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### What Is An Epigram?

(Letters to Gog and Magog, by John O'London.)

Gentlemen, I have been taking epigrams in the last few days as a tonic; they are safer than tablets and more easily swallowed. What is an Epigram? The epigram says:

What is an epigram? A dwarfish whole; Its body brevity and wit its soul.

Coleridge wrote that. It is but a thin account of a literary form which has great antiquity and has been put to every kind of use from the most sacred to the most trivial. At root an epigram is simply an inscription, and it may be an epitaph. It was to be cut in stone or metal, hence its brevity. To the Greeks an epitaph was really an epigram on a tomb. Plato's lines, exquisitely translated by Shelley,

Thou wert the morning star among the living  
Ere thy fair light had died;  
Now, having died, thou art, as  
Hesperus, giving  
New splendour to the dead,

was to them both epigram and epitaph; in either case it was a beautiful poem in one stanza. But Coleridge was thinking of the old Latin epigram which some have attributed to Martial without warrant:—

Omne epigramma sit instar apis: sit  
aculeus illi; sit et corporis exigui,  
which has been rendered:—

Bees and epigrams should, if they are  
not to fail,  
Have honey, small frames, and a  
string in the tail.

On this definition Mr. Aubrey Stewart, in his delightful little anthology, "English Epigrams and Epitaphs," remarks justly: "It is not applicable to the classic Greek Latin method, but well describes the Italian, the Spanish, and the French, the stretch, the not very pointed wit in this line of some classic German authors." The English epigram has a wider range. Mr. Stewart's little volume is a treasure of pre-war publishing. It was issued by Messrs. Chapman and Hall twenty-three years ago. I picked up a copy the other day in its limp leather binding, and was caressing its beautiful pages and type when a friend proposed to give me a fifty per cent. profit on my bargain. As I had paid only a shilling, this munificent offer did not tempt me.

When Adam Deided.  
The first English epigram quoted by Mr. Stewart is the famous fourteenth-century couplet:—

When Adam deided and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?

Is he right in attributing it to that "mad priest of Kent" who engineered the insurrection of Wat Tyler, John Ball? It seems to have had a Latin original, which Ball may have translated as above. Mad as he was called, "it was in the preaching of John Ball (says Green) that English first listened to the knell of feudalism and the declaration of the rights of man."

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A spirit fatal to the whole system of the Middle Ages breathed in the popular rhyme which condensed the levelling doctrine of John Ball: "When Adam deided and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" It is certain that these words obtained a permanent lodgment in English ears, and to-day many people know them who have hardly heard of Magna Charta. The Epigram, then, can be a social gospel.

### Epigrams of Revolt.

Indeed, it is often a gospel. Not very different in tone is the couplet written by Sir John Harrington—"that saucy poet, my godson," as Queen Elizabeth called him:—

Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?  
If it doth prosper, none dare call it treason.

a truth which has lost none of its application in recent years. It was Harrington, by the way, who wrote one of the first, if not the first, English epigram on the enclosure of commons:—

A Lord that purposed for his more avail,  
To compass in a common with a rail,  
Was reckoning with his friend about the cost  
And charge of every rail and every post;  
But he (that wished his greedy humour crossed)  
Said, Sir, provide your posts, and  
without failing  
Your neighbours round about will find you railing.

This is exactly what is happening to-day on the South Downs, though there the railing is provided rather by visitors than the Down-dwellers. The true form of the well-known modern epigram on the same subject appears to be this:—

'Tis bad enough, in man or woman,  
To steal a goose from off a common;  
But surely he's without excuse  
Who steals the common from the goose.

This is marked Anonymous My Mr. Stewart, and I doubt very much whether it can be traced to Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law Rhymist, to whom my confrere, "Jackdaw," was inclined last week to attribute it. As early as 1804 it was being quoted, and Elliott was then only twenty-four; his "Rhymes" did not appear until 1831.

Dr. Johnson considered that Dr. Doddridge's family motto, "Dum Vivimus Vivamus" (while we live let us enjoy life), was not very suitable for a Christian divine, but that his rendering of it was one of the finest epigrams in the English language.

Live while you live, the epicure would say,  
And seize the pleasure of the fleeting day;  
Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,  
And give to God each moment as it flies.  
Lord, in my view let both united be,  
I live in pleasure while I live to Thee.

On a less exalted plane of philosophy are the well-known lines:—

'Tis an excellent world that we live in,  
To lend, to spend, or to give in;  
But to borrow or beg, or get a man's own,  
'Tis the worst world that ever was known.

