

THE GOOD OLD TIMES.

THE MEDIEVAL HOUSEWIFE AS SHE LIVED AND LABORED.

Especially the Head of the Household—The "Spinster" of the Middle Ages—Table Furniture and Good Cheer—The Kitchen.

[By M. C. Kelly in Philadelphia Press.]

The housewife of the middle ages is seen stepping out of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" as natural as life, in that May morn'g of long ago, when the merry company fled out of the Tabard inn to pursue its pilgrimage. She is dressed in a cape and kirtle of blue stuff, the collar of her cotehardie and the tapes of her white volupere are embroidered in silk, as likewise, her girdle, and her apron or barn cloth is as white as morning-glories. She wears a broad, flat, round hat and her head is encased in a hood of her own making, which she wears as big as the boss of a buckler, and her "shoon" (shoes) are of high upon her ankles.

The medieval housewife was a very industrious woman. She was busy in the head of the household, everything in the house was under her charge, she cooked the whole house with the work of her own hands. Spinning was one of the most important labors taught young women. The word "spinster," now the legal designation of an unmarried woman, had its origin in the fact that in the early ages spinning was her special employment. In the ballad of the patient Griselda, the maiden was engaged in spinning when the Marquis first saw her. All the illuminated manuscripts which have come down to us illustrating the domestic life of the middle ages show us "the lady spinning," "the lady carding wool," "the lady at the loom," etc. Every household had its looms and spinning wheels. The women of the medieval home often sheared the sheep with their own hands, and carded and combed the wool and beat the fleeces.

The old-time house-keeper was also physician and surgeon to the household and all around. Medical receipts in all periods of the middle ages, written by the fingers of women, are still preserved in European libraries. It was the women who set the knight's broken bones by the manipulations and healed greivous wounds by cunning plasters spread by their own fair fingers. In the "Icelandic sagas" of the thirteenth century, "Ariasson and Nicolette," we see the heroine acting the part of a surgeon when her lover had dislocated his shoulder, and in the romance of "Elle de St. Gilles" Elle, who has been wounded, is carried by the fair Rosmonde into her chamber, where she takes precious herbs from her coffer and applies them to his wounds.

Neither the good wife of Bath nor Griselda knew what it was to take up and put down carpets, they spread rushes and sweet herbs on the floor instead when they expected company. They covered the walls of their homes with tapestry and sat at their meals on heavy wooden benches and stools. The table was usually a board of boards, set on trestles and covered with cloth. The "good cheer" of that old time would seem strange enough to us. Barley and oatmeal bread, bacon, boiled fish, capons, eggs, manchet, with vast quantities of home-brewed ale or mead, and sometimes among the nobles, wines from the Levant covered the medieval table. Food was not always plentiful in the household.

The choicest articles of furniture in the kitchen of the middle ages was the sideboard or court cupboard. It was usually richly carved and made with little compartments, in which small articles of plate could be placed. On the top the good mothers arranged for display the basins, tankards, flagons, drinking-horns, basins and pincers. On the shelves glistened the family plate, often of pewter, which was of value at that time. Beside them were the lesser utensils, the forks for "the green granger," the powder box, the sprinkling green spices over the meats, the curious carving knives, the clasp-knives, the spoons, and that singular vessel called the "masher cup," manufactured from the knottiest wood and handsomely ornamented with silver, which was used on great occasions like Christmas to pass around a warm spiced drink, of which all the company must partake.

There was no stove in the medieval kitchen, and even chimneys were rare. The fire was usually kindled on a stone hearth in the middle of the room, the smoke passing out from a hole in the roof. Even in castles, only two or three of the largest rooms had a "cover" or fire hearth; around these the servants and housecarles sat shivering in the cold winter months. Later, some of the queens had braziers or small iron furnaces in their rooms.

The day's work done, the spinning-wheel set away, the children tucked in their cradles, the bolts of the door drawn, the fire smouldering on the stone hearth and the feeble rutilant hanging low in its socket, the good wife and her husband sought the chamber where stood the great "posted set work bedstead," covered with its "harden sheets" (made of coarse flax, "tear sheets" of fine flax, "dock beds" wool coverlets), "pillow beers" and "counter-poins" (quilts made in squares of contrasting colors).

