

CUSTOMS OF VENDS.

A PECULIAR RACE FOUND IN GERMANY.

Their Home Is the Serbian Swamp—Baptismal Processions and Wedding Parties—Heathen Practices That Survive of Ancient Origin.



HARLES DE KAY, consul general to Berlin, is the author of a paper entitled "An Inland Venice" in the Century. It describes the picturesque scenes in the Serbian Swamp, Germany, and the peculiar manners and customs of the Vends, a remnant of which race still makes its home there. Mr. de Kay says: As a rule, the older women wear white headgear; at least the big square kerchief that falls nearly to the shoulders is white, while with girls this upper part is colored like the tulip-beds of Haarlem. But on Trinity Sunday they wear the piyach-zshka: all is white on head and shoulders, while the gown, the wohnjanka, is black. Then is the old church at Burg which recalls Brittany. The men for the most part are in the galleries. Almost the entire floor of the church is filled with seated women, their starched caps, as white as white can be, having the effect of stiffened windows of snow.

But on other Sundays the young women appear in all their finery. Many of them enter the village barefoot, and put their shoes and stockings on just before assembling in front of the church. The men gather in one group, the women in another. As a gentle reminder of the uncertainty of life, the first thing one sees in the vestibule of the church is a pair of coffin-rests, past which the people troop to their German prayers and Vendish sermon. After the services a baptism may be held, when the godmothers (knotra) are expected to appear in a special kind of white cap very difficult to describe. When the baptism is over the party adjourns to a tavern, and the dresses and caps are duly criticized or admired.

great show of wrath, only to receive, instead of the bride, an old maid who has a false hump on her back. The men strike her on the hump, which soon breaks, since it is an old cooking-pot, and drive her back into the house. Then the bridesmaid, or druzka, is given up; but she also is compelled to flee into the house. Finally the bride herself is handed to the best man, who places her beside the groom, whereupon the couple turn about three times, a peculiar pagan rite known formerly to Ireland and Scotland, and the whole party enters the house to breakfast. The Turkish and Finnish tribes of Asia have similar customs of teasing the groom and his best man before surrendering the bride. At the wedding both must have money in their shoes, or they will always be poor. On the return from the wedding a newly bought pot filled with milk and beer is sent to meet the couple; as soon as they have drunk, the druzba seizes the pot and dashes it to pieces.

On reaching her new home, the bride must feed all the animals. At the wedding feast neither groom and bride nor best man and woman must rise from the table under any pretext whatever until dancing begins in the evening at the tavern.

A Botanical Freak.
One of the curiosities of nature is known as a plant atol. There are but two or three of these known to scientists. This atol is made up of a circle of growing plants. They are found floating on the top of ponds or lakes. They form a hoop-shaped figure and are closely matted together at the roots, which make a sort of cup or basin, to which more or less vegetable matter falls or floats. There is a sufficient amount of nutriment in this to keep the plant growing. As it increases the roots become longer and larger, and in time the plant may anchor itself in the soil at the bottom of the pond. These rings, after many years of accumulation and growth, make what appear to be small islands. It is the opinion of certain scientists that islands may have been formed in this manner. The roots catch all floating vegetable or animal matter. Leaves collect and form mold, and after a while birds may drop plant or tree seeds on the little pod that floats on the top of the water. These take root

NEW SORT OF FUNERAL.

Burial Service Is Read by a Phonograph.

The latest kind of funeral is one in which the burial service is read by a phonograph, says the New York Journal. At Gravesend, near Coney Island, several funerals have been conducted by phonograph recently. Clergymen are very few and far between in that section. The undertaker of the village saw that something had to be done to supply the want of a clergyman, and, being a man of inventive genius, hit upon a phonograph as being the best way of solving the problem. He persuaded a duly ordained minister to read the burial service into the cylinder of a phonograph, and also secured cylinders with appropriate hymns and prayers. A huge trumpet serves to intensify the sound and causes the voice from the phonograph to be both long and distinct. When the coffin has been laid beside the grave the minister would ordinarily be, is started and the ceremony begins. First of all a portion of the scriptures is read, then a quartet renders the hym, "Nearer, My God, to Thee," after which the Lord's prayer is recited. The phonograph voice then reads solemnly the burial service. Committal of the dead is followed by another prayer. Another hymn is sung and then the phonograph pronounces the benediction. The effect is very solemn, for the faraway sound of the sonorous voice seems somehow to intensify the meaning of the service. No use, other than a religious one, is ever permitted with the phonograph, and its big trumpet has never ground out popular ballads. The undertaker takes a really serious view of the instrument, and when not in use it is kept alongside the family bible, with a decorous crape band depending from the flaring trumpet. The inhabitants of Gravesend have become quite used to the phonograph and say it is just the thing for them. Some of the older villagers, who make it a point of attending all funerals in the vicinity, say that a funeral would not seem like a real funeral without "Abe's" machine. Abraham Stillwell, the originator of the idea, holds that there is nothing inappropriate in the idea and several ministers have assured him that they fully approve of the plan.

