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THE WILY COMEDIAN.

His Mixup With a Contract, a Legal Fee and an Opinion.

There was a certain comic opera comedian who made no end of money and who scorned anything like ostentatious recklessness in the spending of it. He was almost morbid on the subject, in fact, and there were those who said that he went to evening instead of morning service so that he might have the use of the money he dropped into the box a little longer. This is by way of explaining the grief which once befell him in Cleveland.

Somebody had played an engagement at a certain theater and had received a frigid reception, which stage people call a frost. The comedian wasn't going to run any risks. He wouldn't play at the theater unless a certain amount of money was promised him. The manager of the theater offered a very large percentage of the receipts; but, oh, dear, no, the wily comedian wasn't going to be caught by such chaff as that. He insisted upon a lump sum regardless of receipts. The sum was guaranteed, the contract signed. The comedian came to town and, straggling as if by chance into the box office, asked how the house was selling.

"Oh," said the ticket seller, "we sold every seat in the house ten days ago!"

The comedian's blood boiled. "Would," said he to himself, "oh, would that I had accepted the percentage! It would have been double what I get now!"

It was too late, however, to rely on simple wordplay to change matters, so he sought the foremost attorney of the town, showed him the contract and expressed his desire to break it and abide by the customary percentage plan. Before the attorney would consent to express an opinion on the question of fee came up, and the comedian handed him \$500. The man at law then took the paper and examined it.

"My dear sir," said he, "that contract can't possibly be broken. I drew it up myself."

It is not told what the temperature of Cleveland according to the government report was that day, but in the neighborhood of that comedian things fairly sizzled.—Washington Star.

THE DEATH PENALTY.

Horrors Incidental to Old Time Execution by Drowning.

Execution by drowning was abolished in France by Henri Quatre, only to be revived by one of his successors. It was finally abolished as a statutory method of execution by the earliest decree of the great revolutionaries.

As late as the eighteenth century death by drowning was decreed to a felon in Edinburgh, and in the middle ages it was a common enough mode of doing a convicted criminal to death. That execution of this nature was considered as humane as any other, so far as the victim was concerned, is shown by the fact that it was not unknown among the early Jews, who varied the punishment of stoning adulteresses by drowning them. Among the Egyptians it was common. The Roman lex cornelia sanctioned the method by placing it on the statute records. Tacitus tells us that the Germans copied the practice from the Romans. The Teuton termed it the "last baptism," and he did not allow his powers of imagination to sleep when he set about devising additional varieties which should add to the excitement attendant upon the doomed person's departure from life. The convict was sewed up, Monte Cristo fashion, in a bag, and with him were inclosed a vicious dog, a hungry cat, a violent rooster, a venomous viper, all very much alive and presumably bleating.

For what reason it is hard to see, but death by drowning was by many peoples considered preferable for criminal women. In the case of very debauched or very mean offenders the Romans had a more or less pleasant fashion of drowning the doomed ones in marshes, first inclosing them in elaborate crates.

For refined cruelty in killing off their female criminals the earlier Albanians were certainly the most inventive in the matter of ingenuity. It is commonly known, of course, that even the modern Albanian has less respect for womanhood than any other known male in the human catalogue, not even excluding the Chinese. The approved method of doing a criminal or even a displeasing woman to death prevalent among them up to rather less than a century ago was to chain her in a tank into which the water was allowed to flow gradually. As the water reached her breast, it was allowed to recede, sometimes back to her ankles, when the refilling of the tank began anew. If the woman had children the torture was enlivened by the drowning or mutilation of them before her eyes. To various parts of her body was attached such food as attracts rats, of which a number would be let loose.—New York World.

Fog Filters in London.

