

SUPERSTITIONS OF NINE.

A Number Conspicuous in Ancient and Modern Speech.

Of all odd numbers the one which would seem to be the most conspicuous in ancient lore and modern speech and in allusions of all sorts, whether classic or vulgar, is 9. Whether this is because it is a multiple of 3, a triple trinity, or not we need not stop to inquire. The connections in which 9 figures are very numerous and extraordinarily varied. Of old there were nine muses and also nine rivers in the infernal regions. In classical mythology we read of nine heavens and nine worlds, and the hydra had nine heads.

In mediæval times there were nine "worthies of the world," the places in this select assembly being differently allotted by different authorities, the usual division being three gentiles, or pagans, three Jews and three Christians. One of the oldest English games is nine men's morris. It could be played either indoors or outdoors, on a folding board marked with the necessary lines and squares or on a board marked out on field or down by stones or by cuts in the turf. In Dorset they still play the game under the name of marnull.

Nine appears frequently in popular medicine. A Sussex collector referring to the very common rural belief in the efficacy of passing a ruptured child through a cleft ash tree says that the patient must be attended by nine persons, each of whom should pass it through the cleft from west to east. A Perth Kirk session record of 1623 refers to the preparation of three cakes for some medicinal purpose from nine portions of meal contributed by nine maidens and nine married women. Threads with nine knots and straws with nine joints are used for various healing purposes, while nine successive mornings are often prescribed for the performance of certain folklore ceremonies.

The great Lambton worm, one of the best known of English dragon myths, had nine eyes and was fed from the milk of nine cows.

Again, the same number is prominent in various common phrases and proverbs. Nine tailors make a man. Queen Elizabeth is alleged to have once addressed a deputation of eighteen tailors with a "Good morning, gentlemen both!"

Every one knows that a cat has nine lives, while the "cat" that is used for the castigation of evil-doers has nine tails.

When Mercutio insults Tybalt and the latter inquires, "What wouldst thou have with me?" the volatile but fiery partisan replies, "Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives." Heywood, the proverb monger, has the saying, "A woman hath nine lives, like a cat," which will be news to most folk.

Three more examples may be given from a collection of applications of this remarkable number 9 which is not easily exhausted. Possession, we often hear, is "nine points of the law." A person who has paid some attention to his or her attire is said for some inscrutable reason to be dressed "up to the nines," while the most startling event is but a "nine days' wonder." The last phrase, though truer now than ever, was familiarly used, with many other still current forms of popular speech, in the days of Chaucer. — London Globe.

Unreasonable.

Not long ago in a western market down I chanced to observe an Irishman with a live turkey under his arm. The turkey was squawking and gobbling in a distressed way, a racket to which the Irishman did not at first pay any particular notice. Finally, however, the disturbance got on the Celt's nerves. Giving the bird a poke in the side, he exclaimed:

"Be quiet! What's the matter wid ye anyhow? Why should ye want to walk whin I'm willin' to carry ye?" — Harper's Monthly.

Ate It All.

A wife had occasion to go out to women's votes meeting, so left a pudding in the saucepan for her husband. When she arrived home she went on with her washing and inquired how he'd got on.

"Very well," said he. "I thoroughly enjoyed the pudding."

"Good," said the wife. "What did you do with the cloth it was piled in?"

"Cloth, my gal?" said hubby as he abstractedly continued reading his paper. "Was there a cloth?" — London Illustrated Bits.

An Exception Noted.

yer—Your uncle's will seems a perfectly legal document, will stand in any court. I have no grounds on which to point Nephew—But you had some grounds. Where a will there's a way, you Lippincott's.

Barnato Won the Bet.

There is a legend of an amusing competition in connection with a discussion regarding the financial value of literary genius. Barney Barnato, who was a genius, but not literary, began to chaff some financial journalists. "You blomin' fellers don't know nothin' about literature. I'll back myself to write a little piece against any of yer."

