

PICKED UP AT RANDOM.

A YOUNG lawyer was asked the other day why in the English courts a woman must remove her hat. He could not answer the question. But an old lawyer, to whom the matter was referred, recalled the opinion of Sir Edward Coke on the matter. It was at a murder trial where the prisoner was a woman and appeared before the court with her head covered. Sir Edward Coke ordered the woman to remove her hat, and said: "A woman may be covered in church, but not when arraigned in a court of justice." The accused tartly replied: "It seems singular that I may wear my hat in the presence of God, but not in the presence of man." "It isn't strange at all," replied the judge, "for the reason that man, with his weak intellect, cannot discover the secrets which are known to God, and therefore, in investigating truth, where human life is in peril and one is charged with taking life, the court should see all obstacles removed. Besides, the countenance is often the index to the mind, and accordingly it is fitting that the hat should be removed and therewith the shadow that it casts upon your face." The hat of the prisoner was taken off, but she was allowed, for modesty's sake, to cover her hair with a kerchief.

"The impression that sheriffs are opposed to hanging criminals is all wrong," said an old U. S. sheriff the other day. "The fact is, no sheriff feels that his official life has been a success until he has hanged somebody. Like the lawyer who thinks he has not discharged his duty to his profession until he has written a handbook; like the doctor who is not satisfied until he gets one of his lectures published in the medical reports; like the minister who groans because he has never attained a bishopric; and like the editor who mourns because his circulation has never surpassed that of his vile contemporaries—so the average sheriff is never satisfied with his record until he has strangled one of his fellow-citizens. This is the reason I am inclined to be discontented. And yet I came near reaching that crowning triumph of a sheriff's existence.

"Let me tell you about it. When I was first elected to that office there was

a man in jail named Dunne. He had been convicted of arson, of the burning of an inhabited dwelling in the night, and the jury, under the statute, gave him his choice of hanging or imprisonment for life.

"Dunne had a strong notion to accept the latter alternative, and I had to talk to him like a good fellow to get the idea of further living out of his head. I pointed out to him all the evils of existence; told him that life was a fleeting circus for man's illusion given, and that he would be a great deal more comfortable under the daisies than he would be struggling round in this vain and transitory world. Finally, after a great deal of hard work I got him to say he'd rather be hung, and the judge, who was a friend of mine, to accommodate me, sentenced him to be executed on Friday of the same week. Everything looked favorable and I thought I had a sure thing of it. But Dunne had no sand. He heard the carpenters hammering on a frame in the jail-yard and began to weaken. I told him it was a new barn I was having built, but he said I was a liar.

"Then, when he caught me trying to measure him with a tape while he was asleep, he went all to pieces and said he was going to apply for a pardon. I told him it was too late and tried to argue the case with him, but he was as obstinate as a mule. I could not do a thing with him. Talk had no effect on him, and when I went to serenade him and sang 'The Sweet Bye-and-Bye' and 'I Would Not Live Always' and other songs calculated to put him in a proper frame of mind, he only cursed and tore his hair and swore he would have me impeached. Finally, only two days before the appointed time, he got some lawyer to go to Springfield for a pardon or reprieve, and then I was in a fix. Dunne knew I had no right to hang him until twelve o'clock meridian Friday, and he expected his lawyer would be back at twenty minutes after eleven on that day. However, I had the clock put forward a half hour, and thought by having everything ready I could work him off while the lawyer was stopping to take a drink on his way up from the depot.

"Friday morning the trigger on the scaffold was working beautifully, and at twelve by my clock I went up and told

him we were waiting on him. He asked me if my watch was not too fast, and wanted to get into a long argument with me about the difference between Cook County time and Springfield time, but I saw what he was after and pulled him out by the leg. Then, when I got him on the trap he said he had a right to make a speech and I had to let him commence, but I told him to cut it short and not to have any repetitions in it. Well, sir, you can hardly appreciate the low, scheming disposition of that man Dunne. He commenced away back in the dark ages when the Dunnes, as he said, were the kings of Ireland, and of all the irrelevant trash that ever I heard a man talk his was the worst. I told him that his remarks had nothing to do with the matter in hand, but he paid no more attention to me than though I had been a wooden man. I heard the train whistle and the town clock strike twelve, and although I hate to interrupt a man while he is making a public address, the situation got so desperate that I hit the trigger a kick, and Dunne, in the midst of his family genealogy, went sailing through the middle of a hole in the floor, and he never brought up until he took out over seven feet of slack in a first-class halter.

"Did it kill him? Not much. The infernal knot slipped round under his chin and he swung there as comfortable as a side of bacon. I was just getting ready to climb down the rope and see if I could not choke him by standing on his shoulders, when his lawyer came galloping up with a pardon. And he got clear off. Yes, clear off. He is doing work here now, and I never see him but I think of Whittier's expressive lines—

Of all sad words of tongue or pen
The saddest are these—it might have been.

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