

TOLD BY SIGNS AND OMENS

Superstitions of the Virginia Mountain Folks.

BIRDS AND HEADACHE

Interrelation of Sassafras, Kitchen Fire and Cow—Poverty Shunned by Peacocks—Influence of the Moon on Crops—A Stern Code of Perpetual Disaster.

Washington, self admitted centre of culture and enlightenment, looks upon superstition as a form of devil worship that vanished with witch burning. Yet within two hours ride of the Capitol are communities that despite public school and church choir factions problems and things are as deeply saturated with superstition as the scholarly hats that flitted through the intellectual twilight of the Middle Ages.

In the upper reaches of the Virginia counties that flank the Blue Ridge on the east and climb the mountain shoulders until they look down over the summit into the Shenandoah Valley the daily life of the hill dweller is hedged in with countless signs and omens, all portents of evil. Through them he walks gingerly, fearful lest in propitiating one genius of the forest he offend against another.

"Sides, I want yer to go fer the doctor. Yer ma's sillin' this mawnin' an' er durned walppo will set on their horse block an' hollerer las' night 'tel 't cloddid him off. Yer know what that means?"

Whippoorwills, that the ignorant may know as much as Hance, mean early and sudden death. For years they had made that block a rendezvous for their nightly chorals, while the family remained healthy as hostlers. But it shook not the old man's belief in the faith of his fathers. The doctor was hurriedly fetched, only to find ma recovered "as peart as a cricket."

"Don't yer put that sassafras wood in their kitchen fire!" cried the old lady to her helping hand one day, a twelve year old girl, as yet unlearned in the lore of the hills. "Every single cow on their place'll go dry of yer do. Put it in pa's fire."

A listening city man wondered at this fine distinction.

"Law, chile," sagely explained the old lady, "it's jes' puttin' sassafras in their kitchen fire what makes cows go dry; it don't make no difference in no other fire. Why, when I wuz er gal over'n Rappahannock— and wise saws and ancient instances were copiously cited to sustain the theory of interrelation of sassafras, kitchen fire and cow.

"Peacocks won't stay 'th us," explained the old lady when the city man suggested them as an ornament to the velvety blue grass lawn. "They won't stay 'th po' folks."

"We used ter have er beautiful pair on 'em. They stayed here fer years 'tel we los' that lawsuit 'th their Cyarters an' got po'. Ther very nex' night them peacocks went down their moun't pas' Dorse Hefflin's place an' ole man Cooser's, who's both po' folks an' didn't stop 'tel they got plum' ter Col. Waller's, that owns 'bout half er Warren county.

"They're been thar ever sence, an' they'll stay thar 'tel their Wallers gets po' an' then they'll move on. No, 'tain't no use ter git peacocks hyah." Cuttings and combings from the hair must be carefully collected and burned in the kitchen fire, that altar to the god of bad luck. Otherwise a general run of ill fortune will sit by the hearth for an indefinite term.

If the birds get the hair the ill luck is more specific. The miserable man has a headache that no coal tar product can relieve until the nestings leave their hair lined home. The unfortunate woman loses her remaining locks, unhelped by hair tonics.

"I've always had good crops," said a clever and comfortable farmer of the foothills, "because I always plant things that yield above ground, like corn and wheat, on the light of the moon and those that yield beneath like potatoes, on the dark. I've never failed. Yes," he reluctantly admitted, "I do use lots of fertilizer. But the moon—" and the city man listened to a monologue on its virtues as a crop raiser.

"When yer hev er dawg that don't know 'nuff ter bark when he trees er varmint," confided a dweller in the Rappahannock Valley, "thar's only one way ter learn him how. Take er green gourd that's been raised in their northwest corner or er fiel'—yer mus' pull it on er Sadday—an' ther first time that dawg trees an' don't give tongue take ther gourd an' bus' it wide open over his head. It'll learn him ter bark t'reed all right."

When the city man came home he found himself stopping to make a cross mark with his toe every time he turned back and shuddering when over he heard a howling dog, the deadliest of mountain death omens. He insists that every one is superstitious at heart.

