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OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

The Punishments of the Past—Conditions That the British People Have Outgrown in Treating Criminals.

Returning to the quaint diary of old Fisherton, Wiltshire, we find a note in 1826 of a pauper eighty-five years old being charged with refusing to work. On being convicted he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment and to be once privately whipped.

Marianne Moore was tried in 1829 for felony in the house of the lady milliner to whom she was servant, and had a narrow escape. The peculiarity in the case was that by an Act of Parliament passed in the previous year (Peel's Act) private stealing in a dwelling house was rendered capital, if to the amount of five pounds. When the five sovereigns were weighed one of them proved to be of light weight, and the capital charge was therefore abandoned.

Death penalties were then so common that in 1830 Baron Vaughan pointed out that of fifty-four cases to come before him there were only seven which were not capital.

A man believing that the sale of a wife publicly in the market place with a halter round her neck would have the full force of a divorce legally obtained, took his wife (equally willing to try a change of circumstances) into the public market at Melksham, and there disposed of her for two shillings and sixpence to a man named William Watts. The couple were committed to prison for the offence, but Watts was acquitted.

An extraordinary conspiracy was unearthed in 1836. Two brothers in association with a woman carried on prosecutions of felony in Dorset, Somerset and Gloucester. The whole of the evidence was fabricated, the alleged for such prosecutions.

A curious point of law arose in 1837. James Curtis and Ann Pontin were indicted for having stolen what was described as being mutton. The counsel objected that in anything stolen it was a sheep, of which there was abundant evidence to have convicted them. They were both acquitted on this plea.

An ordinary case of robbery obtained some importance in 1838, by reason of an underlying romance, as will be seen in the following story—

"George Thorne was indicted for stealing a quantity of bristles, the property of his employer, John Wilkins, of Westbury. It appears that Thorne was engaged by Wilkins as a foreman, and received £100 salary, profits of sale amounted to a certain sum he should receive fifty per cent. upon the profits. A great many parcels of bristles having been missed, Mr. Wilkins marked some packages and sent them with lavender water. These, being also very shortly missed, were traced to the possession of Thorne. (It is necessary here to premise that it is the custom in many shops to allow the employed to purchase anything they may want for their own use, without paying for it at the time, and at the cost price, in the day book, the credit of the master.) Thorne had kept company with a Miss Rymer, a young lady possessing considerable property, and to whom he was shortly to have been united, the wedding day being fixed, and a handsomely furnished house prepared. While in prison, Thorne bethought himself of the following ingenious plan (which had great probability of succeeding) to obtain his acquittal. He had received a letter from Miss Rymer, on a vacant corner of this he wrote an account of all the articles found at his lodgings, charging himself with them as a debtor to his master. This he privately contrived to send to Miss Rymer, with instructions how to act; and she soon after found means to have this paper placed among some other papers and things under the desk in Mr. Wilkins' shop. This being accomplished, it was then, for the first time, stated that he had charged himself with the various articles and had left a memorandum to that effect upon the desk. Search being accordingly made, the identical slip of paper was found; but suspicion arising, application was made to the governor of the goal, who caused all Thorne's papers to be seized, and among them was still preserved the letter of Miss Rymer, with the corner torn off, and to which the piece found in the shop exactly corresponded (that this letter had been destroyed in all probability the prisoner would have been acquitted). Miss Rymer's regard for the prisoner so far overcame every prudent or upright feeling as to induce her to swear that the paper on which she wrote her account was given her by the prisoner before he went to prison—that the letter was so mutilated when she wrote it—and that she remarked to her father that such was the case, and that when the letter was found it could be partly read which induced her consequently to make a parcel of it. The father also swore that he recollected his daughter saying she had written a letter on a sheet of paper much torn, and that she subsequently recalled the circumstance to his memory. The governor of the prison, however, swore that the letter was not so mutilated when he read it, previously to delivering it to the prisoner. The calm and attentive conduct of Miss Rymer throughout created unusual interest, cheering the prisoner with her looks and supplying the counsel with occasional information.

Some Chartists riots in 1840 sent a batch of prisoners for trial at the Lent Assizes, when the accused were ordered to be fined and imprisoned. Poaching was one of the most heinous offences. Three men were in 1846 transported for twenty years. Baron Rolfe, in sentencing them, remarked "That he saw enough to convince him that they were all idle fellows, spending their time in poaching and drunkenness. He would, however, take care that for the remainder of their days they should not taste a drop of liquor, or have one moment of idleness, as slaves in a distant land."

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Swaying Chimneys.

A chimney 115 feet high will sway ten inches in a high wind without danger.

The Word "Meander."

The word "meander" comes from the river of the same name, whose course was so devious that it furnished nearly every modern language with a new word.

Fogier Than London.

Esquimaux is the only place in the British empire that exceeds London in cloudiness. Esquimaux is also the dampest place in the empire, while Adelaide, in Australia, is the driest. Ceylon is the hottest and northwest Canada the coldest possession that the British flag floats over.

A Monster Petition.

The biggest petition ever presented to the English parliament was the Chartists' petition in 1848. It bore 5,706,000 signatures.

The Rose Tree Record.

Six thousand is the record number of roses produced by one tree at a time. This was in Holland, on Mme. Regnew's land. A Marechal Niel at Whitby has had 3,500 blooms on it at the same time.

Venetian Glassworkers.

Most persons employed in the Venetian glass industry begin to lose their sight when they are between forty and fifty years of age and in a short time become totally blind. This blindness is caused by the excessive heat and glare from the glass furnaces.

