

## Gems from Examination Papers.

## A String of Amusing Blunders.

A WRITER in *Blackwood's Magazine* describes "The Philosophy of Blunders" in a paper that is choked with samples of the amusing mistakes made in examination papers:—

"A little boy in the course of his reading lesson came to the word 'widow,' and called it 'window,' a word more familiar to him. The teacher who was acting as examiner, corrected the blunder, and then, wishing to improve the occasion, put the question, 'what is the difference between 'widow' and 'window?' The boy's answer began, 'You can see through a window, but—' and then stopped. The amusement plainly visible on the teacher's face prevented this miniature Sam Weller from completing the contrast.

Some of the most amusing blunders occur in Scripture lessons:—

In rehearsing the story of the Nativity at Bethlehem, the question was put, "Why was there no room in the inn?" "Because it was pay day," came at length from a little fellow, who seemed to know well the appearance of the "inn" on the fortnightly payday in the mining village where he lived.

In a northern Sunday-school, the subject of lesson was the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. "Why did the people strew palm-branches in the way?" asked the teacher. One pupil, impressed no doubt by the hostility of one section of the Jews rather than by the enthusiasm of the other, gave the startling explanation, "To trip the cuddy" (north country for jacks).

Many mistakes occur from similarity between two words, of which the following are instances:—

John Wesley joined the navy in 1779, and by degrees rose to be Duke of Wellington. John Wesley is here, as is not at all uncommon in such papers, confounded with Sir Arthur Wellesley, and the navy has been put in place of the army. A more extreme case of confusion may be added: "Sir Thomas More lived in the reign of William; he was a great poet; some of his poems were 'Celestis in Search of a Wife,' 'Ye Mariners of England,' and 'The Descent of Man.' He was also one of the greatest preachers of his time."

There is more excuse for the youth who replied to another question that:—

"Pym was a companion of Haunspen in the ship called the *Pilgrim Fathers* which sailed to America in 1620," where the confusion of the name given the passengers with that of the ship is responsible for part of the blunder. Even chronology, which is the crammer's strong point, goes astray under the effort to reproduce statements seen somewhere in a text-book. For example, "During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, one of her most able supporters was Cranmer a Protestant. During the reign of Queen Mary, Cranmer was burned for heresy, a statement made by a student who could not possibly be ignorant of the fact that Mary's reign preceded that of Elizabeth.

The slip is evident in "what an Englishwoman would throw away, a Frenchwoman would neutralise in her soup."

The importance of a good water supply is recognised by all the writers, but their remarks regarding this matter are in one or two cases suggestive of sarcasm; for example, "The water that is used is carefully analysed, and when anything is found likely to cause disease it is entirely disregarded;" and "The water communication should be stopped, as water is the greatest carrier of the germs of typhoid fever."

Papers on this subject also contain an unusual proportion of expressions somewhat suggestive of the Emerald Isle; for example, "Every house was not yet infected should be disinfected;" "The body is covered with little holes;" "Girls of all ages;" "The nurse should not mix with anyone except the doctor;" "For tea she might get a little cocoa;" and "One breath of pure morning air is worth a dozen of moonlight." The following is a more detailed example of the same type, the reference being to penny dinners at school: "Each child receives a good deal more than a pennyworth, but the loss is not great when a great many children buy."

But scientific terms are by no means safe from variations, as the two following quotations, this time from the papers of schoolgirls will show: "Car lony cassid" is an unusual but yet recognisable form of carbonic acid. "Lack tail ducks" may not be so easily recognised; one might suppose that it referred to a species of waterfowl, related in some way to the Manx cat, but it is really intended for lacteal ducts. Possibly the functions of these vessels was no less a mystery to the writer than the spelling of their name.

*Anna:* Is it an interesting story?

*Daisy:* Extremely interesting! I don't think I skipped twenty pages.

## Spice Column. A Comfort of Life!



from you."

"Which shall I thank you for first—the service or the compliment?" asked the lady, smilingly.

"Troth, ma'm," said Pat, touching the place where once stood the brim of what once was a beaver, "that look of your beautiful eye thanked me for both."

A PERVERSE WOMAN.—"So Ferguson's wife is dead."

"Yes, she died yesterday."

"She was an awful contrary woman."

"She was that about everything, and she kept it up to the last. In fact, I don't think she would have died at all if it hadn't been for her perverseness."

"Why, how was that?"

"She was very ill, and her husband, with tears in his eyes, said, 'Dear Jane, you must not die.' Then she looked at him and said, 'I'll show you whether I'll die or not,' and turning her face to the wall, was dead in a minute."

"Dennis, why don't you strike?"

"And phat should I do that for?"

"The work's too hard for the pay you get. The idea of going up that ladder all day long."

"But I only go up half the day, sur."

"How can you make that appear!"

"Because, sur, I spend the other half of it in coming down."

AMONG THE HEATHEN.—Helen, aged 4, was spending a night away from home. At bedtime she knelt at her hostess' knees to say her prayers, expecting the usual prompting.

Finding Mrs. L. unable to help her out, she concluded thus:

"Please, God, scuse me. I can't 'member my prayers, and I'm staying with a lady that don't know any."

TO MAKE A SALE.—"I'm afraid to buy this wheel; it may make me get thin."

"Oh, no; wheeling increases the flesh."

"Well, but there's my wife; she wants a wheel and is afraid she will get fat."

"Not at all; most people who wheel lose flesh right along."

Chaplain: "This is your third term in this prison; are you not ashamed to have your friends see you here?"

"Indeed I am, sir. The prison is disgraceful; the reception-room smells like a tap-room; the cells are as dark as pitch; the warden is no gentleman; and the table is not fit to sit down to. Ashamed to have my friends come here! I am mortified every time I see them, but what can I do?"

Young Wife: "I am your treasure, darling?"  
Young Husband: "You are indeed. I don't see how I had the good luck to get you."

Young Wife: "Oh, well, you know, mamma attended to that! It wasn't luck."

Teacher: "Anonymous means without a name. Write a sentence showing you understand how to use the word."

Small Girl: (writes) "Our new baby is anonymous."

A COMPLACENT CASE.—"Mister," said Meandering Mike, "you look like a lawyer."

"I have practised at the bar."

"Well, I'd like to get an opinion. Ef I takes a job o' snow-shovelin' without contractin' ter complete it at any given time, an' the snow melts before I git around to it, kin I call on the lady o' the house an' recover, or kin she put me off by statin' her opinion that I didn't intend ter come back nohow?"

SMALL.—"Somebody," she faltered, "may come between us." His breast heaved. "Whoever would do such a thing," he fiercely exclaimed, "would be contemptibly small." And with that he moved even yet nearer to her.

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