

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

THE Argentine Republic has become weary of political intrigues and revolutions, and has declared that she intends to settle down to trade and commerce, and to do her utmost to develop her resources and pay her debts.

THERE is such a demand for houses at Kenova, W. Va., that they cannot be built fast enough. Five houses were imperatively wanted last week. Trains were sent to Graham, Va., and five large two-story houses were torn down, carried to Kenova in sections, erected and occupied, all in six days.

ENGLAND'S wheat area was diminished by 510,000 acres, or over 26 per cent. last year, while at the same time the number of pigs was increased half a million, or 21 per cent. It is evident that the country cannot profitably produce its own breadstuffs, but no reason has yet been found for the turn toward pork.

A WESTERN man is in a peculiar quandary. He is wanted for murder, and also as heir to a large fortune. If he claims the fortune he must risk hanging, and if he prefers to take no chances of that, he loses the fortune. It is literally a case of his money or his life, and professional pessimists and cynics will be interested in watching for his action to decide which of the two is worth the biggest risk.

THE oil fever is spreading rapidly and increasing in virulence in California and other far Western States, and all the incidents of speculating in options and prospects that characterized the craze in Eastern fields years ago are being reproduced there. Oil prospecting is going on all over the coast country, and some notable strikes have been made, particularly in California. The oil fields of Fullerton, Orange County, are said to be especially productive.

MOSES CHAMBERLAIN, now living at Milton, Penn., enjoys the distinction, it is said, of being the brother of a man who was killed in battle 118 years ago. Such a thing would seem impossible at first thought, but it is a fact. Mr. Chamberlain is 88 years old, and was born thirty-five years after the battle of Germantown (1777), in which his brother, 18 years old, lost his life. The latter was the oldest of twenty-four children, and Mr. Chamberlain is the youngest.

PROFESSOR MOORE, the new head of the weather bureau, thinks that captive balloons can be of great use in collecting meteorological data. A north pole expedition by means of balloons has been projected, and inventors are constantly struggling with flying machines. The possibilities of ballooning are just as attractive to scientists now as they were a hundred years ago, when Benjamin Franklin was foremost in predicting results, but little of much value has been accomplished.

PLATINUM is very valuable. Ten thousand dollars' worth of it was the other day stored in a vault at a chemical works in New Jersey. In the vaults there was also some sulphuric acid, sulphuretted hydrogen and other chemicals. Burglars dynamited the vault in an attempt to get the platinum, but the explosion of the dynamite broke the chemical jars, and the vile odors that came from them drove the burglars away. There ought to be in this a suggestion for the protection of bank vaults against burglars.

A PRESS despatch from Tokio states that a remarkable literary coincidence has lately been established in Japan. Miyake Yujiro, a Japanese journalist, has written that a celebrated Chinese poem, shown several hundred years ago by Liu Ting Che, bears a really striking resemblance to "The Last Leaf" by Oliver Wendell Holmes. It is scarcely conceivable that the American author could have had any idea of the Chinese poet's work. The incident only goes to support the theory that "great minds think alike," whether in the domains of the Mikado or in Massachusetts—in the earliest or the latest civilizations.

INGENUITY is exhausted in the methods of self-destruction employed nowadays by men who are bent on putting an end to lives that they deem no longer worth the living. Probably it will be long before a mode of suicide more revolting and maniacal is devised than that adopted by a New York City laborer, who bound about his head a piece of cloth saturated with kerosene oil, set fire to it and then cut his throat. So determined an effort might have been expected to succeed, but at last accounts the man was believed to have at least a chance of holding on to the life that he prized so lightly. There can be no doubt, comments the Tribune, that in this case at least an unbalanced mind was responsible for the strange attempt at suicide.

DAVID STARR JORDAN, President of Leland Stanford University, has recently made some remarks concerning co-education and matrimony. "Does co-education lead to matrimony?" he asks, and answers, "Most certainly it does; and this fact need not be and cannot be denied. But such marriages are not usually premature. And it is certainly true that no better marriages can be made than those founded on common interests and intellectual friendships. A college man who has known college women is not drawn to women of lower ideals and inferior training. He is likely to be strongly drawn towards the best he has known. A college woman is not led by mere proximity to accept the attentions of inferior men. It is part of the legitimate function of higher education to prepare women as well as men for happy and successful lives."

