

QUOTIDIAN

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PRELUDE

This issue comes a full fortnight after the most recent, and for that I have regrets. However, it has been a very exciting and fun-filled two weeks, and for that I cannot apologize. Spring break! What a wonderful concept. It has evolved from a simple vacation in mid-March to an all-out celebration of freedom and good weather. It has grown to include those who do not even attend school any more (my friends number among them). As a tribute to this carefree and often sinful time, I have chosen to devote this week's issue to the things we all love to do, but often feel bad about doing.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"It is good to be without vices, but it is not good to be without temptations."
—Walter Bagehot

"Search others for their virtues, thyself for thy vices."
—B. Franklin

"Money won is twice as sweet as money earned."
—Paul Newman
from *The Color of Money*

"A Smith and Wesson beats four aces."
—American proverb

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

MARCH 29, 1999: The Dow Jones Industrial Average closes above 10,000 points for the first time since its inception in 1896, at 10,006 points.

APRIL 3, 1882: Famed American outlaw Jesse James is betrayed and murdered by his own gang member Robert Ford, who shoots James in the back of the head in the hope of receiving a \$10,000 bounty. Jesse and his brother Frank had eluded authorities for 16 years, robbing and murdering throughout the American Midwest. James and his gang are credited with pulling off the first successful daylight bank robbery (in peacetime) and train robbery. Despite their often violent acts, James and his gang were glorified by contemporary journalists, who were eager to provide easterners with entertaining stories of the "wild west."

Robert Ford received only a fraction of the promised bounty and was charged with murder, but achieved for himself a place in western outlaw lore.

Sources: www.wikipedia.org, www.historychannel.com/today.

3 WORDS

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

This week's theme: words related to vices.

diablerie (dee-OB-lur-ee) *n*

1. black magic; sorcery
2. a representation, in words or pictures, of black magic or dealings with the devil
3. devilish or mischievous conduct

Ex. One's tendency to engage in diablerie is greater in a place like Las Vegas, where everyone shares the common purpose of drinking too much and sleeping too little.

Etym. From the Greek *diabolos*, meaning "accuser" or "slanderer."

libidinous (le-BID-i-nus) *adj.*

1. having or exhibiting lustful desires

Ex. It is perhaps every young man's dream to find a libidinous mate and her like-minded circle of friends.

prodigal (PRAW-di-gul) *adj.*

1. recklessly extravagant
2. characterized by wasteful expenditure; LAVISH
3. yielding abundantly

Ex. His prodigal ways earned him many friends, but quickly left him bereft of any wealth.

ETYMOLOGY 101

This week's spotlight word is fun to use as an insult; i.e. "You libidinous strumpet." No one will know exactly what you mean, but they'll know you insulted them, and resent your use of intelligent words to do it.

Libidinous comes from the Latin word *libidosus*, which means "full of desire" or "lustful." It in turn comes from the more familiar Latin *libido*, which we now associate with the human sex drive, and any emotions linked to sexuality.

The term was first applied in this manner by Sigmund Freud, the founder of modern psychoanalysis. Freud believed the libido was the most basic and powerful human drive, one that was developed during infancy. As an individual progressed through certain life stages, the libido would change, from focusing on the mouth (such as when an infant suckles at its mother's breast) to focusing on the sexual organs (such as when a person advances through puberty).

Later psychoanalysts, such as Carl Jung, questioned Freud's emphasis on the biological development of the libido. Jung believed social pressures were a significant factor in shaping sexual desires, a view that is largely held today. Sources: www.etymonline.com, www.hindustanlink.com/sex/sexglossary/libido.htm.

NEAT-O WHY WE FOOL EACH OTHER ON APRIL 1

The reasons we subject each other to harmless pranks on the first day of April are shrouded in a veil of mystery, like so much else in this world. If only our ancestors had taken care to write these kinds of things down! Silly, uneducated peasants.

The most widely circulated theory holds that April Fool's Day is the product of a calendar switch. When the western world made the transition from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in the 16th century, the day on which the new year fell changed. Under the old Julian calendar, the new year began on March 25, but festivities celebrating this event did not begin until April 1, since March 25 fell during Holy Week. When the Gregorian calendar was adopted, the new year changed to January 1. Those who still believed New Year's Day fell on April 1 were often the subject of harmless japes, such as false New Year's Day visits by their friends.

