

The Plattsmouth Weekly Herald.

KNOTTS BROS., Publishers & Proprietors.

English Funerals.

Directly after the breath leaves the body the window blinds, usually inside Venetian shutters, are pulled down, the windows of the room where the death occurred being left slightly open, however, from the top to permit the spirit to take its celestial flight. This latter is an old superstition, a very poetic one. In the country the house door is left ajar on the day of the funeral until after the mourners' return. "Because," they say, "to shut the door would be to shut out the welcome to the spirit's return."

In the country, notably in Hampshire and Somersetshire, the usual shroud of the simple village folk is composed of white cotton wadding, shaped about the body dressed in ordinary undergarments. The coffin is borne on the shoulders of friends to the cemetery, the other mourners following on foot to the grave.

Naturally such customs are impracticable in a city like London. Only intimate friends, but not the more immediate family, accompany the body to its burial place. The leave-taking of the family is private. Other friends assemble in the drawing rooms. There is no service until reaching the chapel in the cemetery, where one takes place, if at all, as supplementary to a final one at the grave itself. Only when the deceased has been a great public man is there service in the church he attended in life, or in St. Paul's, the Abbey, or other noted sacred edifice. This service is called a "mourning function."

Memorial services, on the other hand, for a noted man or woman may occur simultaneously in many churches. There are no crape streamers on the door knocker or bell handle, as in Philadelphia or other cities in America. The blinds are down, the knocker muffled, and frequently straw is placed in the street for half a block to deaden the sound of vehicles. It is also an unwritten courtesy of the neighbors to draw their blinds on the day of the death and on that of the funeral. Thus we know the "King of Terrors" holds his grim, dumb court within the house with rawn blinds and muffled knocker.

Even in the last four years changes in the funeral customs have taken place. Some people still rigidly keep to the old ways. Therefore, if we should not at first be sure of death, the presence on the doorsteps of two lugubrious persons would prove it. These, relieved with other two at certain intervals, stand one on each side of the door to weep until the period shall be ended between the death and the removal to the cemetery. These paid mourners are "mutes." Their business is to weep, and they perform it faithfully. In solemn black garments, hands in black gloves, broad streamers of crape, called "weepers," about their hats, they ply handkerchiefs to their eyes, black-bordered and gloomy. When there are no passers by they discuss the local politics or their own affairs. Directly some one heaves in sight, up go the handkerchiefs. The ends of their noses are suspiciously red. One feels that gin is the cause of such a perpetual flow of salt water from their weak reddish eyes. It is, despite the solemn cause of their employment, exceedingly droll. They look like pen and ink sketches, and their marionette woe is ghastly in its grotesqueness. Strange that this custom of the early Romans should be survived until the nineteenth century. Many of the Roman rites have lingered on these isles of Great Britain, once so extensively used as Roman encampments. "The funeral baked meats" of sacred as well as profane history—these are still prepared. Poor, indeed, the London family which fails to have a banquet provided on the funeral day for the assembled friends.

So wide-spread is the horror concerning being buried alive that bodies are kept here longer than in America. It is regarded as barbarous to keep a body less than a week, and ten days is more frequently the time. Of course in cases of contagious diseases the authorities enforce speedy and private burial. Perhaps the humid atmosphere is not conducive to mortification. Certain it is that less ice is used here, if used at all, than in America on these melancholy occasions.

The funeral flowers are even more extravagantly used than in America, and not alone white flowers, but all the delicate hued blossoms pertaining to the season. Besides natural flowers quantities of a species of everlasting white pinks are used. These flowers come from Africa and are called "Cape flowers," also "wraith flowers." They resemble in shape a double carnation pink, and are graceful, ghost-like blossoms. They are regarded as lucky emblems, messages from the spirits, and are rather a joyous garniture than otherwise, since they are symbolic of hope. Another floral extravagance is in the form of composition—China flowers made up into wreaths, crosses, anchors, etc., which are preserved under raised glass or paper and are placed on the mound in the cemetery. This mound is raised

up squarely like a low bed, with a head stone or monument at the head of the same.

