

GUNS FOCUSED ON THE PLANET

Barrister Martin After This
Great Home Journal and
Contemporaries on use
of Word "Fiasco."

Incidentally he "Brick-Bats"
Brer Marx—A Literary Ori-
entation Upon Adaptation of
Foreign Vocabulary.

Editor of The Planet:

Sir, re the word "fiasco," I can assure The Planet that the intelligent people of Chatham were highly satisfied with, and approved of the views I expressed as to this child of Sunny Italy. I gave two definite examples in The Planet showing where the word "fiasco" was properly used, and where it was not. I backed up the faith that was in me with a challenge and \$50 worth of the great O'Brien Bros. cigars. The question at issue is clearly stated in your paper. Now, this challenge is still open, not only to Marx, but to The Planet and all the other great journals it quotes as using the word "fiasco" regarding the financial failure of the Pan-American. Whatever else Marx is, or is not, he certainly has all the shrewd subtle cunning of his ancient race; and he had too much respect for his shakels to accept my challenge. Instead of promptly taking up the gauntlet, he throws at me Aesop's long-legged jack, old hen and lame raven—and he is now very sorry he spoke.

Why, Marx referred the question to myself perhaps before it was submitted to any one else, and I candidly confess that at the time, I thought he was right and so told him. But, the question has a fascinating interest to me as it was right in line with one of my favorite studies. For several days and nights I studied its history, philology, original meaning and the road it traversed into the English language; the net result being—based at every step upon authorities—that I was compelled to modify my former opinion, given upon the spur of the moment, and to declare—as I now again do—that while this word was perfectly justifiable and grammatical in the sense used by Marx, it was not the best "chosen word." I stand upon that high pedestal now. It is Alexander the Great.

AGAINST THE WHOLE WORLD.
Any one who wants 2,000 good O'Brien cigars can have them on the terms of my challenge. So, that it is now a question of putting up or shutting up. I have a large section of a quaint old library to back me up, that will weigh far heavier with the selected judge than the "copy" of the bean reporters of all the newspapers on earth. The journals quoted, viz., The Planet, prove nothing but that—that a purely foreign word adopted into the English language, and having in its home idiom a technical definite meaning is very liable to be misapplied and pitched into all kinds of uses by its adopted mother—the English—or rather by the rank and file of English writers. But, when a foreign word is brought into Court to have its proper meaning and use judicially analyzed and expounded, the decision of the Court will often rudely brush aside many cherished preconceived notions of even highly educated people regarding a word and its proper use and abuse; and will restore and restrict the word to its original and proper meaning. Here is just where my victory—hands down—is going to come in. Have we not a good, nay! an expensive example in Ontario of the "not well chosen word" in nearly all the present Government's "fiasco" statutes.

GOVERNMENT SCORED.

The number of "fiasco" words misapplied and misappropriated by the Ross Government stand to cost this good Province half a million of dollars. Take the scrap-iron assessments, and those of corporations and railroads, and the "fiasco" words in those crude statutes, supposed to mean something to protect the public were, when laid bare, anatomized, analyzed and criticized by the judicial mind declared to mean something else to rob the people—were not "well chosen words," and this bit of legal information has cost several hundred thousand dollars. Just as it will cost my "fiasco" opponents 2,000 cigars, when the word is reduced to its natural elements by the proposed literary tribunal. I use the word "fiasco" advisedly regarding the Ontario Government. Because it is strongly suspected that in framing the Acts regarding assessments there was a studied purpose and intention to deceive the people and favor the pockets of the vote-giving cowards—the corporations, companies and scrap-iron railways. Never was the word "fiasco" used to better advantage than as to these humbug Acts. Now, The Planet will probably admit that these statutes were drafted and revised by very learned able men—a whole army of belted Esq.—men certainly not inferior in education to the rank and file of journalists, and yet, a word badly, or "not well chosen," here and there in these statutes, either by design or incompetence required the High Courts—at great expense—to properly interpret some innocent looking word that was supposed to be like Marx' "fiasco."



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in its proper place, and the judicial interpretation was a fatal blow and financial loss to the good people of this Province.

