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POET'S CORNER.

"To charm the languid hours of solitude,
He oft invites her to the Muse's lore."

THE MECHANIC

I am nature's own nobleman, happy and free,
A peer of the realm might well envy me,
For the land of the Eagle has given me birth,
And my sons are all freemen that meet round my hearth.

Your cities, now rising with beauty & might,
Whose palace-like towers are fair to the sight,
My hands helped to build them, my strength lent its aid,
And by the sweat of my brow your proud cities are laid.

The ship that sweeps proudly o'er the far-spreading sea,
Has been timbered and fashioned by the labor of me,
And the proud massive marble that strikes on the view,
Is chizelled and formed by the artizan too.

The smith, as he hums o'er his anvil a glee,
He toils not for honors, or power—not he;
He dreads not loss of office, he seeks none to gain,
And the smithy's a king in his own proud domain.

The bravest of men from mechanics have sprung,
And the sweetest of lays mechanics have sung,
And the proudest of hearts mechanics should wear,
When conscious of right in their bosoms they bear.

POOR TOM.——By PHAZMA.

There's a new stone now in the old church-yard,
And a few wither'd flowers enwreath it;
Alas! for the youth by the fates ill-starr'd,
Who sleeps in his shroud beneath it!
Poor Tom! Poor Tom!
In his early day to be plucked away
While the sunshine of life was o'er him,
And nought but the light of a gladdening ray
Beam'd on the road before him.
Poor Tom!

All the joy that love and affection sheds
Seemed to fling golden hope around him;
And the warmest hearts and the wisest heads
Alike to their wishes found him.
Poor Tom! Poor Tom!
He is sleeping now 'neath the willow bough,
Where the low toned winds are creeping;
As if to bewail so sad a tale,
While the eyes of the night are weeping.
Poor Tom!

O, the old church-yard, with its new white stone—
Now I love, tho' I used to fear it;
And I linger oft 'mid its tombs alone,
For a strange charm draws me near it.
Poor Tom! Poor Tom!
We were early friends!—O, time still tends
All the links of our love to sever!
And, alas! time breaks but never mends
The chain that it snaps forever.
Poor Tom!

In the old church yard we have wandered oft,
Lost in gentle and friendly musing;
And his eye was light, and his words were soft,
Soul with soul, as we roved, infusing.
Poor Tom! Poor Tom!
And we wondered then if when we were men,
Aught in life could our fond tho'ts smother;
But—alas! again—we dream'd not when
Death should tear us from each other.
Poor Tom!

On the very spot where the stone now stands
We have sat in the shade of the willow,
With a life-warm clasp of each other's hands
And this breast has been his pillow.
Poor Tom! Poor Tom!
Now Poor Tom lies cold in the church-yard old,
And his place may be fill'd by others;
But he still lives here with a firmer hold,
For our souls were twined as brothers.
Poor Tom!

Miscellaneous.

PUNISHMENT OF A SUBSCRIBER *WHO DID NOT PAY HIS SUBSCRIPTION.*

Translated from a Paris Journal for the Times and Compiler.

'Twas at Strawsburg; two old men from fifty to sixty years of age, were amusing themselves over two glasses of *'eau sucree'* (sugar and water) in a solitary inn, in the Rue de France. One of these old men who has the appearance of a settled reflecting merchant, speaking little, and never laughing, was expediting the melting of the sugar by violent motions of the spoon. The other, dressed in a black silk cap, covered by a hat of most respectable age, had the air of a man who had just escaped bankruptcy; for grief for lost money characterizes the physiognomy in a peculiar manner. Between him who has lost his wife, and him who has lost his fortune, you will find as great a difference as between the position of a cathedral and a grave digger. The old man with the black silk night cap slipped two pieces of sugar in his pocket, casting the darkest possible glances around him, with the air of saying 'Thank God, I have a right after so many misfortunes.

His friend who had just laid his half empty glass on the table, now pushes it from him, and folding his arms in a resolute manner, exclaims—

'Boucaud, something is the matter!'

Boucaud is silent for a moment, and then decides to answer 'Yes,'

'Tell it to me, my old friend.'

'Tis a long and sad story.'

I suppose so, yet it is a solace to tell our griefs to a friend of fifty years standing.'