Another possible explanation is that around this time of year, nature "fools" humanity with the fickle weather of spring.

In France, the victim of a joke is called a *poisson d'avril*, or "April fish." An April fish is a young one, and thus one that is easily caught, or fooled. Source: <http://www.snopes.com/holidays/april/aprilfool.htm>.

WELL I'LL BE! THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION YOU NEVER ASKED

What is a "Dead Man's Hand?"

In poker, any hand consisting of a pair of aces and a pair of eights is known as a "dead man's hand," since it is widely believed that James Butler Hickok ("Wild Bill" Hickok) held such a hand when he was shot by Jack McCall while playing in Deadwood, South Dakota, on August 2, 1876.

Most agree that the aces and eights were the black suits—clubs and spades. It is not known for certain what Hickok's fifth card was, but transcripts from the trial for Hickok's murder list it as the jack of diamonds.

Some poker players maintain that a "dead man's hand" is very lucky and seldom beaten. Certain "wild" variations of poker allow a dead man's hand to trump all hands, even a royal flush.

Source: George Stimpson, *A Book About A Thousand Things*, pg. 99.



NEAT-O

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAS VEGAS

Given the theme of this week's issue, I thought it appropriate to include a very brief history of the Mecca of licentiousness, everyone's favorite city: Las Vegas. Not surprisingly, the city did not always look and behave as it does today, and had its humble beginnings in the early 19th century as a desert oasis.

For many years, Spanish and Mexican traders traveled between Santa Fe and Los Angeles along a well-used route known as the Spanish Trail. The "trail" was actually comprised of numerous routes, which looped northward into present day Colorado and Utah, then dived back down through Nevada and into Los Angeles. The more direct, westerly route was known as the *jornada de muerte*, or "journey of death" by the Spaniards, for it traveled through many miles of inhospitable desert.

Sometime in 1829, a party of 60 men led by Mexican trader Antonio Armijo left Santa Fe and drove west in an effort to blaze a new, more direct path to Los Angeles. After a time, Armijo and his band set up camp and sent out a scouting party to search for water. One of these scouts was Rafael Rivera, who became separated from the scouting party and got lost. As luck would have it, he came upon a meadow fed by a desert spring—the site of present day Las Vegas. Two weeks later, Rivera found his group and led them to the spring.

The discovery of water by Rivera shortened the journey to California by several days and provided an impetus for settlers to move west, since the journey was now less severe. The area became known as Las Vegas, which is Spanish for "the meadows." It was not until 1844, however, that anyone other than Spanish missionaries, traders, and indigenous peoples knew of the Las Vegas valley.

In 1842, famed American icon John C. Fremont was instructed by the U.S. War Department to lead an expedition west to explore the Rocky Mountains. This he did, and afterward explored much of the area between the Rockies and the Pacific. Sometime in the spring of 1844, Fremont camped near Las Vegas springs and wrote of the area.*

Mormon settlers established a fort in the area in 1855, both to protect the overland Salt Lake City/Los Angeles mail route, and to teach local Indians farming techniques. The Indians rejected the teachings and raided the fort until it was abandoned in 1857.

Las Vegas did not experience rapid growth until it became a railroad town in 1905. The location of the area and its abundance of water made it an ideal stopping and refueling place for trains on their way from Salt Lake City to southern California.** On May 15, 1905, the city was founded when 110 acres of land were auctioned off in a single day.

The city as we know it today owes much of its influence to events that happened in 1931. In this year, gambling was legalized in the state of Nevada, and laws making it easier to obtain a "quickie" divorce were passed. A mere six weeks of residency were required to qualify for a quickie divorce; those who stayed for this short period lived in "dude ranches," the predecessor of the modern day casino-hotels.

That same year, construction on the Hoover Dam began, bringing in an influx of workers and construction capital.

In 1941, the El Rancho became the first hotel-casino in Vegas. Its success attracted and inspired the money-hungry mob to construct its own resort, a flamboyant and gaudy tribute to Miami resorts of the time. Its construction was presided over by the infamous mobster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, and is still known by its original name: the Flamingo (the nickname of Bugsy's mistress, Virginia Hill).

Bugsy ended up biting the bullet (or the shell, since it was a shotgun that got him), since the mob suspected him of skimming costs from the construction.

