

# QUOTIDIAN

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## PRELUDE

This is a particularly special issue, since it marks the first time my readers can receive it by email and online at [www.quotidian.us](http://www.quotidian.us). A lot of work went into this site, so I am hopeful it is a useful extension of this publication. Initial feedback has been positive, and I am sincerely thankful to those who have visited. This week, I chose to keep things interesting; as such, there is no set theme. The quotes below are short and sweet, saying much by saying little. They all come from *Oxymoronica*, my wonderful book of paradoxical quotations.

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Melancholy is the pleasure of being sad."  
—Victor Hugo

"Poverty is hateful good."  
—Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*

"Striving to better, oft we mar what's well."  
—Shakespeare, *King Lear*, I.iv.226

"Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet."  
—Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*

"Several excuses are always less convincing than one."  
—Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point*

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

**JULY 4, 1826:** American songwriter Stephen Collins Foster is born in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania. Foster was a well-known songwriter in his day, and many of his tunes are still popular today, including "Oh! Susanna", "Camptown Races," "Beautiful Dreamer," and "Old Folks at Home" (the latter is better known as "Way Down Upon the Swannee River"). Foster's songs were largely written for minstrel shows, a popular form of entertainment in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Minstrel shows consisted of comic skits, variety acts, dancing, and music performed by white actors in blackface. These shows invariably showed African Americans in a negative light, and while their popularity all but vanished by the 1950s, Foster's minstrel tunes lived on.

Foster's attempts at making a living as a songwriter largely failed, given the limited copyright protections at the time (he received only \$100 for "Oh! Susanna"). He died impoverished in 1864 at the young age of 37, and was inducted into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1970.

## 3 WORDS

Memorize these by week's end and you shall quickly develop an enviable lexicon.

This issue's theme: little-known synonyms for well-known words.

**eleemosynary** (e-li-MAW-sin-air-ee) *adjective*

1. of, relating to, or supported by charity;  
CHARITABLE

*Ex.* Victims of large natural disasters frequently depend on **eleemosynary** relief from private individuals.

*Ex. 2:* The church is supported by donations from an anonymous, **eleemosynary** benefactor.

*Etym.* From the Late Latin *eleemosyna*, "alms."

**deracinate** (dee-RAY-sin-ate) *vb.*

1. UPROOT  
2. to displace from one's native or accustomed environment

*Ex.* To keep an orderly garden, you must frequently **deracinate** unwanted weeds.

*Ex. 2:* During World War II, Hitler **deracinated** millions of German-born Jews as a part of his "final solution."

**concupiscence** (con-CUE-pi-sens) *noun*

1. ardent sexual desire;  
LUST

*Ex.* Her presence aroused in him an uncontrollable **concupiscence** that was not easily slaked.

## ETYMOLOGY 101

### *The origin of: potpourri*

In everyday usage, *potpourri* has a positive connotation. It can refer to either a medley or assortment of anything (a potpourri of ethnicities), or a mix of flowers, herbs, and spices kept in a jar to provide a welcome scent. It may thus come as a surprise to learn the word literally means “rotten pot.” The original French *pot pourri* (*pot* “pot” + *pourri*, past participle of *pourrir* “to rot”) was a stew made with a variety of meats and vegetables slowly cooked together, and was borrowed from a traditional Spanish dish called *olla podrida*. Why the stew was referred to as rotten is not very clear, but may have to do with the fact that stews were often made from anything available, especially ingredients not typically mixed together.

### *The origin of: ounce*

I discovered more than I bargained for while accidentally stumbling on this word in my *New Book of Word Histories*. It appears our system of weights and measures is far more complicated and arcane than most of us realize. Because the Romans used a system of measurement based on twelve parts, **ounce** comes to us from the Latin *uncia*, meaning “a twelfth part,” by way of Middle French *unce*. The word **inch** also comes from *uncia* by way of the Old English *ince* or *ynce*. Etymologically, both **ounce** and **inch** should refer to a twelfth part of something, so why does our pound contain 16 ounces? The reason is due to the development in medieval Europe of two separate systems of measurement.

The first system originated in Troyes, France, an important medieval commercial hub. Today, the only unit of measurement still used from this system is the troy ounce (ozt), which is slightly larger than our standard ounce (see table on page 3). It is only used to measure precious metals, precious stones, and medicine.

The second system, used today in the United States and in many parts of Canada and the United Kingdom, is the *avoirdupois system* (from Old French *avoir de pois*, “goods of weight”). After 1485, it was the standard system of weights used in England for all goods—except those covered by the troy ounce—until metrification (conversion to the metric system) took place in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reason this system of weights contains a 16 ounce pound may originate from a 1590 decree that differentiated the weights of troy and avoirdupois pounds (but failed to give any type of conversion factor between the two).

\* The reason we abbreviate pound **lb.** is because the Latin word for pound is *libra*. A pound sterling (abbreviated £) indeed used to be a pound of silver.

\* The abbreviation for ounce, *oz.*, comes from the Italian word for ounce, *onza*.

Source: *The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories*, Wikipedia, *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (1971), Online Etymology Dictionary, <http://www.gwydir.demon.co.uk/jo/units/weight.htm>.