"All London public buildings are now erected with fog filters," said an architect. "They are essential. London's yellow brown fog, made of the smoke of a million soft coal fires, smells of sulphur, irritates eyes and throat and causes headache. It penetrates houses. Waking on a winter morning, you can't see across your bedroom for it. So now all public buildings filter it. The air is drawn in one office only, and fans hurl it against curtains of cotton six inches thick. It is forced through these curtains. It comes out on the other side for distribution through the various rooms a fairly clean, pure, transparent air. But the white filter curtains! Every day they must be changed. It takes only an hour to gray them, and by nightfall they are as black as ink."

Scottish Impertinence.

Color sergeant of Highland company (in which were one or two English) calling the roll: "Angus Mackay!" No reply. (Lauder.) "Angus Mackay!" Still no reply. (Sotto voce.) "If you're there. Yer eye at yer footy, de-cent man, but ye're awer modest to speak before see many folk. I see ye fine." (Marks him down in the roll.) "John Jones?" Squeaky voice replies, "Ere." Sergeant—On, aye, ye're here or say ye're here, but ye're sick a muckle leard I canna believe a word that comes out o' yer mouth, see I'll just mark ye down as absent!—London Answers.

Much Like Demosthenes.

"Woman," he said, "really ought to be a better orator than man." "Why so?" she asked. "Because," he replied, "to a certain extent at least she follows the methods of that famed orator Demosthenes." "In what way?" she inquired, still busy with the finishing touches of her toilet. "You remember," he answered, "that Demosthenes used to practice talking with his mouth full of pebbles." She hastily took the pins out of her mouth and informed him that he was a mean old thing anyway.—New York Times.

The Eternal Marathon.

"Man," declared the old-fashioned preacher, "is a worm." "And," said a man who had been married three times and who was copying a small space in a rear pew "woman is the early bird."—Chicago Record-Herald.

COAL AS FUEL.

It Was In Use as Far Back as the Time of King Solomon.

The first mention of coal in the annals of mankind occurs in the Bible, Proverbs xxvi, 21, as follows: "As coals are to burning coals and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife." This was written about 1016 B. C., at the time King Solomon came into power. Part of his dominion was Syria, and ancient coal mines are worked in that country today. There are several other references to coal in the Bible, all of a later date. Tools and chisels have been found near the Roman wall, indicating that the Britons were familiar with the use of coal prior to the Roman invasion in 54 B. C. The first actual record of a coal transaction is the receipt for twelve cart loads of coal written by the good abbot of Peterborough, A. D. 822.

Years before the Christian era coal was in common use in China. Anthracite coal is powdered, mixed with wet clay and rolled into balls. These are dried in the sun, and the poor use this fuel in little hand furnaces precisely as they did centuries ago. Marco Polo speaks of seeing in 1275 "a kind of black stone in Cathay that is used to burn better than wood." Marco Polo's countrymen refused to believe the traveler's tale.

The earliest historic mention of coal in the United States is by the French Jesuit missionary father Hennepin, who in his journal in 1679 speaks of traces of coal appearing on the banks of the Allegheny river and makes the site of a "sole mine" on the James river, near Richmond, the first mine opened for the market. In 1796 anthracite was discovered in the Wyoming valley and a sample of the coal sent to Thomas and William Penn in London.—Carrington Phelps in Metropolitan Magazine.

How Germany Deals With the Waster.

Germany has a law that provides that if it can be proved that a man is earning a sufficient wage to support those dependent on him, but that he is dissipating that wage by vicious habits, he can be declared a minor, and he is then treated as a child. His employer is told that the wage must be paid not to the man, but to a guardian appointed by the magistrate of the district in which he lives, who uses it for the support of the wife and children. In England a man who could not get his wage might refuse to work. In Germany the police would see that he did his work.—Progress.

Her Opportunity.

The man later had just announced her engagement. "But you always said that men were horrid creatures," said her friends. "So they are," replied the bride to be, "and here's my opportunity to punish one of them." They all agreed that it was real noble of her.—Philadelphia Ledger.

There is no tyrant like custom and no freedom where its edicts are not resisted.—Boyer.

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