The strangest coin is the ideal money spoken of by Montesquieu as being found in certain parts of Africa. It is an ideal money called "maconte," but is purely a sign of value without a unit.

Trusts in England are dealt with severely.

TRIALS OF ORCHID HUNTING.

Attended With Great Difficulty and Risk of Life.

The prices sometimes paid for rare and new orchids seem exorbitant, but when the figures are put by the side of the hardships endured to procure the plants they are seen to be reasonable enough.

An official of the Botanic Gardens at Washington tells of the perseverance displayed by an agent for that institution.

This agent was sent to New Guinea some years ago to look for a dendrobium, then very rare. For months he dwelt among the natives, faring as they fared, and living under the most trying conditions. But he secured about four hundred of the coveted plants and loaded them on a little schooner. Then, thinking his mission accomplished, he hastened away with his trophies. But on putting into a port in Dutch New Guinea he had the misfortune to see his vessel burned to the water's edge.

He was ordered to go back for more plants. He went. This time he found a magnificent collection of the orchids growing in a native burying ground, among exposed bones and skulls.

It was no easy matter to obtain permission to remove the plants especially as some of the skulls had to be removed with them. However, at last the natives consented, sending with the consignment a little idol to watch over the spirits of the departed. This time the orchids reached their destination. Inferior varieties, which the agent had been permitted to gather in addition to the specimens desired for the Government's gardens, were sold in the open market at prices ranging from twenty six to one hundred and forty eight dollars each.

Many such plants will grow in swamps, which the natives themselves regard with dread as the home of fever and mosquitoes. To go in search of the orchids is often to face death. One agent, detained at Panama, went to look for an orchid he had heard of and was carried back from the swamps to die.

The difficulties of the work are as great as the dangers. One collector was known to wade up to his waist in mud for a fortnight, seeking a specimen of which he had heard, and another lived among the Indians of Brazil for nine months, peering through the tangled jungle for a lost variety.

To obtain the orchids that grow on trees, the collector must hire a certain area of woodland, with the right to fell the timber. As the natives cannot be trusted to climb the trees and gather the plants, the wasteful plan of cutting down the trees is adopted, and he gathers his specimens from the fallen trunks.

The forest being often inland, the plants, after being collected, must be carried to river or sea. In one case they were carried for six weeks on men's backs from the mountains to a river, then six weeks in canoes, with twenty portages, and then conveyed over the ocean.

Earliest Book Plates.

It was within half a century from the invention of printing that book plates were introduced as identifying marks to indicate the ownership of the volume.

Germany, the fatherland of printing from movable type and of wood cutting for making impressions in ink on paper, is likewise the home land of the book plate.

The earliest dated wood cut of accepted authenticity is the well known "St. Christopher of 1423," which was discovered in the Carthusian monastery of Buxheim in Suabia.

It was to insure the right of ownership in a book that the owner had it marked with the coat-of-arms of the family or some other heraldic device. Libraries were kept intact and passed from generation to generation, bearing the emblem of the family.

The first book plate in France dated 1574; in Sweden, 1575; Switzerland, 1607; and Italy, 1623. The earliest English book plate is found in a folio volume once the property of Cardinal Wolsey and afterward belonging to his royal master.

The earliest mention of the book plate in English literature is by Peeps, July 16, 1688. The first known book plate in America belonged to Gov. Dudley, Paul Revere, the patriot, was one of the first American engravers of book plates and a designer of great ability.

All Animals Have Cancer.

It was long thought that cancer was a disease peculiar to men; but it is now proved that there is scarcely a vertebrate animal without it. Savage races were long supposed to be free from cancer. Now that trustworthy reports are being sent in to the imperial cancer researchers, however, it is known that savage races, and indeed all animals develop cancer quite as freely as people living under civilized conditions.

He was the first tramp of the season, and merrily we welcomed him. Here, we said, is a glass of water. Pure, cold, delicious water. What you refuse it, man?

He shook his head and sighed. I have to sir, he said. You see, I've got an iron constitution, and water would rust it.

