

A quaint ceremony is that still obtaining in some parts of Normandy, the benediction des bestiaux. The oxen and the draft horses are assembled in front of the church. There may also be a bullock or two and perhaps some cows. The procession of peasants, clad in their very best, issues from the church to the sound of a chant that is droned by the priest. The venerable cure sprinkles a few drops of water on the heads of the beasts and when all the animals have received the benediction the next feature of the ceremony is to place at the pedestal of the cross facing the church certain bundles tied in coarse linen. These bundles contain bread and salt, which are to be given to those beasts not able to attend the ceremony, says the Washington Star.

Power of Love

Once when John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle were discussing the literature of their day, the latter said to his companion: "Can you tell me why it is that works on subjects of vital interest to the race, splendidly written by men of profound scholarship, command scarcely sufficient sale to pay the cost of publishing; while trashy novels, false to history, false to philosophy and false to the facts of human experience, and altogether lacking in literary merit, will sell by scores of thousands?"

After a short pause, Ruskin replied: "There is but one explanation of that fact, but the explanation is all-sufficient; the novel has love in it and the other has not."—Scribner's Magazine.

Good Idea

Copierscope had arrived home tired and hungry, but the beds had not been made and neither was there the faintest sign of any dinner. Presently he surprised his wife reading a novel in the drawing-room.

"Do you mean to say that dinner isn't ready?" he asked, with dangerous calm. "Very well, I'm going back to town to dine at the Criterion."

"Just wait five minutes," replied his wife, throwing aside her book. "Will it be ready then?" he queried hopefully.

"No," was the cheerful answer; "but I'll come with you."

Bagpipes in Spain

Specimens of bagpipes are found on old Spanish manuscripts. In the beautiful volume of the "Cantigas de Santa Maria," which was made in the Thirteenth century of King Alfonso the Wise, there are 51 separate figures of musicians. These form an introduction to the canticles. There are three pipers among them with bagpipes. Another Spanish manuscript of the end of the Fifteenth century, illustrated by a Flemish artist for Queen Isabella, shows many musical instruments, among which are bagpipes.

Relic of Indian Art

A relief of the old Mathura school of Indian art is in the possession of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It consists of a thin slab of red sandstone, carved on both sides. It is a pediment decorated with a repeating ornament of three varieties, the same on each side of the slab, and was probably part of the main or only entrance to a temple which may have been entirely of stone, but more likely of brick except for the doorway.

Special Folding of Bills Prevents Loss

With many men it is a common habit to carry a few odd bills in convenient pockets to save themselves the trouble of pulling out their wallets to pay for small articles purchased. Frequently these bills are folded in indifferent fashion and stuffed into pockets where other bills, folded with equal carelessness, may be reposing.

Bankers point out that this is apt to be a costly habit, as a bill may be dropped when some of them are withdrawn from the pocket. They point out that there is one proper way to handle bills thus carried; that is, by smoothing out the bills, placing them together, preferably with the smaller denominations on top and larger below, although that is entirely a matter of preference. Then one end of the little pile of bills is turned inward to the depth of about an inch or so and folded down, after which the bills are creased lengthwise down the center and folded over. Finally the narrow strip of bills is folded from end to end in the most convenient little wad.

In this way the bills are all locked together and there is no danger of any being separated and lost, while the owner can readily unfold them and extract what he wants at any time, re-folding the balance securely and returning them to his pocket.

A Walk With Thoreau

To take a walk with Thoreau, one must rigidly adhere to the manners of the woods. He could lead one to the ripest berries, the hidden nest, the rarest flowers, but no plant life could be carelessly destroyed, no mother bird lose her eggs.

First he would give a curious whistle and a woodchuck would appear—a different whistle and two squirrels would run to him. A different note yet and birds would fly and even so shy a bird as a crow would alight on his shoulder. The children must be mute and very motionless till each pet was fed from his pocket and had departed. Thus the children were introduced to his family, as he called them.—Mary Hosmer Brown, in "Memories of Concord."