'You are right, my good Quentin. But I repeat it, 'tis a sad story; the sadness possible. Listen to me and you will acknowledge that I am very unhappy.'

'There are newspapers every where now; they are a plague—a nettle which stings, no one knows how or why. They are found at Pontoise; at Carpentras, at Quimpee Coventin, I know not where!—There is one even at Chateau Thierry, our common country—confound them!'

'You mean that there were such papers, but there are none now—the director has crushed them. Formerly, any low fellow, favored by a little wit might ridicule the most respectable persons.'

'To whom do you tell this? But let me continue my story. I had the misfortune to receive for a whole year, on the plea of being a countryman, doubtless, the newspaper of Chateau Thierry, without ever perceiving that a previous notice bound me either to refuse the cursed paper or regard myself as a subscriber. I was so unfortunate as not to refuse, and at the end of the year, three months ago, my newspaper ceased to make its appearance, and the editor demanded twenty-four francs, the price of a year's subscription. My signature to this effect had been obtained only through a little note which I had written, asking one paper to be sent as a specimen. I, therefore repudiated the debt.'

'And you acted well.'

'I acted very ill, as you will see. A week after my refusal, I received a letter from Chateau Thierry, which cost 70 centimes postage. You know that I have many friends and much business there, and receive unfranked letters frequently from the city and from the environs. Do you guess what was in that letter? Very little—'Sir, you owe me twenty-four francs, and you refuse to pay them. You are a rascal.'

'Impossible! And did you not hand over this letter to the Solicitor of the King?'

'There was no signature, and hoped to get rid of the writer at the price of this insult. A week after, another letter came to me from Sardenois, where I have funds invested—80 centimes was the postage.—What do you suppose that I saw on opening it? *Sir, you owe me twenty-four franks, and you refuse to pay them. You are a rascal.*'

'Ah! that is too much."

'In a word my friend, I paid successfully, in the course of a month, eight or ten postages on letters to the same purport.—One came to me from each place with which I had business as transactions. I even received one from Soissons, where my son, who is a physician, resides, and his hand writing was imitated in the direction.'

'Why, the editor must be a great rascal!'

'Do not speak too vehemently. I was no longer myself. When the post boy brought me a letter I hesitated ten minutes before receiving it. I felt it, weighed it, smelt it. Sometimes it was a serious letter from my lawyer or from one of my debtors, but oftener it was from this wicked fellow! He went so far as to frank letters from great distances, to add to my uncertainty and to ruin me more effectually.—What was I to do? Must I give notice to forty or fifty persons that I would not receive unfranked letters? Impossible! I must then tell the reason, and this I dared not do, nor ought I to dare it. I wrote to the fellow to offer him his twenty-four francs; I even franked my letter! He had left the country and no one knew what had become of him.'

'This is an abominable story!'

'Yes, abominable, and worse when you know it all. In the end I lost my wits.—I took or refused letters at hazard, and the devil always compelled me to choose those of his own dictation. I have a drawer full of them.'

'This man was enough to ruin you in postage.'

'This was a slight matter. One day my lawyer in Condeen-Brie wrote to me that I had just lost 800 francs by my mistakes. He had written to me a fortnight before concerning the situation of one of my debtors, who, on the eve of his failure, offered me a note at discount, by which I might have secured my 800 francs. I had made no answer; the letter had lain in the post office, and the failure was now published.'

'Ah! he harrassed me on all sides, my dear sir. It is but a month at most since some one brought me from the office Laffite Gaillard a large willow basket, on which I had to pay 11 francs freight. I was now always suspicious. But it was just the eve of the first of January. This basket might come from my brother or my son. I paid the eleven francs, opened the basket, took out three or four beds of hay and straw, and what do you suppose that I found? A collection of unfortunate papers, with a letter, of which I need not tell you the contents. A week after, another basket come, yet not franked. This I refused.'

'I suppose so.'

'You suppose so. My lawyer at Chateau Thierry soon after did me the honor to inform me that the Baron of Ladoncette was furiously angry with me for having refused a basket of oysters and game, which he had sent me as a present after an exchange of land between us. The game and oysters returned to him after a week's stay at the stage office, God knows in what condition?'

'This was enough to make a man crazy!'