If you will show me the style of a man's amusements and recreations, I will tell you what are his prospects for this world and the world to come. —T. D. Talmadge, D.D.

Unsung songs cheer no hearts.

NATURE THE BEST DOCTOR

Less Faith Put in Drugs to Cure Diseases Nowadays.

DEPENDS ON THE SYSTEM

The Efforts of Physicians Directed in Many Cases Simply to Stimulate the Body's Power of Fighting Germs—Common Mistakes About Household Remedies.

The increase of exact knowledge regarding diseases and their causes often do more harm than good. Years ago, for instance, all sorts of remedies were administered to consumptives, and nine-tenths of the patients died. To-day little medicine is prescribed for consumptives and they recover.

It is the same with pneumonia, typhoid fever and a host of other maladies. The era of sure cures is past, and scientific physicians have learned that the best way to combat most ills is by the indirect method of stimulating the body's natural power of fighting and destroying germs.

It is a rule of nature that human tissues when disturbed or disordered exhibit a strong tendency to return spontaneously to a state of equilibrium. You strike your thumb with a hammer and a painful bruise results, with effusion of blood under the skin and much inflammation.

The tissues are mangled and many of the flesh cells are broken and die. But in the course of a week the wreckage is removed and new tissue is there. The dark, wasted blood is absorbed and carried away. The dead cells are carted off, too.

The inflammation subsides. New tissue takes the place of that destroyed. The pain disappears and your bruise is cured.

It is the same with more serious maladies. As soon as a germ of tuberculosis or pneumonia enters your body the white corpuscles in your blood begin to fight it. If it is but a single germ, making a solitary excursion, it is soon killed. But if instead of one germ, a million or a hundred million invade your tissues, the battle is more strenuous and it takes longer for your white corpuscles to do their police work.

Thus it is apparent that the seriousness of a disease may be measured by the effort the body must expend in getting rid of its germs. A pimple on the face usually cures itself within two or three days. That is because the staphylococcus, which causes pimples, is a germ which falls an easy prey to the anti-germ substances in the blood. But an attack of rheumatic fever lasts a couple of months, even when the patient is in good condition for fighting it, and that is because the germ which causes it is a tough one and puts up a hard battle against the blood.

Nevertheless the body always makes a hot fight and always has a chance of winning, albeit this chance is sometimes a very small one. All that modern medicine professes to do, in most cases, is to help the body in its good work and to surround it with the most favorable conditions.

A consumptive is ordered to sleep in the open air and is fed on rich milk and eggs in order that his blood may become clear and healthy and so be able to wage a successful war against the tubercle bacilli in his lungs. No effort is ordinarily made to combat the bacilli directly.

The same thing occurs in the case of pneumonia, typhoid fever, yellow fever and other diseases. The patient is well nourished and well nursed and whenever medicine may lend a hand—by reducing a fever or aiding in the removal of waste products—this aid is given. But the main fight—the actual war on the germs—must be conducted by the body itself.

Again, there is a universal tendency to exaggerate slight ailments into very serious ones. A man who has been confined to his bed for a week by some sort of self-curing inflammation in the air passages says that he had a "touch of pneumonia."

In reality it is impossible to have a "touch of pneumonia. One either has the disease or hasn't it. In the same way laymen often speak of a "touch" of typhoid fever or diphtheria or dysentery or rheumatism or scarlet fever or even of such diseases as malaria or yellow fever.

No human being ever had a "touch" of malaria. When this phrase is used the layman usually means that he had an attack of influenza or an extraordinarily bad cold, with fever and chills. A man who really has malaria cannot drag through his daily work with no other aid than an occasional quinine pill and the privilege of swearing at the office boy and of making himself generally disagreeable.

The success of a host of homely remedies for colds, bruises, sprains, &c., is based upon this error. A cold is a simple infection of the mucous membrane, and careful observation shows that in a man otherwise healthy it is certain to cure itself within a short time. But the victim of a cold almost invariably demands that "something be done for it"—and the result is a host of teas, lemonades, broths, rubbings, balms, pills, &c.

MYSTERY IN TREE GROWTH.

Whence and How it Came No Man Can Tell.

