A CALIFORNIA CRAZE.

COLLECTING BASKETS FROM THE MEXICANS AND INDIANS.

The Latest Fad Among Artistic People on the Pacific Slope—Hunting for Specimens—Beautiful Work of the Dusky Basketmakers.

The latest fad or craze in California, especially in the southern portion, is to possess a collection of Indian baskets. It is the correct thing, and some of the most artistic homes in the state have rooms decorated with them. Who started the craze is not known, but some one discovered that the baskets possessed great artistic beauty, were rich in harmonious coloring and formed attractive ornaments for library and parlor, and the demand began. It was the old story of new lamps for old, and dealers and others went around the country exchanging new modern baskets for the old ones of the Spanish and Mexican families.

The baskets are exhausted, at least the old ones, being now in the hands of a few collectors and others who will not sell them. The baskets cost from $1.50 to $3 usually, and bring from $10 to $50 apiece. Unless the reader has seen some of these works of barbaric art this price will seem excessive; but the graceful shape, the rich brown tints, the age and association, give them a value appreciated by those who have engaged in their collection. The cheapest way to make a collection is to go to some collector and buy their baskets outright; but the most pleasurable method is to take a carriage and go about the country among the Indians and Mexicans and buy them one's self. Many of the finest baskets come from the Indians north of San Francisco, and others have been collected in Los Angeles, San Diego and San Bernardino counties. In the latter counties are the remnants of the Mission Indians, hidden away in the mountains at Pala, Pauma and at Pachanza.

EXPERIENCES OF THE COLLECTOR.

The experiences of the amateur basket collector are varied, and no better way in which to study the habits of the present Indians can be found. The successful basket fiend must have what is popularly known as "cheek;" must walk into the bedrooms and private apartments, insist upon trunks being opened and contents shown. This may seem a high handed proceeding, but it is necessary, as even while the people wish to sell they, in the majority of cases, say at first that they have no baskets, and when they are produced do not wish to sell on account of the ancient aunt or grandparent who has handed them down. If, however, the would be purchaser has the staying power the basket can be secured. The sellers generally believe the Americans to be great fools for paying such prices. A half-breed informed the writer that the people were crazy and would give anything; and with a laugh, he said: "They pay five times as much for the old ones as they do for the new." That a basket which they use to sift their flour in could serve as an ornament is beyond their conception; yet this is the end to which these old utensils are put. They are tacked against the walls to show the figures or color, or hung over doors or in corners. The large ones find a place near the fire to hold the wood, while others are distributed about the library for papers and magazines; indeed, their usefulness grows upon one. The finest collections are photographed by their owners and make a fine and artistic showing.

It is as an art that the work of these people commends itself, not alone in the form of the baskets, but in the marking and arrangement of colors; and that such artistic feeling should be found among people whose ideas of art, as we recognize it, are of the crudest description, is remarkable. After so many years of association with white people it would not appear strange, if some of their ideas of ornamentation were obtained from them, yet this is extremely rare. All the ornamentation is unique, possessing an individuality that cannot be mistaken. The lines are often graceful and of great geometrical beauty, radiating from the center. A common design is a series of triangular or arrow shaped figures worked into radiating lines. Some seem to represent flashes of lightning in the zigzag motion. Human figures worked in, often extending completely around the basket, with clasped hands, are seen in some of the best baskets, while deer and other animals are sometimes introduced. The colors are usually dull reds or browns, yellows and black, and in almost every case the blending is harmonious. Where these people obtain their ideas is an interesting question, but probably from nature—the foliage, the bending grasses, etc., suggesting the lines of grace and beauty.

METHODS OF BASKET MAKING.

It is not necessary to go far from the centers of civilization to see basket makers. The Diggers produce beautiful baskets not far from San Francisco, while the Indians about Monterey, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and other localities still make coarse ones in the same primitive way.

The basket work of the California Indians is valuable in several ways. It is characteristic of the different tribes, and they can be traced by it. Some baskets are beautifully ornamented with feathers, and this shows that they were made by the Indians north of San Francisco. One for which a large sum was recently paid is ornamented with the red feathers of the woodpecker, while around the edge are the plumes of the plumed quail. The feathers are woven in while the basket is being made. Fineness and age are two important qualifications.