ALL our public men who have given the subject of forestry careful and intelligent attention are unanimous in the opinion that public opinion should be fully aroused to its importance. In a letter to the American Forestry Association, ex-Senator Edmunds writes: "The subject of forestry is of immense importance to the future welfare of all our countrymen, as well in Vermont as in the arid regions of our one country. I have seen in Europe much of the remedial evils of stripping the hills and mountain sides of their forests great or small, and I have seen in our temperate and well-watered climate of Vermont how great has been the loss from reckless timber cutting. The devastations of a dozen years can hardly be repaired in half a century, and so every energy of reason and persuasion ought to be brought to bear upon the public intelligence to avert the evils that so seriously threaten large parts of the republic from the destruction of the forests."

HANDS GROW OLD EARLY.

Their Greatest Dexterity is Between Thirty and Forty.

The actual amount of dexterity in the human hand has been measured with more or less accuracy, and its value in mechanical employments traced from youth to age. How the hand grows old, gradually losing its skill, has been described by Sir James Crichton Browne, the British labor student, who has made a long course of investigations in the English rural towns. The high period of skill and endurance, this authority says, is from thirty to forty, the hand after that beginning to lose its muscular delicacy and its suppleness.

Between the ages of seventeen and eighteen the hand of the boy grows into the hand of the man, and 2rst becomes valuable from a commercial point of view. If a workman is temperate and industrious and continues to improve in his trade, his hand's dexterity increases until he is thirty.

After forty the muscles do not respond nearly as readily and certainly to the orders of the brain, and the quality and quantity of the work one begins to fall off. While a man in especially fine health and one especially dextrous can often keep up his high degree of skill long past the age of forty, such a man is an exception. This comparatively early aging of the hand is an interesting and remarkable fact, as it is after forty, as a rule, that a carefully used brain becomes the most valuable. Practically no British statesmen of the highest rank are under forty; most of them are above fifty, and often ten years older than that. In the trades, on the other hand, the highest paid workmen, with hardly an exception, are under the age of two score.

The scale of wages in the button trade, for example, is a good indication of this tendency of the hand to grow old so early in life. At his very best, in his prime, a skilled button-turner can make 6,240 ivory buttons a day on his lathe. For this he receives 45 shillings a week, or about \$11.25. At forty-five years of age it is only the exceptional man who can make more than 28 shillings a week, or \$9.50. When the workman is sixty-five years of age he can seldom make more than 20 shillings, or about \$5, this providing that he still enjoys good health.

Of course this is only the case in the trades where one hand is used continually and systematically. A Sheffield knife forger, for instance, strikes something like 28,000 blows with his hammer daily. An enormous amount of muscular and nervous force is required for this, and it is no wonder that the strain on the nerve centers and the muscles becomes visible in a few years. In farming or the seafaring life, or some other vocation in which the energy is more equally distributed over the entire body, the hand does not lose its cunning so early. Oftentimes it retains its skill until the faculties generally commence to give way.

It is the sedentary occupation that tells, and the only remedy for it is such exercise as will divert the nerve current from the already overtaxed hand.

The Fakir's Business Fit.

The stragglers at the fair in the forenoon saw some familiar driving horses paraded on the track, but for the most part the fakirs took attention, and they made things lively while they had the chance. Several new tricks have been sprung this year, one of the most absurd coming Tuesday afternoon. One of the fakirs had a genuine epileptic fit, and as he fell forward foaming at the mouth and going through the usual convulsions, a great crowd gathered about him, and there was much excitement for a time, nearly every other booth being deserted temporarily.

He recovered in a few minutes and went about his business, finding an immediate demand for his wares, sympathetic people pouring the dimes into his hand as fast as he could reach for them. This was rather too much for one of the gentry, and in a few minutes the crowd was startled by a frightful scream, and this man was seen jumping in the air, rolling over and over, tearing up the grass with his teeth and raising the dickens generally. As a fit it put the case of the epileptic quite into the shade, and he was apparently so much more a subject for commiseration than on his recovery, which came in due course, he also was able to do more business in half an hour than he usually finds in a day. After the crowd left he gave a knowing wink, and remarked that "that fellow over there needn't think he's got any dead cinch on tils, see!"

A Famous Remedy.