This has been attributed to "Hudibras" Butler, and to the Earl of Rochester. The epigram has played an interesting and mordant part in literary criticism. Dryden used it nobly in the lines that he wrote to appear under Milton's portrait:—

Three Poets, in three distant ages  
born,  
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.  
The first, in loftiness of thought surpass'd;  
The next in majesty; in both the last,  
The force of Nature could no further pass;  
To make a third, she joined the former two.

In his fine collection, "The Epigrammatists," the Rev. H. P. Dodd remarks that Dryden probably knew and developed a Latin couplet, written by

# SOLVE THESE RIDDLES WIN THIS CAR

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When a bear goes into a dry-goods store what does he want?



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What is it that every living person has seen but will never see again?



Answer  
**DRY E YEAST**

What is that which you break by just naming it?



Answer  
**ICE LENS**

What is the difference between a 1920 dime and an 1899 cent?



Answer  
**NICE NETS N**

HERE are four riddles for boys and girls with wise heads. We told the artist to draw the pictures to represent the riddles, but he guessed the right answers—and put them in too! So we barred him from the contest and told him to keep it a secret. Luckily, he got the answers all jumbled up, so you won't be any the wiser. If you can unscramble the jumbled letters beneath each riddle picture and put them in their right order to spell the right words, you will have the right answers. It isn't an easy task. Good thinking, patience and perseverance may find you the answers. Try it. If you think you have found the answers, write them carefully on a sheet of white paper. Put on nothing but your four answers and your name and address in the upper right-hand corner of the page. Handwriting, spelling, punctuation and general neatness will count if more than one answer is correct. We will write and tell you immediately if you are correct, and send you a handsome illustrated list of all the prizes that you can win.

What Others Have Done YOU Can Do

Here are the names of only a few of the boys and girls to whom we have already awarded big prizes:  
Earl J. Beattie, Surf Inlet, B.C. Chummy Racer, Value \$250.00  
Harry Dwyer, Elgin, Ont. Typewriter  
Helen Smith, Edmonton, Alta. Seven-jewelled Watch  
Beatrice Hughes, Hazenmore, Sask. Shetland Pony and Carriage  
Lyle Benson, Hamilton, Ont. \$100.00 Cash  
Helen Bengsch, Junkins, Alta. \$50.00 Cash  
Bernice Mellett, Amport, Ont. \$25.00 Cash  
Bryden Foster, Leamington, Alta. \$150.00 Cash  
Frankie Kirby, Three Hills, Alta. \$25.00 Eastman Kodak  
Mary Proctor, Vancouver, B.C. \$15.00 Bracket Watch  
Eva Carson, North Bay, Ont. \$10.00 Doll and Carriage  
The contest will close on June 20, 1921, at 5:30 p.m. We will send you the names of many others too. Only boys and girls 17 years of age and under may send answers, and each boy and girl will be required to perform a small service for us. Send your answers this very evening to  
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Selvaggi, which has been rendered:—

Greece boasts her Homer, Rome her Virgil's name,  
But England's Milton vies with both in fame.

It was Pope who wrote:—

Sir, I admit your general rule  
That every poet is a fool;  
But you yourself may serve to show it  
That every fool is not a poet.

Mr. Stewart, however, points out that this is really a translation of an old French epigram.

Mr. Leach Made a Speech.

The Law and the Universities have been hot-beds of epigram. A very curious example is Sir George Rose's "Record of a Case." It originated in the request of a law-reporter who, when called away from the court, asked Mr. Rose to make a note of anything important that might occur in his absence. On his return he found the following in his note-book:—

Mr. Leach made a speech  
Angry, neat, and wrong;  
Mr. Hart, on the other part,  
Was learned, dull, and long;  
Mr. Trower spoke for an hour,  
And then sat down quite hot;  
Mr. Bell spoke very well.  
Though nobody knew about what;  
Mr. Parker made the case darker,  
Which was dark enough without;  
Mr. Cooke cited a book.  
And the Chancellor said, "I doubt."

The Chancellor was Lord Eldon, and "I doubt" was his favourite expression. Mr. Leach afterwards became Master of the Rolls and Mr. Hart Vice-Chancellor of Ireland. The peculiarities of all the men named are faithfully recorded. When this epigram became public it was repeated everywhere, and soon came round to Eldon, who a few weeks later dismissed a case which Rose had argued very earnestly before him with the waggish remark, "The judgment must be against your clients; and here, Mr. Rose, the Chancellor does not doubt."

One of the best of all Oxford epigrams is anonymous, and concerns the inexhaustible personality of Dr. Jowett:—

I am the Reverend Benjamin Jowett,  
What there is to know I know it;  
I am the Head of Balliol College,  
And what I don't know isn't know-ledge.

The writing of epigrams is one of the finest of literary exercises.  
I am, gentlemen,  
Yours faithfully,  
JOHN O'LONDON.

