

HE'S A BRICK.

Ancient Origin of a Phrase of Popular Commendation.

Plutarch, in his life of Agesilaus, king of Sparta, gives us the origin of the quaint and familiar saying. On a certain occasion an ambassador from Epidaurus, on the diplomatic mission, was shown by the king over his capital. The ambassador knew of the monarch's fame—knew that though only nominally king of Sparta, he was ruler of Greece—and he looked to see massive walls rearing aloft their embattled towers for the defense of the town, but found nothing of the kind. He marveled much at this, and spoke of it to the king.

"Sire," he said, "I have visited most of the principal towns, and I find no walls reared in defense. Why is this?"

"Indeed, Sir Ambassador," replied Agesilaus, "thou canst not have looked carefully. Come with me to-morrow morning and I will show you the walls of Sparta."

Accordingly, on the following morning, the king led his guest out upon the plain where his army was drawn up in full battle array, and pointing proudly to the serried hosts, he said:

"There thou beholdest the walls of Sparta—10,000 men, and every man a brick!"—[Detroit Free Press.

Geraniums.

There is nothing better adapted to pot culture or for bedding out than the geranium. It requires but little care, is not sensitive to atmospheric changes nor troubled with insects.

The list of good geraniums is a long one; we can hardly miss it. To select from the many catalogues extant, here are, however, a few that are extra fine for pots or beds.

Single varieties: Queen of the Belgians, New Pearl, Mrs. Windsor, Sam Sloan, Leon Perault, F. L. Voith, and Bridesmaid.

Double varieties: Blanche Perfecta, Gloire de France, Black Knight, Gillian Mangilli, Golden Dawn, and Naomi.

The Ivy Geraniums are also fine for bedding. They are really much finer than when grown in pots. F. J. von Hohenzollern, Mme. Thibaut, and Joan of Arc are three very beautiful varieties.

Geraniums delight in a sandy, mellow soil, only moderately rich. If too rich, their tendency will be to produce luxuriant foliage and but few flowers.

Whenever the leaves of geraniums turn yellow or pale we may know the soil in which they are growing is exhausted, and at such times we may safely give them weak liquid manure once a week.

Don't spray your plants when the sun is shining directly upon them, if you want the foliage to look nice. Before or after sunrise is the best time to water plants in the ground.

English Spelling.

Some compositor, disgusted with the inconsistencies of English orthography, has been at the pains to construct the following elaborate travesty, which appears in the *Printer's Album*. The ingenious reader can lengthen it at his own pleasure. Know won knead weight two bee tolled the weigh too dew sew:

A right suite little buoy, the sun of a grate kernel, with a rough around his neck, flue up the rode as quick as a deer. After a thyme he stopped at a gnu house and wrung the belle. His tow hurt hymn, and he kneaded wrest. He was two tired to raze his fare, pall face. A feint mown of pane rows from his lips.

The maid who herd the belle was about to pair a pare, but she through it down and ran withawl her mite, for fear her guessed wood knot weight. But when she saw the little won, tiers stood in her eyes at the site.

"Eve poor deer! Why dew you lye hear? Are yew dyeing?"

"Know," he said, "I am feint."

She boar hymn inn her arms, as she aught, to a rheum where he might be quiet, gave him bred and meet, held a cent bottle under his knows, untide his choler, rapped hymn up warmly, gave him a suite drachm from a viol, till at last he went fourth as hail as a young hoarse.

The United States Mail.

When Dr. Franklin was the Postmaster General of the American Colonies the entire accounts of his office were kept in one book—and not a very large book either. The Postmaster General now has a larger force of men under him than there are in the combined Army and Navy of the United States. The postoffice is not, never was, and is not intended to be, a source of profitable revenue to the Government. Whenever the receipts exceed the expenses, the postage will be reduced in the interests of the public. The reduction from 3 to 2 cents caused a loss to the Government of \$2,848,839.00 in one year, but the immense increase in correspondence will make up that immediate loss, and we may expect at no distant day to have a 1 cent letter postage.—[E. L. Didier, in the *Chautauquan*.

A Moment With Esop.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB. A Wolf and a Lamb were drinking out of the same Purling Stream, when the Wolf angrily blurted out: "I say, you! You are Rolling the Mud all up."

"Let her roll," returned the Lamb nonchalantly. Whereupon the Wolf Leaped across the Stream and fell upon the Lamb. The Fierce Creature had hardly attempted to Tear the Lamb's Shoulder, however, before his Teeth broke off Short and fell to the Ground.

"Bah!" said the Lamb; "what a Fool you are to try your Fangs on a Hardened old Tong like myself! Can't you See that I am a Spring Lamb?"—[Puck.

Finding the Proprietor.

"Are you the proprietor?" asked a visitor of an important looking man.

"No, sir. I'm the master painter."