GIRLS AND TITLES.

LIKE COMIC OPERA AFTER THE CURTAIN HAS GONE DOWN.

Some of These Gilded Misalliances—Why American Women Should Have Sense Enough to Wed American Men.



DEAR old American lady who lived the greater part of her life in Rome and used to receive all who were worth knowing in her spacious drawing rooms far up in the dim fastnesses of a Roman palace, used to say that "she had only known of one really happy marriage made by an American girl abroad," says the New York Post. In those days, being "young and innocent," we considered that remark very cynical, and in our hearts thought nothing could be more romantic and charming than for a fair compatriot to assume a historic title and retire after her marriage to her husband's estates, to rule smilingly over him and a devoted tenantry, very much as it appears in the last act of a comic opera, when a rose-colored light is burning and the orchestra plays the last brilliant chords of a wedding march. Then, also, there seemed to our perverted sense a sort of poetic justice about the fact that money, gained honestly but prosaically in groceries or gas, should go to regild an ancient fagon or prop up the crumbling walls of some robber stronghold abroad. Alas! many thoughtful years and many cruel realities have taught us that our gracious hostess of the "seventies" very nearly was right and that marriage under these conditions is apt to be much more like the comic opera after the curtain has been rung down, when the lights are out, the applauding public gone home and the weary actors, slowly brought back to the present and the positive, are wondering how they are to pay the rent or dodge the "warrant" in ambush around the corner. These marriages come about generally from a want of knowledge of the world. The father becomes rich, the family travel abroad, some mutual friend (often from purely interested motives) produces a suitor for the hand of the girl in the shape of a "prince" with a title that makes the whole simple American family quiver with delight. After a few visits the suitor declares himself; the girl is flattered, the father loses his head, sees visions of his loved daughter hobnobbing with royalty, and (intoxicating thought!) snubbing the "swells" at home who had shown great reluctance to recognize him and his family. It is next to impossible for him to get any reliable information about his future son-in-law in a country where he has not a single social relation, belongs to no club and whose idiom is a sealed book to him. Every circumstance conspires to keep the flaws in the article for sale in the background and put the suitor in an advantageous light. After a few weeks' wrestling, paterfamilias agrees to part with a handsome share of his earnings and a marriage is "arranged." In the case where the girl has retained some of her self-respect the suitor is obliged to come to this country for the ceremony. And, that the contrast may not be too striking, an establishment is hastily gotten together, with hired liveries and new-bought carriages (as in a recent case in this state). The sensational papers take it up and publish "faked" portraits of the bride and her noble spouse. The sovereign of the groom's country (enchanted that some more American money is to be imported into his land) sends an economical present and an autograph letter. The act ends. Limerick and slow music!

In a few years rumors of dissent and trouble float vaguely back to the girl's family. And finally, either a great scandal occurs and there is one more dishonored home in the world, or a wretched, heartbroken woman, thousands of miles away from the friends and relatives who might be some comfort for her, makes up her mind to accept "anything" for the sake of her children, and tries to build up again some sort of an existence out of the remains of her lost happiness, and her father wakes up from his dream to realize that his wealth has only served to ruin what he loved best in the world. Or, again, instead of being sad, the circumstances become delightfully comic, as in a certain case we know of, where the daughter, who married into an indolent, happy-go-lucky, impoverished Italian family, had inherited her father's business push and energy along with his fortune, and immediately set about "running" the whole estate as she had seen her father do his bank, trying to revive a half-forgotten industry in the district, scraping and white-washing the picturesque old villa, proposing her husband's going into business, and in short dashed head down against all their national prejudices and inherited traditions, until her new family fairly loathed the sight of her brisk American face, and the poor she had tried to help sunk in their newly drained houses and refused to be comforted. Her ways were not their ways and she seemed to them unlike Italian ladies—almost unsexed, as she tramped about the fields, talking artificial manure and subsoil plowing with the men. And yet neither of these people were to blame. And the young Italian had followed the teachings of his family; he had learned that the only honorable way for him to acquire wealth was to marry it, and his wife honestly tried to do her duty in her way and naively thought she could graft her native thrift and "go" into the indolent Ital-

