

THINGS WORTH KNOWING.

Among birds the swan attains the greatest age.

There are 13,000 kinds of postage stamps.

The British nation has £100,000,000 invested in American railways.

Two Chinese built suspension-bridges over two thousand years ago.

The longest artificial water-course in the world is the Bengal Canal—900 miles.

The parent of all the varieties of apples is a sort of wild crab, and its home is in the Himalayas.

Hollanders are perhaps the greatest tea and coffee drinkers, using 240 ounces to the individual every year.

It is estimated that during four and a half centuries three thousand million volumes have been produced.

Parsley is said to have come from Egypt, and mythology tells us that it was used to adorn the head of Hercules.

Ireland has 156,000 dwellings of one room each, 357,000 of two to four rooms, and 304,000 of five or more.

Investigations show that colour blindness is about twenty times as frequent among men as among women.

In northern New Zealand harvesting extends from November to January. In the south it extends from December to March.

Though hard, the diamond is one of the most brittle stones. A fall on a wooden floor will sometimes crack and ruin a fine specimen.

The amount of air that a man will inhale in twenty-four hours would fill seventy-eight hogheads and weigh fifty-three pounds.

The Emperor of China pays his soldiers at the nominal rate of a trifle over 4s. a month, out of which they are required to purchase their food.

A pair of gloves passes through nearly 200 hands from the moment that the skin leaves the dresser's hands till the time when the gloves are purchased.

The counties in California have over 50,000 bee-hives, and export 6,000,000 pounds of honey, besides 300,000 pounds of comb and 20,000 pounds of wax.

The produce of 2½ acres (or about 7,200 lbs. of rose leaves) only makes 2½ lbs. of otto of roses. The latter, however, in its pure state is worth from \$80 to \$90 per lb.

Linseed oil is derived from the seed of the flax plant from which linen is made. It grows in all parts of Europe, in the Western States of America, India, and New Zealand.

The public building of Philadelphia, when finished, will have the highest tower on any building in the world. It will be 587 feet high. The building covers four acres, and will be finished next year at a cost of \$10,000,000.

There are 5,925 lighthouse stations in the world. Of these England has 817, the United States 802, Canada and Newfoundland 494, and France comes fourth with 444 lights. The whole of Europe has 3,477 lighthouses or stations.

Opium was first smoked by the natives of Java. They mixed the drug with their tobacco, and from them the Chinese learned the habit. After a time the Chinese tried the opium alone, and the effect proved more pleasurable to them than when both ingredients were used.

It is estimated that since the building of the famous Tower of Babel there have been 1,500 distinct languages and 3,500 colloquials, or 5,000 different forms of speech. At the present time 600 of the primary languages are dead, leaving 900 spoken all over the earth, with 2,500 colloquials.

Artificial eyes were first made in Egypt, of gold and silver, and subsequently of copper and ivory. Hundreds of years later, in the sixteenth century, when they were made in Europe, porcelain was the substance used, and the maker usually stamped his address on the white of the eye.

A Japanese auction is a most solemn affair. The public do not call out their bids, but write their names, together with the amount they are willing to pay, on slips of paper and put them in a box. These are looked through and the article awarded to the person who has made the biggest offer.

Breech-loading rifles were introduced into Europe in 1840, but did not at once come into general use. It is estimated that over 12,000,000 are now in actual service in the European armies, while 3,000,000 more are reserved in the arsenals for emergency. Statisticians say that there are 100,000,000 guns of all kinds in the world.

The Great Wall of China has been carried across rivers, through the deepest valleys, over the highest mountains, and, in fact, every natural obstacle that stood in the way of its progress. It is 1,250 miles in length. The total height of the wall, including a parapet of 5 ft., is 20 ft. Its thickness at the base is 25 ft., at the top 15 ft.

In Southern Germany for some years past oil has been produced from the beech-nut. It has given great satisfaction as a substitute for olive oil, but has not come into general use because the production is small. One reason why more has not been done in the production of this beech-nut oil has been the great scarcity of the nut in certain years.

It is always possible to tell the year in which any article of gold or silver was made in Great Britain, as a portion of the stamping consists of the annual date letter, which, read in conjunction with the hall-mark, denotes the date and place of manufacture. In London the hall-mark is a leopard's head, in Edinburgh a castle, and in Dublin a figure of a harp; in Sheffield a crown, and in Chester, since 1784, it has been a sword, erect between three wheat-sheaves. The Birmingham stamp is an anchor. The London date-letters were formerly distinguishable by the shape of the shields as well as by the character of the types; but the shields were discontinued in 1796-7, since when four alphabets have been completed, and the fifth, in the present year 1893-4, has reached the letter S in modern full bodied character.