"The Sun Cholera Cure," so called from its having been published in the New York Sun during the last cholera epidemic, was used with great success then, and has ever since been in use as a remedy for diarrhoea and similar diseases, which it controls in a perfectly marvelous manner. "Equal parts each of tincture cayenne pepper, tincture opium, tincture rhubarb, essence peppermint, spirits camphor. Take one-half teaspoonful in water every two hours; in severe cases one teaspoonful every half hour." If taken at first appearance of cholera symptoms this is said to be a certain cure. The prudent and considerate head of a family will see the wisdom of having this mixture promptly made up by a careful druggist for immediate use in case of necessity. Get it at once.

Hidden City in the North.

The story of the hidden city revealed to the world by a mirage seen over the Muir glacier in Alaska has once more been started, says the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. Several alleged observers have seen this alleged mirage, the most favored of them being an alleged John M. White, of Philadelphia, who on June 21st, "some years ago," was able to study it for nine hours, from 11.30 a. m. to 9.30 p. m., through a powerful glass. Mr. White is quite certain he didn't dream this mirage, because he has seen photographs of it, taken by other people. The photographs do not look in the least like the mirage Mr. White saw, but that is immaterial to his argument, which is that the mirage could not very well have been photographed unless the mirage were visible, that if the mirage were visible, there is no reason why he, Mr. White, should not have seen it if he were at the Muir glacier at the proper time of the year; that having, indisputably, been at the Muir glacier at the proper time of the year, he is decidedly inclined to believe that he is not mistaken in his recollection that he saw the mirage. Mr. White's theory is that there is a flourishing open metropolis situated somewhere near the north pole on the shores of the open polar sea, and that when the sun "is at its highest northern point, as it is June 21st, the mirage of the Arctic capital is reflected to the point where it appears over the Muir glacier."

Great London.

London is perhaps the most eccentric wonder in the history of the world. Its vast extent of sordid, inartistic building, and its enormous migratory lodger population; its abundant evidence of wealth and yet its widespread areas of local poverty; its feeble-minded native occupants and the energy of its foreign and provincial immigrants; the sumptuousness of its western mansions and its unlimited extent of squalid hovels; its ill-arranged, ill-kept and dirty streets and its polluted atmosphere are all exceptional, and most of them are in their various ways superlative. Moreover, London, all its gifts considered, is perhaps the least efficient and least influential aggregate of people on the globe.

A population so enormous and condensed is, from sheer incapacity of apprehension, led to take the facts of its condition absolutely and without comparison, and to suppose that in its special sphere the actual condition is at once natural and necessary. London so completely fills the eye of Londoners that they become incapable of measuring the great community or of estimating its condition and its worth by any other standard. Hence it is that the chief city in the world falls frequently behind those less important places which are not completely overwhelmed by their own greatness. Petty capitals are large provincial towns compared themselves with one another, to their mutual benefit. They thus acquire self-conscious modesty, and are not left to the assumption that in their respective areas and communities whatever is, or is determined, must be natural and right.

Seventy Million Houses.

In all the countries of Europe, in the United States and in the Dominion of Canada, there are, so far as recent and authentic figures show, 70,000,000 houses. New York City has 115,000 houses, averaging eighteen residents to each.

London, the greatest accumulation of inhabitants in the world, has 600,000 houses, or seven residents in each on the average. London has increased in this respect very rapidly, for at the beginning of the present century the number of houses was only 130,000, little more than New York has at this time. The population of London at that time (1,800) was 960,000. It is now 4,200,000. So it has increased nearly five fold, but the number of houses has not increased in as large a ratio.

Paris has 90,000 houses. At the close of the Franco-Prussian War it had 70,000. At the close of the Napoleonic wars it had 25,000. The area of the city has extended meanwhile.

The average number of residents in a house in Paris is twenty-five.

Valuable Bookmarkers in Old Books

It is told of Xavier Marmier that he one day discovered a 1,000 franc note between the leaves of a book which he had picked up for a few sous at a street stall. A similar, but much more marvelous, adventure has happened to a young doctor in Turin. While turning over the leaves of a book which had been bequeathed along with others to the medical faculty of Turin by a certain Dr. Giordani he was astonished to find between the pages no less than 40 bank notes, amounting to the handsome sum of 40,000 lire. This incident will no doubt give rise to a most interesting case in the Turin courts. Although Dr. Giordani undoubtedly bequeathed his books to the library of the faculty, his other heirs will hardly be disposed to admit that he intended to leave it his monetary savings as well. Possibly, however, the library trustees are quite prepared to prove that the deceased doctor was in the habit of utilizing his thousand-lire bank notes as bookmarkers.