'I was not far from being so! You know that I had a law suit at Amiens, which suit has since terminated unfortunately on account of the impossibility of my attending to business. I could not fix my mind upon it! Well, they told me at the post office that there was a package for me from Amiens, tied and sealed; having these words under the direction: 'Business papers; from the royal court of Amiens. Important.' My suit was yet pending, and this might come from a lawyer. I paid nine francs, signed the register, and returned home with my mind entirely occupied with one subject. The package contained the end of a billiard stick, from which the ivory was taken off, and on the paper which was wraped around it, like a motto around the child's whistle, was the infernal phrase, '*You owe me twenty-four frances, and you refused to pay them.—You are a rascal?*

'And did you not consult some one?'

'Whom should I consult? I spoke of it to the Prefect and the General; but they only laughed at it, and asked me, whenever they met me, after my correspondent, the editor. The wife of the prefect even went so far as to say that she should be delighted to know this young man.'

'This was the equicism of the administration. Boucand, there must have been something which you might do; but what the devil was it?'

'I did every thing. I wrote to my friends at Soissons, at Meaux, at Chateau Thierry, at Paris, in all the surrounding provinces, indeed—sometimes to interrupt my correspondence, and establish a sort of continental blockade against the letters of this vile creature—sometimes to find him out and pay him his twenty-four franks, with interest, if he required it? but it was impossible to lay my hand on the rascal.—And then, unexpected letters on business always profited by the opportunity, when I had refused to pay any postage, to come to me. It seemed as if every body was in league with him. At last, I resolved to refuse no more letters, as it cost me dearer than to receive them. I even went to the post office to take all my letters which had been thrown aside for five or six days. I had my usual luck. There were nineteen there from various places, and not one which was not from him!'

'And always the same thing?'

'Always.'

'Do you receive them still?'

'Yes; I have one in pocket which came yesterday from Pointoise.'

'Do you know any one there?'

'No, but it is always the same. Besides, I have taken my resolution since my last adventure, and will ruin myself in postage if it is necessary.'

'What an adventure?'

'I will tell you. You know my trifling brother, commissioner of the police of Vilparisis?'

'Yes—a good fellow, but rather light.

'Light as to his purse particularly.—Some one came one evening lately to tell me that two girls and a boy had arrived by the stage to visit me, and were waiting for me at the office Laffitte at Cailliard!'

'They came *franked*, at least?'

'No; I had to pay 130 francs for their three places. I cursed the arrival as you may suppose. However, I reflected that it was difficult to deceive me as to the two girls and the boy. Their arrival, unlike that of letters and packets, spoke for itself. I hastened, then, in great uncertainty, to the stage office, I heard there was a young man there, perhaps it was the editor, and I thought so much the better.'

'Yes; you would have strangled him immediately—'

'No, indeed; I should have begged his friendship, that he might leave me quiet for the rest of my days. I reached the office, and found there—guess what?'—Two neices and a nephew, that my brother had sent me, and whose passage I had to pay from Vilparisis to Strasburg!'

And——

And I hesitated; but they all began weeping like calves, and I was obliged to take them away.'

'Into your little lodging?'

'I added two furnished rooms, but is it not agreeable for a widower, a receiver of registers, who lives in bachelor style, entertain two girls of 15 or 16 years old, and a great urchin about the same age?'

'How the devil came your brother to send his children to you and not give you notice?'

'He had given me notice?'

'He had given me notice, the fool, twice. He had written to me twice; but I received no letters which were not franked, and both his having remained in the post office, I had no opportunity to decline the visit, which I should not have failed to do.'

'But what become of these poor children?'

Poor children! The boy did not quit the house the two girls—they all had such appetites, that I thought it most economical to send them back to Vilparisis, and pay 130 francs for their passage.'

'And you payed 130 francs again?'

'Certainly; what are 130 francs more or less to a ruined man?'

'Go on, then.'

'I have reached the end, my dear sir, at the point. I am ruined, Quentin; you understand me; I am ruined, by having refused to pay twenty four franks to a ——, I know not what to call him. Are you astonished to hear me speak thus? Well, you must know that twenty-four francs have entered into my body. I have not made statement which has not been sent back to me from Paris, on account of gross errors in the addition. Those cursed figures are before my eye night and day: 9 francs, 10 francs, 800 francs. I must write them, the inclination is stronger than myself, and thus all my accounts are embarrassed.'

