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A TWISTER OF WORDS

DEAN SPOONER OF OXFORD IS VICTIM OF MANY STORIES.

The Celebrated Educationalist Whose Name Has Become Affixed to the Mental Disease Which Consists in Muddling Up Phrases is the Butt of Scores of Fictitious Stories of Funny Transpositions.

Probably few men have had so many wholly apocryphal tales about them as Spooner, the learned but timid Dean of New College, Oxford. It is inevitable that as a university as in wider fields of life, someone will be made a butt, and Spooner, perhaps owing to his nervousness, soon came to fill this position.

It was just a position which had formerly been occupied by Jowett, who was, however, more respected than his successor owing to the real wit which he undoubtedly possessed. Yet it is said that when, on a certain occasion, a series of choice Spoonerisms were recited to Jowett, he was much amused thereby, and remarked: "Fifteen years ago they used to tell all these about me."

Be that as it may, generations of undergraduates have exercised their ingenuity in fabricating examples. Most people, indeed, at some time or other have unwittingly made a Spoonerism, which, as nearly everybody knows, consists of a transposition of the initial letters of two or more words in the same sentence.

How did Dr. Spooner first obtain his unenviable celebrity? Some of the best-known examples attributed to the head of New College are supposed to have been made at table or in the college chapel. The best known anecdote of all is the one which refers to the hymn, "Conquering kings their titles take," which the dean is supposed to have solemnly given out as: "Tinkering kings their titles take," then, nervously noticing his error, to have altered the line to the famous expression, "Kinquering kings their titles take."

This was the first and original Spoonerism, and around it numberless others, good and bad, have sprung up, all, of course, ascribed to the individual who is alleged to have perpetrated the first.

One of the quaintest mixups put down to him is a phrase he once used in a sermon. Speaking of the vague, half-formed ideas which often enter the mind, he said, "We all know what it is to hold a half-warmed fish in our bosoms." On another occasion he gave out the following text: "Sorrow may endure for a joy, but night cometh in the morning"; then, again, he spoke of the wicked men whose words were "as smooth as oil," and the first line of the well-known hymn which starts, "From Greenland's icy mountains," he once quite seriously read out as: "From Iceland's Greasy mountains."

One Sunday when he was not officiating in the service, he was surprised to find someone occupying his pew in chapel, and addressed him sternly with, "Are you aware, sir, that you are occupying my pew?"

At the table he rarely "opened his mouth but he puts his foot in it"—metaphorically speaking, of course. Once when he wanted some figs he is said to have electrified a luncheon party by asking a lady to pass the pigs' fleas. Those who know the doctor would understand at once that he was merely asking for "the figs, please."

At the same luncheon he is said to have asked his neighbor to have "some of this stink puff," pointing to an ornamental dish of pink jelly. Late for dinner one night he sidled into the room with the explanation that he had been "hatching a posty snipe." Even an old friend, who had the comment to translate this into "snatching a hasty pipe."

His poetical description of a gipsy enameled as "a tipsy gent pitched in a pot of grease," was even more complicated. Of course, he meant "a tipsy gent pitched in a pot of grease." His description of his baggage to a railway porter as "two rags and a bug" was simpler.

To a relation who was about to start on a bicycle tour he remarked, "You will not forget to boil your fiddle before you start."

Again, returning tired from a long walk, he observed, "I must have walked ten miles as the fly crows."

Just as there are numbers of people daily perpetrating Malapropisms of speech, so there are many unconsciously doing their utmost to perpetuate the memory of Spooner. For instance, the actor who said, "Stand back, my lord, and let the parson cough" (instead of "coffin pass") may have made a solitary slip, but in some persons "lapses linguæ" amounts to a veritable infirmity.

An excellent clergyman was the subject of the more frivolous among his hearers, because he was never known to preach a sermon without introducing a reference to a "faren big tree," or dwelling on the fact that "Many are called, but few are chosen," ending the text with the impressive exhortation, "Be ye therefore of the fosen chew."

"Spoonerisms?" said a friend of the writer. "My wife nearly startled a local grocer out of his wits with one some months ago, and he has always eyed her suspiciously ever since. We had just settled down to the supper when he called, asking for our custom, and inquiring whether he should tell his vanman to call every day. Now, we have dealt at the stores for years, but what she really said was, 'No, thank, please don't. I steal at the door!'"

A good Spoonerism went the rounds quite recently. A fine, dignified old lady descended to her kitchen, where tasty fish were being grilled. She sniffed disapprovingly, as the aroma reached her, and cried out, "Oh, dear, what a hell of snerrings!"

