

SWORD IN THE THROAT.

THE SWALLOWING ACT IS EASY IF YOU DO IT RIGHT.

No Deception about this Famous Trick of Professional Joggers—The Weapon Actually Goes Down the Throat—How the Strange Feat is Performed.

That the mucous membrane of the throat is extremely delicate, any one who has had a physician examine his throat by pressing back the tongue with a spoon can testify; yet it is possible so to overcome this delicacy by practice that the introduction of a solid substance is followed by not the least muscular contraction. Such a state is reached by the professional sword swallows, who are not mere tricksters, as some people think, but actually perform the marvellous feats that they appear to do. We translate from the "Revue Scientifique" (Paris, Sept. 7) an account by G. Varlot of this curious profession and the training necessary to enter it, with some facts due to observation of one of its shining lights.

"Every one has seen the extraordinary exercises of the acrobats known under the common name of 'sword swallows.' With incredible boldness these men thrust quickly through the mouth and into the interior of the body cutlasses, straight or curved swords, and bayonets. Experts can even place the barrel of the gun on the bayonet and balance the weapon, the breech in the air, while the bayonet penetrates to unknown depths. Others swallow a sword bayonet with its scabbard, and draw out first the sword, then the scabbard.

"I have heard several persons express doubt, and reservations regarding the good faith of the sword swallows; it is quite commonly believed that they use spring swords, and that the blade does not descend so deep as it seems: others think that by a skilful piece of slight-of-hand, an undetected trick, the blade is hidden and not really swallowed. To do justice to these poor acrobats, their exercises, which astonish the public, are sincere; the sword blades are really thrust down the oesophagus and into the stomach. When we analyze exactly the methods of the sword swallows we see that there is nothing mysterious in them, and that the natural conformation of the organs perfectly permits the introduction of voluminous foreign bodies into the primary digestive passages.

"I have had occasion to examine recently one of the best-known sword swallows in Paris, and as he submitted with good grace to all my examinations I was able to form a very clear and precise idea of the manner in which he accomplished his feats. "He is a man of 35 years, 1.65 metres (5 feet 5 inches) high. The greatest length of the instruments that he thrust into his stomach is 52 centimetres (20.5 inches.) The majority of his knives and swords are not so long; they measure between 40 and 50 centimetres (16 and 19.5 inches.) Their size is varied, from that of a triangular bayonet 1½ centimetres (¾ inch) up to 3 centimetres (11.5 inches) the width of a large hunting knife.

"This man swallows also with equal ease a sword bayonet of the old chassepot model, and even a portion of a cavalry sabre. All these weapons are dull as well as the point as on the edges; they are naturally quite heavy. Rust does not prevent their use.

"This is how he proceeds: after having bent the head far back, so that the occiput rests on the cervical column, he opens his mouth wide; with the right hand he introduces the point of the sword as far as the rear wall of the pharynx; then, with a swift movement, in less than it takes to tell it, he thrusts the blade down the oesophagus to a depth of thirty to forty centimetres (twelve to sixteen inches.) I have been astounded at the rapidity and dexterity of the operation. The sword cannot be left in place longer than twelve to fifteen seconds; the larynx is pushed forward by the blade. Respiration is suspended, and the man cannot utter a sound during this short lapse of time. At the end of seven to eight seconds the face reddens and the heart beats quicker, and after fifteen seconds at the most the sword must be withdrawn.

"How far down does the point of the sword go?" By measuring the length and applying the measuring tape to the boy I have satisfied myself that the point was in the cavity of the stomach. The muscles of the abdomen were too tense to admit of feeling the sword from without, but pressing just over the stomach the sword could be made to move.

"He also swallows swords while lying down, and then rises and withdraws them. Inversely after having swallowed the sword while standing, he lies down and takes it out. But in these exercises he does not use weapons more than thirty centimetres (twelve inches) long; he is afraid of wounding himself with longer ones when he bends and moves his body. This particularity proves indirectly that the point of the longer sword is well in the stomach when the man is upright.

"No lateral movement of the head, the neck, or the spine is possible while the sword is in place. The trunk can be bent forward, but the bending must be from the hip joints.

"The man has been accustomed to this strange treatment of the oesophagus for more than twenty years and has never been

injured by it. He swallows swords after drinking or eating. When he withdraws the point from the stomach he has never noticed particles of food on it, only a little mucus. The oesophagus does not seem to be permanently dilated.

