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Thirteen and Its History as a Hoodoo

(Continued from Page Three.)

consequences had anything to do with the case. He will stoutly maintain that it was the hoodoo number and nothing else that was responsible for the first one of the party to die.

In the Isle of Man the superstition takes almost as gruesome a turn. It is related by old-time travelers that in the crypt or cavern in which criminals were thrown many years ago there are 13 pillars. If a stranger out of curiosity enters the cavern and leaves without first counting all of these pillars he will, according to the popular superstition, do something to occasion his being incarcerated in the cavern. No matter how good a man he may be nor what his standing in the community entitles him to, fate will pursue him until finally, before he dies, he will become a broken-down inmate of the netemso prison.

A recent instance was related by the newspapers a few days ago of a New York man who picked up a newspaper and noticed by the date line it was Friday, September 13. The fact preyed upon his mind, and whether the uncanny combination had anything to do with it or not, before night he was dead. Physicians examined his body and could find nothing wrong with him, but his body lay there, a mute testimonial in the minds of thousands to the fatality of the combination of week and month-day.

But in this general gloom of weirdness and darkness there is a ray of light for the knights who attach so much importance to the number, for history is full of instances in which the mystic number has proven an omen of good instead of evil.

For example, no one with the patriotic blood of an American can be found who will say that because the original states in the union numbered 13 any evil spirit has followed the course of this country in its prosperous course among the nations. It will also be remembered that 13 colonies fought and won from the mother country with no thought that the mystic number would act as a hoodoo. May not the number 13 be just as propitious in the realms of King Ak-Sar-Ben as it was in the little country presided over by George Washington?

As a further proof that 13 brings with it luck and good fortune, there is related the story of John Hatfield, a soldier in the army of William and Mary. John died, it is true, in spite of his charm, but it was at the ripe old age of 102. His death occurred June 18, 1770, and the tale of his unusual connection with the number 13 is told on his coffin lid and in the London Public Advertiser. It appears from the best authorities that John was suspected of snooping on his beat, which was on the grounds of Windsor palace. Promptly he was yanked up before the authorities, and on a specific accusation of going to sleep one night at midnight he was condemned to be shot. The soldier had prospects of forty to fifty long years of usefulness ahead of him, and he was disposed to argue the question of his death with the king. When he was brought into the royal presence he saluted respectfully and thus began:

"It is a mistake, O, king, for your counselors to say I was asleep on that memorable night. 'Tis false. In fact, I was very wide awake, and as proof I offer the fact that just at midnight I heard the clock in St. Paul's steeple strike 13."

At this the court jester fell over backward and rolled on the floor in convulsions of laughter. The king's counselors hid their faces in their sleeves to keep from smiling in the royal face.

"Nevertheless it is true," repeated the stout-hearted John Hatfield. "And more than that if you will give me half a chance I will prove it."

The king gave him the chance and he returned a few days later armed with affidavits from reputable citizens living in the neighborhood of St. Paul's, declaring that on the night in question the clock had departed from its usual custom and had struck 13 times. The king granted the desired pardon and John lived happily for forty or fifty years afterward, and the story of how the mystic number 13 saved his neck was told by the mothers to their little children until it became known to the entire city of London.

John Hatfield's experience was in a way duplicated by Dr. Nansen, whose attempts to discover the North Pole a dozen or more years ago made him a world-famous character. At the last minute before the departure of Nansen on the Fram a new man was added to the crew and when the good ship had gotten well out of port it was discovered that there were just 13 men on board. Despite predictions of disaster all 13 of the crew returned to their homes well and sound three years later.

More than this, on December 13, Nansen made a tour of his ship to look at a colony of recently arrived pups and he found to his surprise there were just 13 of them to keep company with the 13 men. To make the proof of the charm of the number positive, Nansen arrived in Vardo, Norway, August 13, 1896, and on the same day the Fram emerged from the ice doe and swam the open sea again. After this experience it is said Dr. Nansen swore by number 13.

In medieval Rome the superstitious had a peculiar custom of dividing the mystic number into 3 and 10, and the belief was widespread that the 3d and 10th of September and October were unlucky days. The poem of the months contains the following couplet:

"The third and tenth, with poisoned breath,
To man are foes as foul as death."

Consequently the medieval Latin would not begin a business enterprise or take any unnecessary risks on these two days.

To one who weighs the accumulated evidence of ages impartially it would appear that it is about a standoff whether the 13th year of the reign of the beneficent king is starting under a cloud that will require unusual watchfulness on the part of the subjects. With 1,313 of the latter, the knights will give the old superstition a thorough test, and many there are who are ready to predict the downfall of the hoodoo belief in the Kingdom of Quivern after this year.

TALL TALES OF THE TRACK

Conductor's Recollections of the Early Days of Train Service.

EXPERIENCE ON COBDURGY ROADS

Numerous Side of Life on Runs from Long Island to Omaha—The Jarrett and Palmer Transcontinental Train.

