

## STRAINED WISDOM

James L. Strain was a man for his time. He was a farmer, soldier, magistrate, postmaster, Presbyterian elder, newspaper correspondent and historian. The following statements are taken from 1907 newspaper columns written by Mr. Strain for the *Gaffney Ledger*. Some quotes on women and the rearing of children may seem out of date to our way of thinking but they do bear witness how the majority of people in 1907 felt on these issues. Comparing Strain's remarks with today's society will certainly spark emotions of humor or anger. Without a doubt our culture has changed during the last one hundred years--the reader will have to decide whether that change has been for good or ill.

Many of his opinions may create within us humor or anger. And certainly some of us will say "Amen" to his remarks about government.

**Women.** The most available weapons a woman uses are her tongue and her tears. We would as soon be knocked down by the force of habit concentrated in the heels of a kicking mule as to visit either of them--especially when she is angry.

What a woman can't accomplish with her tongue she can with her tears. When put together the two are irresistible, especially if accompanied with a kind of a howl.

It is right amusing to see a crowd of women get together if each one has a young baby. Such taking on and flattery is hard to find in any other part of the Adamic race. It's the woman who isn't present that they don't want. All the others are chums, proem. When you see a crowd of women with their noses in a huddle you may know what that means--somebody is getting "Hail Columbia."

The good book declares that "man is fearfully and wonderfully made." How is it with women? One thing is certain--their most available instruments of defense are their tongues and tears. To this we might as another--their tempers. But after all they (or most of them) are better than men.

A lady of marriageable age was asked why she didn't marry. She said, "There is no use in it. I have a parrot that swears, a cat that stays out all night, and a monkey that chews tobacco and spits on the floor and that's enough!"

It is a wise woman who realizes that two husbands of twenty years each are not necessarily as good, or better than one of forty.

If people (especially those women) who take so much time and pains in "primping up" and putting on their good looks by dressing themselves so as to gain the applause and admiration of men would exert themselves even half so much to prepare their minds, hearts and souls to win the approbation of their creator, a Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit would take the place of so much pride and untold and unmeasured blessing would inevitably follow... To such it really seems that a week's scouring, washing,

starching and ironing affords more pleasure than an hour's worship; while with some men it seems that fifteen cents cotton is more desirable than their soul's salvation. Much as we may hate to acknowledge it there are facts all the same.

**Politics.** The [South Carolina] legislature is in session and we hope that body will remember that there are many things it can do (without killed a great deal of time) to bring about some much needed reforms--notably a marriage license law without the much dreaded and talked of "divorce" annex about which such a hullabaloo is raised when we say anything about a marriage license law. If people make a mistake in marrying let them live it out or die out of it.

Some of our Southern representatives in Congress it seems have a mania for the loaves and fishes. When anything is offered by the government they get into a kind of squabble and like the man in Aesop's Fable, kills the goose to get the golden egg.

On January 19 Congressman David E. Finley spoke on a post office appropriation which well pleased Mr. Strain, and probably many other Democrats. Here we have some excerpts from that speech. **Mr. Chairman: Two hundred and nine million, four hundred and two dollars is a very large amount of money to be carried in one appropriation bill... It has been correctly stated that this is the greatest amount of money ever reported to congress in a single bill. This is a great country, having a population of possibly 86,000,000 exceeding in material wealth [of] any other two countries in the world...**

Speaking on rural mail carriers he said, "[Little of this is] going to the increase of salary for rural carriers, they are resigning at a rate that threatens the efficiency of the service in some sections of the country. I believe between four and five thousand resigned last year...routes have been temporarily discontinued because of the fact that carriers could not be obtained at the salary provided by law, to wit, \$720 annually.

"Not only this, but these employees of the government are entitled to more pay than they receive today, because they perform service entitling them to increased pay. Voicing my individual opinion, I may say that the salary should be \$900 at least. These employees have no classification. They have no thought of promotion. They furnish their own equipment, horse and vehicle. ...The report of the Postmaster General show that...they spent something like \$300 annually on their equipment and upkeep...leaving only something like \$420..."