'You are very unfortunate.'

'Very!' but learn in conclusion, that I have this morning received a letter from the director general territories, so harsh as to make me anticipate a removal from my office on the plea of exaction and incapacity.

'Why, what have you done?"

'In my state of mind, a man may do anything. One day I kept eleven francs for recording a judicial notice instead of a franc and a half. But it was a paper of the same form as that of the Chateau Thierry.'

Do you know what you ought to do, Boucaud?

'You will oblige me by telling me.'

'I would go immediately and throw myself at the feet of the director! I would relate to him the whole affair. He would be moved, for it is a heart-rending story. I would ask a change of office, with leave to a friend the general direction of my affairs and would go to spend my three months in England or in Algiers, in search of this fellow.'

Quentin, if you think this is a good plan, I am ready to obey you. Take me with you, my friend. I will do all that you wish like a child, since I am no longer capable of knowing my right hand from left.'

'Let us go and talk of this at your house.'

* * * * * * *

The two good old friends went out together, after the receiver of Registers had thrown 80 centimes, the amount of the postage on his last letter, on the counter, to pay for two classes of 'eau sucree.'

Father Quentin carried Father Boucaud away the same evening; but the latter became crazy in the stage, and is now given up to the care of a doctor, who has established a house for this purpose at Fontainebleau. His mania is the most whimsical imaginable. He thinks that every one who approaches him comes to ask twenty-francs, as the subscription to a paper. He searches his pockets in anguish, and having no money, he wishes to give up his hat, his residing coat, his shoes, his pantaloons, even.—The sight of the doctor frightens him—he takes him for the editor of the Chateau Thierry, and sees in each keeper a foot-boy.

[From the Albany Argus.]

IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENT IN PRISON DISCIPLINE—DOES NOT MUCH REMAIN TO BE DONE?

We believe it is now considered an established truth, that Prisons are erected fully as much to reform as to punish criminal offenders. The discipline of Auburn Prison has had a reputation all over Europe. That system even while it punishes exerts their influence in reforming the convicts, has most justly been considered by philanthropists as eminently worthy of an extended adoption. But there are some features of the New Jersey State prison as detailed in the N. York Courier some months since, which led one to suppose that improvements have been engrafted on the Auburn system.

The principle of *solitary confinement* is one of the main points of the Auburn system, but this does not extend to the work shops or at the meals, or at the chapel exercises upon Sundays. Convicts are upon these occasions allowed to meet but not to speak, yet it is remarked there is an intelligence of the eye far more expressive than that of the mouth. In this manner of seeing each other daily, convicts keep up their acquaintance during the years of serving their time.

It is well known that convicts who are determined to reform after the expiration of their sentence are frequently dragged back to crime by *being recognized* by their old associates. To reform them thoroughly, these old associates must be entirely broken off. When they come out, they must be known as State Prison convicts, or otherwise their efforts at reformation, will be too much like the labors of Sysppus. He will get almost at the top of the hill and then comes the sudden slip of the feet, and down all his labors go.

To revert to the New Jersey system which precludes the chances of a renewal of former intimacies. "The prisoners work in their own cells, *never seeing each other*, and if any thing is required, a small reed with a piece of white leather on the end, which runs through every door is pushed out. The officer in the range, who is constantly on the move, sees it and goes to the cell and supplies his wants."

"On Sundays, the chaplain stands at one end of the corridor, while the cell doors are all closed, and preaches there—his words being heard as distinctly in the cells even the most distant, as though they were at his elbow. The only punishment inflicted when a prisoner is refractory or will not work, is to change him from his cell to one where he has no work and nothing to employ even his mind; or else to place him in a dark cell, called a dungeon. One or the other of these punishments is always found sufficient—but perhaps occasionally a ration or so is stopped.

The correspondent of the Conrier relates an instance to show how completely this system of perfect exclusion from each other, breaks up old intimacies, and gives the discharged convict an object to reform.

