

QUEER EASTER CUSTOM.

The Way Filipino Penitents Torture Themselves.

One of the many curious customs practiced by some persons in the Philippine Islands is the way in which they observe the week before Easter. For the Thursday, Friday and Saturday before Easter the streets or roads on the outskirts of some villages and sometimes the principal streets of the town itself are filled with crowds, who have come to see the natives inflict self-torture.

The willing victims are stripped to the waist, their faces are covered with a thick cloth and around one hand is a heavy hemp rope, with a cluster of from fifteen to twenty smaller hempen cords. To each of these is fastened a small piece of hard wood. The whole thing is just long enough so that when flung over the shoulder it will not quite reach to the waist.

When the penitents are ready to start out a Filipino, who has been appointed as a sort of overseer, takes the flesh of the back between his thumb and first finger and cuts the skin with a long bolo. This is done all over the back. He then cries, "Alla, sigle" ("Go ahead"). Then the penitent begins to beat his back by lashing his cluster of little pieces of wood and cords first over one shoulder, then over the other, until the back is so lacerated that it somewhat resembles raw beef. All the while the onlookers and victims also are singing or, rather, chanting, a most dismal, unearthly funeral chant.—New York Tribune.

QUICKSILVER MINING.

An Occupation That Quickly Dooms the Workers.

The chief quicksilver mines in Europe are in the Spanish town Almaden, which is an Arabic word, meaning "the mine of quicksilver." These mines were formerly worked by the Iberians and after them by the ancient Romans. Between 1245 and 1843 the Spanish government employed galley slaves in them, an occupation that soon ended in death. The fumes of the mercury produce constant salivation, and the system becomes permeated with the metal.

At first the victim is seized with tremblings and then the teeth drop out; pain in the bones follow and then death. The annual yield of mercury is 1,500,000 pounds, to produce which 4,000 men are engaged in this unhealthy employment.

After Almaden, so far as yield of quicksilver is concerned, comes Idria, an Austrian town, twenty-eight miles from Trieste. These mines also were once worked by criminals, who, owing to the terrible qualities of the mineral, expired after about two years' service. There are now nearly 500 miners engaged in the work at Idria. They are induced to enter the mines by high pay. A pension is allowed when they are disabled, and provision is made for their widows and children.—Pearson's.

Gunpowder.

The explosive nature of gunpowder, which is made of charcoal, sulphur and saltpeter, is due to the fact that when fired the charcoal and sulphur are burned at the expense of the oxygen in the saltpeter, much heat is developed and large quantities of gas are produced. This gas exerts great pressure on the sides of the gun; hence its disruptive or propulsive effects. When gunpowder is fired in a gun the explosion is not instantaneous. The expansive force of the gases produced acts on the shot all the time it is moving along the barrel and gradually increases its velocity. If the explosion were so sudden as to be practically instantaneous the greater part of the force would be exerted mainly on the sides of the chamber containing the powder and not, as is actually the case, on the shot.

The Oldest Prescription.

The oldest medical prescription in existence bears date of 4000 B. C. It was discovered in an Egyptian tomb, written on papyrus, and has been deciphered by an English professor. It bears evidence that it was intended for some high-headed Egyptian and reads as follows:

Parts.
Dog's new (calloused part).....1
Dates.....1
Donkey hoofs.....1

Boil the whole in oil and rub the scalp gently with the mixture.

Egyptian history does not say whether or not the patient regained his lost hair.

Hasheesh.

Hasheesh, or the Indian hemp, is a resinous substance produced from the tops of the plant in India. Some authorities state that it is gathered by men who dress themselves in leather clothing and run to and fro in the hemp fields, afterward scraping off the resin from their garments, while other authorities say that it is gathered by rubbing the tops in the hands and afterward scraping the hands. Its narcotic properties are well known.

Old Ships in Norway.

Norwegians have a primitive way of breaking up old, worn-out wooden ships. They take them to exposed rocky parts of the coast and, after anchoring them, leave the breakers of the next storm to smash them to pieces. After the storm the floating fragments are picked up and sold for firewood.

Anxious to Repeat It.

"Beck (despondently)—I said something my wife didn't like, and she hasn't spoken to me for two days. Peck (eagerly)—Can you remember what it was you said?"

Success is like a generous wine which begins by exciting the intellectual faculties and ends by plunging us into a stupid intoxication.—Bougart.

A Bridge of Crocodiles.

