

FAMOUS LONDON TREE

The Cause of Several Hard Fought Legal Battles.

ITS SITE WORTH MILLIONS.

But the Lawyers Never Have Been Able to Break Through the Phalanx of Legal Enactments That Preserve the Old Landmark in Cheapside.

There is a tree in Cheapside, London, that may be described as the most expensive of its kind on earth. It is a tree of gold pieces filled the entire trunk and five dollar bills fluttered in place of every one of the leaves. It would not buy the terra firma it occupies, for the land on which it stands, the northwest corner of Wood street and Cheapside, is worth \$4,500,000 an acre. The tree has stood on the spot for more than 200 years, while its site has augmented in value to almost fabulous proportions.

There have been several hard fought lawsuits over this plot of ground, the fight having been carried even to the house of lords. But so far the lawyers never have been able to break through the phalanx of legal enactments which preserve the tree. In the first place, there is a law in England which prohibits builders from putting up a structure which shall keep out the light from windows which bear the mysterious words "ancient lights." This tree in Cheapside literally is surrounded by a number of "ancient lights" proprietors whose consent never has been obtained when it came to cutting down the tree and putting a modern structure on its site. For the same reason the storekeeper who rents the tiny two story structure on the corner just in front of the tree never has been able to put his building up beyond its present height.

Some years ago one builder, who thought himself more "cute" than the others, started to take the law into his own hands and put up a building, thinking to "arrange" with the owners of the "ancient lights" afterward. But he was met with a perfect shower of injunctions, proceedings, writs and indictments, more than would have covered the tree in its full spring bloom, and it is said he never has been able to pay the thousands of dollars of law costs which his little experiment resulted in.

A few years ago some gardener were ordered to lop off certain limbs of the tree which hung over Cheapside. It was done really to save the life of the tree and with the consent of the parish clerk and churchwardens of St. Peter's, Cheapside, the ancient little Norman church in Foster lane, near by who guard this tree from the vandals' clutches. When the men began to work on the tree, however, it created a big sensation in Cheapside. "They are chopping down our tree," went up from a thousand angry throats in the district. Policemen were called, and doubtless there would have been another shower of writs, injunctions and proceedings had not the minister of the parish explained the real reason for the lopping operations.

Another almost impassable barrier which protects the tree in its position is the fact that it grows in sacred ground. There is a law in London that no building can be erected on sacred ground without special act of parliament, and woe betide the unhappy man who dares to put up even a shanty within the sacred precincts of a graveyard in England.

This particular corner of Cheapside has been immortalized by Wordsworth:

At the corner of Wood street when day light appears
There's a thrush that sings aloud; it has sung for three years.

This bird was wont to perch in the now famous tree, and it attracted the attention of Wordsworth, who used to breakfast in a little shop near by. As far back as the year 1392—just a hundred years before Mr. Columbus discovered America—another tree stood in this graveyard and is spoken of by Chaucer:

That whosoever ploynes it away,
He shall have Chrystis' curse for aye.

The tree is therefore a direct descendant of perhaps the oldest tree on record in England, and it may almost be described as an English institution.

This particular portion of Cheapside is back of the general postoffice and is one of the finest pieces of real estate in the world. With the tremendous difficulties that stand in the way of its being built over—the sanctity of the land itself and the power of the "ancient lights" statute—it is probable that this piece of ground will remain "unimproved" for another century or two. In a recent interview the manager of the real estate agency who control nearly all the land in the district declared that "the old tree in Cheapside occupies a position which is likely never be built upon." There would be a perfect bowl of excretion from all sides if any one were to attempt to put up a modern building there, for Wood street itself is so narrow that the people on both sides of the street have a right to claim "ancient lights," and the builder who went in for improving this property would have to "square" so many people that he would never be able to get any profit out of the building.—New York Press.

The Fraction.
"The average family in America comprises 4.5 persons." "I guess I'm the .5 of this family," murmured Paw Hoptoad, a trifle acidly.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

HE READ HIS MAN.

Lincoln's Rebuke to a Visitor Who Would Not Meet His Gaze.