ian character. But her work was all in vain and she made herself and her husband so unpopular that they are now living in this country, regretting their error! Another case only a little less laughable is that of a fair young Boston girl having a neat little fortune of her own. Once she was married to the young Viennese of her choice, she found that he expected her to live with his entire family on the third floor of his "palace" (the two lower floors being always rented to foreigners, and that as there was not enough money for a box at the opera she could not go, but that his position made it necessary for him to have a stall among the men of his rank, while the astonished and disillusioned Bostonian sat at home et cetera-et cetera with the women of his family, who seemed to think this the most natural arrangement in the world. It certainly is astonishing that we, the most patriotic of nations, with such high opinions of ourselves and our institutions, should be so ready to hand over "our daughters and our ducats" to the first foreigner who asks for them, often requiring less information about him than we would consider necessary before buying a house or a dog.

STALKING A DEER.

It Was the Merriest Skating Party Ever Seen.

We had gone up in the great bay near the head of the lake, when some boys and dogs, rummaging around in the woods along the shore, started a deer and chased it onto the ice, and we had the most exciting chase immediately after that I ever took part in, says a writer in the Minneapolis Journal. We did not harm the animal, and had we wished to do so we couldn't, for there wasn't a gun in the crowd, but we made him "make the effort of his life" before he broke through the trocha we built around him and got away. When we sighted him he was making straight across the bay, which is five miles wide, and the ice was so slippery that he could not make anything like the usual time of his kind when they throw their souls into their heels and scatter miles behind them with an easy indifference most beautiful to witness.

We played wolf on him. "Doc" Spalding, who was riding the ice bicycle, shot straight ahead and very soon passed him and forced him to turn and when he did turn there was a ring of skaters all around him, and for an hour he played with us very much as a four-legged seal might.

We got him running in a circle, but we were unable to catch him, for every time any one tried it that venturesome individual either failed to get a hold on him, or, succeeding, was hurled as from a catapult along the ice, to the great delight of all the rest. It was the merriest skating party ever witnessed, although the deer might not have seen much matter for merriment in it.

But he was perfectly safe unless his wind played out before ours did, of which the event proved there was small danger. One wing of the circular trocha we had formed in the line got out of breath, and slowed up, a gap was formed in the line, and the deer went through it like a flash and the last we saw of him was "hull down," and going as merrily as if freshly started.

A Brave Girl.

"Do you think your sister likes me, Tommy?"

"Yes; she stood up for you at dinner."

"Stood up for me! Was anybody saying anything against me?"

"No, nothing much. Father said he thought you were rather a donkey, but sis got up and said you weren't, and told father he ought to know better than judge a man by his looks."—Comic Cuts.

ABOUT CHAMPAGNE.

In France champagne is only served at the dessert, and it must be neither too sweet nor too dry.

There is no stimulant known to medicine as efficacious in bringing cheerfulness of mind as champagne.

Champagne is noxious in some cases of sickness which cannot stand a development of carbonic acid gas, like heart disease.

The best manufacturers use no labels in France proper, the brand of the corks being sufficient to protect their product.

As a general rule the absolute quantity of alcohol contained in champagne amounts to 10 or 11 per cent of the measurement.

The corking machine is the next step and the "flocleur" or wire-worker draws a hot iron around the cork to keep it safely in place.

The quantity of alcohol contained in champagne depends mainly on the nature of the essence added to it after fermentation, and varies widely with the taste of the consumers in various countries.

In Austria and Germany there is a demand for sweet champagne. England and America order champagne with the least addition of essence, there being a popular demand for good, strong wine, with plenty of body to it.

All champagne is dosed, liquor being added to the wine makes it stronger or lighter, dryer or sweeter, according to the brand. It is applied with a machine, which apportions the exact quantity to each bottle without error or waste.

Tests with the manometer show that champagne exerts a pressure in the bottles of from four to five atmospheres. The greatest pressure should never exceed six atmospheres, and the bottle will burst when the pressure reaches seven or eight atmospheres.

The costliest building of modern times is the state capitol of Albany, N. Y. Over \$20,000,000 has been expended on it.

THE CATS OF THE SIENA.

A Paradise of Felines Is This Old Italian City.

