

ATOP THE SPIRE.

Thrilling Incident in the Life of James Freeman Clarke.

When James Freeman Clarke, the famous Unitarian minister and author, was a young man he visited Salisbury, England. Here the beautiful cathedral lifts its spire 404 feet into the air. The spire is topped by a ball, and on the ball stands a cross. From the ground the ball looks like an orange, but its diameter is really greater than a man's height.

Workmen were repairing the spire. Mr. Clarke saw them crawling round the alim steeple in the golden afternoon like bugs on a bean stalk. The impulse came to him to climb the spire and stand on the horizontal beam of the cross. Accordingly at dusk, when the workmen had left, the young American slipped in and made his way up the stairs to the little window which opened to the workmen's staging. To run up the scaffolding to the ball was easy. Then came the slightly more bulging curve of the ball. A short platform gave him foothold. He reached up, put his hands on the base of the cross and pulled himself up. To gain the cross arm was merely "shinning" up a good sized tree, and soon he stood on the horizontal timber and, reaching up, touched the top of the cross.

After enjoying his moment of exaltation he slid to the foot of the cross and, with his arms round the post, slipped down over the great abdomen of the ball. His feet touched nothing. The little plank from which he had reached up was not there!

Here was a peril and one for a cool head and sure eye. Of course he could not look down. The hugging hold that he had to keep on the bottom of the cross shortened the reach of his body and made it less than when he had stood on the plank and reached up to the cross with his hands. He must drop so that his feet should meet the plank, for he would never be able to pull himself back if he should let himself down at arm's length, and his feet hung over empty air.

Now his good head began to work. He looked up at the cross and tried to recall exactly the angle at which he had reached for it, to make his memory tell him just how the edge of that square post had appeared. A few inches to the right or to the left would mean dropping into vacancy.

Bending his head away back, he strained his eye up the cross and figured his angle of approach. He cautiously wormed himself to the right and made up his mind that here directly under his feet must be the plank. Then he dropped. The world knows that he lived to tell the tale.

A Curious Puzzle.

Ask your arithmetic teacher at school to double the number of his pupils, add 3, multiply this sum by 5, add to it the number of pupils absent on that day, multiply the result by 10, add to it the number of his own aunts, and then tell you his answer. From his answer you subtract 150 and the remainder will be the correct number of his pupils present and absent and the number of his aunts as well. For example: Supposing the number of pupils is 6, doubled equals 12, plus 3 equals 15, multiplied by 5 equals 75, plus 3 equals 78, multiplied by 10 equals 780, plus three equals 783. Subtracting 150 from 783 leaves 633. Therefore you can safely announce to your teacher that he has 6 pupils, 3 absent pupils and 3 aunts.

Dresden Runs a Paper.

Dresden appears to be the only town where the principle of municipal ownership extends to newspapers. On his death some years ago the proprietor of the leading Dresden newspaper bequeathed all his property to the town where he had built up his fortune, and the municipality has since run the paper on strictly business lines. The profits, in accordance with the terms of Dr. Gunt's will, are devoted to beautifying and extending the open spaces of the town.

Provocation.

Judge—Pat, I wouldn't think you would hit a little man like that.
Pat—Suppose he called you an Irish slob?
Judge—But I'm not an Irishman.
Pat—Suppose he called you a Dutch slob?
Judge—But I'm not a Dutchman.
Pat—Well, suppose he called you the kind of a slob that you are?—Life.

Nerve.

"Bigbee has a nerve."
"Why so?"
"I threatened to sue him for the \$100 he owes me."
"Yes?"
"And he asked me to sue him for \$200 and give him the other hundred."

BLACK DIAMONDS.

Their Origin a Riddle That Science Seems Unable to Solve.

Genuine black diamonds, although considerably more valuable than the ordinary white diamond, are not used for gems, having an appearance no more attractive than a bit of stone or fragment of coal, being dark gray, brownish or black in color and opaque, without crystalline form. They are somewhat harder than the crystal or gem diamond, being, in fact, about the hardest substance known and are found in irregular pieces ranging in size from one-half to 500 carats.

The origin of the black diamond is a subject on which science remains silent. They are found in but one spot on the earth—an area of not over 225 miles square, in Brazil. Here they are recovered from the gravel and washings of the river beds. No fine specimens of the gem diamond have ever been found in the black diamond fields. Yet—and this is the point over which science has vainly puzzled—both black and white or gem diamonds are simply pure carbon, being of practically identical composition. The gem diamond is translucent and crystalline in form, while the other is not. The black diamond is harder, tougher and not so brittle, and there the difference ends.

