

BURNING THE DEAD.

A Custom That Can Be Traced Back to the Earliest Ages.

Cremation has been practiced by most of the nations of the earth from the earliest ages, and, although in pagan countries it may have taken the form of fire worshiping, there can be no doubt that its adoption by the ancients was for the most part prompted by other than religious reasons. Greeks ascribe its introduction to Hercules, who, having sworn to transmit the body of Argus to his father, thought this the most convenient way of fulfilling his promise. According to Homer, the burning of the dead was a common practice among the Greeks long before the Trojan war, but the earliest record of it is among the Scythians, who inhabited the vast region known under the name of Tartary. Slender accounts handed down concerning the manners of some of the ancient natives of Hindustan also allude to the custom. The idea of purification by fire was in all ages universal, and with good reason. Some believed that the body was unclean after the departure of the soul, and it was therefore deemed necessary that it should be purified by fire. Ovid expressed the general opinion of his time when he said that the soul was not completely separated from the body until the latter was consumed on the pyre. The Athenians invariably after a battle burned the slain.

WHIPPED BY MACHINERY.

Automatic Floggers Used by Several European Armies.

Automatic flogging machines are in use among the military forces of several European nations. For many years the whipping was always done by soldiers under the command of an officer, and the punishment varied, according to the personal relations subsisting between the soldier and his victim. It was to correct this disadvantage that the flogging machine was invented.

The machine is automatic in action, and as soon as the culprit is fastened in position a spring is tightened or loosened to gauge the exact force of the blow. A pointer is moved over a dial to the requisite number of strokes and the mechanism is started.

With perfect regularity the victim's back is scourged by the throngs, the handle of the whip being moved by a screw device after each stroke so that the lash does not fall on the same spot throughout the punishment.

Each blow is of uniform severity, and as soon as the required number has been given the machine comes to a rest, and the offender is released, with the assurance that the exact punishment ordered has been meted out to him.—Harper's Weekly.

The Last of the Ruffs.

In 1702 the rage for ruffs, such as are seen on many monumental effigies, began to decline. A writer in the London Chronicle of that year says of gentlemen's dress, "Their cuffs entirely cover their wrists, and only the edges of their ruffles are to be seen." It is said that a distaste for ruffs was first created so far back as 1613, when a woman named Turner wore them on her trial for the murder by poison of Sir Thomas Overbury. The French revolution of 1789 much influenced British fashion, and the picturesque cocked hat and ruffles then gave way generally to round hats and small cuffs. The period of their final decline cannot be easily determined, as men of old fashioned or eccentric habits have worn ruffled shirt fronts within quite recent memory similar to those which, according to Planché's "History of British Costume," originated in the seventeenth century.

The Conductor's Baton.

According to the investigations of a Frenchman, the credit of inventing the conductor's baton belongs to Lully, the composer, who eventually had cause to regret his invention. Before he adopted the baton conductors were in the habit of pounding on the floor with their feet or clapping their hands to mark the time. Lully found it wearisome to keep his foot constantly in motion and so used a stick to strike the floor and beat time. He used a pole six feet long. One day he brought down the pole with such force that it struck his foot and made a deep wound. He paid no attention to the matter. The wound grew worse and ultimately caused his death. After his time conductors tried more and more to improve the baton, and it was ultimately brought to its present form.

Extra Cautious.

They were returning to America after a European honeymoon.

"George," petulantly, "I really feel hurt. Over on the other side you declared I was a jewel, and you haven't repeated it since we have been aboard."

"Hist!" cautioned George, holding up a warning finger. "If I declared you a jewel I might have to pay duty. You know these customs men are terribly strict these days."—Chicago News.

Quite Willing.

"Fardon me, governor," began the street beggar.

"Certainly, dear fellow," answered the gentleman from Tennessee. "What are you guilty of?"—Buffalo Express.

In the Swim.

"Congratulations, old chap! You are seen everywhere with Lord Bunkhurst."

"Yes, I have rented him for the season."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Self respect is the cornerstone of all virtue.—Herschel.