Strangers in Siena often speak of the great quantities of pet cats seen there. At each doorway opening directly on the street sits a pet cat, staid and respectable, with a ribbon or some pieces of color tied about her neck to show that she belongs to a human family. Workmen in their little shops have a cat to keep them company, sometimes sitting on a low counter at the window. All are in reach of any teasing hand, but I never saw a cat chased or teased in any way, and it is plain that they felt perfectly secure and did not expect any injury. Personally, I found them unsocial, and that when I spoke to them they took no notice and made no reply, even when I learned an Italian word or two to say to them. They were happy at home, and did not need to make new friends. In Naples there are men whose business it is to feed cats every day at noon. People with economical tables subscribe a small sum to have their cats provided for by the cats' food men. The cats begin to feel quite hungry about noon, and stroll out from the shops in all those crowded streets to watch for dinner. I could not imagine what was the excitement among them that first day I was out at that hour. Presently I saw a part of the daily distribution on bustling Chiaja. There were cats there who seemed to watch what was dealt out to them critically, as if they intended to make a complaint if their dinner was not as good as it ought to be. In Florence the cats enjoy the freedom they love; and never did I see one chased, or looking timid and anxious, as if uncertain where to run to. I remember a cat I used to pass near the old Medici Church of San Spirito. She seemed to live on one of the upper floors of a tall house, and she could only look up to her window by sitting in the middle of the street. She would never answer my greeting, but continued to look up as if watching her friends or perhaps signaling to them that she was ready to go home. There is a special cat church in Florence, San Lorenzo, the church in which so many Medici are buried. I don't know whether that family was particularly fond of cats or how it happened, but the cloisters of San Lorenzo are reserved for homeless cats, whether they come there by themselves or are brought by people who want to dispose of them. I had read in my guide book that these animals are fed every day at noon from scraps brought in by people in the neighborhood, so I was particular to time my visit at noon, and was disappointed to hear that for some reason the breakfast hour had been changed to 9 a. m. There is a large, raised green center in the cloisters, on which grow some shrubs and trees; and, asleep under the bushes or loitering around the stone ledge that inclosed the green were a dozen or two of the charity cats. Legend says they are witches, who have consented to take this harmless shape, and to keep out of mischief. They were rather a dilapidated-looking lot, but still interesting, because all cats have a great deal of individuality also. I cannot envy the horses and dogs of Italy, and certainly not the birds; but if I had to be changed into an animal, I might choose to be an Italian cat.

Maintaining the Court's Dignity.

(From the Taylorsville, Ky., Courier.)

Judge J. C. Wickliffe is fond of athletics, and although he never exercises now, he can tell of the days when he was a terror among the boys. The judge has been a vigorous man in his time, and the story is told of him that, while holding circuit court at Lebanon shortly after the war, there being a military garrison at that place occupied by a regiment of Ohio troops, about twenty of these were drunk and on the warpath and had collected in front of the court house and were making things lively for a time, and it looked like a riot was imminent, as the feeling between the citizens and the Yankee soldiery at that time was of the bitterest type. Judge Wickliffe ordered the sheriff to disperse the riotous soldiers. The officers proceeded to execute the order; but they were unable to remove the stubborn soldiery and so reported to the judge. He at once adjourned court, walked coolly to where the crowd had collected, and ordered them to at once disperse, which they still refused. The judge waded into them in grand style, and in less time than it takes to tell it he had eight of them lying on the pavement and the rest scampering in every direction. It is said the judge never leveled his arm on a man but he sent him to the ground.

Looking Over the Ulva.

The ulva, or sea lettuce, in which a lot of Bermuda sea anemones lately presented to the aquarium had been shipped, when the sea anemones had been removed from it, was placed in a can of water and held for further inspection. This is the customary practice in all large aquariums. The ulva or rockweed or whatever may have served as a packing or envelope for the fishes or other marine animals received is not simply thrown away; it is first carefully looked over for any living thing that may be attached to it. There may be small anemells, minute crustaceans, or other forms of animal life which had been attached to the ulva when it was gathered to serve as packing for the larger animals, and which had thus been shipped with them, their presence perhaps unknown. But many of these lesser marine animals are very wonderful and interesting, and they may themselves be desirable for purposes of exhibition, especially in the smaller, balanced tanks.—Ex.

A WONDERFUL TREE THAT GROWS IN TURKEY.



