

LUCKY OMENS.

(From Chambers's Journal, 1875.)

What an exhibition of human weakness is made in the petty superstitions regarding so-called omens, and lucky and unlucky days! Let us run over a few of these follies, not yet exploded in certain sections of the population.

Odd numbers—barring the ever fatal thirteen—are thought to be lucky. The shrill piping of the household cricket is prophetic of happiness to the hearth it haunts, as surely as the settling of a stork upon a Dutchman's roof-tree bodes pleasant times to the dwellers beneath it. That forlornest of animals, the masterless dog, that follows close upon the heels of a night-walker, and will not be balked of companionship, is a certain luck-bringer. Black cats should be at a premium, considering a stray puss of that hue who takes a fancy to establishing himself in a house, introduces good fortune with him; while a cat of any color, whether an uninvited visitor or an acknowledged member of the family, ought never to be restrained from sharpening his talons at the expense of the table's legs, since, when he thus scratches, he scratches for luck. Eat kindly the head of the first lamb of spring, if you have the chance; it will bring prosperity to you and yours; but avoid the innocent creature if it presents its tail to view. Hail the first hearing of the cuckoo's voice with thankfulness, if he salutes you upon your right hand—then his greeting is an assurance you will make your way in the world, and attain the highest object of your ambition; and begrudge not a sip of good liquor to the busy, curious, thirsty fly, dropping into your glass, but welcome the intruder as heartily, if not as poetically, as Oldys did; he brings good luck to the glass, and the drinker too.

To come suddenly upon a couple of magpies, to pick up a pin lying with its head towards you, to find—of course without seeking—a four-leaved clover, or a bit of old iron, is matter for rejoicing: if the iron take the shape of a rusty nail or an old horse-shoe, the omen is so much the more fortunate. Absent-minded and careless dressers are likely to be often in luck's way. To put on any garment wrong side out, provided we are not neat enough to spoil the charm, is an infallible prognostic that something is about to happen which will profit the sinner greatly. Mr. Village tells us, in the *Connoisseur*, how his pretty country cousin came down to breakfast one morning with her cap on wrong side out, whereupon her mother solemnly charged the heedless lassie not to alter her headgear all the day, for fear she should change the luck. When the Conquerer was arraying himself on the morning of Hastings, some one hinted he would get the worst of the coming bout, because, in his haste, he had donned his mail-shirt hind part before; but the ready-witted and confident Norman declared it to be a token that he was about to be transformed from a duke into a king; an interpretation, at any rate, not to be disputed a few hours later.

Trouble will never come near folks whose eyebrows meet. Ladies with overmuch down, gentlemen with overmuch hair upon their arms and hands, carry about them nature's own guarantee that they are born to be rich some day, as rich as those happy individuals whose front teeth are set wide apart. Steel belongings, such as keys and knives, get rusty by instinct, spite of all pains to keep them clean and bright, when some kind-hearted soul is laying up riches for their owner's benefit. To find a spider upon one's clothes indicates some money is coming to us. The moral of which, Fuller says, is this: 'Such who imitate the industry of that contemptible creature may, by God's blessing, weave themselves into wealth, and procure a plentiful estate.' The appearance of a white speck upon a finger-nail warns the owner of the finger a gift is on its way; and the same pleasant notification is made by the itching of the palm of the right hand; but in that case it is best to make assurance doubly sure, and rub the said palm against wood; then 'it is sure to be good.'

It is not pleasant to stumble up-stairs, but there is some consolation for sore shins in knowing that a wedding will come off in the house ere twelve months have passed by, even if the stumbler has no hope of being a party concerned in the event. Should a spinster or a bachelor be inadvertently placed between a married pair at the dinner-table, he or she will taste the sweets of connubial bliss before the year is out. A maiden who has constant ill luck at the card-table will play the game of life with greater success partnered with a good husband. Happy will be the bride the sun shines on; and if a hen cackles in her new home as she crosses its threshold, she will be a happy mother as well as a contented wife. The odd notion prevails in some parts of France, that when two marriages take place at the same time, the bride who first leaves the church will have a boy for her first child. Not long ago, two weddings were celebrated simultaneously at Archies. As soon as the ceremony was over, the two couples and their friends made all haste to reach the church door, and, to use a sporting phrase, made a dead-heat of it. Neither party were inclined to yield precedence, defiant looks were exchanged, and things wore a threatening aspect, when the mayor, stepping to the front, solved the difficulty by giving an arm to each of the brides, and taking them out together, to the immense relief of their respective friends.

