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CURIOUS AIDS TO SPEECH.

Methods Adopted by Well Known Speakers and Writers.

Readers may have noticed that many persons while speaking—public orators included—have a knack of doing something which appears in an unaccountable way to assist the flow of words.

Sir Walter Scott has supplied an illustration of this. When at school he could never succeed in getting above a certain boy in the class until he discovered that this boy, while repeating his lessons, continually fidgeted with a button on his waistcoat. At the first opportunity that offered, Scott cut the button away, and his object was gained. When the boy was called upon to construe, his hand instinctively sought the button, and, being unable to find it, his memory completely failed him and he went in disgrace to the bottom.

Mrs. Cowden Clarke, the compiler of the well known concordance to Shakespeare, has told of a similar peculiarity on the part of Madame de Staël, who had a habit when talking of taking a scrap of paper and snipping it into bits with a pair of scissors. The idiosyncrasy of Gibbon, the historian, was to take a pinch of snuff between his fingers when he recounted an anecdote, and invariably drop it at the point of the story.

A Mystery Explained.

One of the strangest of stories of false imprisonment comes from France. A woman was sentenced to imprisonment for life for having caused the death of her husband and brother. The three had lived together at Malaunay, near Roenun, in a cottage, the lower part of which was used as a wineshop. When the woman was sent to prison other people took the wineshop, but the new tenants suffered, the man from fainting fits, his wife from nausea, from which she died. Another couple tried their fortune, but they too were overcome by the "spell of the accursed place," as they thought it. They were subject to fainting and loss of memory. At last a scientific examination of the premises was made. Then it was found that a lime kiln adjoined the inn. In the wall dividing it from the cottages were many fissures, so that whenever lime was burnt monoxide of carbon escaped into the inn. This was the secret of the deaths for which the woman was suffering. She was brought out of prison after six years of servitude.

The Quality of a Mirror.

In the mirrors of to-day the light is reflected by a layer of silver or an amalgam of tin, but a proportion of light is lost in the process of reflection and the image is less luminous than the original. The value of a looking glass is usually estimated by the thickness of the glass, because the thicker it is the stronger it must be. But, speaking scientifically, thick glasses are defective because the outlines of the image reflected are less clearly defined.

Habits of Domesticated Animals.

The dog is the most widely distributed of the domestic animals. He lives in the lowly hut of the African savage and is the companion of the Greenland Esquimaux, the most northern inhabitants of the world. He is, in fact, the inseparable companion of man and is found wherever the human race exists. His habit is thus extended further north and further south than that of any other domestic animal.

Uses of Cocoanut.

Oriental coals not being well suited for the production of large quantities of illuminating gas, and gasoline not being readily obtainable, the government laboratories in the Philippines have adopted a method of preparing gas from cocoanut oil. The oil is slowly poured into red-hot cast-iron retorts, and a gas of a high quality is given off, with the production of very little tar.

Medical Value of Flowers.

It is now established that flowers and the perfumes distilled from them have a salutary influence and constitute a therapeutic agency of high value, and that residence in a perfumed atmosphere forms a protection from pulmonary affections and arrests phthisis. In the town of La Grasse, France, where the making of perfumes is largely carried on, phthisis is unknown.

Passing of the Glacier.

According to experts who have been studying the question, the death and total extinction of the prehistoric glaciers is only a matter of time. In the Dauphine Alps seventeen main glaciers have been under close observation since 1890, and all have shrunk steadily during the period, some of them as much as fifty feet a day.

Zone of the Silkworm.

The silkworm girdles the earth between the fiftieth parallel of north latitude and the Tropic of Cancer, being found further south only in Siam and Cochinchina. In other words, it lives wherever the mulberry and other trees on which it feeds are found in perfection.

Selling Snow in Italy.

Snow is sold in the north of Sicily, and it fetches about a cent a pound, and it is a government monopoly, and the Prince of Palermo derives the greater part of his income from it. The snow is gathered on the mountains in felt-covered baskets, and is sold in the cities for refrigerating purposes.

VARIOUS RADIUM RAYS.