"Is that the proprietor?" he continued, pointing to a man even more imposing in appearance.

"No, sir. He's the walking delegate. That little man mixing paint in the corner is the proprietor."—[New York Recorder.

CAPTAIN CASTLE'S WHALE.

The Thrilling Tale Told by Him on the San Francisco Exchange.

An interesting story is told in the *Examiner* of San Francisco of the adventure had by the pilot boat *Lady Mine*, recently. The boat, Captain Steve Castle, was lying becalmed about 10 miles southwest of the main Farallones. Not a ship was in sight and the captain improved the opportunity to shift the schooner's canvas for her lighter summer suit. All hands were engaged on the work, and to secure more deck room the yawlboat used for boarding vessels was heaved over the side and made fast astern by six or eight fathoms of painter.

The sea was full of whales, lolling about on the glassy surface, playing and blowing and emitting an unpleasant oily odor, as whales are wont to do when the sun is shining, the air is still, and the water smooth. One particularly big fellow of the finback variety, commonly called California g.a.y.s., manifested much interest in the *Lady Mine* and came alongside to investigate. The first notice of his approach was received from a tremendous flock of small seabirds that skimmed along the surface, flying down to snatch their food of parasites every time the whale came to the surface. All the birds flew away when the big fish sounded a cable's length from the *Lady Mine*, and the crew thought he had taken his departure. In this they were erroneous for in about two minutes the schooner set up a violent rocking, a huge black bulk suddenly loomed up alongside, there was a sound of escaping steam, and half the deck was wet with a cloud of ill smelling spray.

It was an awful big whale for a finback. It was longer than the *Lady Mine*, which measures 88 feet.

When he came up he touched the schooner, but did it very gently, not with a jar or a bump, but with a slow upheaval that simply shoved the vessel off sideways and careened her over a little until her round bottom slid off the monster's back. The whale appeared highly delighted, and repeated the performance. For two hours he was never 200 yards from the *Lady Mine*, and half the time when he was above water the crew could have touched him by simply extending their hands over the side. A dozen times he rubbed against her side, but always with the same gentleness that characterized his first contact, and often his huge fin protruded above the rail as big as a boat sail.

He was an old bull, and his back and head were literally covered with barnacles. It was to rid himself of these that he rubbed up against the boat the crew soon learned. Several times it looked very scary to see the terrible bulk rising swiftly from the depths of the clear water, but he was considerate enough to always slacken speed just before striking, so that the contact amounted to no more than a gentle push.

The crew did not mind the whale using the *Lady Mine* for a backscratcher as long as he continued good natured about it, but they did protest against the odor, and finally made an attempt to drive him away. The boatkeeper prodded him with a sharp pointed spinnaker boom just as he rose near the schooner's stern.

Down he went like a flash, and in his flurry he breached directly across the little yawl's painter, which was hanging slack a foot or so beneath the surface of the water. One of his flukes caught the line, and as the several tons of blubber and whalemeat went down the yawl boat went too. The bow plunged under with a terrific dash, and the oars and loose bottom boards of the boat flew for yards in all directions.

The entire boat was lost to sight for over a minute, when it popped up like a cork, full of water, but right and tight and perfectly uninjured. The crew used garbled language, bailed the boat out, gathered up the gear that strewed the surrounding ocean, and hauled the rescued craft aboard.

The whale manifested no anger whatever, but returned in a few minutes as if nothing had happened. He rubbed off a couple or three more barnacles as gently as before, flirted his monstrous tail contemptuously, and took his departure.

He Had a Friend at Court.

A laugh was raised in the United States district court by the testimony of John Boye, a resident of Lewiston, N. Y. Boye is old and somewhat deaf, and gave his testimony with an air of childlike innocence. The following dialogue took place on cross-examination:

"Did Rich ever sue you?"

"Yes."

"Did he beat you?"

"No."

"He caused you trouble and expense?"

"Yes, a little."

"You had to hire a lawyer?"

"No."

"Did he hire a lawyer?"

"Yes."

"You did not have one?"

"No."

"Are you a pettifogger, and try cases yourself sometimes?"

"No."

"What did you do when you were sued, if you did not get a lawyer?"

"I got the magistrate."

The laugh that followed this reply indicated that some of those present appreciated the importance of having the favor of the court.—[Utica Observer.

A Generous Banker.

A pretty anecdote comes from Brussels illustrating the generous spirit of a banker of that city. The banker is fond of outdoor exercise. As an exhibition of his skill in skating, he made his autograph on the ice in a very artistic manner. Some gentlemen having admired the signature, proceeded to write above it as follows:

"On demand I promise to pay for the benefit of the poor the sum of 5,000 francs."

They sawed out the block of ice, and, having called a hack, proceeded to the bank and carried the frozen note of hand—of foot, we mean—to the cashier's counter. The cold temperature happily prevented the melting away of the icy draft, and the banker having been appealed to, ordered it to be paid.—[Irish Times.