The illustration above shows a Platane tree at Bujukdere, nine miles from Constantinople. This tree is about 100 feet high, but the trunk is more than 160 feet in circumference. It is celebrated all through the East. It belongs to the genus Platanus Orientalis. Its American representative is the cottonwood. Pliny says that in

his time a tree of this kind grew in Lycia. The trunk was hollow, 27 metres in circumference. Its branched top resembled a forest. The interior of the excavation in the trunk was carpeted with moss, which made it resemble a natural grotto. Here Licinius Mucianus, governor of Lycia, spread a feast for 18 of his companions. Pliny

also tells of another Platane tree that the emperor Caligula found in the suburbs of Veitres. Its branches had grown in such a shape that they formed an immense green grotto, where the prince dined with 50 persons, and had abundance of room for the attendants and servants.—From the Farmers Review.

and the proud parents are expected to do the handsome thing by the friends and godparents. Godfathers and godmothers are also given a present of money, but not a round sum, that is unlucky—always a little over. The child must not be left alone; at least a bird or beast must be left with it to baffle evil spirits. The elder godmother carries the child to the church, the younger from the sanctuary. But before they re-enter the home some one lays symbolical tools across the threshold over which the baptismal party must pass. For a boy it may be an ax and a hoe; for a girl a spinning-wheel and a broom. As she steps across, the younger godmother, bearing the child in her arms, says aloud, "We carried away a heathen, and bring back a Christian with the proper name of John (or Mary)." In some villages children are named in a fixed order as they are born, and if the baby dies the new child is given its name. Thus in Schleifa it is customary to give boys names in the following order: Hanzo, Matthes, Juro, Kito, Merien, Lobo; and to girls, Maria, Anna, Madlena, Liza, Khrysta, Wortija, Worsula. Next to a baptismal procession a wedding party is the jolliest sight on Spreewald fescues, since every one is naturally decked in his or her best, and the men carry staves bound with bright ribbons, said to be a survival of the swords of an earlier period when the bride was carried off more or less by force, or at least with a show of violence. Kozol, the bagpipes, still survive in some parts of the forest. The bridegroom, preceded by his druzba, or best man, a fiddler, and a bagpiper, and followed by his friends, knocks loudly at the door of the bride, and on being admitted demands the young woman with

and further assist in the growth of the little island. It may take centuries for the plant to come to any size, but with nature a thousand years are as but yesterday.

A French Executioner.

An event of national importance will shortly take place in France. It is the retirement of M. Delbler, the executioner, who, now that he has guillotined 502 criminals, thinks it is high time his successor was appointed. He is 63 years of age and has been forty years in his country's service. He served his apprenticeship with Roch, his predecessor, assisting in eighty-two executions.—London Globe.

In the Nineteenth Century.

The Churchman reports that the daughter of the principal notary of Placenza, Italy, was found to have in her stomach an accumulation of medals from a madonna locally celebrated for powers of cure in cancer. She had swallowed a medal each day for a week on advice of her confessor.

'Possum Doesn't Deserve Protection.

The bill before the Georgia legislature for the protection of the 'possum failed because a powerful opposition took the ground that the 'possum, which is very fond of "yellow legged chickens," is not so worthy of protection as the chicken.

Immigrants to the United States.

The 359,000 immigrants landed in the United States during 1896, added to the number landed since 1820, foot up a grand total of something over 18,000,000.

Sneezed His Eye Out.

One of the most peculiar accidents ever recorded occurred the other day at Charles Doran, a resident of a Cincinnati suburb. Doran was nursing a severe cold, and meeting a friend at the railway station he accepted a proffered pinch of snuff. The membrane of his nasal passage was very delicate and sensitive and he sneezed violently. So severe was the paroxysm that the inferior oblique muscle of the left eye was ruptured, and, as he continued to sneeze, the exertion forced the eye completely out of the socket. A physician succeeded in replacing the eye in the socket. Doran said, in describing his sensation, that the pain was not intense when the eye was forced out. He felt as though something was bursting in his head, but did not realize what had happened until he saw with his right eye that his left eye was dangling on his cheek. The pain of repairing the injury was much more severe than the injury itself.

Gladstone's Wonderful Industry.

Dr. Dollinger, who has long been an intimate friend of Gladstone, relates a story that illustrates the grand old man's wonderful industry. On one occasion Gladstone called on his friend, and the two became so engrossed in conversation that it was after midnight before they took note of the time. "I went out of the room for a book," says Dr. Dollinger, "leaving my visitor alone. I returned in a few minutes, and found Gladstone deep in a volume he had drawn out of his pocket—true to his principles of never losing time—during my momentary absence. And this! at the small hours of the morning!"