"During the course of a day he repeats his feat about a hundred times without real fatigue. 'Sometimes,' says he, 'I am hoarse for two or three days, when my performances have been too long.' He enjoys good health and is sober, for good reason. 'My hand must not tremble,' he says; 'when I have taken a glass too much I can work no longer.'

"He has given lessons in sword swallowing for this odd accomplishment has its teachers and pupils. He himself was trained by a celebrated acrobat, who, it appears, made an extraordinary impression in the circuses where he performed. His pupil yet speaks almost with envy of the height of his master, which enabled him to swallow swords 70 centimetres (2 feet 4 inches) long.

"Absolute insensibility of the throat is the condition sine qua non of the performance of the sword swallower. The man just described, in the performance that he gives, makes his pupils 'tire out' their throats with a tablespoon. The spoon is thrust in till it touches the end of the pharynx; this revolts, but the pupil returns to the attack time after time for about a quarter of an hour.

"In the first attempts, the throat is very much irritated; spasmodic contraction follows, and some subjects are obliged to abandon their apprenticeship. The majority persevere though these inevitable sufferings, and patiently keep on with the spoon till the pharynx can bear it—that is, till all reflex action ceases.

"This accustoming of the mucous membrane of the throat to the feeling of foreign bodies, this anaesthesia obtained after months of patient effort repeated several times a day, is a phenomenon well worthy of note.

"When the throat has reached the desired state, the spoon is given up, and knives and swords are introduced, at first prudently and gradually. Finally, with habit, the young sword swallows acquire such skill that they also can give public exhibitions. Their apprenticeship lasts about a year on an average.

"There is, then, nothing mysterious, as I said at the outset, in all these astounding feats of the sword swallows. The length of the pharynx, of the oesophagus, and of the cavity of the stomach, variable with the height of the subject, allows without great danger the penetration of instruments of proportional dimensions.

"The diameter of the conduit of the oesophagus when inflated in man 2½ centimetres (one inch); we must not be astonished, then, that this channel can receive a sword 3 centimetres wide. The anatomists describe slight lateral curves of the oesophagus and diminution of its size at the middle portion. The best proof that, from a physiological point of view, these incurvations and this contraction have slight importance, is the rapidity, even the roughness, with which the sword swallows thrust in the weapon, without the least stumbling without any pause. From a general point of view the sword swallower must be regarded as a man who, by patience and practice, had been able to catheterize his oesophagus with a dexterity—let us say even with a virtuosity—that surgeons could not imitate without danger."—Literary Digest.

Thomas A. Edison.

The famous wizard, greater than king or potentate, is the most democratic of men. Picture to yourself a gray-haired man with a boy's face, round, ruddy, beardless, rarely unrippled with a smile; sturdy of figure, with a 7½ hat pressed down on a broad forehead, with clothing loosely fitting, baggy, an appearance about it, not of age, but of never having been new; with a scant necktie and an uncovered expanse of shirt front liberally besprinkled with tobacco juice.

That is Thomas A. Edison. A long-listening ear to the delicate vibrations of the phonograph has brought him near to incurable deafness. As he bends his head to what you have to say, his right hand acts as a receiver for his dulled tympanum, his face, for the time being, displaying that blank expression peculiar to the deaf, but brightening into acute intelligence as the meaning of the words reaches him. If it is a witticism his countenance breaks into a tumult of laughter, his body bends as he slaps his thigh vehemently. There never was a more natural man; a boy with gray hair and the record of his birth a ridiculous falsehood. Think of this picture, and then of the incandescent light, the telephone, the phonograph, the kinetoscope, and hundreds of minor electrical wonders.—Philadelphia Times.

Early Race of Men.

By the measurement of skulls, Professor Sergi thinks that he has established the existence of an early race of men whom he calls the Mediterraneans. They arose in the mountains of Abyssinia, spread over Egypt and the north coast of Africa, reaching to the Canary Islands, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain, and Ireland, the greater part of France, Greece, Asia, Minor Syria, and the country about the Black Sea. In later times branches of this race came to Europe from Asia Minor, and became known as Pelasgi and Etruscans. The Hittites belonged to the same stock. Their skin was brownish, their hair and eyes black, and their skulls of peculiar shapes, which Professor Sergi subdivides into ellipsoid, ovoid, pentagonal, rhomboid, cupoid, sphenoid, and the like. The race in North Italy, France, and Britain was driven west by the coming of the kelts.

His One Fault.

Young Mother (whose baby has been weighed by the butcher)—and how much does this little fellow weigh, Mr. Butcher?

Butcher—Twenty pounds, mum.

Young Mother—Isn't he a splendid specimen?

