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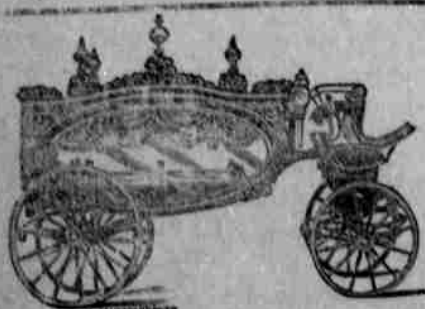
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GREAT LANDLORDS.

ASTOR PROPERTY IN NEW YORK WORTH NEARLY \$200,000,000.

There is No Sentiment in the Management of This Vast Property—Tenants Must Face the Music—Not Very Progressive and Wait For Others to Lead.

We are all inclined to regard the great American landlord with disfavor. He is associated in our minds with the idea of high rents, demanded the instant they are due, with unfulfilled promises as to repairs and little improvements that would add so much to our comfort and with many other small annoyances that make him the man terrible, the man unfaithful, the man hostile.

Through the obscurity of these prejudices it is doubtful if many of us see him clearly or judge him fairly. According as we are near moving day or not and as we secure repairs we are apt to regard him as a very disagreeable person, indeed, with few of the higher human attributes or else the reverse, and in the meantime we pay rent and tolerate him because he continues to exist and the law protects him.

Perhaps the best example of the American landlord is Astor, or rather the Astors. The interests of this famous New York family are so numerous and so extensive, so widely distributed and so varied in character, that as landlords they hold sway over all classes of society, occupying every kind of structure. Then, too, the Astors are typical in that no sentiment enters into the management of their properties, and, after all, this is true of the management of most real estate in this city.

As landlords the Astors demand the market rate for rents, and they demand it the first of every month or quarter, as the case may be. Sooner than make material concessions in the amount to be paid on a lease the Astors will allow a house to remain vacant, not one season or year only, but two, three or more years, and if then a good tenant is not at hand the building will be altered, provided the condition of the neighborhood requires it. It is apparent, therefore, that the Astors get the figures they ask. These are not the highest paid, for the estates take no risks, but they are well up to the average.

No one possibly requires more assurance of responsibility in tenants than the Astors. References as to character and financial standing must be forthcoming if you would be an Astor tenant, and they must be more than paper references, for they will be investigated carefully. If you are unknown or cannot show who you are and what you have got, and that you are fairly certain of being able to meet the rent for the term of the lease, do not try to rent an Astor house. You will be refused.

As a matter of fact, the Astor rent rolls, if one could secure copies of them, would be an excellent commercial directory, far more reliable within the limited sphere, perhaps, than anything ever attempted in this city. Ninety-five per cent of the persons whose names are on them pay the rent they agreed to pay on the first of every month. Those on the rolls who do not disappear when their leases are up or before if possible. The Astors are not hard landlords, but they are very businesslike, and the discipline proceeding is resorted to whenever occasion demands.

Though of Dutch stock the Astors have no feeling of friendliness for the liquor traffic. The saloon keeper is not wanted, even at the high rates he offers, and neither is any other sort of tenant who is likely to clash with the police. From time to time, of course, persons not in favor with the authorities creep into Astor properties, but when discovered they are ousted as quickly and as quietly as possible.

So far as improvements go, the estates are behind many of the other large landlords and a host of the smaller ones. Up to a very recent period the management of the family possessions was exceedingly unprogressive, and it is hardly up to what might be expected of it yet. It is urged in defense of this policy that various sections of the city in which Astor holdings are large are at present undergoing a change and that alterations appropriate in character will be made later. That is the trouble with the Astors. They are always backward in making a change. Their conservatism holds them in check, while smaller and weaker men take the risk, and often they stand in the way of progress by presenting immense blocks of property directly in the line of great improvements. If changes are effected all around them, they will alter also, but they are always the last to do so.

In the matter of individual repairs, decorations and the like they are not liberal, but they have the reputation of doing what they promise. Usually residences are put in order before the new tenant goes in, and then the occupant has got to be very careful. It is not expected by the estates that much money will be spent upon the house except at long intervals.

The Astors hold few tenements and flats directly, though they own the ground upon which hundreds of such structures stand. This kind of building is not popular with either branch of the family, and they only have to do with it so far as receiving leasehold rents are concerned. Dwellings in great number and comprising all kinds, from one bringing in hundreds yearly to one yielding thousands, and business and

There is one use of kerosene which is seldom mentioned. It often happens that when a heavy shoe or boot has been wet it hardens and draws so that it hurts the foot. If the shoe is put on and the leather thoroughly wet with kerosene, the stiffness will disappear and the leather become pliable, adapting itself to the foot. If oiled while wet, the leather retains its softness a longer time. The kerosene does not in turn the leather at all.

