

A TRIP TO AFRICA.

HABITS AND HOMES OF THE DENIZENS OF THE GOLD COAST.

How 10-Year-Old Mothers Carry Their Babies—Singular Though Rudely Elaborate Maternal Custom—An Uncomfortable Conveyance.

Although the Gold Coast is not favorable for the prolongation of life of white men, the natives are strong and healthy enough. The children are particularly sprightly and fat. They run about in a state of nature, with merely a girdle of beads around their waists, in lieu of clothing. They are marriageable at an early age, commencing the cares of wedded life at 10. The infants are carried by their mothers in a peculiar position. A piece of light wood about ten inches long by four or five broad is covered with cotton and tied around the woman, so as to rest upon the lower part of her back. Upon this the infant is placed, straddling face to the mother's back and secured by a fold of her cotton cloth. The woman is thus free to work and the babe is near the nourishment necessary for its existence.

DRY WEATHER HORSES. I saw some very old persons here. One day on going down the road toward the castle, I saw a venerable looking negro sitting in a wicker chair, bareheaded and fully exposed to the fierce rays of the sun. It was about noon, when the sun is very powerful, and the old fellow's skull was dried of wool, and he shined. I stopped to speak to him, placing my hand on top of his head and finding the heat excessive. He spoke in tremulous tones, telling me he was nearly 100 years of age, and that his blood was cold; so he had his chair placed in the sun so that his system could be made thoroughly. The houses are made of sun baked bricks, or adobe, which material is all right during the dry portion of the year, but has an inconvenient habit of tumbling about your devoted person during a continuance of rain. The walls of the houses are thick, to keep the great heat out, and the roofs are thatched with dried grass. Two of us occupied one of these houses half way between the castle and the lighthouse. The under story was a merchant's store, and we occupied the top floor. We had been experiencing rather heavy rain for a week, when one night the wall facing us, directing the wind came from collapsed, bringing down the roof with it. Fortunately our coats were on the other side, otherwise our earthly "globe trotting" would have been brought to an untimely and sudden end.

BURIED IN GOLD. The burials of the Gold coast are very peculiar. Most of the people own their houses, and the family have perhaps lived in them for generations. The custom doubtless arose from considerations of security, for fear the graves might be rifled. They always bury their dead within the walls of the deceased's residence. The houses where we were lodged was separated from the adjoining one by a narrow alley. The window of our upper room looked into the lower story of the other house, as a door was just opposite us. We were thus enabled to view the whole proceedings. The wife of the owner, a young woman about 20 years of age, had died of puerperal fever and was laid out on a stretcher covered with black cloth, attired as in life. In the center of the room a trench was dug, the depth of which we could not exactly determine. The body was literally covered with gold ornaments. Gold chains were her neck in a double row, gold bead girdle, earrings, rings, pins, bracelets—all of massive form and chased, but not very finely. The workmanship is not of the highest order.

A rich mulatto lady, widow of a white merchant and niece of the ruling king of Ashantee, was among the mourners. She had a vial filled with gold dust in her hand, which she emptied into the mouth of the deceased woman, scattering the omentum on the face. Some women then took the body and wrapped it carefully in a white sheet; they then lowered it into the trench and a little brazier was burning in the apartment, which was large, and usually the parlor. Onto the hot coal they then threw some odoriferous gums, which gave out an intense smoke. This had the effect doubtless of driving away any evil spirits that might have been loafing around seeking something to devour. Under cover of this smoke, which was too dense for us to see through, the earth must have been filled in; for when we could discern objects again the floor was even and stamped down, looking as before. I saw no men present during the internment. I was informed that during a little difficulty between the French and a native king, men were landed from a war ship, who, after driving away the inhabitants, had Kree boys to dig up the interiors of the chief houses, and secured a fair amount of the precious metal as booty.