"I have seen many queer happenings, both ludicrous and tragic," said a veteran railroad man, long since retired, to some Washington friends recently. "Nowadays the boys don't have such queer experiences, because in the early 90s railroads were a novelty to the rustics living up the states in newly opened sections."

"When I was a boy I was traveling on one of the branch roads in middle New York, and an old woman flagged the train. When the conductor went to see what the trouble was she calmly asked him to change a \$5 bill, which he obligingly did."

"When I first took up railroading I worked on the Boston & Albany road for a short time. One day, just after pulling out of Troy, N. Y., the engineer saw two women walking on the tracks ahead of our train, and he rang the bell and whistled frantically. Suddenly, before his startled eyes they disappeared down into a cattle guard, and the entire train passed over them. The engineer brought the train to a standstill and we ran back to find the women. It was evident that they had not seen the cattle guard, as it had been flooded by recent rains and was covered with a thin coating of ice, through which the unsuspecting women had dropped. As we hauled them out dripping, but evidently unhurt, the oldest one gasped: 'If my mister, ain't them things dangerous?'"

Knocking Around.

"After a few years of knocking around," continued the speaker, "I drifted down to New York and then got a job as brakeman on the Long Island railroad. I was put on one of the accommodations, which gave me a lot of experience and hard work. We classified these locals as: 630, workmen; 735, clerks; 836, shirkies, and 935, flirts."

"One night a tall, well-dressed man boarded the train at Mineola, and I noticed he sank down wearily into a seat very near the stove and gently snubbed. We pulled out, and shortly after I jerked open the door and shouted, 'Queens!' The slumbering passenger slightly shifted his position and stammered:

"The pot's yours; I stayed in on Jack's."

"A few days after that experience our train crew had a bad scare. As we pulled out of Long Island City a man attempted to jump aboard and fell under the cars. The entire train passed over him before the engineer could bring it to a standstill. When we picked him up he exclaimed: 'I've bumped my nose!'"

"He had, and that was his only injury. 'That same year a man was struck by our train at the line between two counties. As nearly as could be told he was in one county when the engine struck him, but it threw him some thirty feet and landed him just over the line in the next county. Two coroners immediately laid claim to the body, as each said that the man was killed in his jurisdiction. The dead man could not tell, nor anyone else, whether he had died when the engine struck him or when he reached the earth after his flight. A very pretty fight ensued and the man remained unburied while they disputed over the possession of his body, but nature's law intervened, and he was finally buried in defiance of the laws of the state."

Chicago-Omaha Runs.

"I stayed on the road for some years longer," went on the railroad man, settling back more comfortably in his chair. "Then I joined the Chicago & Northwestern as a fireman on the Chicago-Omaha Express. It was a very smooth road and we usually made record time."

"On one run to Omaha the chief engineer placed a full glass of water on a seat in a Pullman car to test the smoothness of the roadbed, and when we reached Omaha he found not one drop had been spilled."

He was very much pleased, but thought possibly specific gravity had much to do with it, so, to test that he placed a full glass of whiskey on the identical seat. We went to examine it after we pulled out from our first station on the route and discovered the glass as dry as the burning sands of the desert of Sahara."

"Once when we were going to make the return run from Omaha to Chicago our conductor was approached by a solemn, cadaverous looking man who gravely asked him if he was a Christian. John Gaudum managed to keep calm, and upon further inquiry he learned that the stranger had spent two days in trying to find a train in charge of a Christian conductor going to Chicago."

"He was very anxious to start on his journey, but was firmly resolved not to intrust his life to the care of a sinner. He had questioned fifteen conductors, and had failed to discover one of the desired kind. He did not take our train, and I guess he began his journey on foot."

"Conductor John Gaudum was very sensitive about his name, and always insisted that friends addressing him hastily should call him John. He was one of the best fellows I ever worked with, but he was continually getting into hot water."

Old Times Revamped.

"On one of our trips Gaudum was passing through a coach when he noticed a woman asleep in a seat. Her head was on the window sill, and her feet extended to the aisle. Her dress was so badly disarranged that her ankle and a good portion of an exquisitely fashioned calf were plainly visible. A number of men a few seats farther down were contemplating the scene with keen enjoyment."

"Now, Gaudum was always very strict and kept things straight on his train, and he noticed this. He touched the woman on the shoulder and woke her up."

"Madam," he said, politely, "excuse me for disturbing you, but your dress is so disarranged that your ankle is exposed."

"Oh, that makes no difference," replied the woman, smiling sweetly. "It's nothing but cork."

"In three seconds Gaudum was in the baggage car, where he promptly lost his religion."

"We had the misfortune, through no fault of ours, to run over a man at a grade crossing just outside of Omaha, and one of the boys in that office was instructed to inform his wife that her husband had been killed. He was cautioned to break the news gently, so this is what he wrote: 'Dear Madam: I write to say that your husband is unavoidably detained. An undertaker will call on you tomorrow with full particulars. Yours, very truly, etc.'"

"The division superintendent in that same office told me that he once sent the customary half-fare ticket to a Nebraska minister. He promptly received a letter from the minister asking if he couldn't embrace his wife, also."

