

A COIN OF COURTESY

THE GUINEA OF THE ENGLISHMAN IS NOT A COIN AT ALL.

As a Piece of Real Money it Has No Existence, and it is Used Only in Imagination as a Rather Advanced Standard of Monetary Value.

Of all the obstacles that confront the Englishman the guinea is the most amazing. The other day an American guest inquired of me, "What is a guinea?" He had been asked for one by a circulating library. It seems an easy question to answer, but as I had been puzzling over the division of an imaginary guinea into four parts the explanation took time. It was as difficult as explaining cricket to a German—in German.

"Show me one," said the American. I confessed that I did not possess one.

"What, not \$5.25?" "Yes, but not a guinea. We don't have a guinea in England any more."

"But you talk in guineas!" "That's our fun," I replied lamely. Nevertheless there is something to be said for our system. Indeed, one might argue that this incessant obstacle race over the multiplication tables that we have to enter insures a bracing of the muscles. We are always kept on the alert to fathom the relations between a pottle, a perch and a guinea or some such absurd and fortuitous combination. And one may suspect that this tightening and strengthening of the muscles in the obstacle race is really the source of England's greatness.

For all practical purposes the guinea—in which we talk—is the most preposterously absurd coin in the world, for it does not exist—corporeally. Some few honest citizens wear spade guineas on their watch chains. But if they tried to pass them over to the bookkeeping clerk on the underground railway they would be in danger of the judgment. There are no guineas in England. Yes, in imagination they exist.

And never more accuse yourself of belonging to an unimaginative nation of shopkeepers! The guinea is the coin of courtesy, just because it is not a coin at all. And its preservation as an anomaly is a curious proof of the innate courtesy of the Englishman, who will face any arithmetical inconvenience rather than put a stir on a friend.

This you may see from the lists of subscriptions for the gentleman in distress. You cannot offer him the necessities of life. When the friend falls by the wayside it must be guineas, not sovereigns, that you supply, and one feels glad that the remarks of the meanest sport that exists—the sport of kings—offers prizes in "guineas." It is merely the analogue of that convention which regulates gifts between equals.

Etiquette forbids your sending a friend a leg of mutton—that is, a sovereign, the ordinary humdrum coin. But you may send him pheasants, oysters, grouse or salmon, more especially if the salmon is the victim of your own "rode, pole and perch." Possibly the real explanation is that, as a matter of courtesy, you may not give a man what he could obtain at the nearest shop—it must be something that is not easily obtainable.

Now, a guinea is not easily obtainable, and the difference between offering a man a guinea and offering him a sovereign is the difference between sending a man a leg of mutton and sending him a barrel of oysters. That little silly shilling stuck on to the sovereign, that retention of the ghost of a coin long dead and borne on a watch chain, with the locket containing a twist of great-aunt's hair, was its significance.

It is the embodiment of the Englishman's innate idealism. It is like the equally silly "Esq." which we tack on the names of friends. There are no esquires nowadays and no guineas, but we see them with the eye of faith. And we sacrifice to our faith considerable muscular exertion, many blobs of ink and sundry shillings that might otherwise stock our houses with cheap reprints of the world's best books.

You will naturally conclude that I did not put this view before my American friend. He would scarcely understand it. I led him gently to the palatial bank premises into which I hurriedly cast my weekly wage for fear I should lose it on the way home and pointed out to him dowering my voice discreetly, as becomes the suppliant in the temple of wealth.

"Note that young man," I said. "He is adding up three columns of figures. There are guineas, things that won't fraternize with half crowns or four shilling pieces or florins or half sovereigns or sovereigns, but you will perceive that this young man is taking them in his stride. Now, what about his muscles?"

"I should conclude," said the American guest thoughtfully, "that a young man who can put 12 guineas together and make 'em dollars can do anything."

"The guinea," I explained as we went out into Piccadilly, "is the source of England's greatness." And the American guest remained thoughtful. —London Chronicle.

Kind of Him.

"No, dear," said he, "I don't intend to have you do your own work after we are married."

"Is that so, dear?" she cooed. "Yes," he went on. "I have just been looking up your business affairs and I find that you are perfectly able to keep a hired girl." —Detroit Free Press.