"A young man had been sentenced for ten years for manslaughter, having killed his best friend in a drunken frolic. Being put at shoemaking, he soon became the best workman in the place. At the expiration of ten years, he had earned sufficient money from outwork to purchase a very handsome outfit, besides having upwards of $100 in money. The day his term of service expired, the keeper took him to the depot in his carriage, and while there a man who had worked in the prison for ten or twelve years came up, and seeing the newly discharged convict about to shoulder his own trunk, he sprang to assist him never dreaming that the man was just out of State Prison—and yet *these men had been within the same walls for ten years.*"

Neither does the health of the convicts suffer, it is said, from this system of solitary confinement.

The Trenton prison seems also constructed on a different plan from the prisons of New York. It is certainly as novel as it is ingenious.

"At the end of the main entrance is a circular room, perhaps thirty feet in diameter, and from a spot in the centre of this apartment, a person may stand and command a view of all the cells in the person, which are located in two story ranges of (I believe) one hundred in each. These ranges are so ingeniously constructed, that a whisper uttered at one end can be distinctly heard at the other, a distance of 250 fee; and what is more singular; altho' the door of every cell is closed, the keeper converied in the ordinary tones of voice with a prisoner in a cell at the farther end of the range, and his replies were heard with distinctness; but a prisoner talking in one cell cannot be heard in the next one, though every word he utters is heard in the hall."

The question of prison discipline has assumed its just and proper importance. It is the great point whether in punishing an offender against the laws, society should by its management of its prisons, not only punish but destroy. It seems a far nobler and higher duty to so punish criminals that when they leave the prison walls, they may feel that life is not closed to their repentance, and that if they will, they can become redeemed and disenthralled from their past associations, and once more become useful and honored members of society.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM.

We have frequently of late adverted to the demand for reform which has been urged throughout this State, irrespective of locality or party distinctions. The interest in the subject continues unabated, and will increase as the iniquities and defects of our constitutional system become developed by discussion.

The Constitution of Maryland, as the reader is aware, was framed at a time when our revolutionary struggle was in its incipiency—when the form of a general government suitable for the country in the event of successful termination of the war of independence, was undecided upon, if at all canvassed, and when it was altogether uncertain whether a limited monarchy, a consolidated republic, a mere league of independent States, or our own present system, would be finally adopted. Its provisions, consequently, were scarcely more than declaratory of those rights and privileges, which it was contended were guaranteed to the people by the British Constitution, (the infringement of which had led to the revolution,) and such as were absolutely necessary upon the State assuming sovereign authority.

Such was the old Constitution. Some of its provisions have become obsolete from their inapplicability to a state of things produced by the spread of liberal principles—others became inoperative by the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1787, and the Legislature have made unencumbered alterations and additions, by amendments, so called, which are scattered throughout the statute book from 1776 to the present time. This complex mass, together with the innumerable legal adjudications which its inconsistencies and absurdities gave rise to, forms what is now called the Constitution of Maryland.

Under the authority of this Constitution the people have endured the most iniquitious system of legislation ever inflicted upon a civilized community. The most glaring acts of favoritism to individuals and corporations have been conferred, by grants of monopolies and special priviliges; whilst on the other hand, whole sections of the State have appealed in vain for sheer justice—for simple relief from partial and oppressive laws. Unrestrained by the salutary checks contained in most of the Constitutions of our sister States, the Legislature of Maryland, by bare majorities, have squandered the public money in wild schemes of Internal Improvements, projected by individual speculators for their private benefit, and by this means an enormous public debt has been created, paralyzing the energies of the whole State. Taxes, the most unequal and oppressive have been levied to pay the interest upon the debt thus created—the very sinews of the mechanic and laborer are appraised, and a tax levied upon an amount of money predicated upon their *probable* earnings—the crop of the farmer is taxed before the seed is sown, and the merchant, after paying for the privilege of conducting his business and a *per centum* upon his supposed future income, is burdened with an additional tax for a *State Stamp* to give validity to the note or bond he may receive in exchange for his wares. Nor is this all. While the people are thus ground to the very dust by every conceivable species of taxation, swarms of office-holders are in the receipt of princely incomes, derivable from offices, the properties of which should properly go into the public treasury; but which have gone into the pockets of the same individuals for nearly a quarter of a century, and have been perpetuated in the same families for double that time.

In short, these and such like enormities sanctioned by our Constitution, have effectively aroused the people, and they now *demand*, with an earnestness and unanimity unparalled in this State, a prompt and radical constitutional reformation.