Minard's Liniment Co., Limited.  
Gents.—A customer of ours relieved a very bad case of distemper in a valuable horse by the use of MINARD'S LINIMENT.  
Yours truly,  
VILANDIE FRERES.

### The Sailor's Chantey.

The term "chantey" is given only to the work-songs used on a vessel. It is admitted to have been taken from the French word "chanter." The man elected a leader, a "chanter-man," was expected to extemporize and to give the passing events in rhythm to the song. The true chantey is a folk-song. It is difficult to trace the melodies. Cecil Sharp declares the sailors' chantey to be the last of the labor songs to survive in England. Every country has its group of sea songs, but England has the greater number. The sea-chantey does not possess the historical value that is admitted the folk-songs of the soil. There is marked rhythm and melody, but the words are as a rule nonsensical. In many of the songs they are in keeping with the early times when grog was king, and the humor is rough and the text vulgar. A large number are found, however, in a sentimental vein.

### The Oldest I. O. U.

An unpaid note for four shekels in silver, bearing 40 per cent. annual interest for nearly 4,000 years, was found recently among the clay tablets at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. The note, was given by a man named Bur-Mama to Il Sinnutun, in October, 1922 B.C., the year in which King Im-Sin occupied the town of Dur-Damigilisha. There were four witnesses to the note. Instead of signatures the witnesses placed their seals on the document, and were not liable for payment unless it was shown they knew the character of Bur-Mama was bad when they swore it was good. A shekel of silver at the time the note was made was equal to about \$100 at the present time.

### Poverty in Australia.

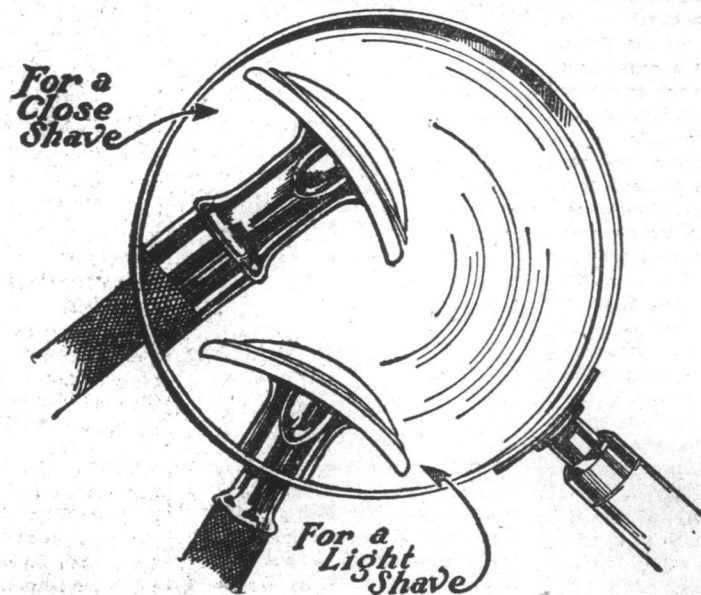
Water will not run up hill, and every tradesman and shopkeeper raises his prices, as his wages bill increases. Some people might say that in such circumstances the only real remedy is economy. But such people evidently do not grasp the depth and intensity of

the general poverty of the community. The evidences are piled up on every hand. Drapers bargain sales are everywhere crowded with female purchasers; picture shows in profusion are crammed with audiences; trotting meetings are nightly attended by thousands; and race meetings are patronized more freely than ever. The trams are packed closer and tighter than ever with people who have evidently lost the capability of walking a mile.—Perth (Australia) Western Mail.

**Cope Bananas, Cucumbers, Racoanuts, Grape Fruit, whole-sale and retail, at GLEESON'S, 108 Water St.—Feb13.f.t.t**

### Which Explained It.

The Vicar was addressing the children at the village school.  
"This morning, children, I propose to offer you an epitome of the life of St. Paul. Now, children, can anyone tell me what an epitome is?"  
There was an awful silence. The word had paralyzed the youngsters, so the good man went on:—  
"Epitome, children, is, in its signification, synonymous with synopsis!"



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### Why, Indeed!

Youngsters have curious ideas about age—rather surprising to their elders. Little Marie was sitting on her grandfather's knee one day, and after looking at him intently for a time, she said: "Grandpa, were you in the Ark?"  
"Certainly not, my dear," answered the astonished old man.  
"Then why weren't you drowned?"

### Wanted Them at Last.

An old couple had saved hard all their lives and with the money had bought a beautifully furnished house. One day the old woman missed her man and called out to him:—  
"Where are you, Thomas? Not on the couch, I hope!"  
"No, on the floor."  
"Not on that carpet!" came in tones of anguish.  
"No; I've rolled it up!"—Western Veteran.

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