Beyond the Scope of the Strongest Microscope to Determine.

For the sake of distinction the radium rays are known as the alpha, beta and gamma rays. Two of these kinds are actual matter. The first seem to be about the size of atoms, they travel enormously fast, but are easily stopped by a thin sheet of metal. The second are atoms a thousand times smaller than anything else known, and they go right through most metals. Both sorts are electrified. The third class of radiations are apparently the Roentgen rays. It would seem as if this waste of substance and power could continue for thousands of years, and yet the radium show no sign of growing less. All these rays are far beyond the scope of the most powerful microscope, but are caught and shown by the Crookes screen.

Difficult Horseback Feat.

There are no better horsemen in the world than the cavalry officers of the Italian army, yet even among them there are very few who could perform the feat recently achieved by one of them.

To run an ordinary foot race is easy enough, but to run at full speed for several hundred yards holding in one hand a spoon on which rests an egg and to reach the goal without dropping the egg is a feat which must be practiced carefully a long time before it can be performed successfully, and as a result there are not many who can be sure of accomplishing it whenever they try. Great was the surprise when an Italian officer mounted on horseback performed this difficult feat. Moreover, he selected a course in which there were two or three high fences, and these he cleared at full gallop without losing the egg.

Fat Men and Marriage.

It is remarkable how seldom one finds a fat man unmarried. It is the thin men as a rule who run to bachelorhood. It may be urged, going back on a previous sentence, which spoke of matrimony as a weight increase in men, that this is putting the cart before the horse. It is true, nevertheless, that where you find a fleshy man his tendency is to marry. In matters of color the fair man may be said to have it against the dark man, and if there be a dash of red in his composition matrimonial probabilities are thereby increased. The little man has, in this respect, as in some others, pre-eminence over the long man. Women, as a rule, are readier to marry tall men—they admire length—but long men are not always ready to be married.

Strange Coincidence.

There is a mysterious coffin-shaped grave in the churchyard at Montgomery, England, on which the grass refuses to grow. According to the local legend, a young man of Montgomery was hanged for murdering his sweetheart. He asserted to the last that he was not guilty, and on the scaffold, declared that no grass would grow over his grave until his innocence was proved. The prophecy, it is alleged, has been fulfilled to the present day.

An Illusive Plant.

There is a plant in Chile and a similar one in Japan, called the "flower of the air." It is so called because it appears to have no root, and is never fixed to the earth. It twines round a dry tree or sterile rock. Each shoot produces two or three flowers like a lily—white, transparent and odoriferous. It is capable of being transported six to seven hundred miles and vegetates as it travels suspended on a twig.

Toilet of the Ant.

A naturalist has been making observations on the toilets of certain ants, and has discovered each insect goes through most elaborate ablutions. They are not only performed by herself, but by another, who acts for the time as lady's maid. The assistant starts by washing the face of her companion, and then goes over the whole body. The attitude of the ant that is being washed is one of intense satisfaction.

Solving the Tramp Question.

The city of Colby, Kan., had 1,000 meal tickets printed and distributed among the housewives of the place. The tickets are good for one meal when countersigned by the city marshal. When a hobo appears at the back door and asks for a handout he is given one of these tickets, which the marshal will redeem for two hours' work on the streets. Unless the tramp follows this procedure he goes hungry in Colby.

Sale of Asses' Milk in London.

This has been a good year for the sale of asses' milk, the consumption of which varies according to the amount of illness prevailing.

Two or three asses' dairies still held their own in London, one being within a couple of hundred yards of the Marble Arch, where "milk asses" are kept on the premises. From this establishment the milk is sent all over the country in sealed bottles, the price being 6s. per quart.

"Singing Insects" of Japan.

More than three thousand persons in Japan make a good living by breeding, training, and selling what are known as "singing insects." The insects somewhat resemble our crickets, being known in Japan by the name of kusa-hbari. The music which they make resembles that of a silver bell, and, though rather monotonous, is very clear and sweet.

Execution of Spies.

The ceremony of disposing of a condemned spy in the English army always follows a definite precedent.