The kingdom of Ashantee adjoins the Fantee country inland. The people of this kingdom are not so tall or athletic a race, but are lithe and clean limbed, active and intelligent. I preferred them to their neighbors, the Fantees. I went up as far as the Prah, a pleasant enough trip of several days. As there are no horses or mules, nor even the humble Jerusalem pony, we were carried in hammocks, a bad imitation of the Indian palankeen. These contrivances are made of canvas and slung to a pole, which latter is carried on men's shoulders fore and aft. It is a very jumpy, jolting method of locomotion. I heard of one poor fellow who was being carried in one of these vehicles of little ease, being sick with coast fever. The jolting irritated him so much that he called out to them to go slow. The bearers, thinking he called out to them to go faster, through ignorance of the language, literally jolted him to death. He was quite dead when they reached his residence.—Cor. San Francisco Chronicle.

What Mars a Woman.

There never yet was a woman so gifted, wealthy, beautiful or high in social position that she was not marred by a cold, distant and supercilious bearing. There are so many sorrowful things in life, all of us, it seems to me that every woman ought to cultivate a sweet manner and a kindly glance for the stranger or the acquaintance. It costs nothing, and, like a ray of sunshine, it warms and strengthens many a frost bitten life whereon it falls. I think some women and girls have the idea that a haughty and proud bearing impresses a stranger with a sense of their importance. This is a mistake. The truly great are never arrogant or cold but modest and kind in demeanor, while the unworthy and presumptuous often assume an air of superiority.

BLONDIN, THE ROPE WALKER.

He Discusses His "High Art" and Tells Some Experiences.

A rope walker is like a poet, born and not made. I myself began to toddle along a rope when I was only 4 years old, and in my 8th year I gave a special exhibition on the high rope before the king at Turin. It is a usual thing, no doubt, for the apprentices in a circus to be taught rope walking among their other lessons, but only a few of them ever get beyond the rudiments of the art. The usual system of teaching is to make the pupil walk along a narrow board the width of which is daily decreased until it is barely thicker than an ordinary rope. Posturing and the assumption of graceful attitudes are taught in this manner, and finally the pupil is introduced to the rope itself.

The apparatus which a leading rope walker uses appears in the public eyes to be simple enough, but in reality it has to be constructed and arranged with the greatest of care. The rope generally used is found with a flexible core of steel wire covered with the best Manila hemp, and is about an inch and three-quarters in diameter. It is several hundred yards in length, and the cost may be \$500. The rope is drawn from either end on two large windlasses, and when supported by two high poles the windlasses are turned until the rope is stretched perfectly taut. It takes me, as a rule, several days to adjust this simple apparatus to perfection. The balancing pole is made of ash, is about twenty-six feet long and weighs some forty or fifty pounds.

I am often asked as to my sensations when walking the rope; but if by that is meant whether I feel fear or nervousness, I must answer decidedly in the negative. When walking I look some eighteen or twenty feet ahead of me, and whistle softly or hum a snatch of a song, as the humor may seize me. I invariably keep time in my step to the music the band is playing, and I find that helps me wonderfully in preserving my balance. With my own weight and that of the balancing pole there must be about 230 pounds bearing on the rope, which naturally gives considerably, this sagging being one of the chief difficulties we have to encounter in keeping our balance. I prefer to perform in the open air.

Nowadays I never practice, and even my most difficult tricks, such as turning a somersault over a chair placed in the middle of the rope and landing with my feet on the other side of it, are usually performed without premeditation, just as the whim seizes me. This enables me without effort to vary my programmes at every performance, and prevents them from becoming monotonous to me. I could remain a year or even longer without ever setting foot on a rope and then go on and tread it as safely as though I had been in constant practice.

If I myself do not feel nervous, I am afraid the many persons I have carried on my back across the rope have felt a trifle perturbed, save when they have been professional assistants. In reality there is nothing in the world for them to be afraid of. All they have to do is sit perfectly still, refrain from clutching me too tightly around the neck, and leave the rest to me. When I am carrying any one over for the first time I chat with him continuously on any indifferent subjects I can think about, and try in this manner to relieve his anxiety, and I always caution him against looking downward when in mid air. Somehow, though, he never seems quite happy, and I always detect a gasp of relief when the end of the rope and the platform are reached. More than once the victim has devoutly exclaimed: "Never again!"

