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HOAXED THE CITY.

One of the Many Pranks Perpetrated by Theodore Hook.

In the early part of the nineteenth century great preparations were made in England to receive a Spanish ambassador who was expected to arrive at Southampton. A mischievous idea came into the head of Theodore Hook (born 1788, died 1841), novelist and journalist, and above all contriver of that diversion known as the hoax. The English fleet was lying off Southampton. Hook, then a young man, knew many of the younger officers. He formed his scheme, and one morning a launch set out from the fleet and drew up at the quay.

In this launch was he who purported to be the Spanish ambassador in almost royal robes, arrived two days before the expected time. The mayor of Southampton, who was to receive the Spanish envoy, was greatly flustered. It was all so sudden. He did the best he could. Several companies of soldiers, some on foot, some mounted, were called out. The bells were rung. The ambassador, accompanied by a number of young officers of the fleet, was escorted with much pomp to the mayor's palace. There was a banquet and speechmaking, one of the young officers acting as interpreter for the ambassador.

After it was over and the Spanish envoy was supposed to be on his way to London the true ambassador arrived. There was but a sorry reception for him. The other ambassador, who was Theodore Hook, having perpetrated the greatest hoax ever known on a mayor and a city, had exhausted the hospitality of the town. The scandal was so great, the mayor and the people of Southampton had been so outrageously sold, that to make any stir about the affair would only cause them to be laughed at all the more. With the exception of the dismissal of some of the naval officers who had taken part in it little was done, and the affair was allowed to blow over.

"The Old Beast"

An old story concerning Lord Beaconsfield is worth repeating. One day, while walking about his country place in the easy coat and general careless attire he liked to adopt when among his farmers, he encountered two women, strong partisans of Mr. Gladstone. Supposing him to be the keeper or gardener or something of that sort, they inquired if he would show them over the place. While they were walking about they overwhelmed him with questions as to the habits of the master of the manor. "Do you think you could manage to get us a sight of the old beast himself?" asked one of them. "Madam," replied Lord Beaconsfield, "the old beast has the honor to wait upon you now!" — London Graphic.

Worth of a Prairie Owl.

The prairie owl searches for food in the afternoon. By making these afternoon journeys he is easily distinguished from the other members of the owl family as they seldom go out until night. The prairie owl, known sometimes as the marsh owl, eats insects, rabbits, mice, brown squirrels, gophers and now and then quail, grouse or water birds. More than 95 per cent of his food consists of destructive quadrupeds and insect pests. In appraising the yearly value of a single owl to a farmer it would not be amiss to make it \$30.—Farm and Fireside.

Why They Went to School.

The master of Manchester Grammar school says that to the question, "Why do boys go to school?" put to a number of scholars one reply read, "To learn to enjoy life while young." Another boy wrote, "If I didn't go I would not be joyous, as I am now." A third went to school "to help to enlighten other people's burdens," a fourth "to learn how to get the right change for a ten shilling piece."—St. James' Gazette.

Enemies of Jewels.

The pearl is nothing but carbonate of lime, and vinegar or any other acid will eat away the polished surface in a few minutes. As for the opal, hot water is fatal to it, destroying its fire and sometimes causing it to crack. Soap is a deadly enemy to the turquoise. If a turquoise ring is kept on the hand while washing, in a short time the blue stones will turn to a dingy green.

Bachelor Taxes.

In the days of William III. any commoner in England who remained single at twenty-five had to pay a shilling yearly, and the amount was increased with rank or title. A duke was supposed to be a special offender in not taking a wife and had to pay for his selfish whim to the extent of £12 per annum.

WHEN TO EAT THE BANANA.

Tropical Natives Never Let the Fruit Ripen on the Tree.

According to Frederick Upham Adams in his book, "The Conquest of the Tropics," there is a popular misunderstanding concerning when the banana is ripe. Mr. Adams asserts:

"The banana will never enjoy the popularity it deserves until the people of the temperate zones learn to know when it is ripe and learn not to eat it in its raw state. There is popular delusion that the banana has ripened when it turns from its original green to a golden yellow, and those thus deluded decline to touch this fruit when dark spots appear in the yellow skin of the banana.