Practically the entire output of black diamonds is used for tipping diamond drills, the precious bits of carbon being set in pieces of soft steel or iron. These diamond pointed drills will cut through any substance known and have eaten their way through the hardest known rock down to a depth of 6,000 feet. Ordinary gem diamonds would be crushed under the enormous pressure it is necessary to put upon the drills when the bore has gone to a great depth. No substance is known which could be used in place of the black diamonds for drill points used in boring for mineral deposits, and should the supply become exhausted there would be no more deep borings, as there were none before the black diamond was discovered.

The diamond drill is a decidedly expensive tool, as it is usual to place eight stones in each bit or drill point, and fair sized stones of three to four carats each are more satisfactory and economical in the long run than small ones. As the carbon is worth about \$85 per carat, a single drill armed with stones of medium size would cost in the neighborhood of \$2,500.—Harper's Weekly.

The Marseillaise.

The famous battle hymn known as the "Marseillaise" is generally attributed to Rouget de Lille, a French engineer officer, who, it is said, composed it in 1792 to cheer up the conscripts at Strasbourg. It derived its name from a body of troops from Marseilles marching into Paris playing the tune. The piece became instantaneously popular, and from that day to this it has never failed, wherever sung or played, to arouse the martial ardor of the hearers to the highest pitch. As an inspiration for fighting it is beyond doubt the most successful musical composition ever known. The author of the immortal piece was pensioned by Louis Philippe in 1830 and died in 1836.—New York American.

Fish That Cannot Swim.

More than one species of fish is met with that cannot swim, the most singular of which is the malthe, a Brazilian fish, whose organs of locomotion only enable it to crawl or walk or hop after the manner of a toad, to which animal this fish to some extent bears a resemblance. It is provided with a long, upturned snout. Other examples of nonswimming fishes include the sea horse, another most peculiarly shaped inhabitant of the sea, and the starfish, of which there are many specimens, which walk and crawl on the shore and rocks, both being unable to swim.

He Had the Last Word.

A lecturer was annoyed by a man in the audience who insisted on rising and asking questions. "Sit down, you ass!" said a second man, jumping up. "Sit down, you too," cried a third man; "you are both asses."

"There seem to be plenty of asses about tonight," put in the lecturer calmly, "but for heaven's sake let us hear one at a time."
"Well, you go on then," said the first man, resuming his seat.—Boston Transcript.

Careful Auntie.

"You will never see your Aunt Maria again until you get to heaven," a little girl was solemnly told by her mother the other day, according to the London Globe. "Will she ask me to wipe my feet?" was her only response. It throws a flood of light on Aunt Maria's character and history.

ATE THEIR OWN WORDS.

Made That, Even Though They Were Spicy, Were Not Palatable.

"Eating one's own words" is not so fanciful as it sounds. There have been cases where the feat was accomplished.

Isaac Volmar possibly saw no humor in the command issued by Bernard, duke of Saxony, that he should be forced to eat the manuscript of some poetical satires he had written against his lordship, and the enforcement of the order probably went much against his stomach, even though the satires were described as "spicy" by the historian.

Nor was it a matter of laughter to the jurist Philip Oldenburger when he was condemned to eat a pamphlet of his own composition and had the lesson emphasized by a good stiff flogging.

Arvine's "Dictionary of Anecdotes" (Boston, 1860) quotes from some unnamed traveler a detailed account of how an unfortunate Russian author submitted to a similar penalty at Moscow. He had published a quarto volume on "The Liberties of the People" and had taken occasion to inveigh against the venality of the bureaucrats and even question the conduct of the autocrat himself. Naturally the author was taken into custody.

"After being tried in a summary way," continued the traveler, "his production was deemed to be a libel, and he was condemned to eat his own words. The singularity of such a sentence induced me to see it put into execution. A scaffold was erected in one of the most public streets of the city. The imperial provost, the magistrates, the physicians and surgeons attended. The book was separated from the binding, the margin cut off and every leaf rolled up like a lottery ticket when taken out of the wheel. The author was then served with them, leaf by leaf, by the provost, who put them into his mouth to the no small diversion of the spectators, and he was obliged to swallow this unpalatable food on pain of the knout—in Russia more feared than death.

"As soon as the medical gentlemen were of opinion that he had received into his stomach as much at a time as was consistent with his safety, the transgressor was sent back to prison, and the business was resumed the two following days. In three very hearty but unpleasant meals every leaf of the book was actually swallowed."