The Alligator Was Lively.

W. A. Gilbert, the gunsmith, and a party of friends have returned from a hunting and fishing cruise in Nassau Sound in the yacht Fanny, and Mr. Gilbert has good reason to congratulate himself that he is not sleeping his last sleep in the stomach of a monster gator. The gator was found one morning

dozing on the placid bosom of the sound, only his nose and a part of his head protruding. Mr. Gilbert drew a bead on him. "Crack!" went the gun, and the gator half leaped out of the water. Then he charned it into a bloody foam. Mr. Gilbert hurried up to the gator and pumped eight more bullets into him. Then the saurian lay still, and Mr. Gilbert concluded that he was dead.

Not caring to lose so fine a trophy, he pulled off his clothes and swam to the gator to tie a rope to his tail. He had adjusted the rope nicely, when suddenly, to Mr. Gilbert's surprise and horror, the gator wheeled around, with his mouth wide open, and made for his would-be slayer.

Mr. Gilbert, with remarkable presence of mind, dived. When he rose to the surface the gator spied him again, and on he came at a clipping pace. Mr. Gilbert dived again. Three times the same thing was repeated. At last Mr. Gilbert reached the shore. He was almost winded, and his hair, in spite of the water, stood up straight on end, like the quill of a porcupine.

Sumatra, Nature's Museum.

The "deadly" upas tree is fairly large, with a thick, dark bark, which when cut gives forth an oozy, milky fluid. The liquid is used for arrow poison by the natives. The terror of the jungle is the ringgus tree. When cut with an ax a shower of milky fluid comes forth, and whenever it touches the skin it is agonizing in effect.

Snakes of all sizes abound in the Sumatra jungles. Monster lizards are there measuring six or seven feet. The house lizard is about twelve inches long and makes a noise which sounds like the bark of a toy terrier.

The rhinoceros bird is the size of a small turkey, but has a beak a foot long, which joins the skull top and one-half inches deep. Over this is another beak reversed, forming a cap or helmet.

There is an enormous black spider three inches long as to body, and with a stride of legs that would almost cover a dinner plate. Its web sometimes extends between trees and eighteen yards apart.

The hukang is a curious animal, the size of a cat. It is brown, with a fox-like head and paws, which it uses as if it were a monkey. Its eyes are remarkably large, round and yellow. The sunbar is one of the queer animals. He is about three feet high, and wholly untaught can perform astonishing tricks.

A Japanese Bell.

A Yale professor, who lives on Prospect Hill, New Haven, Conn., has, among other Japanese curiosities, a remarkable antique bronze bell from an old temple in Japan, where it was once used by the priests during their ceremonies. This bell is cup shaped and about twelve inches in diameter and ten inches high. The tone of the bell is remarkably soft and musical and a single touch will cause a sound continuing from two to three minutes. A remarkable feature about the bell is that it resounds when placed on a cushion with the mouth upward, but why the support does not arrest the vibration is a point that has hitherto puzzled the physicists and no one who has seen the bell can explain the phenomenon.

Brandy in Baby's Bottle.

The writer of an interesting article in a London contemporary regarding the tricks of cross channel smugglers tells of a case where a woman used to take a baby backwards and forwards sucking a big bottle. It always seemed full of milk, but it wasn't. The bottle was made of opaque or milky-looking glass, and contained best cognac. How did we find out, sir? By sheer accident. One day the baby dropped the bottle right in the gangway, and, instead of the white fluid we expected to see, there was a brown-gold one, and an odor like anything but milk.

The Spade's Testimony.

According to a recent statement of Professor Sayre, it is now determined beyond a doubt that there was such a person as the Queen of Sheba, and that there was such a district from which she hailed, and that her journey to see Solomon was one of the most natural things to be expected. The spade did it. And we were told that there was no such person, no such place, etc. Wonderful thing that spade. And it has come to pass that the testimony of a piece of old crockery is worth a dozen statements from the Bible—ah me!

An Interesting Petrification.