Thus lived and dined and slept the housewife of the middle ages. Doubtless she thought herself a favored creature, but who of her nineteenth century sisters would care to go back and live in those "good old times"?

Preparing Beets for Market. [Chicago Herald.]

Fel culture is a new phase of industry recently adopted at Cape Cod. Two men at South Yarmouth have bought a large fresh water pond and put thirty barrels of saltwater cels of all sizes in it. It is estimated that 30,000 cels are now quartered there and fattened for New York market on 700 pounds of "horse feet" that are fed out to them twice a week. The water swarms with squirmers at meal time. No one on the coast likes a fresh water celt, but in New York they are delicacies, and if they would continue to be so if they were generally understood that they were fattened for market in this disgusting way.

High-Pressure Steam. [Frank Leslie's Illustrated.]

WIG-WEARING IN EUROPE.

Commencement in France—Collection in the British Museum—Conservations. [Chicago Times.]

The British museum contains the wigs of a large number of lord chancellors and chief justices. Its collection of wigs is very large. It contains one that is said to be more than 4,000 years old. It was obtained in Egypt, and it is presumed that it was worn by one of the early kings. Wigs, like that other useless institution, speculative philosophy, probably had their origin in the country of the pyramids. And speculative philosophy found their way from Egypt into Greece and Rome. Xenophon states that Atvages, king of the Medes, wore a wig on state occasions. Livy, Ovid, Juvenal, and Plutarch all mention wigs in their writings. The early church fathers condemned wigs, but after the church became a great power the bishops wore them.

The great modern revival of wigs commenced in France. Henry III of France lost his hair by sickness, and wore a wig to hide his baldness. It was worn by his own hair or some that closely resembled it. He was so pleased with its appearance that he had wigs made of very long hair. His courtiers followed his example until finally all who attended court balls and receptions wore wigs, some of which were very costly. Under Louis XIII wigs made of silk became fashionable. During the reign of his successor powdered wigs were worn, the curls of which often covered the shoulders and came over the forehead half way down the back. Henry XV had a wig made that was entirely white, so that he might be distinguished from even the most illustrious of his subjects. His example, however, was quickly followed by the nobility of France, and wigs of white hair were worn generally at court.

Wigs were introduced into England soon after they became fashionable in France. During the time of Queen Anne the noblemen, magistrates, bishops, cabinet ministers, as well as all persons of wealth and quality, wore wigs. The pictures of nearly all the authors of this period represent them with wigs. The like is true of most persons of distinction down to the commencement of the present century. In 1765 the "distressed peruke maker" of England petitioned King George III for protection against the French manufacturers, who were crowding the markets with their wares and bringing down prices.

Many English wigmakers came to America during the colonial times and did a very flourishing business. Up to the period of the revolution wigs were very fashionable in this country. Indeed, they continued to be worn long after that period. The "Father of His Country" wore a wig, and so did very many of his personal and political friends. One of our historians states that most of the leading Federalists during the administrations of Washington and Adams wore wigs. The anti-Federalists, or Democrats, however, declined to wear wigs unless they were bald, and as a consequence all barbers, hairdressers, and wigmakers belonged to the Federal party.

Our great Chief Justice Marshall, declining to wear a wig, probably because he had a rampant growth of hair, caused, it is said, by going bareheaded in early life. His example has been followed by his successors on the national bench. Only judges and lawyers now wear wigs in the British islands. They continue to wear them seems somewhat ridiculous. It affords another example of their extreme conservatism. They are the last to hold on to old forms and styles of dress.

Opposed to Bathing. [Pittsburg Dispatch.]

He had down a package which he had just finished tying up, and wiped his hand on the front of his vest. He stood behind the counter of a south side grocery store. His face was broad and red, and overflowed with good nature and perspiration. He looked as though he might weigh 300.

"So you would like to see a man who is opposed to bathing, would you? Well, here is a good look at him. He is never sick and never had cold." "You don't look as though you would go into a rapid decline soon." "No, and I don't feel like it. I am 45 years old, and weigh 185 pounds. I am opposed to bathing. If a man wants to open up the pores of his skin once or twice a week, and lay himself open to the attacks of disease, let him do it."

