

CHINESE FUNERALS.

QUEER FUNERAL CUSTOMS IN FAR CATHAY.

Tombs Built to Last Forever. Family Coffins Provided for the Dear Departed's Future Wants.

A Chinaman, says the Mail and Express, builds his tomb to last through eternity, but builds his house to blow down in the first storm or to wash away in the first rain. A mansion is seldom repaired, and never restored. It shares the same fate as the hovel of the coolie and the hut of the savage. The grave, on the other hand, is cleaned and repaired every year and restored with great regularity and thoroughness.

Very early in life John Chinaman buys himself a nice coffin, a roomy comfortable affair in which he can sleep the last sleep without chafing his knees and elbows. If he has ever done anything worthy of mention he makes careful arrangements to have it inscribed on the ancestral tablets in his own family hall, and the temple of his family and of his clan, so that future generations may render him reverence and so entitle the monotony of his spiritual existence. But in any and every case he picks out a good grave, pre-empting it under the Chinese law and has it made ready for his reception.

This is a very arduous and complicated proceeding. It is about as bad in China as a chancery suit in New Jersey, and like the latter, it has to be conducted by one of more professionals of the highest standard. These experts are known as "grave tellers," also astrologers.

After this work well until marriage, when another grave must be picked out for the wife. This goes so far that many devout Celestials will have a separate place picked out for every wife, child and dependent relative within his gates—a large-sized cemetery in posse.

Finally Azrael does appear, and one of the graves come to be occupied. The coffin is brought from the family undertaker. It is a curious-looking affair, and on its face has some historic meaning that is long since forgotten. At first sight it looks like the trunk of a tree that has been stripped of its boughs and bark and neatly cleaned. Closer inspection shows that it is a box whose three long sides and cover have been sawn from the section of a trunk as described, and which are held firmly together by end pieces made of the same wood. The poorest quality consists of thin boards, worm-eaten and ugly; the handsomest have been taken from great monarchs of the forest, three, four and even five feet in diameter. Then, curious to relate, the entire interior is lined with chensan, which is a cement made from fine sand, lime and calcined cement rock. It is almost white in color and after application is polished while it is setting. When well done the interior of the coffin looks as if it were composed of fine porcelain. The poorer styles of coffins are simply whitewashed on the inside. Sometimes, though rarely, the outside is decorated in gold or pale coloring.

When done it is only by great merchants or mandarins. The simple unadorned trunk is the rule to-day, as it was thousands of years ago. When the coffin arrives small fires are built, in which are consumed all sorts of symbolical objects. In Canton and Amoy, which are famous for this kind of work they manufacture three and four-storied houses filled with well-dressed paper figures, furnished with furniture in gold and silver tinsel, decorated with flowers and trees made out of colored tissues and epitomizing the highest wealth and luxury.

All these are put in the fires, and in a moment reduced to ashes. The imaginative Chinese believes that what is done by him symbolically in actual life is done actually in the spiritual existence; that the paper money which burns is transubstantiated, if I may use the term, into Celestial wealth; that the paper palace when consumed gives to the dead man a real palace in the life to come; the make-believe animals become herds and flocks on the heavenly plains and the tiny figures are metamorphosed into servants, employees, friends and companions.

After the body has lain in state the time allowed by custom or by law the priest appears upon the scene with his paraphernalia and retinue. There is a little statue sitting in a chair gorgeously painted and wonderfully carved and colored. It is carried by four men. There are one or two banners which inform the public who the divine stranger is. There is a man who carries a large gong, another man with cymbals, several with small gongs and tom-toms and always a wretch with discordant and ear-splitting clarionet. They partake of the refreshments and then the funeral cortege starts. Usually the head of the procession is a musician, whose notes give warning of his approach. He is followed by relatives and by the coffin, which is suspended from a framework of poles, whose ends rest upon the shoulders of stalwart carriers; by the family, hired mutes and mourners, then by the little statue in his chair or summer house, the musicians, friends and neighbors. If it is a poor coolie the coffin will be carried by eight men and there will be about twelve other persons in the procession. If he be a great merchant or a mandarin the coffin will be borne by thirty, fifty and even sixty carriers, and the procession will consist, at least five hundred

When they reach the burial ground the coffin stops alongside of the portable altar and the little idol, while three musicians march forward and occupy the points of a triangle designed by the astrologers, which includes the grave, the music and all the members of the procession.