Chance's freakish daughter is given to coming and going as the fit takes her, but there are ways and means of compelling luck to do us suit and service. That man need feel no doubt about triumphing over his foes who takes care to make an end of the first adder that crosses his path. If it is sometimes best to take a bull by the horns, it is always advisable to seize a black snail by his, and toss him

over the left shoulder, for while the first may help us out of a quandary, the last named performance insures us success in all our undertakings. In default of a black snail, a money-spinner will answer the purpose equally well. If too tender-hearted to treat snails and spiders so unceremoniously, the seeker after good fortune will be just as well off if he hangs an adder-skin over the mantel-piece, takes care to keep his fire burning through the last night of the year, or dons something new upon Whitsunday. Farley, of pantomimic fame, pinned his faith to a cap of which he was the fortunate possessor. At the first rehearsal of *Mother Goose*, when all was ready, Grimaldi happened to observe to Farley that he had not the red cap on his head, which he usually sported on such occasions. 'I will not go on without it,' said Farley, 'or we shall have no luck with the pantomime!' nor would he proceed to business until the cap of good fortune had been fetched. According to the fishermen of Buckie, full nets may be insured by dressing a corpse in a flannel shirt stuck over with burs, and wheeling him through the town in a barrow. A correspondent of *Notes and Queries* writes: 'Wife-beating to the effusion of blood may be a novel method of securing luck in the herring-fishery, but to draw blood is practiced in some of the fishing villages on the north-east-coast of Scotland, under the belief that success follows the act. The act must be performed on New-Year's day, and the good fortune is his only who is the first to shed blood. If the morning of the New Year is such as to allow the boats of the village to put to sea, there is quite a struggle as to which boat will reach the fishing-ground first, so as to gain the coveted prize, the first shed blood of the year. If the weather is unfavorable for fishing, those in possession of guns—and a great many of the fishermen's houses possess one—are out, gun in hand, along the shore before daybreak, in search of some bird or wild animal, no matter how small, that they may draw blood, and thus make sure of one year's good fortune.' Another Scottish plan for securing good luck for the space of twelve months at least, is to draw a bucketful of water from the village well at midnight on New Year's Eve, and after throwing a handful of gra into it, to carry it carefully home. If the drawer be a cow-keeper, he uses part of the water to wash his dairy utensils, and gives the remainder to his cows, in the rather dishonest hope, that he will thereby obtain the cream of the cows of such of his neighbors as use the well, and have not been so wise as himself.

To hatter away old shoes for the benefit of the 'translator,' is a sad waste; there is nothing like well-worn leather to propitiate fate. The time-honored custom of throwing an old shoe after a departing friend, in order that his journey may have a prosperous issue, is so ancient and so common, that we only mention it here, to remind intending throwers that the shoe should belong to the left foot—there is no virtue in its fellow; and the harder the recipient is hit, the happier will be the result. Old shoes are within everybody's reach, but a friend is not always at hand to perform the ceremony. However, that scarcely matters much, since we have lately learned success is to be retrieved, whether it be deserved or not, by simply pocketing a bit of coal. There is no reason why black diamonds should not be as efficacious as any other luck-bringers; still, belief must halt somewhere, and ours halts at coal, although ready to concede that incredulity would be lessened if the coal-carriers limited their faith to genuine Wallsend.

COMMERCIAL STATISTICS.

Little does the world think what tremendous capital is required to carry on its travel, trade and commerce. The railroad net, woven all over the globe, consists of 200,000 miles; Asia, Australia and Africa can claim only the fourteenth part, the other thirteen-fourteenths being nearly equally divided between Europe and America. The rolling stock in use over this railroad net consists of 66,000 locomotives, 120,000 passenger and palace cars and 1,500,000 freight cars. The capital invested in all the railways is estimated at \$20,000,000,000. The commerce on the seas is carried on by 12,000 steamers and over 100,000 sailing vessels. The tonnage of these vessels amounts to over 20,000,000 tons. Telegraphic communication is maintained by 500,000 miles of wires, of which about five-eighths fall to Europe, two-eighths to America, and fully one-eighth to the submarine telegraph system. There are 40,000 stations, from which 110,000,000 despatches are sent annually, or an average of over 300,000 daily. According to population, Switzerland does the most telegraphing, there being one despatch sent annually to every inhabitant. This is undoubtedly due to the great annual influx of travelers and pleasure seekers. Next come the Netherlands and then Great Britain, Russia comes last on the list, as she sends only forty-five despatches per annum for every 1,000 inhabitants. The transmission of letters by mail amounts in round numbers to about 4,000,000,000. According to the population of the several countries, the Americans write by far the most letters; next come the English; then Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, France, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Russia, Servia Roumania and Turkey.—*Thompson's Reporter*.

FEMALE SWIMMERS.—The following appears in the *London Times*:—"Sir,—Reading in *The Times* of Mr. P. E. Evans's attempt to swim five miles, for the honour of my sex, I beg to inform you that two young ladies (sisters) swam about three miles—from Shanklin to Sandown—in one hour, three weeks back. The tide was in their favour, but a strong wind was against them, or they could have done it with ease in less time. They were not the least fatigued, and took a four miles walk after. I consider swimming as necessary for girls as boys in these days of canoeing and boating, and wish I could say anything to induce parents to have them taught early this most useful and healthy accomplishment."