The banana is not fully ripe when it is yellow. This change from green to yellow is the first outward appearance of a chemical process incidental to the ripening process. Not until a considerable portion of the skin has turned to a deep brown has this ripening process sufficiently developed to give the fruit its greatest value as a delicious and healthful food.

The natives of the tropics do not permit a banana to ripen on its stem for the good and sufficient reason that such a banana is hardly fit to eat. A chemical process sets in which partially disintegrates the pulp, destroys the fine flavor and renders it insipid and almost tasteless. More than that, the rind cracks when the banana starts to ripen on the plant, and insects burrow in the pulp and thus mar or spoil the fruit. The natives pluck the bunches from the stem at about the same period of their development that the leading importers do, and there is so little difference between an exported banana and one sold in the native markets that even an expert could not be sure which is which.

The same thing is true of most other tropical fruits. As a rule they are picked green by the natives and allowed to ripen artificially. The fecundity of the tropical soil and the forcing powers of the humidity and the sun are so great that most tropical fruits are likely to break their envelopes under the pressure of an accelerated ripening process.

Therefore do not think you are getting the worst of it because the bananas which you eat at home come here green. Nature knows how to grow bananas. Man had to learn how to ripen them.

Origin of Quarantine.

In the fourteenth century one-fourth of the population of Europe are computed to have died of the bubonic plague, introduced from the east. The first measures to check its spread were adopted by the city of Venice, which appointed in 1348 three guardians of the public health. In 1403 Venice established a lazaret, or contagious disease hospital, on a small island adjoining the city. This was the beginning of quarantine. The word itself means "forty" and implies forty days, the period of detention imposed on vessels at this first Venetian quarantine.

Evolution of a Word.

The word "person" has had an interesting history. Signifying by etymology something to make a sound through, the Latin "persona" began by meaning an actor's mask

with its mouthpiece. Then it meant the character represented by the player—"dramatis personae." Then it came to mean the part or character one sustains in real life, and so the "persona ecclesiae," the man who represented the church, became known as a "person" in a special sense and was eventually spelled as "parson." On the other hand, "person" faded away to mean just anybody.

MOTHERS AND MARRIAGE.

Does the Parent Want Her Daughter Wed and Her Son Single?

Women have the marrying habit; men do not. This is not strange, for generations of girls have been taught that every woman should be married and that to remain unwed is a disgrace. Being a "married woman" has been a sort of boast of superiority on the part of wives. Naturally, because their mothers and almost every other person of their own sex puts a great deal of emphasis on the desirability of being married and none at all on the desirability, which sometimes exists, of remaining unmarried, girls looked on marriage as the goal of ambition and bent their whole energies to getting husbands.

Rather than endure the unjust stigma of being "old maids" they took the first man who gave them a chance. Their object was not love, not a husband, but simply to acquire the status, privileges and deference which they had been taught were denied to all of their sex except the "married woman."

Can you imagine anything more disastrous?

Yet this is only half the story. The other half consists in the fact that the very same mothers who fairly drive their daughters to marry are singularly reluctant to see their sons wed. The mother who is employing all the arts and craft of the chase to entrap some other woman's son for her daughter's husband will weep at the announcement that the other woman's daughter has shackled her son.—Mothers' Magazine.

Snakes in the South Sea Islands.

In many of the south sea islands the snake is often held to be sacred, as it is thought to be connected with a spirit. At Valuva there are snakes which strangers are not allowed to see lest some misfortune should follow. Those that are held are not fed or worshiped, but such as are the familiars of individuals who know them receive sacrifices. In the New Hebrides snakes are highly regarded. A native of Pentecost island if he sees one in a sacred place or in a house will think that there is some reason for its appearing to him. He will pour over himself the juice of a young coconut and ever afterward expect to find the world go well with him through the influence of the spirit.

Of Course She Would.

When the train made its first stop after leaving home, Mr. Simpkins, who had been in a brown study for several minutes, raised his eyes, which had a troubled look in them, and remarked, "My dear, are you sure we haven't forgotten anything?"

"Of course we haven't," responded the good lady cheerfully. "I would have thought of it the minute the train started."

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