One of the most interesting of Dr. Girolamo Segato's petrifications has just been found after a long hunt in a Bavarian village, and will be sent to the Florence Anatomical Museum. It is the head of a young woman who died of consumption, sixty years ago, kept as perfect as the day she died, with the blonde hair wavy and soft as that of a living person. Dr. Segato's wonderful secret for petrifying the dead so as to retain the appearance of life forever, died with him, but the specimens kept in the Italian museums show no signs of deterioration.

George Washington, of Washington, D. C., registered in a Chicago hotel the other day.

The Doctor's Bear.

Dr. J. A. Geisendorfer, of Arlington, recently made an excursion into the mountains for health and recreation and expected to have a rattling good time. He was accompanied by a friend, and for several days both enjoyed themselves in fishing for the speckled mountain trout. The Doctor likes to fish, but he is fonder of shooting at game, so he suggested to his friend that they go forth to destroy bear and other wild animals.

One bright morning, well heeled, they started out. After rambling through woods and over high mountains, they were about to return to camp utterly disgusted and tired out with their fruitless search. Suddenly, however, they discovered a good-sized brown bear, sitting on his haunches under a huckleberry bush, gorging himself with the luscious fruit.

Both hunters fired, the bear gave an ugly growl and disappeared. The hunters followed, determined on securing the prize, but were unable to overhaul the animal.

After following his trail for about a half mile they suddenly came to a farm house. The bear was sitting on the front porch with one of his forelegs in a sling. The doctor and his friend were surprised, of course, but were more so when they discovered a man coming toward them with a gun. They turned and ran, the man after them, but they soon got out of harm's way. They afterward learned that the bear was a household pet, which had been trained to play with the children. They say they are through with bear hunting.

A Murderer's Fortune.

If Parker Pearsons Valentine will come forward and be hanged, or take his chances of it he can have \$300,000. Valentine is wanted in Minnesota for murder, and they want to give him his big estate, bequeathed to him in the will of his mother, Mrs. Lucy A. Valentine. Mrs. Valentine died in Columbia County, Wisconsin, two years ago. She had considerable property of her own and she inherited about \$35,000 from the estate of her half-brother, Hiram A. Pearsons, the capitalist, who was drowned in Lake Michigan. A portion of the property is in San Francisco. A twenty years trust was created by the will of Mrs. Valentine, the property to be held during the period of the trust for the missing son. If the son does not appear the estate is to be given to St. John's Home, Milwaukee. When young Valentine was seventeen years of age he had a quarrel with his mother and left home. He went to Chicago and worked as a clerk, but soon speculated and made \$60,000. He then went to Minneapolis to study medicine. Then he married, much against his mother's will, and a few months later he killed a man whom he found in his house. He fled, and soon afterwards he visited his mother, and a few months later he went away and since that time nothing has been heard of him. A former business associate of his son claimed to have heard from him in Colorado a few years ago, and when Mrs. Valentine died she believed her son to be still living.

Carried Off by a Panther.

Mannis Heatherton, a ninety-year-old citizen of Greenup, Ky., was once carried off by a panther and was none the worse for it. His father lived on Grassy creek eighty-six years ago. One evening while he was absent on a hunt a huge panther bounded into the yard and catching Mannis, then four years old, in its teeth, disappeared in the forest. When Mr. Heatherton came home an hour later his wife, who had just recovered from the faint into which she had fallen when the beast seized her child, told him what had happened, and following the brute he found it lying asleep on a sunny hillside with the babe under its paw and shot it dead, rescuing his son, who was but slightly injured.

Birthplace of Lincoln.

The following item regarding the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln is from the Bluegrass Clipper of Kentucky. "Lincoln Park, in Larue County, is to be made one of the most historic places in the South. On the Lincoln farm is to be built at once a log cabin on the site of the Abe Lincoln homestead, in which the martyred President of the United States was born and spent many hours of his life. The cabin is to be built of the same logs that were used in the original cabin, and the same design will be used in its construction. The logs are now in the house of John Davenport, but he has sold his home to allow the erection of the historic old Lincoln landmark, which will attract widespread attention."

A Monster Cannon.

The largest cannon in the world was taken by the English when India was conquered. The cannon was cast about the year 1,500, and was the work of a chief named Chuleby Koomy Khan, of Abneinggur. The inside of the big gun was fitted out with seats, and is a favorite place for English officers to go for a quiet sleep.

Best Head Dress for Hot Countries.