My well known trip over Niagara falls was doubtless productive of nervousness to those gentlemen whom I carried over on my back, and for myself it was one of the experiences of my life. I was elevated some 150 feet above the torrens and had to walk a distance of nearly 1,200 feet. The rope itself was unlike that which I use at the present time. It was formed entirely of hemp, and was about three inches in thickness, and its adjustment in place was, in its way, quite an engineering feat. The rope cost several thousand dollars, and remained in position for nearly two years. I have walked across enveloped in a sack made of blankets, have wheeled a barrow across, turned somersaults, cooked a dinner, and, as I have said, carried a man over on my back. It is doubtful whether I shall ever repeat this performance.—New York Star.

Nothing but Limburger.

Occasionally harrowing sights of the sufferings of the survivors of shipwrecks are published, and it makes one's blood run cold to hear of people out for days in an open boat with only two crackers and a bucket of water to a man, and as the days pass by, and no friendly sail comes in sight, the rations are reduced to one cracker and two buckets of water, and at last lots are drawn to decide as to which of the party is in the best condition, etc. But all these stories pale into insignificance compared to the sufferings of the crew of the steamer Rowena, who got aground on Lake river lately while after a raft of piling. They were fast in the mud for four days with nothing to eat but Limburger cheese. What their sufferings were no pen can describe.—Portland Oregonian.

He Keeps a Scrap Book.

I hear from Rome that the German emperor only looks to advantage on foot. He "sits low," the backbone being short. With this the legs are long. His figure, therefore, is an ungraceful one for riding. The knees advancing far toward the horse's head, and the legs and thighs forming an acute angle. He has given up wine and beer drinking, does not eat much and absorbs quantities of tea. His face was worn and showed fatigue when he was in Italy. Every morning and evening packets of papers were placed on a desk in his sitting room. He glanced over all that was about himself, and when he had done so paragraphs of which he was the subject were cut out by a secretary and pasted into a scrap book.—London Truth.

Horses on Snowshoes.

Snowshoes have been worn for years by horses on the Orville and Quincy mail route during the winter months. It would be impossible for them to travel over the deep snows without their aid. A horse that is accustomed to wearing them will travel five and six miles an hour, where it would be impossible to go that distance in a week without them. The shoes are made of thin steel plate, about nine by eleven inches, fastened on the hoofs with clamps. The horses are shod with long heel corks which go through the snowshoes, and prevent them from slipping.—New York.

TEMPORARY MARRIAGES.

Persian Couples That Contract Matrimony for a Specified Time.

A writer in The Philadelphia North American describes one marriage custom among the Persians which would hardly meet with favor in this country. A Persian couple may enter into honorable matrimony for any specified time—a day, a week, a month, six months or longer. A priest and a written contract are required, as in the usual form, and a dowry and present bestowed. Whether the transaction is entered upon for a matter of days or years, at its termination each one goes their way free of all further obligations toward each other. This form of marriage is indulged in largely by travelers and men whose vocations take them from place to place. A mixed party of travelers—men, women and children—arrive at a village. The susceptible heart of one of the gentlemen is touched by the charms of some rustic belle. The village priest is summoned forthwith, and the young lady's father invited to the caravansari.

"I wish to be united in matrimony to your honored daughter, the light of Mohammed, oh, my father," says the suitor traveler, "I shall marry her for a week." "Bismillah!" returns the parent, "for how long?" "For three weeks, oh, my father," says the traveler, "and I will make the settlement ten tomans—five tomans down and five upon our return from Meshed, the holy three weeks hence, when your daughter shall be returned to her rustic home from having made with us a pilgrimage to Inman Riza's sanctuary."