It is best to keep your troubles in as close quarters as possible. The time to let well enough alone is when you cannot better it. In advising be quite sure you are helping instead of hindering.

EX-CONVICT STATESMEN.

British Annals Show Several Remarkable Instances.

There are several instances in colonial politics where ex-convicts have risen to positions of eminence after their release from prison. Thus, Sir John Janssen, Bart., C.B., better known, perhaps, as "Dr. Jim," who, as all the world knows, led the famous raid into the Transvaal in 1895, after the failure of which he was tried in London and sentenced to ten months' imprisonment. Less than ten years afterwards, in 1904, that is to say, he was chosen Premier of Cape Colony.

His was, of course, a political offence. So was that which caused Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, some time Premier of Victoria, to be branded as a felon. He was implicated in the Irish rebellion of 1848, a fact which was afterwards to gain him the enthusiastic support—and the vote—of all his compatriots in Australia when he elected to go in for politics.

Another Australian Premier, who "did time" was Sir Charles Dillibea. He served a sentence in Darlinghurst Jail, Sydney, for contempt of court. Afterwards, when a turn of fortune's wheel made him Prime Minister of New Wales, he had to appoint a new governor of Darlinghurst. He selected the warden who had charge of him as a prisoner.

Edward Gibbon Wakefield, another famous Australian statesman, was actually at one time a convict, his offence being the abduction of an heiress, a fairly common crime in England seventy or eighty years ago, but one which the law always regarded seriously and punished severely. The Australians of his day, however, were many of them ex-convicts or the descendants of such, and these did not regard his offence as reflecting on his honor in any way, while the romantic circumstances surrounding it gained him many sympathizers among the ordinary colonists. On his release these rallied round him, and before long he became the most powerful political personage in the sub-continent.

Yet another old convict who rose through politics to high honor in Australia, after having served out there the sentence of imprisonment passed on him, was Dr. O'Doherty. He was convicted and transported for treason, and on his release he became a popular hero. He sat in both Houses of the Queensland Parliament, and afterwards filled several high official posts in that colony.

Forging Roberts' Name.
Lord Roberts has narrowly escaped being victimized by a daring forger, for whom the London police are now looking.

A check to the value of nearly ten thousand dollars, purporting to be signed by the veteran field marshal, was presented at Cox's Bank at Charing Cross, and had it not been for the astuteness of the cashier would have been duly honored.

He noticed a small detail in the signature, and when reference was made to Lord Roberts it was found that the check was a forgery.

A check form on Messrs. Cox and Co. had been by some means obtained by the forger, and he had then employed a member of the Veterans' Corps, in which Lord Roberts is interested, to go to the bank to cash it.

The old soldier, of course, had no knowledge of the fraud contemplated, and had simply accepted instructions to return to an hotel in Marylebone road with the money.

When the forgery was discovered Scotland Yard was informed, and they are now searching for the person who handed the check to the commissionaire. They have a description of this man, and find he left the hotel directly he found his messenger did not return with the money.

A Titanic Hero's Memorial.
Public memorials and statues are not erected for seafarers who, in most of them, if not positively heroes, are poor as works of art, and of little or no use to the community. Godwinning is, therefore, to be congratulated on the form in which it has been decided to embody its memorial to John George Phillips, the Titanic hero.

While simple, it is to be both beautiful and distinctly useful. A cloister, with seats sheltered from the wind and rain, will enclose a small garden, and at one end the wall will have an arched opening out to a view of landscape with a background of wooded hills. It is to be hoped that future committees appointed to erect memorials up and down the country will bear in mind this excellent example.

The Fountain Pen.
The fountain pen is not an invention of recent years. In Samuel Taylor's "Universal System of Short-hand Writing," published in 1786, we find proof of the fountain pen's great age.

"I have nothing more to add," wrote Samuel Taylor, "for the use or instruction of the practitioner except a few words concerning the kind of pen proper to be used for writing shorthand. For expeditious writing some use what are called fountain pens, into which your ink is put, which gradually flows when writing, from thence into a smaller pen cut short to fit the smaller end of this instrument, but it is a hard matter to meet with a good one of this kind."

Lunar Athletics.
The "man in the moon" must surely regard with amused contempt our much vaunted athletic records. A good terrestrial athlete could cover about 120 feet on the moon in a running broad jump, while leaping over the barn would be a very commonplace feat. He would find no difficulty in carrying six times as much and running six times as fast as he could on earth, all because the moon attracts bodies with but one-sixth of the force of the earth.