As I came up to the railing in front of the president he was reading a paper that had just been presented to him by a man who sat in the chair opposite him and who seemed by his restlessness and unsteady eyes to be of a nervous disposition or under great excitement.

Mr. Lincoln, still holding the paper up and without movement of any kind, paused and, raising his eyes, looked for a long time at this man's face and seemed to be looking down into his very soul. Then, resuming his reading for a few moments, he again paused and cast the same piercing look upon his visitor.

Suddenly, without warning, he dropped the paper, and, stretching out his long arm, he pointed his finger directly in the face of his vis-a-vis and said, "What's the matter with you?"

The man stammered and finally replied, "Nothing."

"Yes, there is," said Lincoln. "You can't look me in the face! You have not looked me in the face since you sat there! Even now you are looking out that window and cannot look me in the eye!"

Then, flinging the paper in the man's lap, he cried: "Take it back! There is something wrong about this! I will have nothing to do with it!" And the discomfited individual retired.—T. B. Bancroft in McClure's Magazine.

ORIENTAL PARAGONS.

Japan's Four and Twenty Models of Filial Piety.

Filial piety, as is well known, is the special virtue of China and Japan. From it springs loyalty to the emperor, who is regarded as "the father and mother of his people." There are no greater favorites with the Japanese than the "four and twenty paragons of filial piety," whose acts of virtue are the subjects of Chinese legend.

One of the paragons had a cruel stepmother, who was very fond of fish. Never repining at her cruel treatment of him, he lay down on the frozen surface of a lake. The warmth of his body melted a hole in the ice, at which two carp came up to breathe. These he caught and took home to his stepmother.

Another paragon, who was of the female sex, clung to the jaws of a tiger that was about to devour her father until the latter escaped.

The drollest of all these stories is that of Borash. This paragon, though seventy years old, used to dress in baby's clothes and crawl about on the floor, his object being to delude his parents, who were really over ninety years of age, into the idea that they could not be so very old, after all, as they had such an exceedingly infantile son.—Sunday Magazine.

Caught Them All Around.

A Moslem ruler spoke to his people one Friday from the pulpit in the market place.

"People, what shall I preach to you about today?" "We do not know," they replied. "Well, if you don't know I shall not tell you." And down he came from the pulpit. There was no sermon that Sabbath.

The next week the old inquiry was made, and the people rejoined, "We know." When the royal preacher said, "If you know you do not need me to tell you." And again an abrupt close to the services.

The third week the people were more wary and replied, "Some of us know, and some do not know." And now they expected to trap the man, but he was wiser than they thought. "Let those who know tell those who do not know," came his utterance, and the people were trapped instead.—Boston Post.

A Rat's Tail.

A rat's tail is a wonderful thing. The great naturalist Cuvier says that there are more muscles in this curious appendage than are to be found in that part of the human anatomy which is most admired for its ingenious structure—namely, the hand. To the rat, in fact, its tail serves as a sort of hand, by means of which the animal is enabled to crawl along narrow ledges or other difficult passages, using it to balance with or to gain a hold. It is prehensile, like the tails of some monkeys. By means of it the little beast can jump up heights otherwise inaccessible, employing it as a projectile spring.

Hurt Worse Than the Razor.

The Barber—You've got a nasty, deep lot of crow's feet, sir, and them lines runnin' down from the corners of the mouth is somethin' fierce. A massage—The Patient (stercely)—You've got a hump like a camel and a chest like a doughnut, and I don't believe, with legs like those, you could stop an elephant up an alley, let alone a pig. But, hang it, man, do you want to be reminded of it every time you get a shave?—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Evils of Tobacco.

An illustration of the evils resulting from the use of tobacco is found in the life of a Georgia man of eighty-two years who has chewed since he was eleven and is now the father of twenty-five children. Cut out tobacco, young man.—Clio (Ala.) Free Press.

Willing to Try It.

"A fool and his money are soon parted," quoted the pessimist. "Yes," rejoined the optimist, "but it's worth while being a fool to have the money to part with."—Chicago News.

Family Presence.

Nearly every family picks the wrong member for the fool.—Life.

KING COAL.

While He Lives His Throne Is Fixed in the United States.