Now, there are two well defined rules known to literary men, governing foreign words introduced into our language. The first—where a foreign word is added to the English, and the spelling and pronunciation are changed or modified, as is very largely done with French words; then we are at liberty to not only appropriate the original meaning of the word, but to greatly add to it meanings of our own. The second—That when a foreign word is borrowed into English, boots and breeches, without the slightest change as to spelling or pronunciation, then, that word is strictly to preserve its own native, technical meaning in its integrity, without any addition or modification. Now, let us apply the latter rule to "fiasco." "Fiasco" is purely an Italian word, having a definite, subtle, terse meaning in the mouth of an Italian, that is absolutely impossible to translate properly into our own language by the use of any one word. It would require a long English sentence to give a proper definition of this subtle word, and even then, its pith and beauty would be greatly marred in the translation. So, that it was considered wisdom to leave the newly introduced word exactly its home dress and meaning.

HISTORY OF A WORD.

How did the word "fiasco" come into our language? I will tell you the whole story. The Italians are great music-loving and theatre-going people. The little Italian kid—boy or girl—is turned out upon the street, about as soon as it can walk, with a musical instrument in its little hand and told to earn its own living by playing and singing. Some of the world's greatest actors and singers were bred in this kindergarten music school. Well, the Italians by the thousand went to London and other large English cities. Of course they crowded the theatres and playhouses, and whenever an actress or actor undertook to play some part or sing, and the Italians saw they were incapable and making a botch of it, these dusky children of the south—good critics, too—instead of hissing or whistling and making an unearthly noise with their feet, would simply yell out, "Ola! ola! fiasco." In other words; a bad, bad fake, or humbug. The English could not imagine what this playhouse word meant. As a natural consequence, after a while they found out; the word "took" as the saying is, and before long, when the Italians yelled out the cue and joined them. The word in that sense bore.

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came very popular, although it is now all but obsolete, and when used now it is generally in a sense entirely foreign to its real, genuine and original meaning.

THE THUNDERER WITH HIM.

The London Times and myself are very likely of the same opinion as to the meaning of this word. You will notice a wonderful difference between the word used by the Times and those used by the other journals you mention. The Times says, the "conditions" which resulted in making the enterprise the financial fiasco it proved. Just watch the word "conditions." The Times no doubt heard—what is now openly alleged—that the syndicate who operated the big show, scamped the exhibition, and did not deliver the goods they contracted for with a dishonest view to rake in the supposed immense receipts, which did not materialize, and hence got fooled, and lost heavily themselves. If this is true, it certainly was a financial fiasco, a humbug and a fake, and I have no doubt but the other journals quoted by The Planet, spoke of it from this point of view. But there was no suspicion of anything wrong when Marx first used the word.

Now, I am going to offset against all these authorities one greater than the whole of them all in ahead—Hon. John Morley. Sir John Morley is not only a philosopher and great statesman, but he is the acknowledged literary colossus of Great Britain. He is the friend and biographer of that other greatest of all statesmen and scholars—William Ewart Gladstone. In a lecture given in Leeds, I think, Hon. John Morley used those words touching the war in Africa,—"It is evident the Boers are struggling for what they believe to be their rights. There will be no glory for the British arms in any event of the struggle; and even with the final acquisition of the country, its diamond and gold mines, it will prove a great financial loss."

Goodness gracious!

WHERE WAS BRER MARX with his little "fiasco" up his sleeve when the great orator missed it in describing the financial failure? And remember, too, that the living representative of Addison and Lord Macaulay writes out his lectures and practically reads them. Why did he not use the word "fiasco" instead of "loss"? Just because he knew the literary distinction between the two words, and he used the "well chosen" one. Then, Lord Rosebery, another of Britain's great scholars and statesmen, said lately in Edinburgh,—"The spectacle of a few half-starved, half-naked bands in South Africa continuing a forlorn struggle with 200,000 well trained and provisioned British troops is surely what may be well termed in war, a fiasco." These two elegantly expressed examples of the proper use of the word "fiasco" are just in line with the two I have already published in The Planet. Where, O, where, are all your journalists after this? And Marx is hiding behind the woodshed.