"How long ago did you discover this principle in hygiene?"

"If you mean when did I stop bathing, about ten years ago. Not entirely, mind you. I take a light invigorator twice a year, just to keep my skin fresh, you know. Maybe this is too often, but I find it keeps me in the best of health. I got into a tub June 1 and again on July 4. Now, you are laughing, but remember, young man, I am older than you, and have had more experience. Did you ever see a cow bathe? No, I thought not. A cow refrains from bathing by instinct, yet they are as clean as animals as lives. I merely take a rough towel every night and rub myself down and change my clothes often. If the cholera comes here this season I think I can defy it. I never had a contagious disease in my life, yet I have attended to people who had small-pox, and have been among contagious diseases of all kinds."

A Coney Island Custom. [Cor. Chicago Journal.]

Amusement is plenty on Coney Island, however, and the best of it is free, for it can be found in watching the crowds. The democratic end of the island is the place for this, for there the boys and girls from the Bowery side of New York congregate. Their ways are sometimes unique. Where they get their usages is a puzzle to me. The girls are apt to be rakish in attire, audacious in carriage, and slangy in language; and these characteristics are in the respectable ones as well as the dissolute.

I saw a custom, for example, which certainly has not yet reached the bellies of Saratoga or Long Branch. It is a substitute for kissing, and it consists in rubbing cheeks. Two maidens meet. They are rapturously glad to see each other. Ordinarily, two girls thus situated crack their lips together resoundingly in a kiss that is more noisy than emotional. The Bowery belles have for the time abolished purely feminine osculation. Their faces are put together, but not the mouths. The nose of one is sid back about to the side of the other, and the conjunctive cheeks, held hard, are slowly wiped together until they part at the corners of the mouths. The same operation vigorously repeated on the opposite sides of the faces completes the salutation.

The Etiquette of Story-Telling. [The Hatchet.]

The other evening Judge Reily and Dr. Nelson were telling some of their stories when a flock of blackbirds flew overhead. "I killed seventy-five of those birds at one shot down on the east shore," said Judge Reily. "Sho! that's nothing," said the doctor. "I killed 122 one time." "Look here, doctor," said the judge, "after this you can tell your first."

An Ex-Counterfeiter's Warning. [Milwaukee Reporter.]

Life is one long struggle for money, and the devices hit upon for making dollars are numbered by thousands. One of the easiest ways of getting money is in molds, but it frequently leads the seeker after wealth into paths that are not always smooth. In fact, troubles generally come to the person who follows this royal road to fortune, and not one counterfeiter in ten thousand long avoids arrest. Frequently hundreds of spurious coins are made, but the coiner rarely avoids arrest long enough to enjoy his ill-gotten gains, and his career is suddenly cut short by the ruthless hand of a detective or United States marshal, his work of a lifetime destroyed and himself thrown into prison for a long term of years.

With a view to learning the secrets of the manufacture of counterfeit money, a reporter recently sought out a once notorious coiner who has served time for illegally making United States money, but who has since reformed and now makes his home in Milwaukee. "Don't attempt it, my boy," he said. "It's dangerous work and in the long run don't pay. It's easy, though, this counterfeiting," he continued, meditatively, "and more of it is done than people suppose. Two small blocks of oak, the faces of which fit smoothly together, are arranged to fasten with bolts. Find the center of the face of each with a pair of dividers. Bore a two-inch auger hole three-quarters of an inch deep in each, so that the openings will come exactly face to face when the blocks are bolted together. Grease a 50-cent silver piece, a new one is best, with tallow or lard. Wipe it nearly dry. Pack both holes full of plaster of Paris mixed with water. Lay the coin on one, lay the pieces of blocks together and bolt them fast. In an hour open; the blocks will come apart, and in each plaster mould will be a cast of one side of the piece of money. Cut a channel from one edge of the cast to the block, and across the block to the outer edge of the wood. Bolt the backs together and you have the mould, the channel serving as a place through which to pour the metal."

"Build an open furnace, mix block, tinplate, lead and zinc. Put it in a ladle and melt it. Pour in the mould, let it stand a minute, open the blocks and cast out your coin. It's exactly like making bullets, but far more dangerous. Don't try it, my boy."