The challenge was laughingly accepted, and a referee appointed. The papers were thrown into a hat, and the referee, after analyzing them, said: "Gentlemen, I am bound to say that the palm must be awarded to Mr. Barnato. His piece is terse, faultless in form, irrefragable in matter. You yourselves shall judge." And he read out the following essay:

I promise to pay to Mr. X, the sum of \$100 for his likeness in writing as referee in this interesting competition.

B. L. BARNATO.

The award was unanimously confirmed by the competitors, and the check was duly honored.—London Telegraph.

Deflecting Pat.

"A footman," said a banker, "called his master by telephone and said: 'I regret to inform you, sir, that your house is on fire and fast burning down.'"

"Oh," cried the master, "what a terrible misfortune! But my wife—is she safe?"

"Quite safe, sir. She got out among the first."

"Are my daughters—are they all right?"

"All right, sir. They're with their mother."

"There was a pause. Then: 'And what about my mother-in-law, James?'"

"That, sir," said the footman suavely, "was what I wished to speak to you about, sir, particularly. Your mother-in-law is lying asleep in the third story back, and knowin' your regard for her comfort, sir, I wasn't sure whether I ought to disturb her or not, sir." — Los Angeles Times.

Which Is Your Shortest Hour?

"What is your shortest hour in the day?" asked a business man of an acquaintance. "Don't say you have none. You have, although you may not know it. Everybody has. Of course, reckoned by actual measurement, each hour is composed of sixty minutes, yet notwithstanding that chronological exactness the hours vary in length. My shortest hour is from 2 to 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I find upon inquiry that this is the feeblest period for many people. In my case so swiftly do those sixty minutes hurry by that I try to crowd into them as many of the disagreeable, yet inevitable, things of life as I possibly can. If I have to interview a bore, I see him then; if I have to visit the dentist, I do it then. That hour is bound to slip away quickly, no matter what happens; therefore the agony of disagreeable scenes seems of shorter duration." — New York Sun.

Naked Truth.

An encounter of wits once took place between the late Eugene Field and a New York woman. It was at dinner, and the woman was in evening dress, which was rather décolleté. After a skirmish between the two relative to the respective merits of a well known author it would seem that Field came off second best.

"Oh, Mr. Field," exclaimed the woman exultantly, "you must admit that you are fairly beaten at your own game!"

Field bowed politely and, with a smile, promptly rejoined, "At any rate, Miss Blank, I have one consolation—you can't laugh at me in your sleeve." — Lippincott's.

Legend of the Violet.

A Latin poem of the sixteenth century has a pretty legend of a violet that, in mythological days, was a maiden called Ianthia, one of Diana's nymphs. She attracted the attention of Apollo, whose admiration she did not return, and, dying from his pursuit, she implored Diana to destroy the beauty which occasioned her so much trouble. Diana granted her request and turned her face to a dull purple. Ianthia, however, soon regretted the loss of her beauty and was pining away with grief, when the goddess had pity on her and changed her into a flower, which still shrinks from Apollo (the sun) and hides her modest head in the shade.

At Regular Rates.

Miss Matilda Owens hung on the arm of the editor of the Laneville Eagle, to whom she had been engaged for three years, and endeavored to turn his gaze toward the sky.

"Just notice the moon, William!" she said in a melting voice.

"At the usual rates, Matilda, I shall be happy to do so," he replied.—Youth's Companion.

Too Strenuous.

"My son tells me you've discharged him," said the office boy's mother, "and I think that's strange. You advertised for a strong boy, and he's certainly—" "He's too strong, madam," interrupted the employer. "In the single day he was here he broke all the rules of this office and some of the furniture." — Catholic Standard and Times.

Endurance.

Ethel—How long can a human being live without food?
Jack—I don't know about human beings, but I know poets who have been writing for years.—Judge.

It has become necessary to modify the old saying, "Life is what we make it." Life is what we make in it.—Los Angeles Times.

A Mystery of Indo-China.