The moment they reach their post they execute a series of musical or non-musical sounds, while the coffin moves onward to the grave. They repeat this until the earth has covered all evidences of death.

After that, if the deceased was a person of any prominence whatever, or was a father leaving issue, his name is inscribed with some complimentary remark upon the tablets in the ancestral hall of his former home and also of those in the halls of the family and clan temple. Thereafter at least once a year on the Ghost God's day, the family go out to his grave and there spend the day. When they reach the tomb they clean it from moss and weeds and the debris which gathers in the open. If the colored lettering has become damaged they touch up the color until it is new and bright. They trim the grass around the grave and clean the ground of stones, brick and tiles. This done, they bring out their little stores of food and drink and first serve his allotted quantity to the dead. This consists of three cups of tea, three glasses of wine and plates of cold chicken, cold pork sausage and dried fish, fresh fish, preserved eggs, sweetmeats, fruits, ginger, and other delicacies. Then, while the spirit is supposed to be enjoying himself, they light joss-sticks and insert them in the grave and decorate it with tinsel artificial flowers and imitation money. They then sit down and eat their tiffin, finishing up with the contents of the dishes that were set aside for the ghost.

Chinese Fuel.

The Chinese do not use fire to keep warm, and it is only in the rarest of instances that you will find well-heated houses says Frank G. Carpenter. Fuel is remarkably scarce, and everything is carefully saved. I saw hundreds of women pulling up stubble and gathering straw and old weeds in order to make fires, and one of the chief businesses along the Yangtse-Kiang is the cutting the reeds which grow on the low shores and tying them up in bundles to be carried into the cities for sale. I saw no iron stoves in China, and the rooms which they pretended to heat were furnished with what are called kang. These are ledges or platforms of brick about two feet high, which fill one side of the room. They are heated by flues and a fire of straw is started under them and is kept burning until the bricks are hot. The people sleep on the kang, but the trouble I found with them was that when they were fired up they roasted me, and as soon as the fire went out the kang became as cold as a stone. I slept on them many nights during my interior trip, and was continually afflicted with a cold. Had the fuel been wood or coal, they might be better, but with straw they were worse than no fires at all. The stoves of China are usually of clay, and charcoal is largely used for cooking. There is said to be coal in nearly all parts of the empire, but only a little is mined. All of that brought into Pekin is carried on the backs of camels, and I saw many coal merchants who sold nothing but coal dust. They mixed the powdered coal with dirt, and molded it up into lumps of about the size and shape of a baseball. It was sold by the basket, and it brought high prices.

"The Most Complete Man" Dead!

The man whom Henry Grady always declared to be the most complete man he ever knew, the ablest lawyer, the consistent Christian, the best citizen, was buried at Athens, Ga., the other day, death having come at the early age of thirty-eight. He was Hon. George Dudley Thomas, and Mr. Grady's estimate of the man's character was that of all people of Georgia. He was classmate of Governor Atkinson in the State University. He was universally recognized as an eminent lawyer. For nine years, or until his health failed a year ago, he was a professor in the law department of the university. He was a partner with ex-United States Senator Barrett.

The Trade Winds.

The trade winds are the prime motors of ocean currents. They cause a surface drift of no great velocity over vast areas of water in the same general direction as that in which they blow. These drifts, after meeting and combining their forces, eventually impinge on the land. They are diverted and concentrated and increased in speed. They either pour through passages between islands, as in the Caribbean Sea; are pressed up by the land and escape by the only outlets possible, as, for example, the Strait of Florida, and form a great ocean current like the Gulf Stream.

He Copied Them.

A teacher in a Philadelphia school recently gave her scholars a lesson on their slates the Roman numerals from 1 to 42. In about three minutes one of the boys held up his hand, signifying that he had accomplished the work. "Why, Johnny," said the teacher, "you are real smart. None of the other scholars are half done. Now, tell us how you came to finish so quickly." Johnny, in great glee, replied: "I copied them from the clock on the wall up there."