River Kept in Order by Chinese Engineer

In view of the disastrous Mississippi floods it is interesting to note that 2,100 years ago a Chinese engineer, Li-ping, laid down the correct engineering principle for controlling the flood conditions of a river flowing through a flat alluvial plain.

The works that he and his sons established for controlling the waters of the Min river in Szechwan province and distributing them across the great Chengtu plain are still in perfect operation. The Chengtu plain is an area 100 miles long and sixty miles wide. Across this plain the Min river is distributed in eight main branches, converging at the lower end of the plain to form a single river again, which empties into the Yangtze above the Gorges.

Throughout the 2,100 years, the engineering principle laid down by Li-ping, without which the whole system would have destroyed itself centuries ago, has been followed. Flood conditions are still unknown. On the walls of the temple built to the memory of Li-ping and his sons at Kuan-hsien, is written this saying, familiar to every Chinese student: "Shen tao t'ian tao yen," meaning "Dig the bed deep, keep the banks low."—Minneapolis Tribune.

Fragments of Bottle Good Legal Evidence

Fragments of a broken bottle once settled a legal dispute as to the location of the original corner post of a surveyed tract. It was customary in the old surveys to place broken bottles, crockery or other articles that would resist decay in the holes where the corner posts were to be set, and notes of such deposits were recorded by the surveyor in his book.

On this particular occasion, when an effort was being made to establish the location of a post in Canada which had been set sixty years previously, the surveyor's gang dug for two days over an area covering more than fifty square feet. Finally the diggers unearthed broken glass with embossings that corresponded to the notes in the original surveyor's book. With this post established, more than thirty posts in the vicinity were restored and the dispute over the boundary lines was settled.—Kansas City Star.

Optimism vs. Pessimism

The talk was of the pessimism of the young. "I do not understand why," said one. "You would think that young people would be all optimism with the future before them. You would think they'd see life as a rosy path. It seems to me the middle-aged and the old have more reason to be pessimistic. They have seen their illusions and their enthusiasms go one by one."

"Because they are middle-aged and old is the very reason for their optimism," said another. "They have learned by the time they reach mature years that nothing is so bad as it seems and that this is a pretty good old world after all."—Springfield Union.

Satisfied

A short-sighted man who was also very inquisitive was walking in the country one day when he saw a notice board nailed on a tree that stood in a field. As he could not read the notice at that distance, curiosity prompted him to climb over the fence and walk across the field toward the tree.

A few moments later he managed to scramble back over the fence just in time to escape the horns of a raging bull.

"Well," he gasped breathlessly, "I had the satisfaction of finding out what the notice was."

It said, "Beware of the Bull."

Flowers at Weddings

It is impossible to state when flowers were first used at a wedding, since this is a very ancient custom. Orange blossoms were worn and carried by brides from the earliest times, as they portend luck and happiness. Spencer and Milton were of the opinion that the orange was the golden apple presented to Jupiter by Juno on her wedding day. It was customary for the Anglo-Saxon bride to give her friends small knots and ribbons to wear or carry on the wedding day. This custom still survives in the bouquets of the bridesmaids.

Antiquity of Bagpipes

Jacques de Morgan, during his excavations in Persia, found some terra cotta figures, dating from the Eighth century B. C., playing on what appear to be bagpipes. Again we find the bagpipe in Persia in the Sixth century A. D. on the great arch at Takht-i-Bostan. While crude, the representation serves as evidence that the bagpipe was in use during the 14 centuries which elapsed between the time the terra cotta figures discovered by De Morgan were molded and the carving in the rock at Takht-i-Bostan.

Electric Cash Counter

Money flows like water in the Bank of England, in London, where a novel electric machine sorts and counts silver coins and discharges them into bags hung beneath. Amounts of from £5 to £100 sterling are automatically allotted to the proper receptacles, says Popular Science Monthly. Far more rapid and infallible than a human hand, the device measures out the equivalent of \$7,500 in an hour.