THE ENGLISH AVERAGE CLAUSE.

1. It is hereby declared and agreed, that whenever a sum insured is declared to be subject to the conditions of Average if the property so covered shall at the breaking out of any Fire be collectively of greater value than the sum insured thereon, then this Society shall pay or make good such a proportion only of the loss or damage as the sum so insured shall bear to the whole value of the said property at the time when such Fire shall first happen. 2. But it is at the same time declared and agreed, that if Property included in such Average, shall at the breaking out of any Fire be insured by any other Policy which, whether subject to Average or not, shall apply to part only of the Buildings or Places, or of the Property to which such Average extends, then this policy shall not cover the same excepting only as regards any excess of value beyond the amount of such more specific insurance, which a id excess is declared to be under the protection of this Policy, and subject to average as aforesaid. 3. And it is further declared and agreed, that if the assured shall claim under this Policy for Loss or Damage to Property embraced in the terms of any Average Policy extending as well as to other Buildings or Places, or to other Property not included in the terms of this Insurance and if at the breaking out of any Fire there shall not be any property in such other Buildings or Places, or any such other Property actually at risk to be protected by such Policy, then so far as regards the settlement of any Claim under this Policy, the terms and liability thereof shall be held to be concurrent in all respects, with those of such other Policy.

THE MANCHESTER SHIP-CANAL.

Liverpool seems to imagine that the construction of a ship-canal to Manchester will leave the docks at Liverpool and Birkenhead empty, and, therefore, there is said to be some hostility to the scheme upon the part of persons in Liverpool. This hostility, if it exists, is founded upon a misapprehension. It will necessarily be an entirely different class of trade which will be done at the new docks at Manchester from that which is done at Liverpool at present. Liverpool imports large quantities of goods and merchandise which are intended for inland consumption, and exports many things which seek the seaboard at the Mersey port from inland towns. So long as the ships are loaded or unloaded in the Liverpool docks it cannot matter to Liverpool whether the goods are carried thence in a train of trucks or a train of barges. That a large amount of goods destined for Manchester and places beyond will still make Liverpool their port we cannot doubt, but that goods will not in future have to be conveyed for shipment to London or Glasgow Manchester may be justified in believing.—*London Times*.

SAVINGS BANKS IN ITALY.

In the course of their report upon the reorganization of savings banks in Italy, the commission appointed for that purpose state that in 1825 Italy contained only 13 savings banks, with a capital of little more than £100,000, while in twenty-five years the number of banks had risen to 86, with a capital of £1,600,000. At the expiration of another quarter of a century in 1875, there were 327 savings banks, with a capital of £21,080,000, while in 1881 the total number of banks has risen to 355 with a capital of £28,560,000. Of postal savings banks, which numbered only 1,989 in the year 1876, there were 3,406 last year, with 471,000 depositors of sums amounting altogether to £2,600,000, the increase within the last five years being very remarkable, as the capital deposited in 1877 was not much above £250,000. Adding together the sums deposited in ordinary savings banks, postal savings banks, and one or two other institutions of a similar kind, the commission find that the total savings of the Italian people are close upon £40,000,000, of which £15,000,000 belongs to the province of Lombardy, £4,640,000 to Emilia £3,680,000 to Tuscany, £3,560,000 to Piedmont, £2,680,000 to Naples, £2,320,000 to Venetia, £1,200,000 to Latium, £1,760,000 to the Marches and Umbria, £1,440,000 to Liguria, £1,200,000 to Sicily, and £400,000 to Sardinia.

IMMENSITY OF LONDON.—London has a larger population than many a European State with a sovereign and a Parliament. There could be no better method of arriving at a true appreciation of the vast size of the metropolis than a comparison such as this. At the census of 1881, the area of metropolitan taxation and police contained 4,764,312 persons. Thus there are in London more than double the number of people in Denmark, including Greenland; nearly three times as many as in Greece; more than eighteen times the population of Montenegro; some thousands more than Portugal, including the Azores and Madeira; nearly treble the population of Servia; more than double that of Bulgaria; three-quarters of a million more than in Holland; more than Sweden, or Norway, or Switzerland. And yet this splendid capital, the most populous and wealthy city the world has ever seen, is practically without a Government!—*Land*. [In other words the population of London is considerably greater than that of the entire population of Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific.]

WIDESPREAD FAME.—The *New York Sun* is again reminded of the wide circle of British possessions around the globe. "We hear," it says, "of rejoicing over the British victory in Egypt from Quebec to Winnipeg and Vancouver, from Halifax to Jamaica and Belize, from Hong Kong to Calcutta, Bombay, and Aden, from Cyprus to Malta, Gibraltar, and northward to the Shetland Islands, and from Melbourne to Cape Town. Verily the fame of a victorious British soldier fills the wide world, both the dry land and the seas thereof."