HAWKS AND RATS.

The Birds Cleared a Barn of Rats.

One morning recently Farmer Resolved R. Hallstead of Elkland township, Penn., saw a large white-breasted hawk dart into a sashless window near the peak of a wagon barn that he had finished building a few days before. It flew out in a moment with a squealing rat in each claw, and the interested farmer watched it till it met another hawk in midair. The two circled and undulated side by side for a spell, when the one with the rats resumed its flight toward the forest. The other hawk immediately pointed for the barn, shot through the window, flitted out a few seconds later with a struggling rat in each talon, and sailed off in the same direction. Mr. Hallstead started to tell his wife about what he had seen, when the hawks or a pair exactly like them, flew into the barn window, and came out shortly with their claws full of squealing rats. There was no grain or hay in the new barn, and the farmer wondered where all the rats came from. He was also in a quandary as to how the fierce forest birds knew where to find rats under a roof.

On going into the upper part of the barn Mr. Hallstead saw scores of rats scampering around on the floor, and the mystery of their presence was solved. Two nights before, a day or so after the barn had been completed, the young people of the township had a ball on the upper floor. The joend rattles brought pecks of pop corn to the party, and between the dances they sat on rough wooden benches and munched it with their partners. When the ball broke up the rats of the pop corn were left, and the rural merry-makers threw it at one another till the floor was covered. The rats in the other barns soon got scent of the fragrant pop corn, and swarmed into the new building after it; but how the hawks ascertained that the rats were there in large numbers none of the smart local naturalists were able to tell.

Mr. Hallstead's dog pitched into the four-footed cornerets, and the fierce rats pounced upon him, bit his nose and ears till the blood ran, and sent him yelping down the stairs. The farmer went at the rats with a shovel, and they ran up his clothing and forced him to clear out. They bit him on the neck and ears before he could shake them off, and he decided to let them alone. At dusk that night he saw two owls flit through the window and sail out with four rats. The hawks continued to dart into the barns several times a day, and they always steered for the woods with their claws full. When the useful birds of prey ceased to come out a rat was to be seen in the barn, although a lot of popcorn still remained on the floor.

Ginseng.

Ginseng is a root worth almost its weight in gold in China, and Secretary Morton, in his last report, recommends its cultivation in this country.

Formerly we shipped \$1,000,000 worth of ginseng to China every year, but the supply has fallen off, and Corea now furnishes nearly all of it.

The Chinese regard this plant as a cure for almost every disease. They believe that the root possesses intelligence and powers of locomotion, which enables it to run away to escape capture. They also believe that it is guarded by the tiger, the leopard, the wolf and the snake, animals appointed by the gods to protect it.

A root weighing three or four ounces sells for \$200, but the American article commands only \$2 a pound. In Corea it is cultivated under government supervision, but in this country the plant grows wild in the mountain regions. The Chinese say that the virtue of the plant is not in its material composition, but in a mysterious power appertaining to it through being produced wholly apart from human influence under the care of a beneficent spirit.

But while the Chinese will pay any price for this root, and will consume all that can be produced, the medical men of Europe and America have never found any curative power in it. Our Indian tribes, however, agree with the Chinese and regard ginseng as a valuable medicine.

Winter Proverbs.

A snow year, a rich year.
Winter finds what summer lays up.
After a rainy winter follows a fruitful spring.

Winter's back breaks about the middle of February.

December cold, with snow, brings rye everywhere.

In winter expect not fair weather from one night's ice.

He that drops a coat on a winter day,
Will gladly put it on in May.

Winter thunder,
Poor man's death and rich man's hunger.

December changeable and mild,
The whole winter will remain a child.

Poison on Bank Notes.

A bank teller of Vienna recently died from the effects of moistening his fingers with saliva at the lips when counting money. At the first revision of the vaults it fell to his lot to count a large number of small bills, and, although repeatedly warned, continued mechanically to touch his lips when his fingers became too dry.