"Being a cautious man, the superintendent replied, doubtfully, that he thought he could, but he would like to see the lady first, as he was a little particular in such matters."

"The old man paused a moment to light his pipe, then continued: 'An Exciting Scene.'"

"While we were in the yards at Chicago one fall, a freight train pulled in. We heard most extraordinary noises coming from one of the cars. It sounded as if bedlam was let loose. Upon inquiry we were told that it was a carload of cats shipped from the Pacific coast and consigned to a dealer in skins in New York. The felines were to be slaughtered on reaching their destination. Concerts had been given, much to the annoyance of the train crew, all along the route, and had attracted universal attention. One would have supposed it a good deal easier and quieter to have shipped the skins rather than the live cats."

"But the queerest story of unpleasant traveling companions was told me by a railroad inspector, who had just returned from a trip abroad."

"He was traveling on a night express from Vienna to Berlin, when the passengers were aroused from their sleep by the shrieks of a woman, who insisted she was being stabbed with sharp instruments in several places. She would not submit

to an examination, and the guard was at his wit's end because he could not quiet her. A stout man, some distance away, added to the clamor by saying he was being cruelly pricked."

"At that moment the train drew up at a station and the man and woman were taken out. The man was searched and six colossal leeches were found on his thigh. The poor woman fainted from horror and weakness as four of these creatures were removed from her."

"My brother was conductor of a local on one of the branch roads of the Southern, and he once told me these two stories to illustrate the slow time made in that section of the country: 'One day they were making the usual trip, and one of the passengers was awakened by the "toot-toot" of the engineer's whistle, and ejaculated: "This train has caught up with that cow again."

"On another trip a woman put her head out of the door of the last car, and said: "Why, there's that nigger on horse-back we saw ten miles back from here."

A passenger across the aisle remarked: "Well, I wouldn't own that horse."

"I'm glad I never worked on that road," concluded the speaker.—Philadelphia North American.

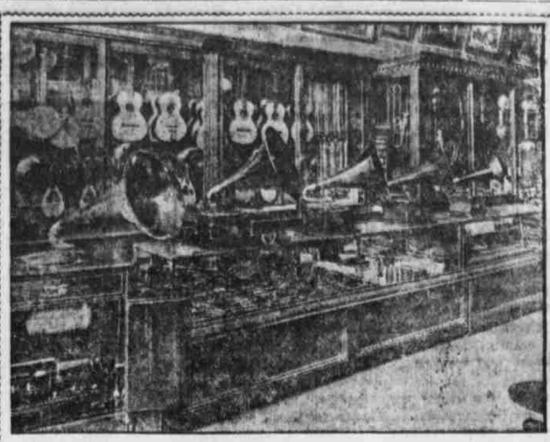
PROPERTY DESTROYED BY FIRE

Enormous Size of the Fire Bill Piled Up Annually in This Country.

Our annual fire bill has been steadily growing as our population increases and the housing facilities try to keep pace with the expansion. Not even the spectacular burning of Rome, nor the great conflagration of ancient London, compare in extent with the vast destruction of property by fire in the United States in a single year. The record for 1906 stands unusually high. owing to the burning of San Francisco. The total losses for that year in the United States and Canada by fire were \$57,590,400. Of this vast sum, San Francisco was responsible for some \$56,000,000, including buildings and contents.

Compare this enormous destruction of property with the investments in new building enterprises. In 1906 building operations throughout the country represented a total investment of \$25,000,000, and that of 1906—the high-water mark in the nation's history—approximately \$70,000,000. Thus during the greatest building year of history, noted for its phenomenal prosperity in nearly every industry, we have been able to replace only a little more than what we burnt down. In 1904 our fire losses aggregated \$25,198,000, and this was greater than those of any previous year, not even excepting the years 1872 and 1873, when the Chicago and Boston fires added enormously to the total. In 1905 the losses from fire showed a still further increase, culminating in the great record of 1906.

But the waste through fire consumption is not the only loss which the people must pay for any extended conflagration. While the fire losses of San Francisco have been placed at \$50,000,000, it is estimated that the loss to business in that city and throughout the country will aggregate at least \$1,000,000,000. It cost about \$12,000,000 to clean up the debris and put the city in shape for new buildings, and a further \$20,000,000 to rebuild and remake the city what it was before. It will take ten years to give the city its former prestige and at least twenty years to recover all of its lost trade and position. In return for this loss in property and business, the citizens of San Francisco received something like \$138,000,000 insurance. The amount of insurance covering property in the burned district was approximately \$25,000,000. Final payments by the companies will probably be in the neighborhood of 80 per cent of the amount of insurance involved. In the great Chicago fire only 50 per cent of the insurance was paid, and in the Baltimore fire—where no earthquake occurred to invalidate any of the insurance—the payments were 50 per cent of the value of insurance. The known ratio of insurance to value was about 70 per cent, and at least 5 per cent of the property carried no insurance whatever.—George E. Walsh in Harper's Weekly.



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