



Mary Arden's Cottage, Wilmcote.

### The Origin of Some Odd Expressions.

The phrase "mad as a hatter" really means as venomous as a viper. "Mad as a hatter" is simply a corruption of an ancient form, "Mad as an atter, or adder."

Until the day of aquariums it was a somewhat difficult matter to observe a living herring. It is a fish that dies instantly on being taken from its native element. Among fishermen first arose the expression, "Dead as a herring."

The phrase "He's a brick" originated from an Eastern ruler, who while visiting a neighboring principality asked his host to show him the fortifications. Waving his hand towards his troops, which were drawn up in soldierly array, the prince said to his guest, "These are my fortifications; every man is a brick."

An official of the Smithsonian Institution was speaking of the origin of some well-known phrases, and pointed to a

small mounted bird. This bird was French grey on the back, drab breast, black wings, and with a small but conspicuous white spot at the base of the tail. "That is a wheatear," the official said. "It is very common in Scotland, where it is known as the 'clacharan.' It is from this bird that we get the expression, 'showing the white feather.' You will notice the location of the only white feathers on its body—they can be seen only when the bird is flying away from you."

The phrase, "When you are in Rome do as the Romans do," is traced to a saying of St. Ambrose. He was once consulted by a woman who asked him whether or not it was right to feast on Saturday in Milan, since in Rome the day was held as a fast day. The saint could do no better than to give her the advice which he followed himself, "for," said he, "when I go to Rome I fast on Saturday as they do in Rome, but when I am here I do not fast."