## WELL I’LL BE!

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS YOU NEVER ASKED

*Why does some old-school writing contain the letter “f” in place of the letter “s”?*

This has always confused me. Take a look at the first sentence of the Declaration of Independence and you will see the following:

*When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected...*

The character in place of the lower case ‘s’ is *not* an ‘f’ but what is called a “long” or “medial” s (represented as f). The long s dates back to medieval times and was used for centuries, often to spruce up manuscripts with additional expressive strokes. The long s is perhaps most familiar to us from its extensive usage in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Copperplate handwriting (a type of calligraphic script that uses a sharp, pointed nib pen) was popular.

Strictly speaking, the long s should only appear at the beginning or in the middle of a word, while the terminal, short, or round s (the one we use today) should end it. A quick read over a period manuscript shows, however, that this rule was not always closely followed.

The long s persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the German script Fraktur (commonly called Old German print), which is today typically associated with (*continued on page 3, column 1*)

TABLE OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Weight	Avoirdupois	Troy (Apothecaries')
Long ton*	2240 pounds	
Short ton	2000 pounds	
Long hundredweight	112 lbs., ½ long tons	
Short hundredweight	100 lbs., ½ short tons	
Pound	16 oz., 7000 grains	12 oz., 5760 grains
Ounce	16 drams	8 drams, 480 grains
Dram	27.343 grains	3 scruples, 60 grains
Scruple		20 grains
Grain	.036 drams	.05 scruples

\* The avoirdupois system was originally divided as so:

16 drams	=	1 ounce
16 ounces	=	1 livre/pound
25 livres	=	1 quarter
4 quarters	=	1 quintal/hundredweight
20 quintaux	=	1 tonne/ton

The Irish and British added another unit of measurement, the *stone*, and set it equal to 14 pounds. The British colonies in North America chose not to adopt the stone, thus giving rise to “long” and “short” measurements. To make conversions between the stone and the quarter, hundredweight, and ton easier, the latter were altered to 28, 112, and 2,240 pounds, respectively. Thus, a British “long” ton has 2,240 pounds (160 stone), while an American “short” ton has 2,000 pounds, and so forth.

(continued from page 2, column 2) Nazi war posters and vintage beer steins. One source claims the script was outlawed by Hitler in 1941, but not because it was difficult to read. In any case, Fraktur fell from grace in the post World War II era since it reminded too many people of German militarism and its associated horrors.

**Humboldfraktur: Victor jagt zwölf Boxkämpfer quer über den Sylter Deich. 1234567890**

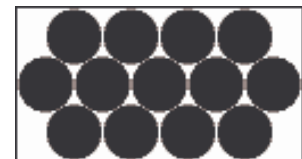
*A pangram displaying all 26 letters of the Fraktur script*

Sources: The Straight Dope, [www.6nc.org/about6nc/copperplate.html](http://www.6nc.org/about6nc/copperplate.html), [www.beerstein.net/articles/alpha.htm](http://www.beerstein.net/articles/alpha.htm), Wikipedia.

*Why are there 13 items in a baker's dozen?*

A baker's dozen, also known as a long dozen, is composed of 13 bagels, cookies, donuts, or other baked items rather than the standard twelve. The most probable reason for this is because an old English statute, the Assize of Bread and Ale, provided fines and other punishments to bakers who swindled their customers. To prevent being seen as a cheat, and to ensure that no customer was shortchanged, a baker included an extra item at no charge. Fear of punishment aside, this was a sensible business practice, since one of the 13 items could easily be lost, eaten, or ruined.

Today, the practice continues for slightly different reasons, tradition not the least of them. Some bakers see it as a way to thank customers for their continued patronage (and indeed many customers expect that extra bagel). On a practical level, it is very easy to pack 13 disc-shaped objects into a standard baking tray, which has a 3:2 aspect ratio. It is also best to cook 13 items on a cookie sheet by placing them as shown below, since it avoids the corners (which are notorious for heating up and cooling off quickly).



Source: Wikipedia.

## LITERARY GENIUS

On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee, a delegate from Virginia, read aloud a resolution to Congress:

*Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved. / That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances. / That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.*

Lee's Resolution, as it came to be known, was not initially supported by all of the colonies, but eventually formed the crux of the subsequent Declaration. Congress postponed consideration of Lee's Resolution, and on June 11 appointed a committee of five delegates to draft a declaration of independence. The committee consisted of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman. In a letter to James Madison, Jefferson confided that the committee "unanimously pressed on myself alone to undertake the draught. I consented; I drew it; but before I reported it to the committee I communicated it separately to Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams requesting their corrections..." Congress reconvened on July 1 after a three week recess. The following day, all but one of the colonies (New York did not vote) adopted the Lee Resolution, prompting John Adams to proclaim in a letter to his wife: "The Second Day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable...in the History of America." He was, of course, mistaken; Congress officially adopted the Declaration two days later, after making several modifications to Jefferson's draft. The handwritten manuscript was sent to John Dunlap, official printer to Congress, who made between 150 and 200 copies. The 25 copies still known to exist today are known as the "Dunlap broadsides."

## THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

*by* Thomas Jefferson, et. al.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation. ----- We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its Powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. ----- He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. ----- He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. ----- He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the right of Representation in

the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only. ----- He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. ----- He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the People. ----- He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. ----- He has endeavored to prevent the Population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. ----- He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers. ----- He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and Payment of their salaries. ----- He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance. ----- He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures. ----- He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power. ----- He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:—For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:—For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:—For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:—For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:—For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:—For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:—For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:—For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:—For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.—He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us. ----- He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our People. ----- He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation. — He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends. -----

**We, therefore,** the Representatives of the **united States of America**, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, **free and independent states**; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. ---- And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.