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Lucky Days

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of discarding personal prejudices in favor of less impassioned and
more profound considerations, and during his whole political life,
fought Burr with all the bitterness of a fanatic. Hamilton’s own
correspondence shows a relentless determination to exterminate the
“little Colonel”, at whatever cost. Whenever Burr was suggested
for any office, Hamilton fairly scorched the paper with invective.
Small wonder he could not truthfully deny uttering despicable opin-
ions when called upon to do so. The only wonder of the whole
matter is that Burr withstood the attack as long as he did, and waited
until there could not be a single doubt of his enemy’s perfidy, before
he demanded an explanation or an apology.

C. J. R.

LUCKY DAYS

One of the modern dangers confronting the student of law is
the tendency to confine his reading solely to technical treatises; when
the confinement is broken it is generally for the purpose of explor-
ing the vast field of imaginative romances. Seldom is the Clausum
of the law left for the investigation of the larger ground of general
knowledge—a lamentable fact, for the old saying “hidden treasure
lie in books” was not meant to apply to the period during which it
was written.

Few of us, for instance, ever stop to consider the etymology of
words and phrases; yet etymology plays an interesting part in lan-
guage. Consider the history of the phrase, “lucky days”, it is now
one of the choice bit of expression found on the campus, and lately
has been chosen as the theme for a song. Little did the ingenious
composer of tin-pan alley realize that he was borrowing an expres-
sion from the early Romans used by them in their legal procedure.

For Mr. Thomas Tyler, compiler of a glossary of foreign legal
phrases informs us that the Latin equiv alent of “lucky day” (dies
fasti) were of great import to the ancient Romans. Our Roman
history established the theory that the Romans marked each day
their calendars with either a white or a black ball, to denote respec-
tively whether or not the day had been a happy (i.e. lucky) manner.
Then at the end of a person’s life his bereaved could easily deter-
mine whether or not his life had been a happy one by the simple ex-
pedient of counting the white and the black balls, and comparing the totals.

It seems that when the early Romans were in court, they wore togas which proclaimed their mission. If a desired verdict was obtained by a defendant in a criminal case, the fortunate man would immediately return to his home and change his attire to befit the occasion. Upon a later date he would once more appear at the court to hear final judgment. Only on certain days could this judgment be pronounced; to these auspicious days was the term "dies fasti" also applied. Gradually, since after all an acquittal of a criminal offense was about the happiest event in a man's life, the term was limited to the latter use, and became obsolete as a designation of calendar days moderately happy.

Thomas J. Jones, Jr.