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HAPPY HITS IN RANDOM SPEECH

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Many of the neatest things in verbal humor, in sarcasm and in retort have been wholly impromptu. Sometimes even the speaker has missed at the moment the wit of his own words. The flash of amusement has come on other faces first. It was probably so with a wedding party which had assembled in a registrar's office. They were obliged to wait. The bridegroom was tardy. He came at last, and he was a white-haired patriarch of seventy. With gentle deprecation, the registrar addressed him—

"Another time," he said, "try to be here a little sooner."

Even a genuine Irish bull may be a felicitous appeal, and that on the spur of the moment. It was a "boy" from the Green Isle, at once ingenious and ingenious, who had his way with a gentleman "standing treat."

"How did you like that whiskey, Pat?" asked his friend.

"Sure, yer honour," he answered, "it has made another man of me, and that other man would like a glass, too."

Satire can be savage when it is quite casual. There was an aspiring amateur actor who strolled up to a famous dramatic critic—

"What did you think of the performance of our club the other night?" was the insinuating query. Quick and sharp as a rapier thrust came the reply—

"I should hardly have called it a club; it seemed, to me more like a collection of sticks."

Where there is no particular peril of any sort, annoyances have been abated by a happy hit in words. At one time there was a Captain Judkins in the service of a great Transatlantic steamship company. He was a gruff old salt, with little or nothing of the traditional gallantry of Jack Tar. He especially resented what he considered pointless questions of female passengers, and he would snarl back the very curtest replies.

A lady tourist from Long Island was once on board a boat which Judkins commanded, and she was unwarned of his reputation for incivility. But she contrived to administer a wholesome lesson. She was standing at the captain's side one day, and, thinking no harm, inquired if he supposed it was going to rain?

"Ask the cook," he said, pettishly.

"I beg your pardon," said the lady, with swift resource; "am I not speaking to the cook?"

Bystanders thought that the bear came off second best in the encounter.

Rebuke, deserved or not, is often foiled by a happy adventitious bit. An Irish minister titled his own land in hard times, and he employed a ploughman who gave him considerable vexation by his indolent habits. The master came up with the man one morning sitting placidly on his plough in the midst of his furrows.

"John," said the divine, gravely, "would it not be a good plan for you to have a stub-scythe here and be cutting a few bushes along the fence while the horses are resting a short time?"

John's answer was ready.

"See here, sir," he said, "wouldn't it be well for you to have a tub of potatoes in the pulpit and, while they're singing, to peel 'em for the pot?"

The oddity of the idea secured a hearty laugh and rescued impudence from dismissal.

The roles are occasionally reversed. They were so in the cases of a well-known English bishop and a querulous acquaintance. Complaint was made that the bishop treated the other in an off-hand manner, particularly in the matter of correspondence.

"My lord, when I write to you, you answer me on miserable scraps of paper," objected the grumbler.

"Very well, sir," was the bland reply. "Next time it shall be on foolscap."

A reply full of cleverness was given by a gentleman badgered for not accepting a post offered by government. He had pleaded unfitness. This was pooh-poohed, and he was challenged for the real reason of his refusal. He neatly escaped.

"What I have stated of my disability is true," he said, "it should be sufficient to have me excused. If I have spoken a falsehood, it is surely not advisable to give me such a position."

Equally felicitous was the quick answer of a courtier to an Eastern princeling.

"Which do you think the greater man, myself or my father?" was the question. It had elements of danger, but the title was well grasped.

"Your father, sire," was the reply, for though you are equal to your father in all other respects, in this he is superior to you—that he had a greater son than any you have."

The Evolution of an Inscription.

About forty years ago, a young soldier of the French-African regiment of Zephyrs, during a bivouac in the Atlas mountains, carved an inscription on the rock, "Regiment II., Des Zephyrs," to mark the place of their night's rest.

Now, a short time ago one of those numerous travellers who haunt the wilds of Africa came to this place and saw the inscription, already half obliterated by the weather. The intelligent archaeologist pondered the inscription for days, and at length presented to the world the following reading:

"Regnante Imperatore Antonio II. Deus Excelis Sanctum Zephirus," i.e., "In the reign of the Emperor Antonius II., God called St. Zephirus to Himself."

Not a Time For Mirth.

A young couple were getting married. Suddenly some absurd idea entered the head of the bridegroom, and he bursts out laughing.

Thereupon the old clergyman who was officiating pauses a moment, and said gravely—"Don't laugh, my friend. You'll have little occasion for mirth in the state you're now entering."

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MEN AND WOMEN TALKED ABOUT.

The Grand Duke Alexis of Russia is now said to be an enthusiastic stamp collector.

Thomas Hardy, the author, has been studying the labor problem, and in his next novel he will discuss the differences between capital and labor.