How Central American Presidents Get Rich.

"No one who has not lived in Central America has any idea of the fortunes which the presidents of those petty republics amass in a few years," says a Guatemalan merchant. "You see, these fellows are as complete dictators as Napoleon was in his best days. They handle the public purse, and can lay out what they want, and cover into their own exchequer a very large amount, which is put down on the books for public improvements and secret service work. There is no question that Barrios, who hadn't a dollar when he secured the control of Guatemala, was worth when he was killed at least ten millions. About half of this amount was invested in New York property and in American Government bonds, so the widow was all right. His Guatemalan property, however, was seized by Barillas, his successor, under one pretext or another. Barrios was an open handed dictator, who never minced words or concealed the fact that he would promptly remove any one who aspired to oppose him. Barillas is equally cruel, but he always masks his work under due forms of law. He has stripped the country of large sums, and it is said he has several millions to his credit in the Bank of England, so that should he be suddenly unseated by a popular revolution, he would have a competence for the remainder of his days. Barillas has also just played the shrewd game of mortgaging his valuable coffee plantation to a rich German syndicate for over two millions. With this mortgage on the property, should he be driven into exile, his estates can not be confiscated, as the German minister would at once demand protection for the interests of the mortgagee. Barillas has also sold the coffee crop on his estates for three years, realizing the snug sum of \$1,600,000 for it. Taking these two things together, it looks very much as though he fears defeat in the struggle with Salvador next summer, and that he is raising all the money he can to be prepared for flight. The legend of Damocles's sword is literally true of Central American presidents."

Ante-nuptial Clubs of Great Cities.

"The club house in Gotham is an ante-nuptial as well as a post-nuptial enemy of domesticity," declared a man about town to me the other day, and I believe he spoke the truth. "There are," he continued, "thousands of men on this island who know no other home than their clubs. If the matrons have a right to protest against their lords being too devoted to club life because they spend a part of their time in such retreats, have not the maids a cause of action against an institution that practically withdraws so many eligibles from the matrimonial market? The man who lives in a club, you know, is usually a man of some fortune and sufficient polish to make him what the world calls a catch; but he is, in my opinion—I am a married man, if I am one of the boys—a selfish egotist, deeply impressed with his own importance, and he ought to be suppressed in the interest of society."

I listened to the gentleman and pondered what he had said in my heart, comparing his comments with a conversation I had with Colonel Jay L. Torrey, of St. Louis, on the same subject a year or two ago. Colonel Torrey, who lives at the Mercantile Club, declared that the service was far superior to that of the best hotels, and that one who had tried it never would go back to the old style of living. "The servants," said he, "study to please you, and they gratify your whims, while your clothes are as neatly kept as if you were a family man—perhaps more neatly in some cases." The colonel did not tell me, however, by what process of reasoning he arrived at the conclusion that it was beneficial to a big, strapping man to have his petty whims coddled, and he admitted that there would probably be more marriages in the church if there were fewer club houses on the corner.—[New York Correspondence St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

One Oyster for Two.

We laugh at the innocent young housewife who ordered "half a dozen halibut" for dinner. Had she lived in the South Pacific Islands she might have been equally laughed at for ordering half a dozen oysters—not to say a pint. The author of "Oysters, and All About Them" gives some examples that nearly match the giant clams and abalones of the California coast.

Pliny mentions that, according to the historians of Alexander's expedition, oysters a foot in diameter were found in the Indian Seas, and Sir James E. Tennent was unexpectedly enabled to corroborate the correctness of this statement, for at Kottier, near Trincomalee, enormous specimens of edible oysters were brought to the rest house. One measured more than 11 inches in length by half as many in width.

But this extraordinary measurement is beaten by the oysters of Port Lincoln in South Australia, which are the largest edible ones in the world. They are as large as a dinner plate, and of much the same shape. They are sometimes more than a foot across the shell, and the oyster fits his habitation so well that he does not leave much margin.

It is a new sensation when a friend asks you to lunch at Adelaide to have one oyster fried in butter, or in eggs and bread crumbs, set before you; but it is a very pleasant experience, for the flavor and delicacy of the Port Lincoln mammoth are proverbial, even in that land of luxuries.

Getting Down to Personalities.

Mr. Bivius—I see that Mr. Wannaker contemplates improving the postal service.

Mrs. Bivius—I hope he has a scheme for facilitating the mailing of letters which wives give their husbands to post.—[Puck.

From a meager salary as king, George, ruler of Greece, has saved \$6,000,000. He has been very successful in his speculations on the Paris and Berlin bourses. His "horse sense" in financial affairs is said to be due to the "tips" of Baron Erlanger, who was formerly president of the Cincinnati Southern Railway.

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