Mecca's Lodging House.
The record lodging house is one for pilgrims at Mecca, which accommodates 6,000 persons.

Many there are who are troubled with trifling despondency. Fair weather friends always want to be tested in fair weather. For policy's sake we often sneak away from our honest convictions.

TALK MONKEY LANGUAGE.

African Natives Can Almost Speak With the Apes.

It is the firm belief of Mr. James Stewart, the Scottish surgeon, who has returned home after spending over three years in darkest Africa, that many of the natives can almost speak the monkey language. Mr. Stewart traveled through Liberia and parts of the Upper Congo with a party of surveyors, and during the whole of their arduous march they killed their dinner every day. Sometimes they traveled at the rate of 20 miles daily, sometimes the forests were so dense and the obstacles so numerous, that they made no more than a few miles.

"During our marches," he said, in relating further experiences to a reporter, "we had to plow our way through a marsh that rose up above our knees. The boggy nature of some of the country was such that we were splashed from head to foot, and it was this most tiresome walk we had in the whole of our journey. For miles the marsh stretched on all sides, the carriers told us that it had never been fully explored, and the only way to get our destination was to go through it as quickly as we could. We went through it—but not quickly. Added to the inconvenience and sudden condition of the land was the terrible smell of rotten and rotting vegetation. We lost one or two of our packages at this stage, for they fell off the heads of our carriers, who stumbled against submerged trees."

One of the most disagreeable, too, he was in the rear and had only a light load, but suddenly he was missed from the caravan, and we had to search for him. The natives spread out in a semi-circle, and did a complete tour round us, sweeping the marsh for a radius of about 300 yards. They never missed the monkey, and I thought they were tribes of natives, and some of their cries were like those of children who had been frightened. It was the weirdest thing to see them swinging along one of the boughs of the trees, hand in hand or grasping each other's tails. They would swing together in the fashion, forming a bridge right across the stream, and then our carriers would get quite excited. They were very fond of monkey flesh. As we approached the animals the natives would ship their paddles and sit quiet, while the best men among them would hold a gun so that he could have a good aim. As a rule, he would bring down one of the monkeys with a screech, and as soon as the result of the shot was seen some of the men would jump overboard and swim to the body bringing it back to the boat in great glee.

I am convinced that most of these men knew the monkey language, if there is such a thing, for their conduct proved it. More than once I have seen a carrier and a companion go off into the bush carrying a gun, walking until they were within sight of the animal. The one would sit down on his haunches and put his fingers to his lips and nose and make cries which were certainly good imitations of the cries we had heard from the forest. In a little while one or two monkeys would come hopping along towards the spot, also calling and when near enough the carrier who had the gun would fire and another monkey would be added to the lair.

How to Grow Tall.
A man's organs and those of his bones which are not subjected to pressure grow continuously until he is forty years old; that is to say, the heart should become stronger, the capacity of the lungs increase, and the brain should develop steadily until the fourth decade of life. Also one should wear a larger hat at the age of forty than at thirty.

A man ceases to grow tall, however, at the beginning of the third decade, because after that time the downward pressure exerted by the weight of the body while in the erect position compresses the vertebrae or small bones in the spine, the discs of cartilage between them, and the pressure overcomes the natural elasticity of the discs and the growth of these bones. However, a British scientist contends that were man a quadruped, and therefore freed from the downward pressure produced by his weight upon his spinal column, he would continue to grow in height for ten years longer than he does at present, since it has been found that bones not subjected to compression increase up to the fourth decade.

Brothers in the Lords.
There are at least two cases of brothers sitting together in the House of Lords. The Marquis of Lansdowne's wife and five sons are connected by those of his brother, Lord Fitzmaurice; while Viscount Hardinge has since 1910 had a brother in the person of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, though the latter up to the present has made few, if any, appearances in the chamber. The two veteran Canadians, Lord Strathcona and Lord Mount Stephen, are cousins, and it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that half the House is related by marriage. The peers who have sons in the elected Chamber would also make a long list.

People Who Do Not Read Books.
There is a story of an educated man and an author who believed and maintained that "The Heart of Midlothian" was written by Gladstone. The literate man is astonished to find that people can be happy and refined, witty and wise, without books at all. He should remember that Dickens rarely read anything except his own novels, that Millais never opened a book and that Prince Bismarck is said to have been chiefly happy with Voltaire. Books are not the measure of all things.—London Saturday Review.

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