The funeral hearse is either open at the sides and ends or it is closed in quite dark. During the last year or two a few hearses have made their appearance with glass sides. These are called "American funeral carriages," but are not popular. The hearse is ornamented with huge waving plumes of coal black. The horses are jet black and have tails sweeping nearly to the ground. They also have long, full manes which the passing breeze during their slow measured stepping blows lightly about. The largest and handsomest horses are devoted to funeral travel, both for hearses and mourners' carriages and livermen there are who keep nothing else in readiness. These horses have to be broken and trained as laboriously as though for ring riding in a circus. Their drivers sit very high up with a black velvet pall across their throne like perches. Their crape weepers flood down their backs from one to two yards from their hats. The horses' heads are decorated with nodding plumes. The "mutes" walk behind the hearse.—London Cor. Philadelphia Record.

Through the Suez Canal.

A writer in the Saturday Review describes how the traffic along the Suez canal is directed and controlled from the office at Terreplein, near Suez. The number of ships in the canal at the same time is sometimes very great. On the 8th of December last, for example, fifteen steamers cleared the canal, of which seven were outward-bound. On the previous day nine ships cleared, and on the following day seven, so that during the 8th some thirty ships were probably in the canal. Sometimes there are as many as forty, and all are completely under the control of the French gentleman at his desk in an upper chamber of Terreplein. The method of work is exceedingly simple. Against the wall at one side of the room is a narrow shelf or platform, along which runs a groove. At intervals this trough or groove has deep recesses, and at two places these recesses are of a larger size. This trough or groove represents the canal. The recesses are the sidings. The larger intervals are the Great Bitter lake and Timosh. When a vessel has been signalled and is about to enter the canal at, say, the Suez end, a small toy boat or model, three or four inches long is chosen to represent her. A group of these model ships stands ready beside the model canal, each furnished with a flag. About forty have the English flag, ten or a dozen the French flag, and so on with other nationalities. As the steamer comes up and her name is known it is written on paper and placed on the toy boat. The whole number of ships thus actually in the canal at any moment can be seen at a glance, and as telegraphic signals give notice the toy boats are moved along, or placed in a siding, or shown traversing one of the lakes at full speed. Signals are sent from the office to various "gares" prescribing the siding at which each ship must stop to let another meet and pass it. The official who is on duty keeps the models moving as he receives notice, taking care when perhaps two ships going in opposite directions are both nearing the same siding to give timely warning to the pilots in charge by means of the signal balls and flags at each station under his control from the office, and to direct which of the two is to lie up and which to proceed. Barring accidents, the whole arrangement goes like clockwork: the clerk can read off in a moment the name, tonnage, nationality, draft and actual situation of every steamer; he can tell what pilot she has on board, what is her breadth of beam, what rate she is moving at, and everything else which had to be known about her, and he is able without an effort to govern all her movements, to prescribe the place where she is to pass the night, and the hour she is to get under headway in the morning, although he does not see her and probably never saw her in his life. The fees which vessels pay for passing through the canal are often enormous. Some of the large liners of the P. & O. of the Orient service pay as much as £1,800 in making a single transit. For every passenger half a napoleon, or 8 shillings 4 pence, is charged. Three-fourths of the ships that go through the canal are English.

Germany's Prince.