There is an impish humor in the conduct of a certain Austrian general mentioned by Oelrich in his "Dissertation de Bibliothecarum et Librorum Fatis" (1756). This officer had signed a note for 2,000 forins, and when it fell due and was presented to him by his creditors he forced those men at the pistol point to eat it.

To close with an instance that belongs to the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth. Tom Nash, defending the memory of his recently deceased friend, Robert Greene, from the aspersions of Gabriel Harvey, thus berates the latter: "Had he lived, Gabriel, and thou shouldst untruthfully and odiously libel against him as thou hast done, he would have made thee an example of ignominy to all ages that are to come and driven thee to eat thy own book buttered, as I saw him make an apparition once in a tavern eat his citation, wax and all, very handsomely served 'twixt two dishes."—New York Tribune.

The Green Rose.

The general verdict upon the green rose is that it is more curious than beautiful. To botanists it is particularly interesting, since it is a proof that all parts of a plant above the root are modifications of the same thing, and in the green rose every part may be called a leaf. This flower is a variety of the common China rose brought to England in the year 1835. It also gives a strong support to the view held by many botanists that all flowers were originally green and that the colors in flowers are analogous to the autumn tints of leaves. In the green rose the flowers generally put on a reddish tint when they begin to fade.—Harper's Weekly.

His Bluff Called.

"So you advertised for your lost purse, pretending that the person who found it was recognized?"
"Yes."

"How did the bluff work?"
"Didn't work at all. Next day this ad. appeared in the same paper: 'The recognized gentleman who picked up the purse on Boylston street requests the loser to call at his house.'"—Boston Transcript.

Home Birds.

"When my wife and I were first married we used to call each other 'Birdie.'"
"Do you still do it?"
"No. I call her a parrot and a magpie, and she usually refers to me as a jay."

BILL NYE'S HUMOR.

It Is Not Sufficiently Appreciated These Days, Says a Writer.

There are too few of this generation who appreciate the humor of Bill Nye. The fame of Mark Twain outrivaled his. The two were entirely apart in their methods. Nye convulses you in the twinkling of an eye. Mark Twain draws your sense of humor with the deliberation of one preparing you for the treat. Nye was closer to the west than Twain, and he was later. Twain went west with the gold seekers. Nye followed the railroads. Twain followed the newspaper business with uneven success in Virginia City, Nev., and became discouraged with his own possibilities as a writer.

It was one of his early bulletins of humor that lost Nye his place on one Laramie (Wyo.) paper and induced his friends to launch the Boomerang. Some of these same friends helped defeat his ambitions as a lawyer. They thought Nye's accession to the prosecuting attorneyship would make a joke of the office. It is as likely that the responsibilities of the office and the prospect of a legal career would have turned Nye's talents into serious channels. But, fortunately or unfortunately, Nye's propensity for humor burgeoned early in his western career.

When he was a justice of the peace in Laramie his office was over a livery stable. At the foot of the stairway Nye nailed this placard:

"Twist the tail of the gray mule and take the elevator."

If his humor was spontaneous, his sense of injustice was just as keen. Philosophy there was in his work. Humor is, in fact, largely philosophy.

"Men will fight," wrote Nye, "until it is educated out of them. Most wars are arranged by people who stay at home and sell groceries to the widows and orphans and old maids at 100 per cent advance."—Collier's Weekly.

He Wasn't Impressed.

Sir Wemyss Reid wrote as follows of one of his early experiences as a reporter: "On the first occasion of witnessing an execution, as I stood trembling at the foot of the scaffold on which the victim was about to appear, I noticed an old reporter for whom I entertained a great personal respect pacing up and down beside me reading the New Testament. In the passion of horror and pity that filled my young heart I concluded that my friend was seeking spiritual comfort in view of the event in which we were about to take part as spectators and recorders. I said something to him about the horror of the act we were shortly to witness. He looked up with a placid smile from his reading and said gently, for he was essentially a gentleman, 'Yes, very sad, very sad, but let us be thankful it isn't raining.' And then he calmly returned to his daily reading of the word."

A Gentle Hint.

A bachelor had courted a girl for a long time without coming to the point. One evening he took her to a concert.

The orchestra played No. 6, a selection that seemed to the bachelor very beautiful. He bent over his companion and whispered:

"How lovely that is! What is it?—do you know?"

She smiled demurely and replied in a low, thrilling voice:

"It is the 'Maiden's Prayer.'"

"The 'Maiden's Prayer?'" he repeated in astonishment. "Why?"

But she handed him her program, pointing to No. 6 with her finger.

He read and stared, for the real name of the selection was Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." He bought the ring next day.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Well Planted.

