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The gravest beast is the Ass; the gravest bird is the Owl;  
The gravest fish is the Oyster; the gravest man is the Fool.

## A Baby Elephant.

The celebrated White Elephant attached to Messrs. TILLEY & Co's Dominion Circus has brought forth a dear little calf. This interesting event took place at St. Catharines, a few weeks ago. The offspring, which has been christened the "Rag baby," is doing as well as could be expected, and promises to be as large and white and clever an animal as the N. P. itself. It is of course somewhat feeble as yet, but under the tender and even affectionate care of ISAAC BUCHANAN, Captain WYNE and Master WALLACE, who have undertaken to rear it, it will soon be strong and hearty. Its principal food is hair-brains stewed with clap trap, and fortunately this country affords an unlimited supply.

## Grip's Historical Readings.

EMBRACING NOTICES OF GREAT EVENTS AND CELEBRATED MEN.

## II.—THE SIGNING OF MAGNA CHARTA.

On the death of RICHARD I. (him who cured de lion), the crown of England was laid upon a sideboard until little Prince ARTHUR should have been measured for a suit of clothes to go through the coronation ceremony with, but in the meantime, a mean man, named JOHN, meanly seized the bauble and put it on his own head. He subsequently requested a party named HUBERT to scar ARTHUR'S eye out, but HUBERT couldn't see it. JOHN then proceeded with his reign under the name, style and firm of King JOHN. Some historians give him the surname of LACKLAND, because he didn't own much real estate, notwithstanding that he had plenty of opportunities of robbing the public till. He really was a poor man (comparatively) and it's greatly to his credit, under the circumstances. We opine, however, that if JOHN had any surname at all it was probably AMICDONALD, or should have been. It is not our intention in the present brief paper to enlarge upon the character and career of this King JOHN; we intend to confine our remarks to the circumstances attending his memorable and most gracious act—the signing of *Magna Charta*.

The reader may perhaps be aware that, previous to the signing of this grand document, the people of England didn't enjoy much more civil and religious liberty than

the people of the United States do to-day, who have emigrated from China. The prerogatives of the Crown were not clearly defined, which was a constant source of trouble to the French members, and often sent the party papers into fits. Former kings had shamefully abused their constitutional privileges, and ground the people under the iron heel of tyranny. King JOHN, however, was "England's greatest statesman," as well as a truly good man, and he was determined that the Barons and the rest of the folks should suffer wrong no longer. He determined to give them *Magna Charta*—which should be a guaranty of liberty for all time. To accomplish this desirable end, JOHN set himself in opposition to the popular will, and endeavored to surpass all his predecessors as a tyrant and a task-master. He was ten times more high-handed than LETELLIER; and as defiantly regardless of constitutional usage as MOUSSEAU. Of course the good King only did this to impress upon the Barons the necessity of the *Magna Charta*; and at length they became impressed. They called a caucus, Nov. 29, 1214, and drew up a round robin which they determined to present to his Majesty. They shook hands all round and swore that they would see the matter through. Some time after this they laid their demands before the King by a deputation, which was politely introduced by Lord-in-Waiting FRAZER. King JOHN replied in the form of words which is still in use in all our government departments, "I'll take your business into consideration." He didn't believe the Barons were really ripe for *Magna Charta* yet. He said he would see them later, say about the middle of April of the next year; and in the meantime, in order to stir them up to a sense of their true interests, he raised an army of foreign troops to fight them a little. At the appointed time the Barons waited upon King JOHN again, professing to feel exceedingly ready for *Magna Charta*, even if they had to pay for it with a few thousands of lives. The King longed to bestow the Great Charter upon them, but still he thought they were not yet prepared for it, and he felt obliged to decline their pressing invitation. At this point open war ensued, the conduct of the truly good statesman King being entirely misunderstood by the Barons. The overwhelming forces of the latter soon subdued the royal troops, and with unkind rudeness King JOHN was requested to be on hand at Runnymede, on Monday, June 15, to wind up this Charter business. Of course the King was on hand, and gladly signed *Magna Charta*, remarking as he threw down the pen, "With all my heart, gentlemen; why didn't you say so before?" Some historians seek to rob King JOHN of the glory of this noble act. What would not such historians do? They would even deny to Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD the credit of passing Confederation and several other measures which he opposed until further opposition meant a loss of place. Out upon such!

## Shakespearian Readings.

SIR HUGH ALLAN:—Want no money, Sir JOHN, you shall want none.  
—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act ii., Sc. ii.

ALECK PIRIE:—The devil take one Party and his dam the other.  
—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act iv., Sc. v.

HON. ALEX. MACKENZIE: Now my co-mates and brothers in exile,  
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet

Than that of painted pomp?

—*As You Like It*, Act ii., Sc. i.

MOUSSEAU (to LETELLIER): You shall be soon despatched.

—*Henry V.*, Act ii. Sc. iv.

GILMOLR (to DOMVILLE): Ha! o' my life, If I were young again the sword should end it.

—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act i. Sc. i.

HON. DR. TUPPER: Shall I tell a lie? I do despise a liar as I do despise one that is false.

—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act i. Sc. i.

T. THOMPSON OF CARIBOO (rising in the House): If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.

—*Julius Caesar*, Act iii. Sc. ii.

CHORUS OF ALL TORY EDITORS, LED BY TOM WHITE AND CHARLEY MACKINTOSH: Bind the offender, and take him from our presence.

—*Cym.* Act v. Sc. v.

SIR JOHN MACDONALD (to OUVIMET): This speech of yours has moved me.

—*King Lear*, Act v. Sc. iii.

JOSIAH BURR PLUMB: Ay, much is the favor of heaven-bred poesy.

—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act iii., Sc. ii.

LORD CHELMSFORD: O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts!

Possess them not with fear! Take from them now

The sense of reckoning of the opposed numbers!

—*Henry V.*, Act iv., Sc. i.

ARCHBISHOP LYNCH: Approved warriors, and my faithful friends, I have received letters from great Rome.

—*Titus Andronicus*, Act v., Sc. i.

BUNSTER: I am too blunt and saucy.

—*Cym.* Act v., Sc. v.

HON. L. H. HOLTON: Peace, peace, and give experience tongue.

—*Pericles*, Act i., Sc. ii.

RAG MONEY WALLACE: Pray, do not mock me:

I am a very foolish, fowl old man.

—*King Lear*, Act iv., Sc. vii.

HON. MR. MOWAT (at Globe office): Is CAESAR yet gone to the Capitol?

—*Julius Caesar*, Act iii., Sc. i.

GRIP: Let me have men about me that are fat, sleek-headed, and such as sleep o' nights.

—*Julius Caesar*, Act i, Sc. ii.

THEY are beginning to tell HANLAN that the other chap is a HAWDON to beat.

WHEN you offer a tramp bread, and he makes a rye face, you can conclude he prefers whiskey.

JEFF DAVIS is of a forgiving nature.—*N.Y. Herald*. Yes, he was for giving the North fits in the late war.

MR. TILLEY is supposed to be an orderly and well behaved citizen, but by his tax on sugar he undoubtedly encourages the people of this country to raise cane.

WAS the late overwhelming defeat of the Grit Government of Prince Edward Island due mainly to the moral force of the Rev. STEPHEN G. LAWSON'S saintly editorials in the *Presbyterian*?

IS IT true that Mr. AMOR DE COSMOS intends applying to Parliament to have his name amended again, with a view of limiting his "love of the universe" to that portion of it outside the Chinese wall?