THE DEACON'S SHEEPSKIN

By M. QUAD

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If you know anything at all about farm life you know that now and then a farmer gets a banking for mutton and kills a sheep. In removing the pelt he is very careful. A cut in it depreciates its value. Pelts are generally purchased by the peddlers, and they are generally looked over very carefully beforehand. If there are two or three cuts in the pelt it is only half price. Deacon Strong lived on a farm in the outskirts of the village of Rawsonville. The peddlers had found him a truthful man. When the deacon warranted a sheepskin free from cuts it was no use spending time to look at it. On this particular morning when a peddler called the deacon had a pelt all rolled up to trade for tin pans. While he didn't exactly warrant it, he didn't acknowledge to any damage, and it was three days later that the peddler found he had been done for.

The peddler could have gone back and talked about graft and all that and raised a row, but he didn't. He returned to the neighborhood after several weeks, but he didn't call on the deacon. Neither did he make any inquiries about him. He just sawed wood and listened to what people were talking about, and what they were talking about just then was the fact that the deacon had decided to send his old mother to the poorhouse.

Deacon Strong realized that he would be criticised, and so he went about telling what a beautiful poorhouse it was.

The tin peddler got on to the talk and the facts, and he was doing some thinking as he drove from the neighborhood. He had a brother in a town twenty miles away, and the brother was a lawyer.

The day had been set for grandma to go to the poorhouse when one of the neighbors brought in a newspaper to show the deacon an advertisement. It called for information concerning one Anna Strong, widow, and strongly hinted that it would be to her great advantage to step out into the limelight. The poorhouse trip was canceled and a journey made to see a lawyer. Anna Strong, widow, was Deacon Strong's mother. He could prove it by fifty people. The lawyer replied that it was all right so far, but did she have a cousin named Charles Bixby, a rich man living in Boston, a cousin who would be apt to remember her in his will to the extent of \$25,000?

The deacon's hair climbed up. He said that he hadn't the least doubt of the cousinship and would take the cash home to the old lady. He went too fast. The Widow Strong must appear and make an affidavit. What her son knew or guessed wouldn't cover the case. The deacon didn't say she had lost her voice. He started for home to see if he couldn't find it for her. Her fingers were so cramped that she hadn't written a line for years, and all depended on the recovery of the voice. The old woman had been tucked away in the poorest room of the house. She was at once transferred to the best. The scraps from the table were thought good enough for her. She was now fed on the best. Instead of three regular meals per day she was coaxed to eat much oftener. The son had hardly spoken to her for weeks, but now he sat with her and even told her jokes and hoped she would live for twenty years yet. He also went among the neighbors and said that he had heard the cellar of the poorhouse was damp after every shower, and he couldn't think of taking his dear mother there.

Mrs. Strong, widow, could hear very well. She heard her son ask the name of all her male cousins, including Charles Bixby of Boston, and she heard herself addressed as "dear mother," but she could make no intelligible replies. Not when the daughter-in-law combed her hair for her and washed her face and said she was a saint if there ever was one could she talk. When she was lifted in and out of the buggy for a ride she couldn't express her gratitude in words. Once or twice she happened to overhear her dutiful son say to his wife that he'd like to build a fire under the old woman to make her talk, but she didn't lay it up against him. She went right on baying the best in the house and wondering why other old women didn't lose their voices.

Once a month for two long years Deacon Strong called upon or wrote to the lawyer. He offered all sorts of terms and compromises, but it was no use. He wrote to Boston, but his letter was unanswered. He consulted other lawyers, but they said that nothing could be done until that voice came back. Raw eggs and wine, pies, cake and puddings fattened the old woman, but the voice remained obdurate. She winked and she smiled and she nodded, but that wasn't enough to bring home the Bixby legacy. Then at last she died. She went to sleep in her chair one day and passed away without a struggle. She was buried in a very decent manner, and next day the deacon walked into the lawyer's office as next of kin and heir to the Bixby legacy.

"And you mother didn't regain her voice?" asked the lawyer.

"Never spoke a word."

"She had the best of care?"

"The very best."