Butcher (dubiously)—From my point of view, mum, he runs too much to suit.—Tit-Bits.

REVERSING THE MORAL.

RICH OLD AGE RESULTING FROM EARLY YEARS OF FOLLY.

The Famous Coal Oil Johnny and His Lucky Career—The Prodigal who Has Not Been Able to Waste his Substance in Riotous Living—A Queer Case.

Good folks fond of instructive stories with "moral" endings, have taken much comfort out of the supposed death in abject poverty of that model prodigal, "Coal Oil Johnny," such a finale being what one would naturally expect from the pyrotechnic career of perdition which made him famous. But the inevitable order of the fineness of things is out of joint again, as usual. Coal Oil Johnny is not, as is popularly supposed, dead and buried, but alive, in pretty good condition physically, and in quite comfortable circumstances. And shocking as it may be to those accustomed to holding him up as a horrid warning to the young, the fact seems beyond dispute that Coal Oil Johnny's good financial plight today is the direct result of his having been a reckless, irresponsible, drunken spendthrift when young.

As he ceased being—so far as the general public were concerned—a realizable entity, and passed into history some thirty years ago, the present generation hardly know him as more than a name associated with many wildly fantastic stories of amazing prodigality, and perhaps without some such publication as this to rescue him from oblivion, in a little while more the myth finders would fall foul of his name and argue him out of real existence, as they have William Tell and Blue Beard, probably ascribing his organization to the "advertising genius of the inventor of a popular petroleum soap after which the unique imaginary being was no doubt named," such transpositions of facts being quite in the way of the legend sharps. Let it go upon record, then, as the solemn affirmation of a solid fact, while the man is still a living proof, that Coal Oil Johnny was a real person; that he did all the amazingly fool things told of him and many more, and that if he had done one less he might be a miserable beggar today, which he is not anywhere near to being. And while the story of his life may no longer properly serve to emphasize teachings of the dire results of ill-advised expenditure under the adventitious stimulus of alcoholic enthusiasm, it may still suffice to preserve his memory as an unparalleled illustration of fool luck.

In December, 1857, William McClintock, owner of an almost worthless little farm on Oil Creek, in Franklin county, Pa., accompanied by his wife, went to the county poorhouse to pick out a boy for adoption, as they had already adopted from the same institution a daughter. They selected a lad 12 or 15 years old, to whom the name of John Steele had been attached—though how he got it does not appear in the record. A little more than a year later the farmer died, leaving all his small property to his widow, and she, impressed by his sudden demise with a new sense of the insecurity of life, almost immediately made her will. She bequeathed to her adopted daughter, who was her favorite, the sum of \$2,000, the total sum she and her husband had, by a lifetime of frugality and toil, managed to save. To the boy, John Steele, she left the farm, which was possibly worth a couple of hundred dollars at that time. Within a few months after her execution of that instrument, on Aug. 28, 1858, Col. Drake struck oil on the first bored well, which was on the McClintock farm.

Coal oil was now a new thing, even then. The Seneca and Complanter tribes of Indians used to collect it, by means of blankets, from the surface of a spring where oil City stands today, and valued it highly as a remedy for rheumatism and other ailments. And when Hicks Spraker, in 1827, bought that spring from the Government, the oil was put up in four and six-ounce bottles for medicinal use by the Pittsburgh firm of Reynolds and Shea, to whom he sold it. That firm, by the way, dissolved partnership in a row over the reckless enterprise of the junior partner, who bought seven barrels of the oil at one time—the spring's output for a year—a quantity so vast that the senior partner did not believe it would ever be all sold.

The sales of "Harlem Oil" and "Mustang Liniment," as petroleum was then called, increased from year to year, and as it was discovered at other points, it was discovered as "Seneca Oil" and "Kier's Rock Oil"—always as a medicine. The last-named stuff came from Samuel M. Kier's salt wells, at Tarentum, a few miles above Pittsburgh, where it was primarily regarded as a great nuisance, but eventually became his most important product. He was the first person to conceive the possibility of its being available for other uses than medicinal. He burned it in an old-fashioned coffee pot-like lamp, and was satisfied that, although it made much smoke, and gave forth a vile smell in burning, it would be, if purified and used in a properly constructed lamp, of value as an illuminant. Without waiting for those improvements, the people in all that district were, in 1846 and 1847, using the crude petroleum in their common oil lamps.

In 1853 Mr. Kier started a one-barrel still in Pittsburgh for the refining of petroleum for illuminating purposes, and in a short

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time found it necessary to put a five-barrel still in operation. Others followed his example, and when he invented a proper lamp for the inoffensive burning of the refined oil, it became popular, and was largely in demand at the time Col. Drake made his discovery, which is commonly looked upon now as the initial point of the oil era.