One of the most wonderful among the many incomprehensible mysteries of earth is tree growth, says the Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser. Everything connected with life and growth, animal and vegetable, is a mystery, for that matter, for all human knowledge fails to penetrate the hidden operations of nature, or to tell the why and how of life. We see two plants growing side by side, fed from the same sources below and above the ground, so far as we can determine, yet one produces a beautiful rose and the other an ill-smelling and ugly opposite. One tree produces a delicious peach and another a sour crab, yet so far as we can see the same elements sustain both. We see and realize the difference, but fail to understand it.

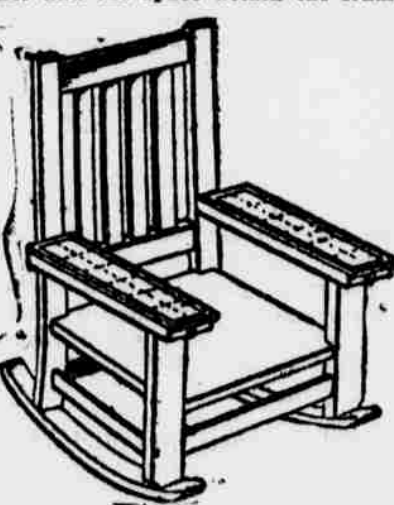
But there are some things about tree growth, aside from leaves, flowers, or fruit, that are as deep a mystery as anything connected with animal life. An acorn, for example, is planted in the earth, and in due time it sends down roots and sends up a tiny sprout. If not interfered with it continues to grow, and in the course of many years becomes a tree. During this time the roots have been attracting moisture and food from the earth, and the trunk and limbs have been obtaining something from the air. Each year a new layer of wood is added, and so it continues till a great giant of the forest is the result.

The material for all this wood has been obtained somehow and from some source but how it is done is the mystery. It may be one of many great trees growing almost against each other, and each has managed to absorb many cords of wood from some hidden recess of nature which man cannot fathom. We can search the earth and the air with all our powers and with all the instruments and appliances at our command, but we will fail to detect the tree germs.

Nor is this all of the great mystery. Two trees grow up side by side, fed from the same source, yet the wood of one is the soft yellow poplar and the other hard white hickory; one may be beautiful bird's eye or curled maple, and the other pitch pine or oak. There is another mystery that man cannot penetrate. Somewhere or somehow the alchemy or chemistry or machinery of nature carries on its tireless and ceaseless work, and the result is before us. That is all man knows, and probably all he will ever know, on the subject. All nature is a mystery, and the growth of trees is not the least.

"Ads" in the Chair.

A Southern business man has devised a novel method of advertising. This is the chair arm of seats used by the public in stations, parks, pleasure piers, on steamboats, etc. His idea is simple enough. A frame with a hinged lid is clasped to the arm of a chair in any suitable manner and the space within the frame



is divided up into advertising cards, which are protected from mutilation and destruction by the elements by a glass cover. The cards can be readily changed or transposed, and usually when one occupies such a chair it is during a leisure moment, when one cannot resist reading and re-reading even the most hackneyed and stereotyped advertisements when thus thrust before the unoccupied eye.

The Cost of Bull Fighting.

Bull fighting in Spain is not suffering from lack of patronage, for during the last year some twelve thousand bulls were killed in fights. From three to six bulls are killed at a performance, and at least 2,500 fights may be reckoned.

Bulls for fighting purposes are costly. They are raised on special ranches and are intended for fighting and no other use. One of the largest is that of the Duke of Veragua, in Andalusia, and his ranch has made a tremendous fortune for him.

The bulls are smaller and more pugnacious than the common cattle, and properly handled will put up a game fight. That they will not give up without a struggle is proven by the fact that some ten thousand horses were killed by the bulls in the different fights.

Unlike the bulls, the horses are of the cheapest sort, and some are so infirm that they can scarcely totter about the ring until disemboweling brings them relief from their torture.

No Sunday Funerals.