The California Indians employ two general methods in basket making; the coil is either twined or whipped. The Diggers, as before stated, produce fine baskets of great beauty, while the Klamath and McCloud Indians make twined baskets so fine that they can be used to hold water. In the baskets from the Eel river tribe a double coil is used. The Modoc women produce some beautiful shapes. We see cones, inverted truncated cones, shallow dishes, some like hats or half eggs, vases, long and narrow, others flat, with short necks. Plaques are common, while some baskets are almost perfect spheres. Many of these are made of willow slips and pine roots, stained in the southern county with nail rust. The material used mostly by the California Indians is the plant known scientifically as "rhus aromatica," or squaw berry. In the houses or ramadas of basketmakers the raw material is seen—twigs cut and scraped, eight or ten inches in length and tied together with a string. They are dyed with plants and nail rust. Young girls can be seen soaking the twigs and scraping off the bark ready for the old women to use. The old baskets may be considered a lost art, and comparatively few modern ones are being made, not enough to meet the demand.—C. F. Holden in San Francisco Chronicle.

SOUTH BAY DUCK SHOOTING.

A Day in a "Battery," with Gun in Hand. Suspicious Birds.

There is a fascination to many sportsmen in shooting ducks from a South bay battery, though a more cramped and uncomfortable position cannot be found than that required by the gunner. The battery consists of a box about eighteen inches deep and long enough to admit the outstretched body of a man. A rubber coat is the substitute for a mattress and a sandbag serves for the pillow. From the box extends on each side a flat, raftlike screen composed of wood and and brown canvas, which serves to float the box and break the force of the waves as they dash up against it. By means of weights the box is sunk in the water and iron decoy ducks hold it in place. A hundred decoys are scattered about the box in a natural manner. The gunner then lies down flat in the box, with his shells on one side and his gun on the other. With a parting instruction to be sure and keep the head well down the battery man sails away, leaving the gunner alone on the sea.

To the man first trying the sport the situation is a peculiar one, and the sensation the same. All alone, surrounded by the little flock of decoys, and the waves pounding up with a swash against the guards to the box, he feels somewhat insecure. As he lies flat in the box his body and head are below the level of the water. Sometimes, if the wind is blowing pretty strong, a wave will break over into the box, tickling his face with briny drops and sending cold streams of liquid down his back. If he is a sportsman he will only laugh at this and take a pull at his whisky flask to prevent catching cold. Sometimes the waves run so high that the gunner is compelled to bail out his box or it will become a fish pond in the sea. The sun beating down on his face will redden it in about ten minutes. Meanwhile the sail boat is tacking across the bay to stir up the ducks. A bunch of them is aroused, and as the birds go skimming along the water they spy the decoys, and, thinking they are a flock of brethren peacefully feeding, shape their course toward them. As they sail up to the decoys they soon perceive they are deceived and wheel away. Just as they come about is a good time to fire, and if the gunner is expert while they are getting away he has time to slip in another shell and fill the back of the rear duck with cold lead. If any of the ducks fall the gunner stands up in the battery, which is a signal for the sailboat men to come up and gather in the fowls that have been shot.

Then the gunner stretches himself out again and waits for another flock. If the ducks are thick and not in a suspicious mood he will not have to remain so long before another set will be along and more blazing away is in order. Some favorable morning there is a constant booming of guns on the bay, and big boatloads of ducks are brought in. It is not uncommon in the autumn for one man to shoot fifty to eighty ducks from a battery. The next day he may not get five.

In the season about five batteries a day start out from Patchogue. The skipper always has a man to help him sail his catboat, and it is a race to secure the best ground. Often in making the best run across the bay the "cap'n" only gets in first to find the ground already seized by the ambitious huntsman who has gone out the night before, slept in the catboat and at sunrise is ready in his battery. The early morning is the best time, as at dawn the ducks begin to feed and are out in great numbers. Every sailboat man is a "cap'n" and must scrupulously be addressed as such. His assistant is the mate. There is no crew. The South bay boatmen are honest, good hearted men, always ready to get as much as they can out of the sportsmen, but working hard to drum up the game for him. He will charge $10 a day for the use of the battery, and will throw in the meals. In the cabin of the catboat the mate cooks ham and eggs, steak, potatoes and coffee, and serves it hot. If the sportsman likes oysters, he will throw over his rake and bring up half a bushel to open on the spot. If one is not having much success with the ducks it is a good plan to allow the "cap'n" to lie in the battery for a time, for he is invariably a crack shot and will fill up the quota needed in short order.