Colonel William E. Cody, (Buffalo Bill) gives as his reason for refusing to run for governor of Nebraska that he does not purpose to exchange an income of \$200,000 for \$2,000 a year.

James Robinson, the once champion bareback circus rider, is spending his declining years on his farm in Missouri. Robinson is a native of St. John, and spent his boyhood here.

The Emperor of China, who is twenty-three years old, is now studying the French and English languages, while Prince Yoshi Ito, the fourteen year-old heir presumptive to the Japanese throne, is pursuing a course in German.

Early last year the Sultan of Turkey presented to the Queen a suite of rosewood furniture of native manufacture, and, in return, her Majesty has lately forwarded to Constantinople a magnificently-framed photograph of herself.

The Princess of Wales possesses furs of the value of £12,000. An expert furrier pays periodical visits to Marlborough House to overlook the Princess's collection, as a single moth in it might work hundreds of pounds' worth of damage.

The Empress of Russia is very fond of the Danish black or rye bread, such as is baked for the soldiers. During her Majesty's visits to Denmark she eats this kind of bread every day, and when at home a loaf is sent to Russia every fifth day.

The German Empress is a victim of the photographic craze. She is photographed in all sorts of costumes and upon all occasions. A recent portrait represents her with a hunting knife by her side, a revolver in one hand and a lasso in the other.

Mr. Justin McCarthy, M. P., is one of the most courteous men in Parliament. Even in heated debates Mr. McCarthy has never been known to speak harshly of a political opponent, and he is respected by all parties in the house. He is believed to prefer literature to politics.

President Carnot does not care much for the fuss and flummery of official life. A separate entrance was built to his box at the theatre Francaise so that he should not be jostled by the common crowd, but he refused to use it, and the new entrance has been bricked up again.

Pope Leo, who is past 83, is the oldest ruler. The Grand Duke of Luxembourg and the King of Denmark, respectively 76 and 75 years old, stand next to him in this regard. The Grand Duke Karl Alexander, who lives in Weimar, is fourth in point of age, and Queen Victoria, with her 74 years, is the fifth oldest monarch.

Clark Russell dictates his literary work lying down in his sitting room. "I have the plot before me," he says, "as I lie there, I close my eyes and realize the whole scene, which I describe as though it were illuminated on canvas by a magic lantern. Before any work goes to a printer it is carefully revised and sometimes one-fourth rewritten.

John W. Mackay, supposed to be the richest man in the world, is not an American, but a native of Dublin. He has spent forty years of his life in the United States, and has entirely lost his native brogue. His wife is the leader of the American colony in London, but Mr. Mackay spends most of his time between San Francisco and Europe.

Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett has extraordinary notions about the bringing up of children. Hers have never been allowed to be corrected since they were born. However much they may have outraged the traditions of good behavior, sense of shame and the force of example were the only remedies permitted. It was as much as a governess or servant's place was worth to forget this rule.

The Princess of Wales has a remarkable collection of hats and bonnets, consisting of all those she has worn during the thirty years she has led London fashion. Each hat or bonnet, carefully put away bears the date of its use; and a history of the whims, vagaries and changes of feminine fashion, which are never so capricious as in matters of headgear, might well be written upon this interesting collection.

Miss Mary Dickens, a grand-daughter of the great novelist, has already published two promising novels, "Cross Currents" and "A Mere Cypher." She is several years short of thirty, and lives at Regent's Park with her mother and father, who, being the eldest son, bears the Christian name of the author of "Pickwick." Part of Miss Dickens' life was spent at Gad's Hill, but her recollections of her grandfather are of the shadowiest.

Gen. Mellinet, the "father" of the French army, died in Paris some two weeks ago at the age of 95 years. He was a grandson of a member of the Convention, and son of one of Napoleon's Generals. He had an active military career, and was highly honored civilly. Throughout his life he abstained from stimulants of all kinds, and averred he did not know the taste of wine. To the last he was healthy, vigorous, and a rather peppery old soldier.

Ferdinand de Lesseps, of Suez and Panama fame, is eighty-eight years of age, and besides being one of the foremost engineers of the day has been a diplomatist of some distinction. At one time he was attached to the Consulate in Lisbon, and subsequently held various consular offices in Europe and the East. During the bombardment of Barcelona, of which he was at time French Consul, he distinguished himself for his energy in protecting the lives and property of his compatriots.

The late Geo. W. Childs made it a rule of his life never to speak ill of any one. It Smith went to him and told him that Brown was his deadliest enemy, he sent for Brown and intimated that Smith was the dearest friend they both had on earth, and, owing to the kind things Smith had said Brown had said about him, he wanted to thank him and find out if there was any favor he could do for him. Unquestionably Mr. Childs' rule in life was the rare Christian one that if one check was smitten he would turn the other.

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