Col. Drake leased one-eighth of an acre from the Widow McClintock, for which she received one-half of the yield of the well. That contract was made in advance, when nobody had an idea of what a well might yield, and neither party to it had any monopoly of amazement when hundreds of barrels of petroleum per diem were realized. Very speedily the farm was leased out in one-eighth-of-an-acre patches and dotted all over with wells. The widow was in receipt of thousands of barrels of oil every day, for which she found ready sale at from \$12 to \$15 per barrel, and the sums of money she handled were greater than she had ever before believed existed. As she had no confidence in banks, she sent down to Pittsburgh for a big safe, which she crammed full of money and bonds. Life was such an exciting whirl of astonishing experience to her that she forgot all about the will, and forgot that death may come as suddenly to a rich widow as to a poor farmer. Had she not done so, it is probable that the contents of more than one pigeon-hole in the big safe would have been added to the adopted daughter's share.

One evening in March, 1862, John Steele, who had been away with a team hauling oil, returned home and found the house in ashes. The charred bones of the widow were picked out of the ruins. It was supposed that she had accidentally set herself blazing, and then the house, by rashly using petroleum to start the kitchen fire.

As John Steele had been legally adopted, he was the natural heir to the contents of the big safe and the river of revenue from the oil-producing farm, his possession of which was further fortified by the widow's will, made before the change in her fortune. This sudden acquisition of enormous wealth turned his head, not all at once, but speedily. He wished to find in enjoyment of it an intensified consciousness of its reality, but was too ignorant to do so in any intelligent way. He married the daughter of one of his workmen, and she taught him to write his name in a laborious, mechanical way, and that was all he ever learned of the art and mystery of letters. She tried to keep him straight, but he knew too little to comprehend self-respect, felt himself too rich to be trammelled by conventionalities or to care for the opinions of others, and thirsted for a riotous excess of sensuous gratification, the highest pleasure he was capable of.

Only a few months after his marriage he went away to Philadelphia, taking with him a boon companion named Slocum, whose assigned duty was the carrying of his money and paying it out as he chose to squander it. The life of prodigality and uncontrolled dissipation into which he plunged was so wild as to be almost beyond belief. He ordered champagne, not by the bottle, but by the basket. He gave a \$5,000 diamond to a negro minstrel for singing a song that pleased him. He frequently bought carriages and the teams attached when he wished to ride a few blocks, and then presented them to the drivers. On one occasion he wagered a bottle of wine that he would spend actual-ly paying out "for fun," and not giving away, \$10,000 a day for sixty days, and so forth. There Mrs. Steele is in control, and if the bad idea should occur to Johnny of an experimental return to the street and quite drunk. It was in bank

notes, as he always required it, checks being objects of suspicion with him, and when he had stuffed it into his pockets they bulged out like those of an urbin after a raid on an apple orchard. His coat could not set well on him, padded with money as he was, and he was disgusted. Just then he caught sight of a bank, and, rushing into it with the airy formality of a hero, took care of this damned stuff for him. It's a nuisance," dumped the whole pile before the receiving teller, and went away, ere that functionary could take breath or gather his wits sufficiently to give any evidence of the deposit. And when Coal Oil Johnny, as John Steele was by this time known, tried, in a bright spasm of sobriety, to remember where he had left all that money, he was quite unable to do so. And, he decided, to hunt it up would involve more trouble than it was worth. Its loss did not worry him at all.

Suddenly his wealth came to an end. Of course, he had been plundered mercilessly, right and left, but had literally thrown away several fortunes, and creditors, scenting his downfall, were pressing him. He mortgaged the farm for a large sum, and plunged at once into even wilder extravagance and more reckless dissipation than before, but with less to go upon, and the end came quickly. His mad career was over.

After a short time of abject destitution, in which he was deserted by all who had preyed upon him, he went to work driving the Girard House stage, in which guests were carried to and from the railroad depots. Soon he wearied of that, and somebody paid his fare back to Oil Creek, where he obtained employment as a freight handler at the depot, in which capacity he earned \$25 a month. That was not enough to support himself and his family, and there was nothing more remunerative that he could find there to do.