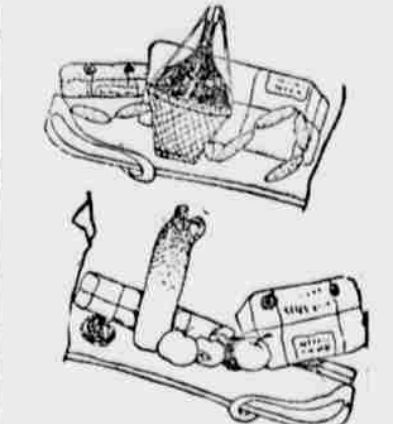
The vicar of All Hallows, a British village, objects to Sunday funerals on the ground that they keep people from the higher duties of worship, cast a shadow of sorrow on the brightest day of the week; break the day of rest and lead people to seek comfort in the poor consolation of a big funeral.

LOTTERY OF A BIG SALE.

Lasted Four Days and Proceeds Amounted to \$10,000.

Recently the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, one of the largest carriers of freight in the United States, sold the unclaimed articles in its custody at its most spacious warehouse, at Locust Point, Baltimore. Some idea of the extent of the sale may be formed from the fact that over eight quarts of paste were used in labeling the pieces to be sold. The articles disposed of were freight which had been kept for six months at various points along the road and which had not been called for. After the lapse of that time they were shipped to Baltimore and sold at auction. A large number of the things on sale had been refused by people to whom they were assigned because they were either broken in transportation or did not suit the buyer. In the latter case the sender is notified, and in many instances he refuses to take back his goods. Sometimes a lawsuit between the consignee and consignee follows, and in the meantime the railroad sells the article, and it is generally worn out before the case is settled by the courts.

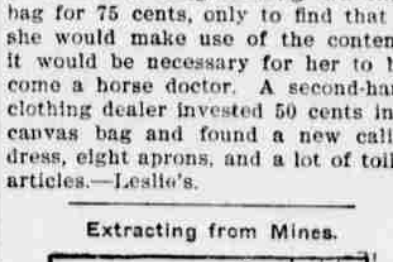
At the sale just held 3,000 lots were advertised. This does not mean 3,000 pieces, as one lot may contain any number. For instance, 100 barrels of glucose were sold in a lump and brought \$750. A crate of imported German sausages, which looked like little logs of petrified wood, was



disposed of with a box of glass disks for electrical machines. The purchaser of this lot at once presented the sausages to a German saloon-keeper, who said he would use them on his free lunch counter. One man paid \$4 for a large box of worm-eaten dried apples, and another bought a broken pump for \$6. A barrel of what was supposed to contain ordinary glass was knocked down for \$5, and when opened about \$200 worth of cut glass was found. The oddest thing in the sale was an immense concrete tomb, such as is rarely used at the present time. It weighed 2,000 pounds and was valued at \$50, but it was found to be imperfect and the consignee refused to receive it. Twenty-five cents was paid for this, and the purchaser will use it as a watering trough for horses.

In addition to the freight, the railroad sold 500 lots of unclaimed baggage, which included 1,500 pieces. Here was the opportunity for sport and a gamble, as the packages were unopened. The uncertainty of the contents lent much interest to the bidding, which was spirited. The second-hand clothing dealers were at their best here, and one of them purchased 40 trunks. The smaller baggage, such as is left on ferryboats and in the coaches, was sold in lots, and although buyers were requested not to open them in the warehouse, yet the curiosity of some led to the breaking of the rules, and several pieces were examined immediately. One young man paid \$2.25 for an old trunk, the contents of which were two postal cards and a filthy suit of workman's clothes. Another found nothing but a pair of old shoes. A woman purchased a rough-looking traveling bag for 75 cents, only to find that it she would make use of the contents it would be necessary for her to become a horse doctor. A second-hand clothing dealer invested 50 cents in a canvas bag and found a new calico dress, eight aprons, and a lot of toilet articles.—Leslie's.

Extracting from Mines.



A man, a saw and a bucket and a ladder was the ancient method by which millions were extracted from the great Tarasca mine.