MORTALITY OF SLANG.

WORDS AND PHRASES THAT RUN WILD AND ARE SHORT LIVED.

The Use of Slang as a Habit Compared to Swearing and the Intemperate Use of Intoxicants—The Harm That Results From the Nonsensical Custom.

The Italian method of prefixing an s to a word to give it a damaging significance can be employed with good effect in christening that wayward and degenerate offspring of English known as slang. In its present state slangness has attained to such a luxurious completeness that it warrants serious treatment. So copious and comprehensive has it become that there is hardly a human want, feeling or emotion of the heart that cannot be translated into the vernacular of the bootblack. In studying the philosophy of slang the first natural query is, How and why did it originate? To the first question one might give, with certain modifications, the same answer that would be given to the question, Why do people swear? The human animal, like a locomotive, seems to require escape valves for occasions when there is too much steam in the boiler. When a man is overflowing with admiration, anger or wonder, the ordinary adjectives do not (or he thinks they do not) meet the emergency. They do not relieve his pent up fullness any more than a sip from a dewdrop would quench a man's thirst. The natural man and the natural woman sometimes find relief under strong emotion in explosive utterances. In the case of anger the escape valve expletive is an oath unless the man in question happens to be a gentleman and sometimes, though very rarely, when he is.

It will thus be seen that slang, being of emotional ancestry, is a first cousin to the oath, and both are used by those who mentally resemble the man whose use of intoxicating drinks has made him forget or underestimate the attractions of pure water. Slang, in sooth, is a whisky distillation of language. It is so strong that it may be taken only very rarely with impunity, and herein lies the chief danger in its use. Not only does the slangist find ordinary English tame, but he ends in not being able to find any English at all.

Another fatal characteristic of slang is the very one which at first attracts its adoption—namely, its pugnacity. The same law that makes quiet colors and shades wear well in the world of fashion has its counterpart in the world of speech. We tire very speedily of a startling costume, in high colors, and just as speedily do we tire of slang, which is startling, high colored speech. Until another reason why slang can never gain a permanent foothold in the language is its utter lack of dignity. No subject can be suitably treated in slang. Its sole function is to tickle by its patness or its grotesqueness. It reflects a fugitive, irresponsible, irresponsible wit and humor, as like the baby catches prismatic colors, but the bubble it vanishes even while you catch it. Normally there are slang phrases of all degrees of goodness and badness, ranging from the word which is only a slight remove from a forcible but perfectly decorous adjective to slang of the most daring, deep dyed order. At one end of the scale, for instance, one might place "fetching" and at the other end one might place "freak." Again, the injunctive "play ball" is rough and ready, in comparison with the brusque command "get a move on." Along certain lines the slangist seems to revel in extravagant, synonymic and antonymic, especially in those expressing some infirmity in the upper story. The man who has "wheels" is also popularly known as "muttery," "cracked" or "off his trolley." Again, if he comes from the country, he is "corn raised," has "seed in his hair," or his "face doesn't fit him." "Gall," "nerve," "cheek," "sand," "brass" and "face" are also nearly synonymous terms for qualities whose universality has made them a target for popular satire. Equally prolific is the slangist in coinage terms for money. "Dust," "tin," "sand," "rocks," "chink" and "spendulicks" are only a few of the words that translate "filthy lucre."

Two of the slang phrases now in gallingly frequent use are, "That's right," and "That won't cut much ice." The latter, it must be confessed, has certain cool figurative qualities which give it a saving color of grace. But most of these phrases rely chiefly upon their condensed expressiveness, which is the trademark of their American manufacture. They are but one of the many devices of the masses to compass a crosscut and avoid circumlocutions. Thus "snap" and "cinch" are time economy for a moneyed squire and an assured competence.

One of the surest tests of the rapid mortality of slang is the extremely painful sensation produced by hearing antiquated slang phrases used—and there are always people who are two or three or ten years behind in their use of such phrases. When other people are saying "Not on your tintype," the user of mildewed slang feebly ejaculates "I should smile." The piquancy and patness of certain phrases make it hard to declare that slang has no legitimate use. But concerning its misuse, there can hardly be two opinions among people whose opinions are worth anything. A careful study of the qualities of men and women who habitually interlard their remarks with slang will furnish anybody with a world of convincing conclusions in favor of pure English.—Critic.

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