

CAPABILITIES OF ENGLISH.

In a Most Flexible and Mobile Tongue.

As our alphabet now stands—even after 6,000 years of perfecting—it is a string of singularly ambiguous signs, and affords an unequalled opportunity for tormentors, just as a man who cannot express himself clearly can be plagued with sophisticated questions. The confusion of English sound and letters is well illustrated by spelling coffee without one correct letter—kauphy, which spelling is nearer the original than the one in use, for a pamphlet was printed in Oxford in 1659 on "The Nature of the Drink Kauphi, or Coffee."

The artistically bad orthography of many of our funny writers is made possible by the glaring inconsistencies of our alphabet. But some instances of naturally funny bad spelling are perhaps equal to any artificial ones. Here is a note that was sent to a doctor:

"Sir—Yole oblige me of yole kum un ce me Ihey a Bad kum an Hill an hev lost my Happy Tight."

The following, received by a school master, was likely to be misunderstood:

"Sir—As you are a man of nolege I intend to inter my son in your skull."

Here is a bill sent to a gentleman:

asasada..... \$1.50
asacionimomegin..... 50
Fade-J. JAXN.

The items are not apothecaries' articles, as might be supposed, but merely "A horse half a day and a takin' of him home again."

Many eccentric devices of literature depend on the peculiar arrangement of letters. Some of these have fine-sounding names, and are recognized as famous recreations of the learned. The palindrome, which is a line that reads alike backward and forward, is one of the most difficult of all feats of letter juggling, and has engaged the attention of the world's cleverest brains.

While in exile Napoleon was asked by an Englishman if he thought he could have sacked London, and replied: "Able was I ere I saw Elba"—the most skillful palindrome on record. Run the letters of the reply backward if you would test it. A famous Latin example is the lawyers' motto—"Si Numini immunit." The following sentence is not only a palindrome, but extraordinary in other respects, "Sator arepo tenet opera rotas."

This spells the same backward and forward; all the first letters of the words spell the first word; the second letters of the words spell the second word, and so on through the third, fourth and fifth. The last letters spell the last word; the next to the last of each word spell the next word, and so on to the beginning.

The anagram has occupied a most pretentious place in literature. Wits and wisseces of the olden times looked into the names and places for satires and for omens. Several astronomers have used anagrams to secure the credit of discoveries which they did not wish to reveal. Louis XIII. retained in his service an astronomist named Thomas Billon, with a pension of 1,200 livres.

Calvin calls himself by the anagrammatic name of Alcuinus, in the title of his "Institutes," printed at Strasburg. Alcuinus was the great restorer of learning in the time of Charlemagne, and substituting u for v (the letters in those days being equivalent), the name is an anagram for Calvinus.

It was deemed a prophecy of fate when it was found that the name of Louis de Bouherat could be transposed to "est la bouche du roi (is the mouthpiece of the king); that of Francis de Velys to "de facon suis royal" (of royal strain). The fascinating Marie Touchet procured a liberal pension for the writer who deduced from her name "Je charme tout" (I charm all).

But history doesn't mention anything about Napoleon Bonaparte penning the transposer of his name into "bona raps leno pone" (rascal, yield up your stolen possessions)—London Mail.

WANAMAKER TURNED BRICKS.

The early days of John Wanamaker were not easy by any means. When only a lad of five years he made bricks, or, rather, assisted in the making, for his business was to turn them in the sun until they were evenly baked.

For this labor he received two cents a day, and sometimes cleared ten cents a week; but it must be remembered that there were many rainy days, when the force of youthful "workmen" had to be laid off. John's first real rise to fortune was in the days when, as office boy, he saved money enough to start in business for himself. He worked as assistant in the office until he had climbed up to six dollars a week, and then seeing that he could get no more, he bought a little stock of cheap furniture and started in to be a merchant.

No one can understand why everybody else is not interested in his specialty—Washington Democrat.

HYBER PASS.

British Turned the Afidis from Wolves Into Shepherds.

Khyber pass had long a deplorable reputation. It is inhabited by a peculiarly savage tribe, the Afidis, more treacherous and more inclined to play with the knife or the blunderbuss than the rest of the Afghans, which is saying a good deal. Until the agreement of 1852, being absolute masters of the passes, this amiable tribe lived there like a rat in its cheese, pitilessly levying toll on the poor caravans forced to submit to their exactions, for the only route to Kabul passes that way, the mountains everywhere placing an insurmountable barrier between India and the anteroom's country. When a caravan was so ill-inspired as to be recalcitrant it paid dearly for it. Enclosed in their inaccessible eyries, the Afidis leisurely, and without difficulty or peril, shot down the unfortunate travelers. In a few minutes all were massacred and pillaged. As long as the victims were natives the English took little notice, but a European having one day taken it into his head to go to see this famous pass, a too-well-aimed bullet made him pay dearly for his curiosity. The British government aroused itself, and very generously, for the victim was not one of the queen's subjects. It resolved on signal vengeance for the aggression. This proud policy proved terribly costly. The expedition of 1842 cost the blood of 15,000 men. In 1879, after a second accident of the same kind, rather different tactics were pursued. The Afidis learned at their own expense all the power of English gold.