The unfortunate man is surrounded by a detachment of infantry, and, after he is provided with a pick and shovel, he is marched off to a selected spot and ordered to dig his own grave. This done, the tools are taken from him and his eyes are bandaged. The attending chaplain reads portions selected from the burial service and from the ranks of the escort twelve men are selected at random by the officer in charge. These men, having stacked their own rifles are led to where twelve other rifles are awaiting them, six of which are loaded with blank cartridges. One of these is handed to each man, so that no one knows whether the rifle he holds contains a bullet or not and none can say for certain that the shot fired by him killed the prisoner. The firing party then marches to an appointed position. The commands "Present!" "Fire!" are given and almost before the last word rings out the volley is fired and the spy falls into the grave he has dug. Nearly every man is more or less affected on being selected to form one of the firing party and many men have been known to faint away on being singled out, while others are so overcome as to be scarcely able to pull the triggers of their rifles.

A Vase Worth £15,000.

Another family treasure of great value which has since passed into the keeping of the nation is the Portland vase, now exhibited in the British Museum. This vase comes from Italy, and what its age is no man knows, though it has been proved that in 335 A.D. it was deposited in a sepulchre under the Monte del Grano, three miles from Rome, and is believed to have contained the ashes of the Emperor Severus. But, whether or no, Pope Urban VIII. had it dug up; and for more than two centuries it reposed in the Barberini Palace at Rome. In 1786 the Duke of Portland purchased it from Sir William Hamilton for 1,029 guineas, and deposited it in the British Museum fifteen years later. The vase is only ten inches high. In 1845 a man named Lloyd, employed at the museum, picked up a stone and hurled it, in a fit of frenzy, at the case which contained the precious relic. The vase was smashed into hundreds of pieces, but with great ingenuity they were all put together again, and as it now stands is said to be worth at the very least £15,000.—Westminster Gazette.

Trout Fishing in a Street.

At Winchester it is quite a common thing to see men fishing through the street gratings. Under the High Street there flow several streams, which ultimately discharge into the River Itchen—a noted trout stream. These streams receive the storm and surface water from the street by means of the ordinary street grating. The line is dropped through and fastened to the end of a stick small enough to go through the grate. When the fish is hooked the line and stick are dropped through the grating and the fisherman rushes to the point where the stream emerges from under the street, and is there able to recover his line and land his fish.—London Tit-Bits.

Brain Wearing Professors.

A scientist has gathered from statistics that the military and naval professions most quickly wear out the brains. Out of 100,000 soldiers and sailors 199 were confirmed lunatics. Next came the liberal professions, artists heading the list, followed closely by lawyers, and more distantly by doctors, clergymen, literary men, and civil servants. In 100,000 about 177 of these go mad. Of domestic servants and laborers 155 out of 100,000 go to the asylum, and of mechanics only sixty-six. The sanest people, apparently, are commercial men, of whom forty-two in 100,000 go mad.—Exchange.

His Means of Wealth.

In some parts of Ireland it is the custom of the farmers to deposit money in the bank in the joint names of husband and wife, so that when one dies the survivor can draw out the money without the legal formalities. To a farmer who made application for money deposited for himself and wife, the manager of the bank asked: "Why, Pat, how can this be? It is not much more than a year since you came with an application on the death of your wife." "Well, your honor," was the reply, "I'm a bit lucky wid wimmen."

Valuable Gold Beetles.

In Central America the most remarkable gold beetles in the world are found. The head and wing cases are brilliantly polished with a lustre as of gold itself. To sight and touch they have all the seeming of metal. Oddly enough, another species from the same region has the appearance of being wrought in solid silver, freshly burnished. These gold and silver beetles have a market value. They are worth from twenty-five to fifty dollars each.

Swedish Postal Custom.

In certain parts of Sweden, where the most absolute confidence is reposed in the honesty of the people, a very informal postal system is in vogue. As the mail steamer reaches a landing-place a man goes ashore with the letters, which he places in an unlocked box on the pier. Then the passer-by who expects a letter opens the box, turns over the letters and selects his own, without being watched or questioned by anyone.—Exchange.

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