"What! ten tomans—pooh, pooh!" screams the father derisively, and making little of the advantages of the pilgrimage to Meshed. "My daughter is a jewel and the belle of the village. The settlement must be 100 tomans cash down."

The prospective bridegroom and the father of the young lady in the case now argue and squabble for probably an hour, at the end of which time they compromise on thirty tomans and three-quarters. The priest draws up a marriage contract then and there, which the groom and the bride's parents sign. In it is stated the exact terms of the marriage, the amount of the settlement, and the time the contract is to expire. The priest is fed, the settlement money paid over to the father, and the blushing bride, who has had nothing to say in the matter whatever, is handed over to her husband. She is mounted on an ass or bundled into a kejavah and accompanies the party to Meshed. Three weeks later the travelers halt at the same village on their return. The bride of three weeks smiles off her dimes, kisses her husband's hands and returns to her parents' roof. She is now a charming young widow, and possesses thirty tomans and three-quarters, besides an extra toman or two presented by her husband at parting if he has been pleased with her conduct. With this snug sum, and the additional charms of her new condition, she of course very soon makes mince-meat of some worthy young peasant's heart and settles down for life. It sometimes happens, however, that the young bride takes advantage of the temporary marriage to steal away her husband's heart, and then at the old home a new marriage contract is drawn up and she becomes his lifelong helpmeet.

A Woman on Kissing.

It has been the gallant habit of men, from time immemorial, to commend us favorably on the habit which women have of indulging in the useless distribution of kisses among themselves, but it is not often that the animadversion of the erring sex itself is visited on the same theme. A critical young lady, however, was recently heard expatiating vigorously against this senseless custom. "Do, for goodness sake," she remarked, "say something about the silly way that women have of kissing each other every time they get together. If twenty women were to meet in the street every last one of them would have to kiss the other nineteen, and that is a lot of kisses—380 kisses worse than thrown away, for probably in ten minutes the whole party would separate into squads and go off talking about each other. When you see one of these very violent miscellaneous kiss-everything-within-sight kind of woman, it is safe to set her down as a fraud, which she generally is. If I had my way, kissing should be confined to family use and for medicinal purposes. Now, don't you put my name to all this or I will kiss you right on Washington street the very first chance I have." Then the talk ran off on other kinds of kissing, and a story was told of a young lady who kissed a baby held in its father's arms; then in a moment of temporary insanity or abstraction she stood on tiptoe and kissed the papa. Realizing instantly what a dreadful thing she had done, she wheeled around and kissed the baby's mamma, who was standing near, and retired in good order. Her satirical sister squelched the poor young woman as they left the house by asking her if she didn't want to go back and finish it by kissing the hired girl.—Indianapolis Journal.

A Surfeit of Beauty.

It is doubtful if there is any one state in America containing so many pretty women as California, and as one contemplates so few as New York. As one walks down Kearny or Montgomery streets in San Francisco, one becomes almost surfeited by the unrelieved ranks of pretty girls, with their round, plump figures, their vivid coloring, and delicate, regular features. They are frequently painted, but they are triumphantly nature over art for all that, and could well afford to discard the rouge pots. They do not dress as well as they might, but their figures are so delightful; they look such thorough women, instead of suggesting a faded fashion plate, that one is willing to forgive San Francisco her lack of good dressmakers.—Gertrude Franklin Atherton in San Francisco Argonaut.

Ice Made with Coal.

The various cold storage companies now springing up over the south and west promise to work wonders in trade and household affairs. The anhydrous ammonia, which is their cooling agent, comes from the soft coal used in making gas. It is driven off in process of cooling. It costs nothing but for fixtures to refine and make use of it. A ton of coal yields twenty gallons of ammoniated water, from which the ammonia is separated in vapor, then forced into liquefaction by a pressure of about 120 pounds to the square inch. When allowed to return to gas, it takes away the heat of whatever it touches. As it can be sent through pipes and coaxed back to be used over and over again, the cost is not to the great.—New York.

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