Power, unless managed with gentleness and discretion, does but make man the more hated. No intervals of good humor, no starts of bounty, will atone for tyranny and oppression. —Jeremy Collier.

INSECT ENGINEERING

FEATS OF THE CARPENTER BEE AND THE TUMBLEBUG.

The Sexton Beetle is an Expert Carvedigger—Wonderful Skill of the Spider and the Great Strain That His Elastic Web Will Bear.

Long before man had thought of the saw the saw fly had used the same tool, made after the same fashion and used in the same way, for the purpose of making slits in the branches of trees so that she might have a secure place to deposit her eggs. The carpenter bee, with only the tools which nature has given her, cuts a round hole, the full diameter of her body, through thick boards and so makes a tunnel by which she can have a safe retreat in which to rear her young. The tumblebug, without derrick or machinery, rolls over large masses of dirt many times her own weight, and the sexton beetle will in a few hours bury beneath the ground the carcass of a comparatively large animal. All these feats require a degree of instinct which in a reasoning creature would be called engineering skill, but none of them is as wonderful as the feats performed by the spider. This extraordinary little animal has the faculty of propelling her threads directly against the wind, and by means of her slender cords she can haul up and suspend bodies which are many times her own weight.

Some years ago a paragraph went the rounds of the papers in which it was said that a spider had suspended an unfortunate mouse, raising it from the ground and leaving it to perish miserably between heaven and earth. Would be philosophers made great fun of the statement and ridiculed it unmercifully. I know not how true it was, but I know that it might have been true.

Some years ago in the village of Havana in the state of New York a spider entangled a milk snake in her threads and actually raised it some distance from the ground, and this, too, in spite of the struggles of the reptile, which was alive.

By what process of engineering did this comparatively small and feeble insect succeed in overcoming and lifting up by mechanical means the mouse or the snake? The solution is easy enough if we only give the question a little thought.

The spider is furnished with one of the most efficient mechanical implements known to engineers—viz, a strong elastic thread. That the thread is strong is well known. Indeed, there are few substances that will support a greater strain than the silk of the silkworm or the spider, careful experiment having shown that for equal sizes the strength of these fibers exceeds that of common iron. But notwithstanding its strength the spider's thread would be useless as a mechanical power if it were not for its elasticity. The spider has no blocks or pulleys, and therefore it cannot cause the thread to divide up and run in different directions, but the elasticity of the thread more than makes up for this and renders possible the lifting of an animal much heavier than a mouse or a snake. This may require a little explanation.

Let us suppose that a child can lift a six pound weight one foot high and do this twenty times a minute. Furnish him with 350 rubber bands, each capable of pulling six pounds through one foot when stretched. Let these bands be attached to a wooden platform on which stands a pair of horses weighing 2,100 pounds, or rather more than a ton. If now the child will go to work and stretch these rubber bands singly, hooking each one up as it is stretched, in less than twenty minutes he will have raised the pair of horses one foot.

We thus see that the elasticity of the rubber bands enables the child to divide the weight of horses into 350 pieces of six pounds each, and, at the rate of a little less than one every three seconds, he lifts all these separate pieces one foot, so that the child easily lifts this enormous weight.

Each spider's thread acts like one of the elastic rubber bands. Let us suppose that the mouse or snake weighed half an ounce and that each thread is capable of supporting a grain and a half. The spider would have to connect the mouse with the point from which it was to be suspended with 150 threads, and if the little quadruped was once swung off his feet he would be powerless. By pulling successively on each thread, and shortening it a little, the mouse or snake might be raised to any height within the capacity of the building or structure in which the work was done. So that to those who have ridiculed the story we may justly say, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy."

What object the spider could have had in his work I am unable to see. It may have been a dread of the harra which the mouse or snake might work or it may have been the hope that the decaying carcass would attract flies, which would furnish food for the engineer. I can vouch for the truth of the snake story, however, and the object of this article is to explain and render credible a very extraordinary feat of insect engineering. —Folios of Science.

Era of Actium.

The "era of Actium," adopted during the early days of the Roman empire, commemorates the great victory gained by Octavius over the troops of Antony and Cleopatra, Jan. 1, B. C. 31. It was often used among the Romans both in writing and colloquially, just as in England people speak of events as occurring before or after the conquest, or as persons in this country frequently refer to events as having happened before or after the war.