Brant and broadbills are the most abundant of the family in the Great South bay in spring. The broadbills are a plump duck, with short bills. They are swift flyers, and it is like shooting at a bumble bee to draw on one as he comes by. In the fall black ducks and redheads come in the bay. Shell ducks are also plentiful. Shell ducks and coots are good shooting, but not worth eating. The broadbills are great divers, and often, when wounded, will lead the skippers a long chase. On diving they are pretty sure to come up to the windward, and a good distance off. Often the ducks come in the bay in great quantities, and set up in the water like big rows of tenpins. When started they rise with the noise of a whirlwind in the forest. The boobies are a small species of duck that sometimes come in the bay. They get their name from their aptness at losing their heads. A shot into a flock of boobies will sometimes so disconcert them that they will fly around in a circle and allow the gunner to take his time in shooting them down. They are great chatterers, and keep the bay noisy with their cries.—New York Times.

"Cycles" for Army Use.

The recent experiments in employment of "cycles" of various sorts for army use in the spring military exercises in England seem to demonstrate the futility of expecting that class of machinery to be of much practical value for this service. The ascents of long hills had to be made by the cyclist volunteers slowly and with toil on foot, because the machines could not be ridden; a carriage to be ridden and worked by four men, and to carry a Maxim gun, broke down utterly; the "Centipede," or flying sapper, a machine on eight wheels, carrying intrenching tools, engineering appliances and men, broke in two and had to be abandoned, and there were numerous minor accidents in only two days' trials. So long as the operations of war cannot be confined to nice, smooth asphalted floors, and conducted daintily, these machines are not likely to be worth much among possible military appliances.—New York Sun.

MEN WITH A MANIA.

MAKING COLLECTIONS OF ODD AND CURIOUS THINGS.

Brokers Eager in the Pursuit of Missals, Pottery, Roses, Orchids, Japanese Curios, Pipes, Mosaics and Butterflies. The True Collector Is Born.

The collecting craze is something almost as inevitable as death to the successful Wall street man. As soon as he begins to feel his fortune upon an assured basis he is absolutely sure to fall a prey to a mania for collecting something. These fancies are as widely different as the poles and as numerous as midnight stars. Brayton Ives spends thousands of dollars every year on books and has the finest collection of illuminated missals in this country, and the most complete collection of first printed editions in the world. Henry Clews has the pottery craze, and his Royal Saxony, Sevres, Worcester and Dresden ware are unsurpassed on this side of the ocean. Alfred Sully raises roses at his country place and is always searching for a new variety; for that reason more than any other he got his affairs in order and went across the water, where he will visit all the famous roseries of France, where most of the new varieties of that flower are produced, and contemplates also looking through the old gardens of England for the elder varieties that can no longer be found in the collections of modern florists. Jay Gould devotes his leisure moments to orchids, and his orchid houses at his place on the Hudson contain the largest variety of these strange plants in any collection in the world outside of the Botanical Garden of London. Austin Corbin cares most for Japanese curios and has his house stored with crystals, swords, pottery, bronzes, Kakamono and carved ivories till there is scarcely room for mere commonplace living purposes.

RARE AND BEAUTIFUL THINGS.

One Wall street man has collected pipes from all over the world. Another has ransacked all lands for weapons; a third devotes himself to bringing together wood carvings, a fourth to the collection of Mosaics—and so ad infinitum. There are a lot of spurious articles palmed off on some of these untrained collectors, but on the whole the mania is admirable if for nothing else than that it results in filling the country with rare and beautiful things. One of the most interesting and occult of these collections is that of Nuemoegen's, which consists entirely of moths and butterflies. It contains 100,000 of these insects, all carefully arranged, ticketed, catalogued and displayed in handsome glass cases. Nuemoegen has been some twelve years bringing these together, and it is said to be the most complete collection of moths and butterflies in the world. No expense or pains have been spared, no expedition has left any of the large cities for purposes of exploration in foreign countries that has not been accompanied by an agent of Nuemoegen's, commissioned to bring home specimens of the papilio of the land.