The success of the Flamingo kept the mob active in Vegas for years, but it also brought in other businessmen who wanted an honest piece of the action. The practices of the El Rancho (including the booking of singers and performers to entertain guests) lived on in successive resorts, who copied this successful formula.



John C. Fremont

New casinos either outperformed their competitors or they perished. So began the snowball effect that has led to today's mega resorts.

Today, Las Vegas is home to 13 of the 20 largest resort hotels in the world, including the largest in the U.S., the 5,005 room, 114-acre, \$1 billion MGM Grand.

It is estimated that the city's population is increasing by 60,000 per year, or 5,000 each month. This is believable considering the city's population increased by 83% between 1990 and 2000.

*Fremont's name is well known in Las Vegas, even today: the Fremont Hotel and Casino and Fremont Street, both located downtown, are named for him.

**The Plaza Hotel, located on Fremont and Main Streets, is on the site of the original rail depot, which is still operational today. It is the only railroad depot in the world inside of a hotel/casino.

Sources:

<http://www.lvot.com/lvoteg/hist/lvhist.html>,

<http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov>, <http://www.carpenoetm.tv>, <http://www.homesteadmuseum.org/family/mapost.htm>.



Fremont Street, 1947

HOUSE ODDS

As everyone who has gambled knows, each casino has a built-in advantage known as the "house odds." Strictly speaking, it is the margin of "victory" the house will have over a player over an extended period of time. The smaller the number, the better your odds of winning. Here are the house odds for some popular casino games:

Blackjack, single deck	0.20%
Blackjack, double deck	0.35%
Blackjack, four decks	0.51%
Craps (pass line)	1.41%
Craps (pass line, 5X odds)	0.32%
Craps (pass line, 10X odds)	0.18%
Keno	27.0%
Let It Ride	3.51%
Pai-Gow Poker	2.50%
Roulette (single '0' table)	2.70%
Roulette (double '0' table)	5.26%
Slot Machines (5¢)	15.2%
Slot Machines (25¢)	10.2%
Slot Machines (\$1)	8.10%
Spanish 21	0.82%
Video Poker	5.00%

In single deck blackjack, for example, the house will win 50.2% of the time. Your best odds are therefore with single deck blackjack and craps, where the casino lets you back up your bets.

Source: <http://www.onlinecasinoreports.com>.

LITERARY GENIUS

This week's selection required me to do a great deal of online research to ensure that it dealt with themes that are in line with this issue's motif. It is one of my favorite poems, since it employs brilliant diction and rhyme, and tackles complex subjects. The poem is difficult to understand with just one read, so I highly recommend going to SparkNotes (www.sparknotes.com/poetry/coleridge) for a synopsis. However, in a nutshell, here is the path this week's selection follows:

Three men are on their way to a wedding when they are detained by a grizzled old sailor—the ancient mariner. He tells one of them the story of his journey from the south, where the weather was cold, out into the open sea towards the equator. While the mariner's ship was caught in frigid arctic waters, a great albatross appeared, and the ice cracked and split. The ship was propelled by a wind from the south, and the sailors thus considered the bird a good omen.

The mariner, however, became bothered by the bird's presence, and shot it with his crossbow. As punishment for this act, the other sailors forced him to wear the dead bird around his neck. The rest of the poem deals, in large part, with the mariner's refusal to repent and his subsequent atonement, when he realizes that all of God's creatures are fair.

When the mariner returns to shore, he begs an old hermit (whom many believe to represent God) to forgive him and "shrieve" him of his sins. This the hermit does, but on condition that the mariner repeat his tale of woe, lest the memories of his dark journey return to haunt him. In this manner, the mariner is charged with sharing his reverence for God's creation, and God's word is, in effect, passed along.

The first edition of the poem was published in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, but since it contained a great deal of language that was archaic (even for the time), it was substantially revised to its present form, reproduced below. The margin notes in the original are here omitted.

Help on this introductory paragraph from: www.awerty.com and www.sparknotes.com.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Parts I through IV

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, greybeard loon!
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheer'd, the harbour clear'd,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong;
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moonshine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my crossbow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

PART II

The sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame,
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the sun.

And straight the sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip -
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The horned moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my crossbow!

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropped not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie;
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt always
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