And shall we be told the hundreth time that the Legislature, by a provision of the Constitution, possesses the proper—nay, the *sole* power to amend it? After a lapse fifty years, during which we have incessantly, but vainly, endeavored to obtain a Democratic Republican form of government, shall we be hood-winked by promises of *amending* that, which by the interminable tinkering of the Legislature already, has been rendered a complex mass of of incongruities. Will it be argued that because the Constitution prescribes a particular mode by which it may be amended that the people have therefore deprived themselves of the power of abolishing it altogether when it ceases to answer the ends of the public good, and of forming a new one, adopted to their condition, and consistent with the spirit and intelligence of the age?—and will it be thus contended, too, in the face of the numerous precedents afforded by other State around us, whose old Constitutions, containing similar provisions for amendment, have nevertheless been totally abolished and new ones formed by conventions chosen by the people under mere legislative enactments passed for that purpose. Let not the enemies of popular rights "lay the flattering unction to their souls" that this fallacious pretext will be longer be available in perpetuating heir power.—*Balt. Argus.*

THRILLING INCIDENT.—We have the following from a source of the highest respectability, and ate allowed to publish it, as a warning to such as on any subject, trifle with the clear dictates of conscience:

There was lately living in the county of Amherst, Va., not far from Lynchburg, a blacksmith who was well off in the world and a decent sort of a man in his way—except he would now and then drink too much. Not long since, he went to a temperance meeting held in his neighborhood, being quite sober at the time, and listened to a very stirring address—when the appeal, warmly seconded by the advice and entreaty of some of his friends, so wrought upon him, that his conscience was roused and he felt that he must either fly from this place of trial, or yield to the force of truth. He hesitated for a moment which alternative to adopt; but his evil genius prevailed. Stifling his conviction, he tore himself from the spot; and coming to a grog shop on his way home, he there furnished himself with a bottle of whiskey. But ashamed to carry it to his house, he resolved to hide it in some place where he might resort to it, without being seen. He went accordingly into the stable but could find no hole or corner there safe enough for this purpose. At last he thought of a pile of stones behind the building, which seemed to offer a new hiding place for his treasure, and was in the act of opening a spot among them, for the bottle, when a *rattle-snake*, concealed in the pile, struck its deadly fangs into his hand, thus terminating his life in a few hours! In the agony of his sufferings, the wretched man, as a warning to others, made a full confession of the circumstances, and died deeply deploring his guilt and folly, in not yielding to his convictions at the meeting. The kind admonition of Heaven to all, is—He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy!"—*N. Y. Jour. of Com.*

CREEK GRAND COUNCIL.

The Van Buren (Ark.) Intelligencer, of the 24th ultimo, says the Creeks are now in council upon matters of importance to their own, as well as the bordering and adjacent nations. There were, a few days since, eleven of the wild tribes represented, but the Comanches and Pawness have refused to meet them. The Creeks exceedingly regret this, as they have ever shown a disposition to cultivate friendly relations with all their neighbors. We were informed that there were about 300 Creeks, besides numerous other tribes present, among whom were the "Niowas," a tribe from the west of the Rocky mountains, who brought in an enormous pipe, to smoke in council with the Creeks.

A correspondent of the Intelligencer, writing from the council ground in the Creek nation, on the 13th ultimo, furnishes the following interesting intelligence:

There are at present deputations from eleven tribes—Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, Delawares, Shawnees, Piankishaws, Piolies, Caddoes, Kickapoos and Osages. They commenced regular business yesterday.—The principal object is to clear the "white-path," and cover over the blood that has been recently spilt by the Creeks and Pawnee Mahaws.

The Comanches returned an angry answer to the Muscogee messengers, allowing them to escape only with their lives. They said "we accept your tobacco and have smoked it; you have lodged with us all night; take back the wampum and the broken dogs; they are false, and your people have a forked tongue." It is said and believed that one of the messengers (and the only one who spoke the Comanche language) played falsely with the Creeks. They, the Comanches, further alluded to a meeting this moon, at the Great Salt Plains, with all the prairie tribes, to concert measures of action and defence. This has created concern on the part of the Creeks particularly.

More on this subject, as matters progress. Jess. Chrisholm has got home. Watson, Conner and others, are not dead, as reported. Old George Guess, the inventor of the Cherokee alphabet, is certainly dead.

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