The collection includes specimens indigenous to every country from the equator to the very limit of their existence northward, and they vary in color and size all the way from tiny creatures half the diameter of one's little finger nail and of the purest white up to wide winged beauties of glowing peacock blues, with bodies bigger than a humming bird. They range the whole gamut of color and present the most curious suggestions of imitation such as the pansy butterfly, whose four wings resemble with startling exactness the four petals of the purple and golden heartsease, or those so like a dead leaf as to be indistinguishable at a little distance. Others have precisely the same rich scarlet coloring of autumn foliage, or the hue of the peacock's breast; the death's head moth has a distinct skull and crossbones marked on his back, a whole branch of this family of lepidopters are seeming counterparts of a bed of pale purple wood violets. Some are white as snow and others black as velvet, while most beautiful of all are the great creatures of pale, milky green, whose wings have long tails of four or five inches attached. Some are very like dragon flies, with gauzelike opalescent wings, while some of the big bodied fellows are covered with actual feathers of down.

THE TRUE COLLECTOR.

The true collector is born, and is only made by long experience and much labor. These rich stock brokers indulge in collecting only as an elegant advertisement and intelligent way of getting rid of their superfluous income; they are rarely born with the true passion. The men who sell curios take them in hand and educate them slowly and laboriously to distinguish between the true and the false, the artistic and the meretricious, and in large part their collections are brought together by their having carte blanche orders with London and Parisian dealers to buy and ship them anything that comes up for sale fitted to perfect or adorn their possessions.

But there are two or three men in New York of very moderate means who are true born collectors. They mouse about old book and bric-a-brac shops, dive suddenly into junk cellars on Avenue A and come up radiant and grimy with some dingy object which, when put in order, causes their friends to crever with envy. Their manner, too, in purchasing is worth study: Whenever they happen across something specially desirable they begin gradually to exhibit more and more profound disgust and scorn. They contemptuously toss the treasure trove aside and examine everything else before they return to it, finally selecting some cheap, worthless object and suggesting that the find shall be thrown in as an inducement to purchase, and wearily pocket the whole as if after all they felt they were very weak to allow themselves to be persuaded to take it at all. I have seen this performance tried successfully more than once.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Mania and Malaria.

Drs. Lemoine and Chaumier communicate to The Annales Medico Psychologique their conclusions upon the relations existing between malaria and certain disorders of the mind, from which it appears that violent mania may accompany an attack of intermittent fever in predisposed persons, and that old subjects of malaria, with masked manifestations, are liable to recurrent intellectual disturbance, or to chronic insanity. Quinine gives good results in intermittent mania and its convalescence. It is apparently of no value in the chronic cases, but even in these the drug may quiet transient attacks of agitation as if they were masked phenomena of the disease.—Chicago News.

Jews' Freedom from Inebriety.

Says Dr. Norman Kerr, the well known writer on physiological aspects of inebriety: "The temperance of the Jews is proverbial. Extensive as my professional intercourse has been with them, I have never been consulted for inebriety in the person of a Jew, while my advice has been sought for this complaint by a very large number of Christians. In my opinion their general freedom from inebriety in almost every clime and under almost all conditions there are very few exceptions to this rule is as much due to racial as to hygienic, and more to racial than to religious influences."

WORK OF PREHISTORIC MAN.

Remarkable Relics of an Ancient Civilization in California.

In many parts along the coast and in Mexico can still be seen relics and remarkable evidence of some of the most skillful arts practiced by the so called "ignorant savages" that once inhabited this land, which, by forcibly dispossessing them, we now inhabit, unless, perhaps, some more civilized race possessed this country prior to its discovery by Christopher Columbus, whose tribe has long since been exterminated and whose record is lost. One of the most wonderful of these relics is the indication of a solid pavement road in Arizona, made of granite blocks or slabs about ten feet long, hewn square, conveyed and placed side by side by some means unknown to the spectator.