Warfare in Dahomey. [Pall Mall Gazette.]

The system of "warfare" followed by the Dahomians is the usual barbarous one of surprise. When the king declares war—a formality which he carefully observes year after year—he rarely tells even the chief "cabinets" the name of the town he intends to attack. The army marches out, and when within a day's journey or so of its unhappy objective point silence at pain of instant death is enjoined, and no fires are permitted to be lighted. All stragglers are taken prisoners, and the army is led through a road cut through the bush, and not along the regular highways.

The town is surrounded in dead of night, and just before daybreak a rush is made, and every man, woman, and child not killed in the melee is captured if possible, and sent to the Dahomian capital, Abomey, where some grace the successful, and others are sent as slaves to distant parts of the kingdom. (Animalism, or something that approaches it very nearly, enters into the rites of the ninth or concluding ceremony of the yearly custom. Four men, known as the menditor or cannibal, each furnished with sharp-pointed sticks, way of fork and knife, are stationed in front of the platform from which the victims are thrown before decapitation.)

When the first captive is beheaded they take the body and cut off pieces of the flesh, which they rub with palm oil and roast over a fire kindled in the square before the platform. The human flesh is then skewered on the pointed sticks and carried around before the crowd, after which these fends parade before the state priests, and go through the action of eating the flocks of mutton. They chew the human meat before the terrified captives, but do not swallow it, and when they have worked upon the fears of the poor wretches for a sufficient time they raise, and spitting out the chewed flesh, take strong native medicine, which acts like an emetic, and it is by no means stinted.

The Emancipation Proclamation. [Ex-Secretary Boutwell's Letter.]

It may be remembered by the reader that in the political campaign of 1862 a prominent leader of the people's party, the late Judge Joel Parker, of Cambridge, Mass., said in public that Mr. Lincoln issued the proclamation under the influence of the loyal governors, who met in Altoona in September of that year.

As I was about to leave Washington in the month of October to take part in the campaign, I mentioned to the president the fact that such a statement had been made. He at once said: "I never thought of the meeting of the governors. The truth is just this: When Lee came over the river I made a resolution that if McClellan drove him back I would send the proclamation after him. The battle of Antietam was fought Wednesday, and until Saturday I could not find out whether we had gained a victory or lost a battle. It was then too late to issue the proclamation that day, and the fact is I had it up a week Sunday, and Monday I let them have it."

An Indian Show for Germany. [Victoria (British Columbia) Colonist.]

Professor Jacobson and his brother departed on the Olympian en route to Berlin. They were accompanied by nine Indians from the west coast of the Bella Bella tribe, intended for exhibition at the Royal museum at Berlin. If the Indians could conceive the amount of land and water they must travel over before reaching Germany, the strange sights of the great cities and hundreds of novelties to them, life would appear a great conundrum, and it would be hard to prevail upon them to forsake their primitive existence and manners. Each of these Indians receives \$20 a month and all expenses during their absence, including transportation both ways. They are quite civilized when they return a year hence. The professor carried several tons of curies with him, which cost over \$4,000. He has purchased and shipped from this coast in all about \$16,000 worth of Indian curies.

Four Hours a Day's Work. [Chicago Herald.]

Physiologists, after patient and close inquiry, have arrived at the important and practical conclusion that the power of the entire man, his vitality, is as much expended by two hours of deep mental effort as by a whole day of bodily labor. This fact seems to be founded on observed physiological laws; hence, the man who spends four hours in the twenty-four in earnest mental labor, is to the utmost allowable limit for a day's work.

A PASSING CLOUD.

[Claud Templier.] She stands be-side the door in white dress; For some portentous nothing is at stake, And she will not unsway the words she spoke, Nor be made right of wrong, though he were woe. Alack! their honeymoon is on the wane; The hearer's that beat as one has learned to ache; The stream whereat they two have come to Love's thirst is parched for draught of Love's sweet rain. They brood in sullen silence neath the cloud That now first shadows this fair well-look o'er, When, lo! it bursts in tears from both their eyes.

And on each other's lips, their anger dies, Upon his breast her olden head she leans, And, in his arms, he clasps his Life once more.