A turban has been proved by actual practice to be the best possible head covering in hot countries. It is light, and while it excludes the direct rays and heat of the sun, permits the free passage of air.

THE JOKER'S BUDGET.

JESTS AND YARNS BY FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

Two Pairs of Eyes--As She Viewed It--As Usual--Not Forgotten--The Baker's Joke, Etc., Etc.

TRIO PAIRS OF EYES. He (delighted with a new play)--"Isn't it grand?" She--"Perfectly lovely! It must have been made by Worth."

AS SHE VIEWED IT. Doctor--I would advise you, dear madam, to take frequent baths, plenty of fresh air and dress in cool gowns.

Husband (an hour later)--What did the doctor say?

Wife--He said I ought to go to a watering place and afterward to the mountains, and to get some new light gowns at once.

AS USUAL. "Did you marry your ideal?" asked a new acquaintance of a bright matron.

"Mercy, no! I married my husband."

SOT FORGOTTEN. "The spirit of John Jones," said the medium.

"He died in arrears," replied the editor.

"Ask him if it is hot enough for him."

THE BAKER'S JOKE. "I wish you'd help me with this bread," said the baker.

"I never promised to be your business assistant," said his wife.

"You promised to stand by me in my hour of knead," said the baker.

CAUSE FOR DOUBT.

"There is only one thing," said he to her dearest girl friend, "that makes me doubt Herbert's affection for me?"

"What is that?"

"He thinks that some of the snap-shot photographs he has taken of me are good likenesses."

SECIDAL.

Miss Prion (quoting)--Wise men make proverbs, and fools repeat them.

Miss Smart (musingly)--Yes; I wonder what wise man made the one you just repeated.

A REAL COMPLIMENT.

Laura--George, look at that dog! Will he bite?

George--Bite! He'll be a dog of any judgment, Laura, he'll try to eat you! Get out, you brute!

TEST OF AFFECTION.

He--Is there anything I can do to prove my affection so that you will not doubt it?

She--There is, marry my sister. She is ten years older than I, and mamma is determined not to let me marry till Sophia is disposed of.

ACCOMMODATING.

"Would you please chop these ribs across for me?"

"John, just break this lady's bones for her."

HIS OBJECTION.

"I simply wish we'd never had any American Revolution," sighed Tommy, after school the other day. "It's made my life miserable."

"How so?" asked his uncle.

"So many more history dates to remember," said Tom.

HOOGLAN'S FALL.

An Irish newspaper once said in announcing an accident: "Our fellow townsman, Mr. Hooglan, fell out of the second-story window yesterday and broke his neck and suffered internal injuries. His friends will be glad to know that the latter are not serious."

REJECTED.

Business Man--Are you a good whistler, my boy?

Applicant--Yesir; daisy.

Business Man--Get!

ON THE DUELING FIELD.

"I thought, count, that you were a dead shot?"

"I am."

"And yet though you said you would shoot your adversary through the heart, you hit him in the foot?"

"It was an error of judgment. I thought his heart was in his boots; it turned out to be in his mouth."

HER LIMITED BOTANY.

"Your father raises eggplant in his garden, doesn't he, Sallie?"

"Oh, yes--every year."

"Well, doesn't chickweed trouble the beds a good deal?"

A DULL TRIP IN PROSPECT.

Neighbor--Mr. Gayboy is going to the Atlanta Exposition, is he? Won't it cost him a good deal of money?

Mrs. Gayboy--Not very much. I am going with him.

LETTING HIM FINISH.

Clothier--Were you pleased with the overcoat which I sold you?

Customer--Oh, yes, all my boys have worn it.

Clothier--Well, think of that!

Customer--Every time after a rain the next smaller one had to take it.

Mr. Depew's "At Home" Signal.

Chauncey M. Depew is not Mayor of New York, but he has two lamps in front of his residence, just as the Mayor has, and he also has a private signal to indicate when he is at home.

The signal consists in allowing the lamp on the east side of the house to remain burning until the "Doctor" is ready to retire. It is then put out.

Beds of the Ancients.

The ancients slept on a floor or on a divan covered with skins. During the middle ages beds were made of rushes, heather or straw. It is believed that feather beds were known to the Roman, since a mention in one of the poets of men so luxurious that they slept on feathers is supposed to refer to this kind of bed.