That evening he felt a smarting pain in his lips, but did not attend to it until a swelling had set in the next day. He then consulted a surgeon, who insisted upon an immediate operation on the tumor, that had in the meantime assumed alarming proportions, as indispensable. A consultation of eminent specialists declared his condition critical, but decided upon the operation as a possible chance. In spite of the operation the patient died three days after of blood poisoning.

THE FIREWEED.

It Disguises the Ruin Wrought by Forest Conflagrations.

As August comes on, one finds along quiet country roadsides and in wood openings, a tall plant, often from four to six feet in height, or even higher whose single straight stem of mingled red and green color is heavily feathered with long, narrow leaves, bearing a striking resemblance to those of the common willow. At the top waves a handsome plume about a foot long of deep pink flowers shaded purple, a feature of such striking grace and beauty that few of our wild flowers can compare with it.

The extreme tip of this plume or raceme is a closely clustered bunch of buds; the base of it is decorated with long pods of the same color as the flowers. Between these two are the open blossoms—twenty-five or thirty, perhaps—circling around the stem upon all sides. Those familiar with the common plant families will at once recognize a member of the evening primrose group, the shape of the flowers, buds, pods and leaves, as well as their position and habit of growth, being almost unmistakable. It is the fireweed or great willow herb; botanically, *Epilobium angustifolium*.

The promptness with which this flower rears its bright head and tosses its plumes wherever the forest has been blackened by fire or devastated by the axe, has given it one of its common names, while the other was suggested by the marked resemblance of its leaves to that of the willow. It is not confined, however, to wood openings by any means; it may be met with everywhere along the quiet roadways and in open lands not disturbed by the scythe. When growing singly or in detached specimens along the country roads it is a plant of rare appearance—a tall and distinguished beauty, exciting attention at once by its striking elegance of form and unusual refinement of color.

An Ever-Bearing Orange Tree.

Mr. Simms, the proper founder of this most valuable fruit, says it is a true citrus vulgaris, found while in the Apopka hammock, without the bitter of the common wild orange or our hammocks. The tree has the characteristics of being in fruit the year round, and is without doubt a cross—the sour orange with the sweet—and of holding the fruit on the tree for months after they are fully ripe. The original tree now has both green and ripe oranges, and they are picked ripe, juicy and delicious any day in the year. The fruit is more even in size and thinner skinned than the old one, with less rag and but very few seeds, and for home use every garden from Tampa to Brunswick should possess it. It surely must prove valuable as a market variety. Only to think of it—a ripe orange picked from the tree every morning before breakfast the year round! A guarantee is given by Mr. Simms that the original tree was found in the month of August full of bloom and green and ripe fruit.

A Cosmopolitan City.

New York is remarkable for its cosmopolitan population. Of the 1,800,000 inhabitants reported by the last State census, 377,000 are aliens. Nearly everyone in five is not a citizen. But thousands of citizens are foreign born and still retain their native language and customs. The American born are, in fact, in a small minority, numbering only 385,000. There are more Germans and more Irish in New York than there are native born. The Russian colony (including Poles) numbers 80,000, and there are 54,000 Italians. Nearly every race, religion and language are represented here. Certain sections of the city are as distinctly foreign in character and population as any foreign city could be. This is one of the things that makes New York so interesting, and also so difficult to govern.

Relics of the Saxons.

Saxon relics have been found in great abundance lately in a cemetery in Sussex, England. In one grave were two elaborately ornamented vessels and a trumpet-shaped glass utensil. In other graves were found a spear, a circular bronze brooch, bronze knife and knife sheath, a bronze ring, with two toothpicks and one earpick attached, a drinking cup of clay and a number of colored beads. Upon a skeleton there were 151 beads of clay and glass suspended on a string from the neck to the waist.

The waist being the most important and conspicuous portion of the gown of to-day, all the labor and adornment seems to be spent upon it, leaving the skirts, for the most part, quite plain. The one thing essential is to have the skirt well fitted at the top. The amount of material at its foot may be varied from three to eight yards. The latter are extreme.

FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS.

SNOW.