A traveler writes of a port in north-western India: "The great night of Karachi is the sacred crocodile preserve at Magar Pir, some seven miles off. There are hot springs here which feed a shallow tank containing nearly a hundred crocodiles. The story, usually thought to be fictitious, of the Englishman who for a bet crossed the tank by jumping successively from the backs of these crocodiles is based on fact. The hero of this foolhardy feat was a certain Lieutenant Beresford, a friend of Sir R. F. Burton. When Burton and his companion were visiting the crocodiles' tank they noticed that these reptiles and certain islets of reeds happened to make an almost continuous bridge across the tank. This prompted the daring subaltern to hazard the feat of crossing by hopping from one crocodile to another. To the amusement of the spectators he succeeded in this apparently mad attempt. Sir Richard Burton had already successfully performed an equally daring feat. He managed to muzzle a crocodile by means of a lasso and then jumped on the reptile's back and enjoyed a somewhat zigzag ride."

Inside Your Bones.

People usually imagine that their bones are of solid mineral construction, without any feeling in them. As a matter of fact, there are blood vessels and nerves inside the bones just as there are outside. During amputation of a limb much more pain is felt when the bone is attacked than when the flesh is being cut through. Through the marrow which is inside the bones run the nerves and blood vessels, entering the bones from the flesh without by little holes. Nature adapts the bony structure of various animals to their habits in a very interesting manner. Sluggish creatures, like the sloth, have solid bones, whereas the bones of the deer and the antelope are comparatively light, so that they may run fast, and the leg bones of the ostrich are hollow. You will find in the bones of any skeleton the application of mechanical principles which have only become known to man through the processes of laborious and long considered invention.

A Finger Pillory.

The finger pillory is still preserved carefully in the parish church of St. Helen Ashby-de-la-Zouch and is thus described: "An ancient and rather singular curiosity is a finger pillory. This instrument seems to have been used for the punishment of disorderly persons during divine service. It consists of two upright posts about three feet high, which support a beam of nearly the same length, in which are bored holes of various dimensions, cut first horizontally, then perpendicularly, in order that the first joint of the finger may be inserted and the finger retained in an angular form. The culprit is then secured by bringing down over the holes another beam which is attached by a hinge at the end to one of the posts and fastened at the other by a lock."—London Academy.

Holding the Breath.

It is a physical impossibility for a man to kill himself by holding his breath. Individuals differ greatly in the length of time they can hold their breath, and what practice and determined effort, combined with natural great lung capacity, can do in this direction is shown by the long periods for which champion divers can remain under water. If a man succeeded in continuing to hold his breath in spite of the physical discomfort in which he had placed himself the result would simply be to induce a state of coma. When this state was reached nature would reassert herself, and the breathing functions would again resume full activity, preventing a fatal issue in spite of their owner's desire.

Mme. Scarron.

Mme. Scarron, afterward the famous Mme. de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV., was in her girlhood remarkably beautiful. She was dark, with piercing black eyes and wavy hair. In middle life her gravity of countenance and of deportment was considered quite extraordinary in that age of gayety. One of her contemporaries said that she did not smile once a year, and yet she was not gloomy, but only of a sedate habit of mind.

A Monster God House.

In Mexico are found ruins of ancient Aztec teocallis, or "god houses," some of which are thousands of years old. One of these, near Cholula, is in the form of a truncated pyramid. Each side of the base of this pyramid is 1,423 feet, which is twice the length of the great pyramid of Egypt. The height of this Mexican wonder is 177 feet, and its base covers an area of forty-four acres.

Not There.

"Judge," said Mrs. Starvem to the magistrate who had recently come to board with her, "I'm particularly anxious to have you try this chicken soup."
"I have tried it," replied the magistrate, "and my decision is that the chicken has proved an alibi."—Philadelphia Press.

Fired.

Young Mother—Do you think baby looks most like me or his papa? Nurse—Like you, mum. Mr. Jenkins is a mighty handsome man.
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Wife (wearily)—Woman's work is never done! Husband (struggling with a buttonless shirt collar)—That's just what I thought!

First say to yourself what you would be; then do what you have to do.—Epictetus.

FILTH IN KOREA.

The Streets of the City Reek With Sewage and Odors.

The streets of Korea are used for every conceivable and inconceivable thing. Down the middle of them or on either side the city's sewage reeks along a sluggish course, carrying with it every possible thing but its own horrible odor. The houses on the main streets, or what might for want of a more descriptive name be called the business streets, are all built with one side open, as houses are built in Japan. There is little or nothing displayed for sale in any shops, and there is seldom anything to detain a loiterer along the way. The Korean woman knows absolutely nothing about the joys and sorrows of shopping. She lives her life in virtuous seclusion, or at least in seclusion, and the tradesmen must needs go to her and thrust their goods respectfully through a small opening in the door of her apartments. What she doesn't want she thrusts out again and then higgles with him over the price of what she has selected, with the thin but not transparent partition between them. So there is little need for attractive shop windows. Since the women make all the men's clothes, they, of course, buy the materials for them also, and I have really never seen anything purchased in a shop. But still they are built with the uselessly open side, and one can buy if one is so inclined, as foreigners so often are. The houses that are not of this description are not to be seen at all, being hidden behind expressionless stone walls capped with tiles and pierced with the finest possible gateways.—Leslie's Weekly.