The beadle in a rural district in Perthshire had become too feeble to perform his duties as minister's man and gravedigger and had to get an assistant. The two did not agree well, but after a few months Sandy (the beadle) died, and Tammas had to perform the last service for his late partner. The minister strolled up to Tammas while he was giving the finishing touches to the grave and casually remarked, "Have you put Sandy weel down, Tammas?" "I hev that, sir," said Tammas very decidedly. "Sandy may get up, but he'll be among the hindmost."

No Cause For Fear.

Husband—That's a foolish habit you women have of carrying your purses in your hands when in the street.

Wife—Why is it?

Husband—Because a thief could easily snatch them and get away.

Wife—Well, if the husbands of other women don't give them any more to put in their purses than you give me to put in mine the thief would starve to death.

WONDERS OF FLIGHT.

Puzzling Aerial Feats of the Graceful Black Headed Gull.

"Flight is the master feat of wild life, the master physical feat of all," writes George Dewar in "Minutiae." "There are feats of birds and insects—of plants, too—subtler than those of the wing, more mystic in the doing. Thus the way finder feasts are more curious and far harder to follow—the means by which the emperor moth can discover where is the empress, which we have caught and imprisoned in a dark box; the means by which the root of a tree knows its crooked path round obstacles to food; the means by which the wreathing stem of the black bryony can recognize and correct its error after it has stretched out and felt for support in a vain direction. In these there are feats of physical intelligence stranger to consider than anything which the swiftest, deftest flier does with its wings."

"But the feat of flight is the most brilliant of all animal accomplishments. Its sure, swift, easy triumph, its grace, the supreme beauty of its action—these make an animal's flight matchless as a spectacle. All that is athletic and all that is aesthetic in movement here combine."

"A black headed gull is floating and gliding, not quite flat on the air. The tip of one wing—say the right—inclines skyward, the tip of the other earthward. Thus he moves forward, up or down or quite parallel with the earth or water for a little distance, wings full stretched and rigid. Then comes a very perceptible change. No flap or stroke of the wing appears to be made for fresh progress, but the bird turns its body slightly, and with the body the full spread, rigid wings. The result is that the right wing now inclines earthward and the left skyward, and so the bird proceeds for another twenty yards."

"The turn is so slight, so easy, one can hardly imagine the bird has won through its new impetus. How can those wings in this smooth, lazy action have stirred the thin air enough to draw from it sustaining force? And how is it that with out a perceptible stroke the bird is not only upheld, but driven forward, though not traveling with the wind? Perhaps we must seek an answer in the marvelous perfection of wing in a gull. The least movement of the tip of that wing—movement we are not conscious of when the bird is swung high above us—may serve the purpose of flight. The faintest touch of the wing tip may be a master touch."

George Eliot and "Romola."

George Eliot's first arrangement with the publisher of "Romola" was for no less a sum than 10,000 guineas. "As that is so very large a figure," he said, "I must run it in fifteen numbers of the Cornhill." "No," she answered; "it must finish in twelve numbers or the artistic effect of the story will be lost. I quite understand the necessity for its prolongation from a commercial point of view, so we'll say 7,000 guineas instead of the 10,000." And 7,000 guineas was accordingly paid for the copyright. Three thousand guineas seems a large sum to give up for an artistic scruple, but she did it.

The Stinging Tree.

The stinging tree of Australia somewhat resembles a gigantic nettle. It has an unpleasant odor, and the natives and native animals are careful to avoid it. When a man is stung by the tree—or, to put it more prosaically, pricked by the tree's thorn—the little wound gives him at first no pain whatever. But in a few minutes a maddening pain is set up; the victim shrieks and rolls upon the ground. For months afterward when water touches the stung part great agony ensues. Dogs when stung rush about with piteous whines, biting pieces of flesh from the place that has been stung.

Keeping Up Style.

Mr. Minks—That girl was decent enough to black the stoves before going, I see.

Mrs. Minks—No; I blackened them myself, and it's lucky I did.

Mr. Minks—Lucky?

Mrs. Minks—Yes, indeed. Mrs. De Fashion and Mrs. De Style called right in the midst of it, and so I just put a little more blacking on my face and went to the door and told them I wasn't in. They said they'd call again.—New York Weekly.

Sure of One Thing.

Mark Lemon in one of his books tells of a fat little boy who passed his instructor on the street without bowing.

"What has become of your manners, sir?" cried the teacher, shocked and frowning. "It seems to me that you are better fed than taught." "Yes, sir," replied the boy solemnly. "I feeds myself, sir."

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