Oh, what do you think came down last night,
And spread abroad a mantle of white?
The jolly, glorious snow,
Ho! ho!

And what do you think we'll do to-night,
When the moon and stars are all alight,
We boys—would you like to know?
Ho! ho!

With a laugh and whoop of rare delight,
With bounding hearts and with faces bright,
Adown the hill we'll go,
Ho! ho!

—[Sydney Dayre.]

REAL DOGS OF WAR.

"Let loose the dogs of war" has long been an expression with a figurative meaning only. It has remained for the present decade to give the phrase a literal significance, says the Chicago Inter Ocean.

"The German army now has trained war dogs. On the march each dog is led by his master and is required to carry a heavy pack on his back. Dogs of a dark color are preferred, because they are less visible to the enemy. The training is pursued on the general principle that the dog would be treated very cruelly by an enemy, so that the creature is taught to creep round the foe unnoticed and to give distinct warning of a hostile approach without attracting attention to itself.

For instance, in the German training process some of the soldiers put on French and Russian uniforms to represent the enemy. This arrangement, by the bye, suggests the idea that the Germans have quite made up their mind whom they are going to fight when the great war does come."

"RICHARD THE LION HEARTED."

Richard I., called Cœur de Leon, which means lion-hearted, succeeded to the throne at the death of his father, Henry II. Richard was very brave, and a great fighting man. That is why he is called lion-hearted. He went to the Holy Land to fight against the Mohammedans. This expedition is known in history as the third crusade. He astonished the whole world by his wonderful deeds, and the most extraordinary tales are told of his bravery.

But he did not succeed in conquering the Mohammedans. He became ill, as did many of his knights, and had to return home. But before Richard reached England his ship was wrecked in the Gulf of Venice. King Richard wandered about in the dress of a pilgrim, but at last was discovered by the Duke of Austria and put in prison.

No one knew where Richard was. Some thought he had perished in the wreck. One day a wandering minstrel was passing the prison, and he was humming a song which Richard himself had composed.

"What," he said, "a friend is near! I, too, will sing the song, and maybe my subject will recognize me."

So the minstrel heard Richard singing and recognized the King. Shortly afterward England obtained Richard's liberty by the payment of a large sum of money. Soon after this Richard died.

In the reign of Richard I. lived the famous outlaw, Robin Hood. He and his band lived in an immense forest in the middle of England called Sherwood Forest. They killed the King's deer and robbed the rich, while at the same time they were kind to the poor. They used bows and arrows, and became wonderfully clever at shooting.—[New York Mail and Express.]

HISTORICAL WALKS.

Philadelphia boys and girls have started the occupation, more than urged in this department, of trips about the city to the various points of interest. They call them "Historical Walks," and the fashion has taken a strong hold upon the youth of this neighboring city. A party of young persons appoint time and place of meeting, and, with one older and responsible guide, make a tour of places in and about the city that are interesting from association, or other reasons. The idea has been copied here in New-York, and this holiday-time, when the day following the Christmas excitement are apt to be hard to fill, many such parties have been seen on their trips of inspection and frolic. More are planned for this week. Some are going to the Metropolitan and Natural History Museums, and others will visit the upper part of the island, Washington Heights, and High Bridge, not forgetting Trinity Cemetery, at the Boulevard and One Hundred and Fifty-third Street, where are the Astor and Audubon vaults. The former home of Audubon is very near this cemetery, a little north, and all about is historic ground. A stranger in the party adds to the interest, as all find pleasure in pointing out to him or her special places of interest. It is excellent amusement for those quite young, who know very little about the city. Brooklyn is full of historic places, and can give more than a day's occupation in looking them up. A party went last week to the Jersey Heights, and tramped over the newly developed district, taking a trolley car down to Hoboken Ferry from Hudson Heights. There is hardly anything jollier for a party of boys and girls than to be out for a good tramp

with an object in view.—[New York Times.]

SURGEON TO A WHITE BEAR.

As a result of captivity, says Herr Carl Hagenbeck, the nails and teeth of lions, tigers and other inmates of menageries often get into a bad condition. One of his largest Bengal tigers was recently a great sufferer from toothache. The tooth troubled him for days, and at length ulcerated.