"I am glad to hear it. I have just ascertained there was some mistake about it. She may have been a cousin of Charles Bixby's, but he left his money to an old man's home."

THE BARGAIN CHASE.

American Women and the Shopping Game Mania.

More money is wasted every year by women buying needless things under the excitement of the bargain hunt than is spent in all the gambling houses and race tracks put together, says Mary Heaton Vorse in Success Magazine. When you say that I have no statistics to prove this I answer that I have common sense and have spent much time in city shops. I know, too, what I am capable of, and I am but a half hearted hunter. I know what my friends do. It isn't for nothing that I have seen earnest young students of economics succumb to this hunting instinct and fare forth to buy ninety-eight cent undergarments.

It is not only in the stores frequented by poor or uneducated women that I have seen the more brutal instincts of the human race come to the surface. I have seen a charming looking elderly woman in a high class store snatch a dress length of gray voile from the hands of another elderly woman, and the reason I happened to see these sights was because I myself was at the sale looking at garments I didn't want and didn't need and buying them.

The bargain chase, the shopping game passion or sport, life work or recreation—for it may be any one of these, according to the temperament of the woman—has American women well in its grip. Hardly one of us escapes some one of the psychological deviations from the normal which I have mentioned.

READ HIS FACE.

The Youthful Amateurs Were Sure He Was a Philanthropist.

They were youthful enthusiasts in physiognomy. On the seat opposite in the train was a man of commanding figure, massive brow and serious expression. "Splendid face!" one of them explained. "What do you suppose his life work has been?"

"A lawyer?" suggested the other.

"No-o; there's too much benevolence in that face for a lawyer."

"Maybe a banker?"

"Oh, no! A man with an expression like that couldn't have spent his life in merely turning over money."

"He might be an editor."

"An editor! Cutting and slashing his enemies at every turn and even his friends occasionally for the sake of a smart paragraph? You can't read faces. That man's a philanthropist or engaged in some sort of public spirited work. Why, there isn't a line that doesn't indicate strength of purpose and nobility! Look at that curve there on the left!"

At the next station an old countryman took his seat beside the man with massive brow and soon entered into a conversation with him, in the course of which he asked the latter "what was his line."

The two opposite held their breath in the intensity of their interest.

"Oh, I've got a little tavern and butcher shop back in the country a bit," was the proud reply. "My wife tends to the meals and I do my own killing."—Youth's Companion.

Picture Forgeries.

There are three or four times as many Corots in existence as the French painter produced in his lifetime. He lived to be nearly eighty, but at Montmartre his posthumous canvases are still being turned out to meet the demands of the market. The old masters never die. They are still working overtime in the back rooms of Florence and Rome. At Cologne the manufacture of genuine mediaeval metal work and antique carving is a thriving industry. These foreign forgers may be scamps, but their tireless energy also testifies to the reverence in which posterity holds the great names of bygone periods. If they are not so highly prized, what inducements would there be for anybody to waste time, paint and muscle in creating fraudulent copies and imitations and passing them off under false pretenses? Our millionaire collectors are not constantly exposed to the risk of buying high priced forgeries where the originals have no value.—New York World.

Mourning in Japan.

The Japanese code of mourning is very elaborate and complicated. As followed by the well to do classes it involves the wearing of special garments and abstinence from animal food. At the death of a husband or real or adopted parents the custom demands thirteen months of mourning apparel and fifty days' abstinence from meat. Grandparents are honored by 150 days if they are on the paternal side; if only common, insignificant, maternal grandparents, they have to put up with ninety. The same rule applies to maternal uncles and aunts. It is one way of introducing the oriental contempt for women.

Superior Wisdom.

"Why do you consider women superior to men in intelligence?"

"A bald headed man buys hair restorer by the quart, doesn't he?"

"Er—yes."

"Well, a woman doesn't waste time on a hair restorer. She buys hair."—Houston Post.

A Natural Cause.

"Do you notice that most dog stories are funny ones?"

"Why not? A dog story ought naturally to be something of a waggish tale."—New York Journal.

Few things are necessary for the wants of this life, but it takes an infinite number to satisfy the demands of opinion.