Hindoo and Meat.

The Hindoos are said to regard us as no better than cannibals because we eat meat.

China's Moon Guitar.

The yuekin, or moon guitar, of China has four strings, tuned in pairs at intervals of the fifth. The drum is usually decorated with Chinese figures in various grotesque positions.

Hairbrushes.

Hairbrushes should be washed in strong, tepid soda water, then rinsed in clean cold water and placed in the air—not in the sun—to dry.

A Singular Notice.

Previous to the visit of James I. to the University of Cambridge, in 1615, the vice chancellor issued a notice to the students which enjoined that "No graduate, scholar or student of this University presume to take tobacco in Saint Marie's Church, upon Payne of final expelling the University."

Snow Crystals.

There have been noted 151 different forms of snow crystals.

Like Nile Mud.

The Nile mud, which renders Egypt a habitable country, is said to bear a striking resemblance to that which every season is brought down by the Missouri.

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CURE SICK HEADACHE.

PASSING OF OLD PLAYHOUSES.

London Theatres that Are No Longer in Existence.

Theatres and places of amusement are very like human beings—they have their births and deaths, and very often their marriages. The marriages (or amalgamations) and deaths are not as frequent as births. Some think the births are too prolific and speak of a surplus population of playhouses. Comparing the millions of to-day with the thousands of Shakespeare's time, the places where "stage plays" were represented were more numerous three centuries and a half ago than they are in the reign of King Edward VII., writes John Hollingshead in London Sketch.

Among the few London theatres that have left a substantial architectural record behind them to keep their memory green, the chief is the Pantheon, in Oxford street, which, after transforming itself into a bazaar of the Swiss type, was acquired by the great wine merchants, Messrs. Gilbey, and presents the same front as it did in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The Pantheon was started to be the great rival of the King's Theatre, in the Haymarket, at a time when Italian opera had partly got over the narrow-minded prejudices of the London cockney, when the humor of calling every tenor or soprano Signor or Signora Spallini was getting a little threadbare, and Italian ballet dancing had almost ceased to be compared with the strolling of a pair of compasses across the stage.

Next to go was the Milton street (ancient Grub street) Theatre just outside the City Wall at Cripplegate, and at the back of old Morrison's great soft goods emporium in Fore street. It has a few interesting records worth searching for, and in one instance of a theatre turned into a chapel.

An opposite instance is that of the old Court Theatre, at Chelsea, now supplanted by "residential chambers," which was a chapel before it became a theatre under the late Miss Litton's tactful management.

Among the old theatres which have turned their backs on the drama and welcomed the tenancy of the Young Men's Christian Association ("Y.M.C.A.") is the "City of London" (so called), which clung to the borders of the city. It was largely used as a "starring" house, and here I saw Elton, the celebrated legitimate actor, a short time before his fatal voyage across the Atlantic.

"Astley's" after a long period of depression, finally fell into the hands of those very "superior" landlords, the ecclesiastical commissioners. They have left the public its broad (panem) in pure modern slang for the "staff of life," but they have taken away its circus. The site is now devoted to cheap boot stores, cheap tailors, cheap fruit stores, cheap hats and cheap food—

But alter and tinker the sight as they will, the scene of the saddest will cling to it still.

Within the last few years several familiar theatres have been doomed—the Olympic bought by private treaty by the London County Council, and the Opera Comique, bought after a semi-judicial investigation, "Toole's" (which has had more names during its short career than any other house) has been absorbed by the Charing Cross Hospital; the Tottenham street Theatre, with its unique record, the Amphitheatre in Holborn, which has become the chief depot of a general carrier, and the "Holborn" (also in Holborn), which is now a portion of the First Avenue (Gordon's) Hotel.

In a short time the Globe Theatre (34 years old) will be cleared by the London County Council for the new street subject. "Old Lyons Inn," which was cleared in the middle of the sixties for an Anglo-American Hotel that ended in a site half covered with a speculative builder's failure, would have afforded good house room for a spacious central theatre; but it was cut up into two theatres, built side by side, like Siamese twins, having many defects and few merits.

The Globe was the best twin—a house in which the "line of sight" was happy—and the Opera Comique the original home of Gilbert-Sullivan opera, was a house that ought never to have been licensed.

Side by side with the vanishing of the Globe Theatre (not without history) comes the transformation of Niagara Hall, in York street, Westminster, into a show bazaar for electric coaches.

Niagara began as a panorama building, and will end its amusement career as a skating rink. The King and Queen visited it a few weeks ago as a rink, having before visited it to see "The Falls of Niagara." It was opened in 1888. To build the hall five houses had to be bought and pulled down. One of these was the house in which John Milton lived and wrote for a time, which is now partially absorbed by Niagara Hall and the new block of Queen Anne's mansions.

This house came into the possession of Jeremy Bentham, the utilitarian philosopher, who let it first to James Mill, the historian of British India (the father of John Stuart Mill, the political economist), and afterward to William Hazlitt, the essayist and dramatic critic. There are about 14 York streets in London and Westminster, but probably not one with such an interesting record.

Unappreciated Dignity.

Andrew Lang tells this story: "As to asking for votes, one would feel like Abernethy—I think it was he—who stood for a professorship in Edinburgh. He had to canvass a ballie who was a grocer. The ballie had an attitude dignified. 'You have come, young sir, in this crevice of your career to ask for my vote for the chair of toxicology?' No," said Abernethy, "I have come to ask for a penny's worth of your figs. Put them up, and look smart about it."

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