Herr Hagenbeck managed to extract it with a pair of pinchers; but the services of five strong men were required to hold the patient and persuade him to open his mouth. The roar which he uttered when the tooth came out seemed likely to bring down the pavilion.

Herr Hagenbeck never saw but one living thing more touchy than a tiger with the toothache; that was a large white bear which he once had at Hamburg, five of whose great curved toenails had grown abnormally long, and entered the flesh to such an extent that maturation had set in. Three of the paws were much inflamed, swollen, and very painful. His keeper realized then the full meaning of the old adage, "cross as a bear." It seemed as if the poor brute wished to annihilate the whole human family.

How to remove those ingrowing toenails proved to be a problem. Herr Hagenbeck devised various "slings" and "jackets" for confining the bear; but he was so big and savage that nothing would hold him.

At last, a stratagem occurred to the showman. He ordered the bear's cage to be turned down upon the front side, so that the bars formed the bottom of it. Then a tackle was rigged and the cage was hoisted to a height of seven feet, clear of the ground. All four of the bear's legs were then down between the bars, at full length. In that position he was bound with ropes, so that he could not raise himself and draw up his feet.

Herr Hagenbeck then got to work as a surgeon, underneath the cage, with his patient over his head. There was a beautiful opportunity to operate; and one by one all five of the troublesome claws were pulled out. Indeed, so badly matured had the toes become, that the nails came away without a great exertion of force. None the less the running comments made by the patient were of a most blood-curdling character. After the operation, a shallow tank full of cold water was placed underneath the cage, for the bear to stand in, in order to reduce the fever in his feet. He made a good recovery.—[Youth's Companion.]

The Indian Festival.

It was my good fortune to spend a day at Yakima last summer while the annual festival given by the Hop Growers' Association of Washington to the Indian hop pickers was in progress, writes W. E. Curtis in the Chicago Record. About 5,000 persons witnessed the races and waltzes that afternoon. The dances were participated in by the Umatillas and Colville Indians and were of thrilling interest. The squaws, old men and other non-combatants were seated in the centre around a large drum, which was beaten by a dozen Indians, while all kept up a weird chant. The bucks or warriors circled around or shot off in trails, cutting the most wonderful capers.

During one intermission in the dances Chief Long Wolf of the Palouse tribe and Long Jack of the Warm Springs made speeches, which were interpreted to the spectators. They said the dances were but imitations of those of the forefathers, who, after making treaties with the government, advised their followers to live in peace and harmony with the pale-faces and adapt themselves to the ways of civilization.

Baby's Elastic Vocabulary.

The proud mother had come to pay her first visit, accompanied by the infant heir and his nurse.

"I don't wish to appear in any way partial," said she, "but, really, for a child of 16 months, I consider Algeron a marvel of intelligence. He understands every word that is said, and joins in the conversation with a sagacity that almost alarms me at times. Speak to the lady, Algeron."

"Boo-boo," said Algeron.

"Listen to that," cried the delighted mother. "He means, 'How do you do?' Isn't it wonderful? Now, Algeron, ask the lady to play for you. He adores the piano. Now, Algia, dear," (very coaxingly).

"Boo-boo," said Algeron.

"He means music by that. Isn't he too smart for anything? Now, love, tell the lady mamma's name."

"Boo-boo," said Algeron.

"That's right, 'Boo-boo—Louise.' My name's Louise, you know. Bless his little darling heart. Isn't he a wonder?"

The Vinegar Habit.

"One of the most difficult habits to cure is that of drinking vinegar," said Dr. L. C. Aiken, at the Emory. "A good many women drink vinegar for the complexion, and in some cases it creates a craving for it even more insatiable than that for liquor. As the habit grows the victim is no longer contented with ordinary vinegar, but demands it stronger and stronger until they drink acetic acid with very little dilution. It burns out the stomach within a very few years, and it is seldom that a vinegar fiend lives even until middle age. It can be detected by the peculiar pallor of the countenance, but no antidote has ever been discovered by which the habit can be cured."