HIS ASSISTANT

A Story of a Professor And a Girl Graduate

By BERTHA D. ALSOP

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Professor Erskine was a very old young man. He was thirty-two and looked ten or fifteen years older. "What can you expect," said one of the young women students, referring to his antique appearance, "of a man whose sole diet is Greek roots?"

Luella Greenfield led her class from start to finish and took every prize she competed for. She was a great favorite with Professor Erskine, who the day after her graduation said to her:

"Your career must not be that of women who are tied down to the care of children. Choose rather to devote yourself to intellectual pursuits. I can give you a fine opportunity for a beginning. I am writing a history of the barbarian kings who changed the influence of Rome in European civilization during the fourth and fifth centuries. I need an assistant to aid me in my researches. Will you join me?"

"And give up all thoughts of a home life with dear little children to comfort me when I am old?"

"You will be interested in your work, a far nobler duty than mending children's clothes and washing their dirty faces."

Luella, whether or no she was convinced, was at last induced to accept the professor's invitation. She dived into books on the Goths, while the professor bored into the past of the Huns. He found her extremely useful. Indeed, he soon learned that it would have been next to impossible to get on without her. She worked so hard that at the end of a few months she needed a rest and went away from him. Professor Erskine was not surprised that he found his work very difficult without her, but he was surprised that during her absence he had no heart in his work. Genserik, Alaric, Attila, all the barbarian kings, ceased suddenly to interest him. The libraries in which he delved had become musty. In his study there were Luella's chair and desk, but without Luella the room was unbearable. Instead of working he went out and walked back and forth on the campus.

"There's old Erskine," said a co-ed on her way to lecture, "stalking back and forth as if moonstruck. He's been doing that ever since Luella Greenfield went away. I wonder if he's dreaming of the barbarian kings or of her."

"He persuaded her," said another, "to devote her life to wormy books. He certainly wouldn't permit himself to think about her except as a means to dig up the past of the people he writes about."

One day a letter came to the professor from his assistant stating that he must get some one to take her place. In order to fit herself physically for the plans he had laid down for her in an intellectual field she needed a year out of door life.

The professor's heart fell like a barometer before a sudden storm. The Goths, the Visigoths, the Huns, were forgotten in the depth of his despair at being condemned to work without Luella. As to having any one else sitting at her desk, the thought was unbearable.

The next morning the college bulletin announced that Professor Erskine, having been suddenly called away, would not lecture that day. A male student, reading the notice, remarked: "Good! I can practice pitching all day. I'll bet he's got on to a headless Jupiter and gone to buy it for the museum." A girl student followed and, with her sex's keener intuition, said: "H'm! Gone after Luella Greenfield. I knew she'd get him."

"I have come," said the professor to his assistant, "to learn if it is absolutely essential that you should give up your work for so long a period."

"So my physician advises me—that is, if I am to do sedentary work. And you know how interested I am in following an intellectual life. It was you who directed me."

"H'm! Unfortunate—very unfortunate for me. It will be impossible for me to continue my present work without your assistance."

"There's Miss Pringle who was graduated last June. She's very bright. She would love the work."

"I shall give it up."

"Oh, professor, don't talk that way. It will give you a great reputation."

"I can't go on with it."

"Not with an able assistant?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Unless I see you at your accustomed place I have no heart in it, and literary work done without heart is worthless."

Luella turned away, but said nothing. "Perhaps," the professor went on, reddening, "if I knew when I went home at night that you would-be there—I mean as my wife—it might make a difference."

There was a prolonged silence, at the end of which Luella said:

"That would mean an abandonment of an intellectual career for me."

The professor hung his head like a boy who had been caught robbing the sugar bowl.

"You remember what you said to me a few months ago as to the preference for an intellectual life?"

He remembered very well that it was better than "mending children's clothes and washing their dirty faces," but still he said nothing.

Suddenly she threw her arms about his neck.

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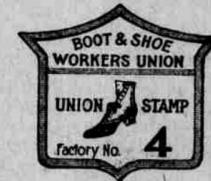
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