Conflicting reports about the health of Germany's Crown Prince are afloat, but it can be surmised from them that he is in danger. Were he to die, it would be a misfortune. The destiny or well-being of no people nor nation is dependent upon a single man, but, for all that, the Crown Prince's death would create conditions that would be unhappy for Germany and for Continental Europe. He is a man of character and of experience—and imbued with modern ideas, more or less, great expectations are entertained of his rule, which, in the natural order of things, were it not imperiled by disease, should begin soon. As great as his veteran father has made Germany, by the fortunate assistance of Bismarck and Von Moltke, there is need of improvement. Reform in Germany could be expected with the incoming of a new administration. Not wholly foreign to the Bismarck idea, the hope in the Prince has been that he would modify where Bismarck has been unrelenting; that he would mitigate where the old regime has been typically the martinet in character and policy. Comparatively well-advanced in years, it can be individually written in the sense of sympathy for the Prince, that it would be altogether bad for him were he to die now, just as his foot is at the base to ascend a throne which has been made so grand and strong as Germany's.—Omaha Herald.

The Daughter's Room.

The cares of the sitting-rooms and kitchens comes under the management of the grownup portion of the family, but every little girl from 10 years old and upwards loves to think that her bedroom is her very own, her special domain, where she may reign absolutely, with none to dispute her right. Here, then, is the mother's chance, if she is only judiciously enough to turn it to account. Encourage the little one by all means in the belief that the room is hers—hers to beautify and adorn in any way which her fertile little brain may advise; hers to retire to when she wishes to be alone, either to do stern battle with her lessons, for girl-like, to dream her wonderful day dreams, and hers above all to keep in perfect order and neatness. This knowledge will go a long way towards fortifying in the child all those elements of character so essential in the woman, and will be the means of making her gradually exercise her individual tastes and ideas, and thus acquire an interest in domestic concerns which, under other circumstances, she might never obtain.—Country Gentleman.

Reconciliation.

I had a friend, but in the heat of rage, When passion killed his nobler sense of mind, He smote me, and in silence worse than words we parted. A weary round of years went by, when came, Like flood tide on the angry deep, great waves Of trouble rolling onward in our paths; Alike the skies were dark for both, Alike the gentle, smiling sun beamed forth. Then, after we had felt the fire of life, Fate, chance, or God, or what you will, took up The raveled ends of our remaining days, And brought us face to face. I met him in the early dawn when morn, Gray hooded and with somber mien, Looked o'er the hills upon a drowsy world. Pale was his face, and in his eyes I saw Few were the moments till his race was run. He turned upon his couch, his dying couch, And bade me hear the last words of his life. Yet ere he spoke his breath forsook his lip, And with a gentle, winning smile, he passed "Into the confines of another world"— And I rejoice he spoke not, for his smile Was better far than idle words.—Will B. Dickson in Kansas City Journal.

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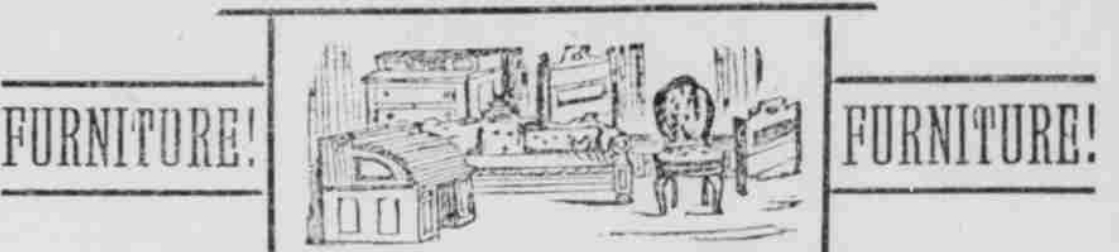
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CALL AT THE OLD STAND OF PETER MERCES.

—It is a good while since the American eagle took such a flight as he did at a democratic convention the other day in Lee county Ky. It appears that one Sebastian, was before the convention for nomination for the state senate, and it was the following speech that swept the convention like a tornado and secured his success:

Place our banner in the hands of J. M. Sebastian, and the future will show the correctness of my assertion, that high over the thunder-riven crags of politics it will float through the dark hours of strife; and when the struggle shall have ended, aloft over the thirty-fourth district will its ample folds spread forth, and with wild acclaim of joy will we see blazoned thereon in burning letters of light the legend of glorious triumph—"Victory."—Sioux City Journal.

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