His wife raised, by the sale of her jewelry, a sum sufficient for the transportation of the family out to Nebraska, and there, in Lincoln, Coal Oil Johnny settled down. They were very poor, but managed somehow to live, for Johnny was a willing worker at any labor he could procure. Realizing the evil fortune of such limitation as had been put upon his capacities by his ignorance, he took care that his son, a bright lad, should receive as good an education as was attainable under the existing circumstances. When the boy was old enough, he obtained employment as a ticket and freight agent at the Ashland, Neb., railroad station, and there his father, Coal Oil Johnny that was, plain John Steele, as everybody about there knows him, works steadily and patiently for the railroad company under the son's direction, handling freight, taking care of the station, and so on. And he is hale, hearty, a well-preserved man, apparently about 53 years of age, seemingly well contented.

But he is by no means dependent now upon his labor for the maintenance of his family, or upon his steady and industrious son. At a time his situation seemed most miserable and his prospects least hopeful, while he was still seeking day's work at any hard labor in Lincoln, fortune again smiled upon him, a gleam of his old luck gilded his life once again.

In some way the directors of that Philadelphia bank in which he had made his informal deposit thirty years before learned of the unhappy condition of the Steele family away out in Nebraska, of the total reformation in Coal Oil Johnny's habits, and the manly struggle he was making to atone for the past. Having assured them of the identification of their erratic depositor, they made up his account and forwarded to him the sum left in their charge, with interest from the date of its deposit. How much it was is known only to those concerned, but it is believed to have been somewhere about \$80,000, probably more rather than less. With that money 700 acres of choice farming land near Ashland were purchased, and a good house erected with barns, outhouses, excellent fences, and so forth. There Mrs. Steele is in control, and if the bad idea should occur to Johnny of an experimental return to the tumultuous delights of earlier days, it is

not probable that he would be able to pre- judice the family interest in that farm. But there are no fears of his doing so. He has proved himself a man, not merely a warning.

Ben Franklin aphoristically affirmed that "always taking out of the meal tub and never putting in soon comes to the bottom." But Coal Oil Johnny went beyond him in demonstrating that, even with much putting in one soon scrapes the bottom by fast scooping out. The only adage that really seems to fit a case like his seems to be, "It is better to be born lucky than rich."

HIS SHOP OPENED UP.

CLOSED FOR TWO MONTHS IN THE EXPECTATION OF DEATH.

A Richmond, Ont., Harness Maker has recently Turns Up and Resumes Business at his Old Stand After Being Cured of Bright's Disease with Dodd's Kidney Pills.

RICHMOND, Ont., Nov. 16.—This not very distant suburb of the Canadian capital has been highly wrought up during the past few days over the recovery of a well-known business man here, Mr. J. McCarthy, who being declared to be in an advanced stage of Bright's disease of the kidneys, had been given up to die.

Curious to know the particulars of a case creating so much local interest your correspondent made haste to call and introduce himself to Mr. McCarthy, and found him in his shop and willing to talk of his case.

"I have called to see Mr. McCarthy; are you that gentleman?"

"Yes, sir," said he, "what can I do for you?"

"Hearing that there was something very unusual about your recovery from a seemingly fatal illness I have called to learn the facts," said I.

"Well, sir," replied he, "I am never too busy to talk about my doctor; I mean Dodd's Kidney Pills, for, with the blessing of God, they have saved my life."

"Is it true that you had been given up to die, and that your doctors both named your trouble Bright's disease?" asked I.

"Yes, sir," he answered, "although ailing for some time it was only about seven months ago that my case became serious. After doctoring here and in Ottawa about four months I had to close my shop fearing that I must die of Bright's disease."

"About ten weeks ago Mr. McCord, a farmer living out near here, advised me to use Dodd's Kidney Pills as they had cured him of diabetes, and so I commenced. After using two boxes all distress left me. I have used twelve boxes in all; have just re-opened my shop at the old stand for some years yet. There is no use trying to describe my sufferings. You can understand when I tell you that my weight ran down from 165 to 120 pounds. I am nearly up to my old weight, but feel as well as ever in my life, and I am perfectly cured."

Dodd's Kidney Pills is the only medicine ever known to cure Bright's disease.

Historical Example.

"Tommy," said the boy's father, "I am afraid you and Willie Smithkins have been having a fight."

"Yes, sir. He called me names."

"My son, I am ashamed of you. You should learn patience. Look at the forbearance which great men have shown under personal abuse and the strongest provocation to give way to wrath. Look at—well, look at Corbett and Fitzsimmons."

—Washington Star.

Watermark in Paper.

The watermark in paper is produced by a layer of coarse wires of the required figure laid in the molds. The fiber over the wires is thus thinner than at other places, and more light shines through the fabric, thus making the figure perceptible when the paper is held up between the eye and the light.