When they were at last brought to reason the government, as the first expedition had cost many men and the second much money, conceived the ingenious idea of changing these wolves into shepherds. It paid the Afidis to guard the passes themselves. The system has succeeded. The caravans are no longer pillaged, the route is as safe as possible—not quite as much as the Place de l'Opéra of Jiddacudd—but accidents are rare, and as Parmentier humorously says, "the Afidis have definitely entered on the path of civilization, which is the substitution of regulated for irregular exploitation." During 15 years things have progressed. Without there being any species of assimilation, for the Afidis are now as independent as formerly, the English have improved their military or police organization. For some years these formidable brigands have been enrolled in a corps which has been named the Khyber rifles, under the control, if not under the immediate orders, of Col. Warburton, the eminent man whom England has luckily possessed for nearly 20 years in these difficult regions.

IN THE WILDS.

NEBRASKA'S SOIL.

In Spite of Report Is Not the Glass-Making Variety.

Along back in the early '60s there was a firm in Peoria, Ill., which was doing a good business. It consisted of a young married man and an old married man. The young man had worked his way up from the position of clerk until he had secured a half partnership. But the older partner had money aside from what he had invested in the Peoria house, and this was before buying up Nebraska land at a few cents on the dollar. But this was years before the '80s.

Along about 1884 this partner who had his money invested in worthless Nebraska land found that what he owned was one vast desert of sand. But the sand was valuable. Some meddlesome person had been through the country, sampled the sand, and found that it was almost pure silica, and would make excellent glass. The partner began selling his land at about 500 per cent. profit, and having nothing else to do with the money, and thinking the business needed more capital, added it to the firm account. This built up the firm until it was the leading one of the kind in Peoria, but it didn't help the partner, for he was obliged to pay interest on this excess of capital or drop back into a third or fourth share. Eventually he dropped out entirely, and moved west to start over again. Here is where the romance of this life sketch begins.

He invested in some of this glass sand country, and found there was no glass about it. His former partner had made a fortune out of it under the mistaken notion some people had that the sand contained silica, but it had none. As the years passed, something in the climate had been working a great change in the sand heaps of western Nebraska. It was no longer sandy, but rich soil, and the country was becoming known as the great grazing district of the West. The immense barren tracts were covered with a rich growth of grass. But the junior partner did not lose his money on the deal. Each year his land became more valuable. He invested in cattle, and to-day is one of the richest earthen men in the west.

Probably from this error of nearly 20 years ago sprung the report still to be heard that Nebraska did not make glass, but there is lots of any truth in it—Omega World Herald.

IN THE WILDS.

God's Woods Are Sater Than Man's Improvements.

One would naturally suppose John Muir suggests in the Atlantic, that since railways have almost abolished distances the great resort villages would be thronged with admiring visitors at least in summer, yet they are neglected, as if of no account, and spoulers are allowed to ruin them as fast as they rise.

Most travelers are content with what they can see from car windows and the verandas of hotels, and in going from place to place they cling to their previous transauds—unknown sailors to rafts. When an excursion into the woods is proposed, all sorts of dangers are imagined—snakes, bears, Indians, etc. Yet it is far safer to wander in God's woods than to travel on black highways or to stay at home. The snake danger is so slight it is worth mentioning; the bears are a peaceable people, and mind their own business, instead of going about like the devil seeking whom they may devour. Poor fellows, they have been poisoned, trapped and shot at until they have lost confidence in brother man, and it is not now easy to make their acquaintance. As to Indians, most of them are dead or "civilized" into useless innocence. No American wilderness that I know of is so dangerous as a city home, "with all the modern improvements." One should go to the woods for safety if nothing else. Lewis and Clark in their famous trip across the continent in 1804-1805 did not lose a single man by Indians or animals, though all the west was then wild. Capt. Clark was bitten on the hand as he lay asleep. That was one bite among more than 100 men while traveling 9,000 miles.

Victims of Sportsmen.

Bohemian sportsmen during the year 1895 shot and killed 50 men, women and children and wounded 2,104 persons, chiefly gamekeepers. They also killed among other game, over 15,000 dogs, 8,762 cats, 2 horses, 15 cows, 132 calves, 276 goats and 129 sheep. For this they had to pay collectively over \$500,000 for doctors, fines and indemnities, and to spend 74,388 days in jail. The Austrian government collects the statistics.

The Vegetarian Restaurant.

Boston is to have a vegetarian restaurant. The Procopia club held a meeting the other night to favor the project, and sat down to a banquet consisting of corn soup with crackers, scalloped eggs, rice croquettes and green peas, apple and celery salad with mayonnaise dressing, cheese wafers, ice cream and cake, coffee and fruit.

—All the possible charities of life ought to be cultivated, and when we can neither be brethren nor friends let us be kind neighbors and pleasant acquaintances.—Edmund Burke.

—Many people are so busy observing church rules that they haven't time to practice religion.—Washington Democrat.

DE LA NILLE-ORLEANS

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Lundi, 7 fevrier 1898.

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