For general information for the people, I admit that our newspapers are the greatest educative power on this planet. Like Lord Bacon's "Novum Organum," while our press—and I certainly include The Planet and the Banner-News—don't assume to give the motor power to move this earth, they certainly do supply the dynamic force to the minds that do move it. But as to questions of literature, science, theology and arts, I think our greatest journalists will candidly admit that there are others, specially equipped, who are more competent to decide these questions. To sum up, I say that the word "fiasco" should never be used as to the financial result of anything that is honorable, legitimate and moral. It is properly used in reference to anything ridiculous, a fake or humbug. This is its native Italian meaning, and no one has a right to misuse it in any other sense. Now, in some quarters, it is supposed that I entered into this discussion with Uncle Marx. I did nothing of the kind. I don't go gunning after jackrabbits when there are moose and great Bengal tigers in my back yard. I attacked The Planet, and while taking a long-Tom dewily aim at the clever young editor of that great home journal, Brer Marx, like an ominous, ill-omened bird of night, came athwart my line of vision, and, of course, I had to topple him over with a strayed brick-bat; and he has since rested pretty quietly in the bosom of his father—Abraham. I now amend my challenge slightly by adding the following—"For the purpose of decision it is admitted that the Pan-American was a bona fide, honestly conducted exhibition, and each party is to be at liberty to submit a written argument and authorities." In conclusion, will The Planet kindly remind my friend, Herr Marx, that I am at home to my literary friends two days each day of the week, and two Sundays a week as well.

Nov. 19, 1901.

GLENWOOD.

Joe and John Shepley spent Sunday with relatives in Cedar Springs. Wm. Smith is quite ill.

Mr. and Miss Dickson, of Highgate, were the guests of Miss M. Gordon on Sunday.

P. J. McGee was in Chatham on Saturday.

Alf. Hickey, of Walkerville, spent a few days with friends in the village this week.

R. Park, I. P. S., paid a visit to our school last week.

MULL.

The Lord's Supper was observed in Bethel church last Sunday.

Wm. Taylor has returned home from Manitoba, where he has been staying for some months.

James Ion is very ill with an attack of la grippe.

A large number attended a dance given at H. W. Titus' last Thursday evening. G. W. Martin and Norman Cooper furnished the music.

Norman McEachern has purchased 50 acres of land in Alborough. His many friends wish him prosperity in his new home.

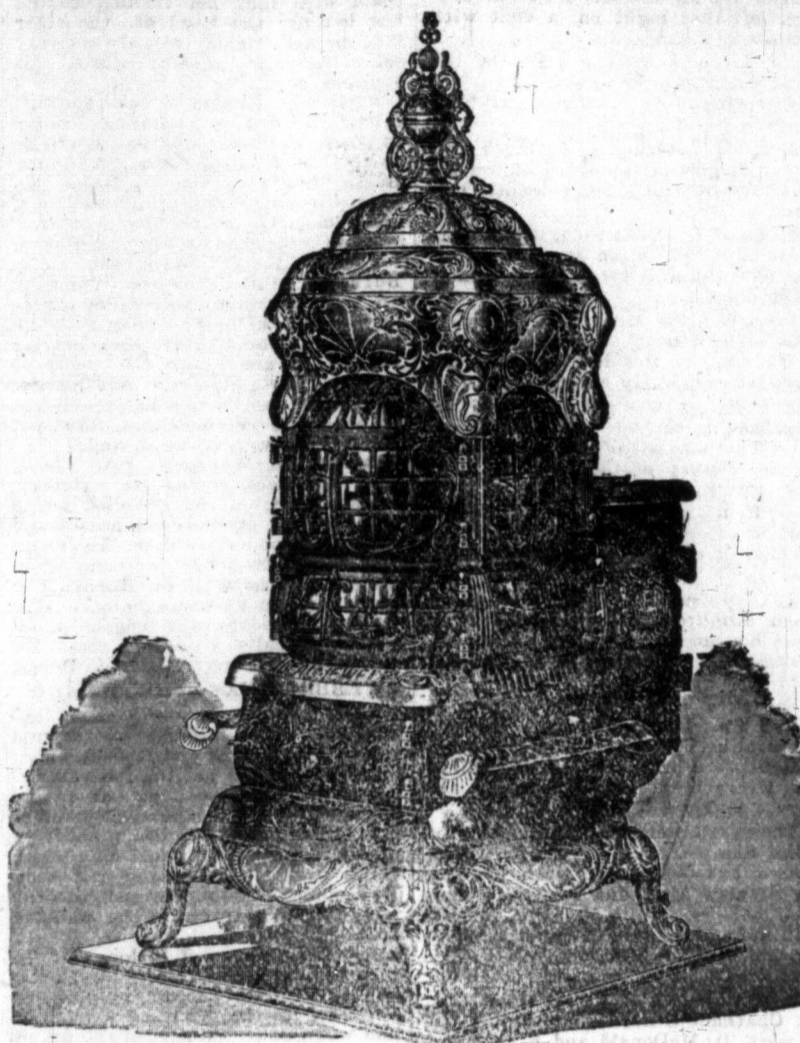
Will Houston, of Raleigh, is apprentice to W. D. Nicholson at the village Smithy.

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