

A LESSON IN EPIGRAM

Long ago a beautiful statue stood in one of the ancient Greek cities. Every trace of it has now vanished, but an epigrammatic conversation between a traveller and the statue has been preserved. This tradition not only gives us an excellent description of the statue, but discloses the lesson which the wise old Greeks wished to convey to every passer-by.

'What is thy name, O statue?'
'I am called Opportunity.'
'Who made thee?'
'Lysippus.'
'Why art thou on thy toes?'
'To show that I stay but a moment.'
'Why hast thou wings on thy feet?'
'To show how quickly I pass by.'
'But why is thy hair so long on the forehead?'
'That men may seize me when they meet me.'
'Why, then, is thy head so bald behind?'
'To show that when I have once passed I cannot be caught.'

ODDS AND ENDS

'What struck you most at school to-day, William?'
'The teacher, sir.'
Teacher: 'Johnny, do you love your enemies?'
'Yes'm—when I meet 'em all at once.'

A health officer recently received the following note from one of the residents in a North Island district:
'Dear Sir,—I beg to tell you that my child, aged eight months, is suffering from measles as required by Act of Parliament.'

FAMILY FUN

The Tape Trick.—This trick consists in suffering a person to tie your thumbs together tightly, and yet that you shall be able to release them in a moment, and tie them together again. The mode of performing this trick is as follows: Lay a piece of tape across the palms of your hands, placed side by side, letting the ends hang down; then bring your palms quickly together, at the same time privately catching hold of the middle of the tape with your fourth and fifth fingers. Then direct any person to tie your thumbs together as tight as he pleases, but he will not, of course, in reality be tying them, because you have hold of the tape, yet it will nevertheless appear to him that he is doing so. Request him to place a hat over your hands; then blow upon the hat, and say, 'Be loose,' slipping your thumbs from the under tape; direct him to remove the hat, and show your thumbs free. You then request the hat may be again placed over your hands, and blowing upon it, you say, 'Be tied,' slipping your thumbs over the tape again; and when the hat is removed, your thumbs will appear tied as at first. After performing the trick, convey the tape away lest it be detected.

The Knotted Thread.—Considerable amusement, not unmingled with wonder, may be occasioned among a party of ladies by a clever performance of this trick. It is most frequently performed by a female, but the effect of it is considerably increased when it is displayed by a youth. A piece of calico, muslin, or linen, is taken in the left hand, a needle is threaded in the presence of the spectators, and the usual, or even a double or treble knot, made at the extremity of one of the ends of it. The operator commences his work by drawing the needle and thread in it quite through the linen, notwithstanding the knot, and continues to make several stitches in like manner successively.

The mode of performing this seeming wonder is as follows: A bit of thread, about a quarter of a yard long is turned once round the top of the middle finger of the right hand, upon which a thimble is then placed to keep it secure. This must be done privately, and the thread kept concealed, while a needle is threaded with a bit of thread of a similar length. The thread in the needle must have one of its ends drawn up nearly close, and be concealed between the fore finger and thumb; the other should hang down nearly as long as and by the side of the thread, which is fastened under the thimble, so that these two may appear to be the ends of the thread. The ends of the piece which is fastened under the thimble is then knotted, and the performer begins to sew by moving his hand quickly after he has taken up the stitch. It will appear as though he actually passed the knotted thread through the cloth.

All Sorts

Dr. Gengou, of the Belgian Royal Medical College, reports the discovery of the whooping cough microbe. It is said to resemble Pfeiffer's influenza microbe.

The gardener (tendering his resignation)—No, sir. It's the missis I can't abide. She's got into the 'abit o' talkin' ter me just like wot she does ter you. She forgets I can leave when I wants ter.

'Has Scribblesmith heard from that firm that promised to teach him for £1 how to make a good living by his pen?'

He has. Three days after he sent the £1 he received a postal card from them saying, "Keep poultry."

'I'm goin' to stop bein' kind and helpful to people,' said little Willie.

'How is, that?' asked his mother.

'Well, it's this way; at school to-day I saw Tommy Jones putting a pin in the master's chair, so just as the master was about to sit down, I pulled away the chair. The master sat down on the floor, and when he got up he licked me for pulling away the chair, and then Tommy Jones licked me for interfering. Yes, I'm goin' to stop helpin' people now.'

The reptile known as the alligator, akin to, but not identical with, the crocodile, is unusually slow of growth. At fifteen years of age it is only two feet long, so that 'a twelve-footer,' says Dr. Smith, of the United States Fish Commission, 'may reasonably be supposed to be seventy-five years old.' While it is commonly known that alligators' hides can be tanned into an excellent leather, people generally are not so well aware that their teeth are of fine ivory, valuable for carving into ornaments.

It is supposed that the saddle was invented about the middle of the fourth century, but the fact, in the opinion of some, has not been positively proved. Zonaras, the historian, tells us that Constantine the younger was killed in the year 340, when he fell from his saddle. The word translated into saddle also means, however, the back of the horse or the place where the rider sat. It is true, nevertheless, that Sidonius Apollinaris used the word that unmistakably refers to the saddle-tree.

It may interest the people of New Zealand, who have a valuable natural asset in the Colony's scenery, to know that, owing to the influx of tourists, during the last 55 years the wealth of Switzerland, not including State property, has risen from £400,000,000 to £680,000,000. The remarkable feature of these figures is the fact that no less than two-fifths of this total has been acquired by the hotel proprietors, whose annual income is estimated at upwards of £6,000,000. In Switzerland economy and efficiency in hotel management are probably combined to a greater extent than anywhere else. Swiss hotelkeepers make their business the study and science of a lifetime.

No word illustrates the changeable fashions of the English language more curiously than 'asparagus.' No one could call it 'sparrow-grass' nowadays, says a London exchange, unless he did not mind being thought an ignoramus or a tiresomely funny man. Yet all through the eighteenth century that was quite a regular way of referring to the delicacy, even in elegant society. A dictionary of 1791 says that 'sparrow-grass' is now so general that 'asparagus' has an air of stiffness and pedantry. 'Sperage' had been the usual English form in the sixteenth century, but in the seventeenth herbalists brought back the original Greek and Latin spelling 'asparagus.' Pepys varies between 'sparrow-grass,' 'sparagus,' and 'sparague.' No doubt the eighteenth-century's relapse was the last, and the 'a' is back for good now.

The High Commissioner for Canada in London has received from the Department of the Interior in the Canadian Government a gratifying statement as to crops of wheat, oats, barley, and flax (linseed), which have now been harvested in the three western provinces of Canada, namely—Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. It is estimated that the aggregate wheat yield for the three provinces will total eighty-seven million bushels, being an average yield of nineteen bushels per acre; of oats seventy-five million bushels, an average yield of forty-one bushels per acre; that of barley seventeen million bushels, an average yield of thirty-one bushels per acre; and that of flax seven hundred thousand bushels, an average yield of twelve bushels per acre. A New Zealand farmer would not think much of a wheat crop which averaged only 19 bushels to the acre.