This pavement or road was undoubtedly built thousands of years ago, as these blocks and indications can be traced for miles along the mountain sides, through which deep canyons have washed their way. Some of these slabs are said to weigh nearly two tons, and there being no granite ledges nearer than several miles from where they are now situated indicates that they must have had some powerful mode of conveyance, as well as powerful machinery to shape and locate them.

To these ancient people also was known a process of tempering brass so it could be converted into tools equal to the best of steel. Numerous specimens of this tempered brass have been found where the city of Mexico now stands, as well as on the Pacific slope, and while the chemist has no difficulty in removing the temper, yet he cannot return it. For the rediscovery of this tempering process scientists and chemists have labored, and the United States government has offered a premium in vain. Nor can they even by having tempered metal before them gain the least light on the subject.

Bringing the discourse a little nearer home, on the edge of the Carisa plains, but a short distance from the stock ranch of C. R. Brumley, can be seen what is known as the "Painted Rock." This rock is in a horseshoe shape, about eighty feet high and 1,000 feet in circumference. The inside being hollowed out gives it the appearance of a natural fort, which has frequently been used by stockmen as a sheep corral, and is capable of holding comfortably 3,000 head of sheep. The inside walls on the south are very abrupt and overhanging, and are covered with many ancient paintings, roughly resembling sketches of men, dogs, snakes, lizards, tortoises and various characters, the significance of which was, perhaps, even unknown to the painter. So we are inclined to think that each character is a record of some historical event, and that, if we but understood them, they would be very interesting to us. The paints used are of three distinct colors—red, white and black. And, although we know nothing of their mode of manufacture or materials used, we can say this much, that they have a power of durability and of retaining their color unsurpassed by modern productions.

In the western part of this county, at the outlet of the Antelope valley, on the Tulare plains, is what is called the "Point of Rocks." On top of the most prominent of these rocks is a large, beautiful water tank about 7 feet deep and 20 feet long by 12 feet wide. Its capacity is between 4,000 and 5,000 gallons of water, and although evidently it has been formed by nature, still, judging by its location being such as to catch all the rain water that falls to the surface, one can be led to believe that it was human art and design. The height of the rock is about 100 feet and its walls are quite steep, but by the aid of steps chiseled into it, is no difficult task to ascend and return with a pail of water. From on top of the rock one has a magnificent view of the surrounding country for miles and miles. There being no other water for a long distance makes it a very convenient resort for stockmen and travelers. On adjoining rocks can be found a great many similar tanks; also two small ancient paintings. Scores of mortars and pestles are found in various places. Some are made very roughly and others are shaped out of a fine quality of stone with elegant taste. Marvelous skill is displayed in the art of making arrow heads and knives of the hardest flint. How they can give a desired shape to so brittle a substance by chipping off bits is easier to think about than to accomplish.—Cor. Bakersfield (Cal.) Echo.

The Second Hand Book Trade.

One of the many peculiarities of the second hand book trade is that the sales are heavier on days of stormy weather. The business men find slow sales on inclement days, and those of a literary turn of mind, or those who have a penchant for collecting books on any special subject, will drop into a second hand book store and while away several hours in looking over the stock. I remember one snowy day last winter a prominent gentleman of this city came into my store, and, while waiting for the storm to pass by, he became interested in several volumes of books on a line he was collecting, and I sold him $65 worth before he left. Customers who have a hobby to which they are devoting attention will find a book sometimes which to the eye is only worth ten cents, but they will value it at $5, and if a dealer asks that price they will readily pay it.—Edward Mills in Globe-Democrat.

Electrical Detective Camera.

The relation of electricity to crime, which began with the invention of burglar alarm devices, has been extended in the shape of an electrical detective camera, invented by two Newark men. Their idea is to have the device fixed in the walls of banking houses behind the tellers, and so arranged as to photograph whoever stands at the teller's window, in case the man's picture is wanted. The little button that does the work of opening the camera shutter, making the exposure, dropping the plate and putting in a new plate, will be under the teller's desk, so that he can, without betraying himself, instantly take the picture of any one who excites his suspicion. This same camera can be put up in police stations in the same way, and as the prisoners are brought in they can be photographed without knowing it and having a chance to distort their features when sitting for the Rogues' Gallery.—New York Sun.