The part played by coal in the world's affairs can well be illustrated by assuming the available supply to be suddenly cut off. The huge railroad systems of America would stop at once. So also would the electric power and lighting in all cities and suburbs. Steamship service would cease everywhere. Transit facilities would be dead. Factories, manufacturing and shops would close down. Vast industries like steel, iron, copper, etc., would cease. Armies of laborers would be thrown out of work. Mills, schools, the navy, newspapers, foreign and internal trade—all would cease to exist. The trilogy governing commercial advance, heat, light and power, except a negligible amount of water, oil, etc., would be annihilated—all this until some other form of power could be developed. The possibility of such a cataclysm is not imminent, for coal will reign for some time yet and is destined to become a power whose capabilities have as yet been comparatively felt only more faintly than would a feather on the hide of an elephant.

The world needs coal. The United States has that coal to deliver. It will be wholly natural that so potent a necessity will make for continued peace and understanding among the powers of the world.

The coal mines of Europe are sunk about 3,000 feet deep. Coal is still being quarried on the banks of the Ohio, and the mines of Europe are nearing the limit of commercial possibility. The manufacturing supremacy of the old world is passing to the new. Coal is king, and while he lives his throne is fixed forever in the United States.—Metropolitan Magazine.

EARLY CARICATURES.

Quaint Art and Humor of the Ancient Egyptians.

The fables of Aesop prove that the ancients were not without a liking for fun, and the remains of ancient art tell the same story. Examples of artistic humor are more common than is generally supposed.

A drawing on a tile in the New York museum represents a cat dressed as an Egyptian woman of fashion. She is seated languidly on a chair, slipping wine out of a small bowl and being fanned and offered dainties by an abject looking tomat with his tail between his legs.

The cat figures largely in the ancient comic groups of animal life. In a papyrus in the British museum a duck of geese are being driven by a cat and a herd of goats by two wolves with crooks and wallets. One of the wolves is playing a double pipe.

There is in Turin a papyrus roll that displays a whole series of such comical scenes. In the first place, a lion, a crocodile and an ape are giving a vocal and instrumental concert. Next comes an ass dressed, armed and scented like a pharaoh. With majestic swagger he receives the gifts presented to him by a cat of high degree, to which a bull acts as proud conductor.

A lion and a gazelle are playing at draughts, a hippopotamus is perched in a tree, and a hawk has climbed into the tree and is trying to dislodge him. Another picture shows a pharaoh in the shape of a rat drawn in a carriage by prancing greyhounds. He is proceeding to storm a fort garrisoned by cats having no arms, but teeth and claws, whereas the rats have battle-axes, shields and bows and arrows.—St. Louis Republic.

An Elixir of Life.

"An annuity is the best elixir of life I know of," said the examining physician of an insurance company. "It sometimes seems as if annuitants never die. We have lots on our books who top eighty, ninety and even ninety-five years. I have passed many a sickly and decrepit old fellow as a good annuity risk—the sicker they are, you know, the better risk they make—and the next year he has turned up to collect his annuity rejuvenated, rosy, spry as a boy. The secret? The secret is that financial worry, fear of the poorhouse, ages and kills off more people than all the deadly diseases combined. Release an old man by means of an annuity from all this worry, and he throws off his years and walks erect and happy and fearlessly young."

Hatmaking in the East Indies.
The making of bamboo hats is one of the chief industries of the natives of the East Indies, and quite often the children are more expert than their mothers in weaving the strips together and forming the designs, their fingers being younger and more supple. In transporting the long stalks of bamboo to the factory the natives tie the ends of two stalks together, spread them apart a short distance forward of the center, tie a crosspiece between and carry them on their shoulders.—Popular Mechanics.

Soused.

Wife—My husband came home from the club last night with such a swelled head that I haven't been able to arouse him today. Neighbor—Why don't you try pouring a pitcher of water over his head? Wife—I did that very thing, but the only thing he did was to call out for an umbrella.—Fliegende Blätter.

Love Taps.

Mrs. Jawback—I suppose you consider your judgment far superior to mine. Mr. Jawback—No, my dear. We proved the contrary when we chose to marry each other.—Cleveland Leader.

No one who cannot master himself is worthy to rule.—Goethe.

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