The great mystery about Indo-China and one which must ever be insoluble is the story of the lost race and the vanished civilization of that strange country. The mighty walls of Angkor-Wat, rising in the midst of sparsely settled jungles, remain as the memorial of a great empire which has utterly perished and is altogether lost to history. No one will ever know who planned this gigantic temple or what meant founded on his myriads of people to build up those immense blocks of stone and cover them with the most elaborate of sculptures. Angkor-Wat was one of the most astonishing monuments in the world, and this forgotten temple was built so as to endure as long as the earth itself were it not for the incessantly destructive effect of plant life on the strongest walls that man can raise. Only a half-dozen civilized and very wealthy people would have erected Angkor-Wat, a very different race from the Annamite of modern days. The whole nation has disappeared as utterly as the busy myriads who once populated the wastes and solitudes of Memphis.—Singapore Free Press.

He Got the Trout.

A story dealing with a large trout that was rising regularly and frequently is told in "How to Fish: A Treatise on Trout and Trout Fishers." This is the story:

"He was going up and down, up and down, up and down; and the insects offered themselves, but it suited his composure that he should take a midge from the abundance. One mouth was casting at the trout; another was looking on. Said the angler, 'I'll have that fish whether he takes it or not.' 'How?' his friend asked. 'I'll throw the fly into his mouth.' The trout went on rising; the angler went on casting. I perceived the angler's notion. It was that if he kept casting accurately and the trout continued to rise in the regular manner mentioned, the fly would ere long fall at the very moment when a midge was being taken. This reckoning was justified. The large trout was hooked and landed by a fly that had been cast into his mouth."

Old Fashioned Oratory.

"We don't have no such forensic oratory as we used to have," said the old settler. "Lawyers nowadays don't create. They only just talk."

"Take old Bill K. Simmons of Eau Claire. If Bill was defendin' a lowly chicken thief he'd speak with the tongue of angels. I'll never forget the peroration of his impassioned philippic in the Clay Bull case about the poisoned cat. It runs like this here."

The little, thin old man rose, reared back in a defiant attitude and shouted in the cracked treble of age:

"Restin' upon the couch of republican liberty as I do, covered with the blanket of constitutional panoply as I am and protected by the aegis of American equality as I feel myself to be, I despise the buzzin' of the professional insect who has just set down and defy his attempt to penetrate with puny sting the interstices of me impervious coverin'!" — New York Press

The Log Driver.

The life of a river log driver is a life that seems to get half of one after a year or two. You are generally wet through for twelve hours out of the twenty-four. Ten of you sleep in a 12 by 15 foot shanty; you live on fried everything, "black strap," treacle and stewed tea. You go to bed at 10 and get up at 3. You are everlastingly cursed and never praised by the foreman. Your life is in danger more or less all day long, and you never get more than \$35 a month for work that is worth \$100. "Then why stick at it?" you say, and all I can answer is, "Just give it a fair trial for a year, and then you'll know." — Wide World Magazine.

Superlatives.

Dr. Johnson says in his "Grammar of the English Tongue," "The comparison of adjectives is very uncertain and, being much regulated by commodiousness of utterance, is not easily reduced to rules."

Then he quotes passages from "Paradise Lost" in which the words "virtuous" and "powerfullest" are found and a passage from "Samson Agonistes" which contains the word "famousest."

Surely Milton had an ear.—Notes and Queries.

Tough Fans.

In a New Zealand town one of the municipal candidates, a pronounced Scotsman, had received a present of a huge Scotch thistle, which at the moment happened to be lying on the table of his committee room. A friend, entering, withdrew suddenly, with the remark: "I beg your pardon. I didn't know you were at luncheon."

Too, Too Much.

"Thank you, son," said old Tightfit to the boy who had run several blocks on an errand for him. "Here's a penny for ye."

"Don't tempt me, gu'nar," said the bright boy. "If I was ter take all dat money I might buy a auto wid it an' git pinched for scorchin'." — Philadelphia Press.

Ingenious.

Servant (to artist returning from a holiday)—There have been so many callers since you left that I have been obliged to wash the names from the slate twice to make room for others.—Pearson's Weekly.