Diamond Mine Depths. Prof. Henry Miers, in lecturing to a London audience recently, said that there was no knowledge of the depth to which the South African diamond mines could be worked. The deeper they go the richer they become. Work can be carried on now to a depth of 2,500 feet. It is thought that it might be continued to a depth of 5,000 or even 10,000 feet, if the engineering difficulties could be overcome.

The average number of horses killed in Spanish bull fights every year exceeds 5,500, while from 1,000 to 2,000 bulls are sacrificed.

Poetry Worth Reading.

In Strict Confidence.

If you've got a little matter that you want folks to know And you think that advertising is perhaps a little slow, Not to say that it's uncertain or confined to some extent To the limits of a circle, which, of course, is evident— If you want it universal—over all the city spread, Never put it in the papers. I've a better scheme instead. You can always send it broadcast with no possible delay If you whisper to a lady in a confidential way.

If you'll let her wring it from you— by just throwing out a hint That to any comprehension would be just as plain as print; If you'll seem to dodge her questions with a knowing sort of smile, Making damaging admissions with an aspect free from guile, And then trust to her discretion and let everything be known With the proper understanding— you confide in her alone— That will do it. All will know it ere the closing of the day If it's whispered to a lady in a confidential way.

There is nothing that can beat it. Never think I mean to rail, I have tried it very often and it simply cannot fail. You insist that it's a secret with a grave and solemn frown, And in four and twenty hours it's the gossip of the town. If a lady isn't handy I'll suggest another plan That perhaps is even better; Go and tell it to a man. Yes, I think a man is better, but be careful what you say, And remember, too, to say it in a confidential way.

Chicago News.

The Brotherhood of Man. A scallawag Chinaman had a young son, Brown as a coffee bean, eyes full of fun— Hi, yi, yellecky mellico! And he was the pulled of all Chinatown, As his father stood tossing him up and down, All swathed in Yankee calico.

You should have seen that parent grin! His cheek bones high go out and in— Hica, mica, zellapho kay! Hearing the babe's hilarious cry At the lanterned red doorway, All the ladders gathered by; An Irishman with pipe at mouth, A burly negro from the South, An Equilman from the Wild West show,

A cowboy in a sombrero, A union plumber, and a man Who looked like an American, An organ grinder, peanut vender, The husband of the Witch of Endor— All joined in the rhythmic din On every face a common grin, Watching the babe go up and down, The cutest thing in Chinatown.

One touch of nature, making kin The whole wide world, was surely in The scallawag Chinaman and his young son— Retta metakah, gillibo tay! Jasper Barnett Cowdin.

A Winter Morning. The soft velled sky leaned down toward the earth, Velled with white, fleecy clouds that moved and stirred Like the light pinions of some sleeping bird; Poised in the ether where it had its birth, An opal radiance shimmered in the east, Mounted and widened, till, shot through its bars, The arrows of the sun dispersed the stars, Glad from their service thus to be released.

No sun which lights a perfect day in June Has ever known a fairer sky than this; It should be welcomed by the song-birds' tune, Its rose and gold should greet the south wind's kiss; Who could believe, did he not glance below, This glory bends above a waste of snow? Ninette M. Lowater.

Feminine Inconsistency. The streets are dry, the world is clear, The sunlight is amazing; Why does he madden poet and sigh When outward she is gazing? Why does she frown on Jack's ad-vance, No word of pleasure saying? It is because she got engaged In hopes of early sleighing.

The storms clouds fly, the world is cold With slippery roads amazing; Why does the matron weep and sigh Upon her prostrated gazing? Why does she frown on Jack's ad-vance The dreary outlook dreading? It is because she married him In hopes of easy sleighing. McLandburgh Wilson.

Dreams. My dreams are dreams of restfulness This everlasting zestfulness Is not a dream, it's a fact. And all along the way I go There is no stop nor stay. I go Until my system's racked, I only wish for peacefulness, A little touch of carelessness From the eternal grind; But everywhere is quietness; There's always such a riotness It wears flesh and mind. Why isn't it that poverty Can hand me breakers of her tea As good as money seems, So in a cup of restfulness I'd drown this billing zestfulness And actualize my dreams? W. J. Lambton.