Seaweed Harvest of Importance in Japan

Japanese soldiers do not give much trouble to the quartermaster's department. In the field they are capable of great endurance on a diet of dried rice, dried fish, dried seaweed, and pickled plums. The seaweed is wrapped round the rice and used as a "relish" to it. Given a tiny fire, a stewpan, and the rations mentioned, they are perfectly content, whatever the weather and however long the marches.

Seaweed is grown specially for food purposes, being cultivated with as much care as any other crop. After the typhoon season, the women may be seen bearing great loads of young trees which have been stripped of their leaves, though all the small branches are left intact. These are drawn into the weed on the shore. Acres of brushy saplings being arranged in long, parallel rows where the tide ebbs over them twice daily.

Gradually, the green fernlike weed collects on the branches, and flourishes there until the farmers harvest it. It is then carefully picked over and dried for future use.

Curative Power Long Ascribed to Flowers

The forget-me-not was formerly known as scorpion grass, because the flower buds were thought to resemble the coiled-up serpent, and our forefathers, believing in the doctrine of signatures, supposed this to indicate that they would cure venomous stings. Vying with the forget-me-not in its sentimental associations is the lily of the valley, which also blooms in May and is indeed sometimes called the May-lily. In the old herbalist's heyday it seems also to have vied with the forget-me-not in curative properties. In the world of legend, however, the forget-me-not seems to have a distinct advantage, for whereas an angel scattered them for us, the lily of the valley sprang from the tears of a mere mortal, Eve, as she left the Garden of Eden.—Chicago Journal.

God's Greatest Gift

The Pall-Mall restaurant is a famous establishment in the Hay Market section of London. All prominent men and women go there at least once. It is by no means to inscribe their names in the "Album of the House," Patti was there once and wrote beneath her name: "A beautiful voice is one of God's highest gifts." Some time after Yvette Guilbert was there, and having read Patti's inscription wrote down: "An ugly, but expressive voice, is also one of God's highest gifts." She thought, no doubt, to have the last word. Chance would have it that Sir Rider Haggard dropped in one day at the Pall-Mall and started leafing the album. He smiled and in turn wrote something beneath his name. This was it, "Silence is God's greatest gift!"—Pierre Van Paassen, in Atlanta Constitution.

Philosogrin

There is no peace in hymns of hate, nor in the road that isn't straight; there is no joy in lifting fobs nor perpetrating hold up jobs; there is no gain in drilling holes in men and letting out their souls. The good-for-evil stunt is great! Heap burning coals upon the pate of the guy who has done you dirt, and then stand back and watch it hurt! There may be profit in red gold, in robbing men but when you're old, and you've lost even self-respect, you know indeed your life is wrecked, and all the schemes you've put across have brought you nothing else but dross. The good will of your fellow men and love are better than much yen, and peace, when life's noon turns to shade, beats all the kopecks ever made.—Judd Mortimer Lewis in the Houston Post-Dispatch.

Syrian Wedding Custom

An ancient Syrian custom which is sometimes observed even at the present time is the assumption by a newly married couple of a royal status. On the village threshing floor is placed a throne on which they are seated daily for seven days, during which time songs and hymns in their honor are sung and poems recited in praise of their beauty, etc. Some leading Biblical scholars have divided the Song of Solomon into seven sonnets or Idylls, which would furnish one for each day of the "King's week."

Language of Diplomacy

The French language was used extensively in Europe in the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries. The French literature was greatly developed and spread throughout the various countries, and persons of culture studied the language in order to be able to read the literature. Many foreign students were attracted to the University of Paris, and this also helped to spread the language. As a language for treaties and foreign intercourse among nations, French became general in the time of Louis XIV.

Highly Dangerous

While two gay spirits were giving an unusually hair-raising display of acrobatics at a recent flying pageant, and to the lay eye seemed to be trying their best, with the aid of some five hundred or so of horse power, to tear the wings of their frail steeds of sticks and canvas, a solemn voice came through a loudspeaker: "Would spectators be good enough to refrain from the highly dangerous practice of standing on their seats?"

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