We hope the day is fast [approaching when] the whole country is not carried in the hands and pockets of designing politicians, merciless, monied corporations and unprincipled tricksters. Until our people are drilled in the old time common sense school of experience this state of affairs will exist--till then, and not till then, can we reasonably look for a change.

**CHILDREN.** A mother who has spoiled [her] children will generally say, "I tried to raise them right." But Madam, Solomon doesn't say a word about trying. He says, "Train up a

child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Foolishness is found in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." And again, "Withhold no correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell."

"Oh," says a foolish mother, "The rod is a relic of barbarism." Its well that it is, but it's the most potent agent when needed and properly used to enforce law and order in the home. Showing and reasoning with children when their reasoning faculties are improperly developed is the height of folly. As the twig is bent so the tree is inclined.

The mistake that some people make in loving their children too well to correct them where they need it is only sowing seed to bring about a troublesome harvest. Solomon took that view of it. The idea is his and commends itself to all right thinking people who will read what he says along that line.

The boy who has a good mother is not very apt to get far wrong in the raising. We have observed this in the history of great men as well as those around us. When we see one wayward we can tell that the maternal is not what it ought to be, or else it was misdirected. We don't lay this rule down as an infallible one, but one in nine times out of ten can be relied upon for its correctness.

The trouble in this country is that the training of the children is left too much to other people and doesn't start in the home, and the results will be that if the courts will do their duty there will be a rise in the price of hemp [a fiber for making rope]. There is not one home in fifty now where the will of the parent is the law of the household--this will bring its fruit. Some children are too good, too sweet and too smart to be made to know their places as they should.

**ILLEGAL LIQUOR.** The liquor question will settle itself if allowed to do so without the buncombe speeches and wire-pulling it will generate. It would be wise to make the party who buys blind tiger liquor a party of the crime of selling it. If there were no buyers there would be no sellers. One is just as bad as the other and deserves the same punishment.

The sad fate of Mr. J. F. Farmer and the narrow escape of Messrs. Scoggins and the Bright boys from death by poisoning should be a lesson to all patrons of the Blind Tiger business. No one who patronizes these lawless can expect any better than as some time or other to come-up dead. Wherever the vile stuff is sold--under whatever name or regulation, evil will be the result--and no one patronizing such places need look for the outcome of any good.

Those who anticipated the closing of the dispensaries by order of Governor Ansel and procured a supply of "bug juice" to bridge over the chasm of temporary prohibition...will have plenty of friends while it lasts--but oh my, what kind are they? Friends and liquor will go out together.

...Senator Otts' position on the liquor question is very satisfactory to us. We would, however, suggest an amendment that would make the buying of liquor a crime as well as the selling of it--especially in such counties as Cherokee where it has been voted out and no one allowed to sell it. If there were no buyers there would be no sellers--we have never yet thought "old mother Eve" was any worse than the Devil who beguiled her.

The most ardent supporter of the dispensary [system] must now admit that the situation...is greatly improved since voting out the dispensary. Formerly, we mean before the dispensary was voted out, it was a common sight to see persons reeling on the sidewalks under the influence of whiskey, especially on Saturday afternoon; now it is a rare thing to see anyone drunk on our streets; and the records in the police court will show that the number of cases of "drunk and disorderly" have decreased more than 100 percent.

**EDUCATION.** In this day of enlightenment, enterprise and advancement, education comes in for its share of criticism. This should not be the case; yet we are forced to the conclusion that some of our schools and colleges are not what they should be.

The crowning process in book learning has become so prevalent as to exclude the possibility of the children learning anything thoroughly. When the child's mind is overloaded with so many different studies it can't properly digest any of them and consequently it is damaged rather than strengthened... For this many parents are to blame. If their children don't "go through" their book with considerable rapidity they think the teacher isn't doing his or her duty and consequently has to step down ...or take a good deal of abuse... Its not so much what a man eats as how he digests it that gives him strength. It is harder for us to unlearn our errors than to acquire correct ideas at the first. The child that has learned to read monosyllables correctly is better prepared to read disyllables and disyllables and polysyllables come in their regular consecutive order.