What Is the Answer?

She—That is a woman whom I envy, and, curious as it may seem, she envies me. He—How can that be? She—We were both after the same man—and I married you.—Illustrated Bits.

HOW VENEER IS MADE.

An Interesting Industry Found in Lumber Centers.

How veneer is manufactured is a mystery to the majority of people. The industry is not only one of the chief occupations of Mattoon, Wis., but an exceptionally interesting one also.

After a tree has been cut in the woods and brought to the mill on flat cars it is rolled into a pond near the mill. Logs are hoisted from the pond to a drag saw, where they are cut into various lengths. They are then put into a steam box for at least twelve hours in order to soften the timber. This steam box is a large box directly behind the drag saw, into which the timber is piled. A two inch pipe containing holes through which the steam can escape passes through this steam box. At the end of twelve hours the timber is removed from the steam box, and then enters the process called peeling. With spuds and axes the bark is removed easily, for the timber is soft now and red hot. It is then ready to enter the mill and be cut into veneer.

The peeled log is hoisted on a crane to the veneer lathe, and that is the last one sees of the log. When it once passes this lathe it comes out on the other side in long, thin sheets of veneer. According to thickness desired, it is cut from one one-hundredth of an inch to one-half inch thick and sixty-four inches long.

As the veneer leaves the machine it slides along a table thirty feet in length. Ten feet from the end is the clipper, where it is clipped into different widths, an inch being allowed for drying. It is now ready to enter the drying process.

The drier is eight feet wide and 100 feet long. It is a chain driven machine throughout, having four sets of rollers. In order to heat this drier there are 20,000 feet of one inch pipes passing through it above and below each set of rollers. The temperature must always be from 200 to 250 degrees. Veneer is put into the drier at one end, or, in other words, fed to the drier. While the veneer slowly moves through the machine it is also dried, so that it is smooth and dry, but very hot. The men in charge of the veneer at that end always wear canvas gloves to prevent their hands from becoming burned and blistered, while the perspiration runs freely from their faces. It takes from fifteen minutes to two hours for veneer to work through this drier one way.

The second story of the local mill is known as the glue room. Here veneer is glued together for furniture factories, bordering panels for dressers and glass backing.

The machine known as the hydro-vaneer press is ten feet high. The veneer that has been glued for panels or glass backing is placed in this machine, and by pressure of water in a tank beneath it slowly forces the veneer together until it is firm and dry. Then it is removed, packed and shipped. — Milwaukee Sentinel.

The Deal Was Off.

A German university professor received a large package containing six boxes of cigars, with a letter saying: "Permit us to send you these six boxes of cigars. We believe that they will give you every satisfaction and trust that you will recommend them to your friends. Kindly send the amount, 6 marks, by postoffice order."

The professor replied: "I have the honor to remit to you twelve dissertations, which will no doubt afford you the utmost satisfaction. Should you wish for more I am at your command. The cost is 3 marks each."

By return of post came the reply: "Be good enough to return the cigars. We send herewith the cost of carriage and package. We are returning your dissertations."

On the Wrong Man.

Bret Harte was so frequently complimented on being the author of "Little Breeches" that he was almost sorry it was ever written, as was Secretary J. An Hay, who would prefer his fame to rest on more ambitious work. A gushing lady who prided herself upon her literary tastes said to him once: "Mr. Harte, I am so delighted to meet you. I have read everything you ever wrote, but of all your dialect verse there is none that compares with your 'Little Breeches.'" "I quite agree with you, madam," said Mr. Harte, "but you have put the little breeches on the wrong man." — Harrisburg Telegraph.

To Easyman's Discomfiture.

Mrs. Scraphard (after a tilt in which Mr. was not without honors)—Mrs. Easyman, across the way, has got a bargain of a husband. Mr. Scraphard—So? Well, then, Mrs. Easyman is proving to the world that there is at least one woman who can drive a bargain.—Norristown Times.

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