Adelaide Neilson's Photographs. ["Uncle Bill's" New York Letter.]

One of the many Broadway windows in which the faces of beautiful actresses are displayed either for sale or to force attention to other commodities, a variety of photographs of Adelaide Neilson have just been arranged. "The fact is," said the man who had revived this lovely but almost forgotten beauty, "that we aim to change the pictures often, and no fresh loveliness has lately been disclosed on the American stage. Last winter did not bring out a single beautiful new face for the footlights to shine on; some of the old ones held over well enough for stage purposes, but for photographic beauty they were played out."

"That is why I have gone back six years to Neilson. No other face has ever yielded so much profit to the photographers." He might have added that none has been more valuable to its possessor. She rose literally from the gutters of London for no other reason than her beauty and the mind to utilize it. Through assiduous effort she became a good actress, but it was her face that made her fortune, not only because she exhibited it adroitly in acting, but she never lost an opportunity to have it portrayed for public admiration. The photographer had only to invite her once to his gallery, from here to San Francisco she faced the camera on every possible occasion.

Treasures of Egyptian Sanads. [Chicago Tribune.]

The papyrus which has been found among the El Fayoum manuscripts, belonging to the Archduke Renier, by Professor Karabacek of Vienna, when completely deciphered will probably revolutionize ancient history. There are altogether 30,000 fragments in eleven different languages, 30,000 of them written on papyrus, and the remainder on skins in voluminous rolls and on paper made of linen or cotton. It has not yet been decided which of the most modern bear the date 933 A. D. The learned professor who discovered and is now deciphering them believes that they formed part of a great library at El Fayoum, the rest of which was destroyed by the Arab Mohammedan, when about 968 A. D. So great is their value that Professor Mommsen, when shown samples of the fragments bearing upon Roman history, regretfully wished they had been discovered thirty years ago, so that he might have had the advantage of their revelations in writing his history.

The immense value of these documents to the historian may be inferred from the professor's statement that it is now possible to write the narrative of 1,000 years of Egyptian history about which very little has hitherto been known, and of Roman history commencing 98 A. D., through the consecutive reigns of thirty-five emperors, closing with Constantine the Great, from contemporary documents of every year of their reigns. They are destined to shed light upon some of the darkest periods of history, especially the time when the power of the Byzantine emperors gradually lapsed into the hands of the Moslem conquerors, the reigns of the Ptolemies still further back, and the period during which Egypt was under the sway of Persia. Professor Karabacek claims that the amplest evidence is obtainable from the archives which supply materials for a consecutive history of Egypt during nearly 1,000 years.

Perfectly Legitimate Business. [Cincinnati Times-Star.]

"Michael Drury, I understand that you are a speculator on an invisible basis of capital," said his honor to a red nosed man, who wore a business like air on his whole form. "I never speculated in my life, it's dangerous, sir; dangerous, and I advise you never to try it," solemnly answered Michael. "I am a produce merchant—commission, you know."

"Explain why you sold a farmer's potatoes to this man for \$1.25, when you had no legal right to them?" asked his honor. "I merely hypothesized them for awhile. Gave them as security for a trust loan! Perfectly legitimate business transaction, which fell through, owing to an unfortunate mistake!" replied the potato merchant.

"But you didn't own the potatoes!" amazedly said his honor. "The capital wasn't yours to speculate on." "That's nothing; everybody does it, and what everybody does must be right," satisfactorily answered the merchant. "I will establish precedent by sending you—"

"No, sir, I warn you that you are interfering and obstructing the legitimate channels of trade. Have a care now!" loftily interrupted the merchant. "I'll risk it. Go out for thirty days," said his honor. "I'll get the chamber of commerce after you. Ill—ill—"

But he was gone, gone to speculate on broken stone.

Simple Cure for Sleeplessness. [Medical Journal.]

A simple cure of sleeplessness has been advised by a Parisian physician of an American traveling through Europe who suffered from wakeful nights. The remedy was complete cessation of mental exertion in the evening, and the formation of a habit of retiring at the same time each evening. No letter-writing, no reading of excitable books, was allowed, and the mind was placed in as passive a state as possible. The American, who had been a victim of sleeplessness for years, returned home cured.

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