A straight life is the shortest distance between honesty and honor. —Saturday Evening Post.

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A HUMBLE HEROINE.
Mother Mary Teresa and the Cross of the Legion of Honor.
Some years ago in a city in France all the soldiers were drawn up on the plaza. A woman in the habit of charity was called out in front of the governor general, and this is what he said: "Mother Mary Teresa, when you were twenty years of age you received a wound from a cannon ball while assisting one of the wounded on the field at Balaklava. In 1859 the shell from a mitrailleuse laid you prostrate in the front ranks on the battlefield of Magenta. Since then you have been in Syria, in China and in Mexico, and if you were not wounded it was not because you have not exposed yourself."
"In 1870 you were taken up in Reishoffen covered with many saber wounds. Such deeds of heroism you crowned a few weeks ago with one of the most heroic actions which history records. A grenade fell upon the ambulance which was under your charge. You took up the grenade in your arms; you smiled upon the wounded who looked at you with feelings of dismay; you carried it a distance of eighty meters. On laying it down you noticed that it was going to burst. You threw yourself on the ground; it burst. You were seen covered with blood, but when persons came to your assistance you rose up smiling, as is your wont. You were scarcely recovered from your wound when you returned to the hospital whence I have now summoned you."
Then the general made her kneel down, and drawing his sword, touched her lightly with it three times on the shoulder and pinned the cross of the Legion of Honor on her habit, saying: "I put upon you the cross of the brave in the name of the French people and army. No one has gained it by more deeds of heroism nor by a life so completely spent in self abnegation for the benefit of your brothers and the service of your country. Soldiers, present arms!"
The troops saluted, the drums and bugles rang out, the air was filled with loud acclamations, and all was jubilation and excitement as Mother Teresa arose, her face suffused with blushes, and asked: "General, are you done?" "Yes," said he.
"Then I will go back to the hospital."—From "The Companionship of Books," by Frederic Rowland Marvin.

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POINTED PARAGRAPHS.
There is no such thing as a secret. A reasonable probability is the only certainty.
Men who have violated the law say it is not hard to do.
Romance is like fire—if you play with it you are liable to be burned.
There is too little attention given to two mighty important words, "Don't tell."
It is a bad plan to seek to make a good impression by following every statement with an apology.
The trouble is when we do things for our friends we do things we want to instead of what they would be pleased to have us do.
We can't understand why people try to deceive others, but cannot understand why they should try to deceive themselves, as so many seem to do. —Atchison Globe.

Musicians Were Scarce.
In these days of conservatories and music schools, when each house has its piano or its organ, to say nothing of devotees to the cornet, violin and banjo, it seems strange to assert that there ever was a time when musicians were in demand, yet such was really the case. "In the fifteenth century," says Mr. Henry M. Brooks in his "Olden Time Music," "musicians were so scarce in England that they were impressed by government order, as in more recent times seamen had to suffer in like manner. Henry VIII. also issued warrants for the impressment of children with good voices for the choirs of the cathedrals, and in Elizabeth's time children with the proper qualification for her majesty's choirs were taken from their parents without any compensation being given to the latter."

Weighting Common Air.
The weight of air has often been tested by compressing it in receptacles by the air pump. That it really has weight when so compressed is shown by the fact that the weight of the vessels is increased slightly by filling them with compressed air and that such vessels become specifically "lighter" as soon as the air contained in them is exhausted. Many elaborate experiments on the weight of air have proved that one cubic foot weighs 536 grains, or something less than one and a quarter ounces. The above experiment on the weight of air is supposed to be made at the surface of the earth with the temperature at 50 degrees F. Heated air, or air at high elevations, is much lighter.

Lunar Athletics.
The "man in the moon" must surely regard with amused contempt our much vaunted athletic records. A good terrestrial athlete could cover about 120 feet on the moon in a running broad jump, while leaping over the barn would be a very commonplace feat. He would find no difficulty in carrying six times as much and running six times as fast as he could on earth, all because the moon attracts bodies with but one-sixth of the force of the earth.

Table Daintiness.
I could better eat with one who did not respect the laws than with a sloven and unrepresentable person. Moral qualities rule the world, but at short distances the senses are despotic. —Emerson.