NEW YORK'S RECORDER.

The City's Most Ancient Official Next to the Mayor.

Next to the mayor the recorder is the most ancient public official in the city. His office dates back to the Dougan charter, given with the authority of King James II. to the city of New York in April, 1686. The governing body of the city were the mayor, the recorder and the aldermen.

From the recorder sprang, in 1821, the old court of common pleas, which later became the supreme court. Originally the mayor and the recorder held all the court in New York, both civil and criminal, the aldermen sitting also to aid in disposing of petty cases. The recorder was a member of the board of aldermen. One of his important duties was to pass on competency for citizenship.

The first recorder was James Graham, appointed by charter. His duties included those of the present recorder and many more. Gradually as the court business increased the recorder ceased to act as an alderman, and in the subdivision of court work the criminal cases, which, as affecting the life and liberty of citizens, were then regarded as of the graver importance, were retained by him, and the civil cases were transferred to newer courts. Thus the office of the recorder is traditionally the primary safeguard under the principles of the old common law on which New York's modern criminal jurisprudence is founded.—New York World.

The Salamander.

In Andrews' "Anecdotes Ancient and Modern" (1789) one reads, "Should a glass house fire be kept up without extinction for a longer term than seven years there is no doubt but that a salamander would be generated in the cinders." This probably accounts for the popular idea that a salamander lives in the fire, a fallacy so far removed from the truth that the curious lizard-like beast so called cannot endure even the heat of the sun, but skulks away under stones to avoid it. It will never lose its reputation for fire eating, though, which lingers still in the heating utensil that is named after it.

An Old Irish Tune.

"The Girl I Left Behind Me" is an Irish tune, known to have been in existence in 1770. The author of the words is unknown, though claims have been made for several Irish and English poets. For over 100 years it has been the parting tune of the British army and navy and is played whenever a regiment is leaving a town where it has been stationed or a man-of-war is weighing anchor to sail from a port.

Study Yourself.

In order to judge of the inside of others study your own, for men in general are very much alike, and though one has one prevailing passion and another has another yet their operations are much the same, and whatever engages or disgusts, pleases or offends you in others will engage, disgust, please or offend others in you.—Chesterton.

A Disputed Question.

On one occasion a Scotch minister knocked at the door of a house where a husband and wife were quarreling. When admitted he inquired, "What's the head of this house?" The man quietly replied: "Sit yersef' doon, mon; sit yersef' doon. We're just trying to gettle that the noo."

Habit.

Boss—See here, every time you see a 6 you call it a 2. What's the matter with you—nearsighted? Stenographer—No, sir; it's a matter of habit. I used to clerk in a ladies' shoe store.—Cleveland Leader.

Two Views of It.

Parson—Do you take this woman for better or for worse? Bridegroom—Well, I can't exactly say. Her people think it's for better, but mine think it's for worse.—Life.

THE DESERT MIRAGE.

An Explanation of This Peculiar Freak of Nature.

One of nature's true wonders—one upon which much has been written, but which is yet not understood when its varied phenomena are considered—is the desert mirage. Travelers in the arid regions of the western and southwestern United States tell wondrous tales concerning the spectral pictures which the desert mirage has presented for their inspection. Cool sheets of water and waving trees and grassy swards appear where all is known to be parched earth and burning sands. Occasionally a mountain range will appear on what is known to be a boundless stretch of level plain, or a herd of deer, cattle or other animals will seem apparently contentedly grazing on the glassy surface of the atmosphere. Cities are occasionally seen hundreds of miles from civilization, and phantom ships have been known to loom up against the sky and appear as real vessels to persons who lived so far away from the waters that they had never taken the trouble to visit the seacoast and who had never seen a real ship.

The explanation of the mirage, as usually given, is as follows: The sand, being intensely hot, causes the layers of air which rest upon it to become greatly rarefied, and under certain circumstances this layer is quite distinct from the denser stratum a few inches or feet above it—just as if it were a sheet of water upon which oil rested. It is this rarefied stratum of air which acts as a reflector and pictures to the eye those curious inverted images.

Different Medicine.

Mr. Courtney (flattened)—I had the blues when I came here tonight, Miss Fisher. But they are all gone now. You are as good as medicine. Miss Fisher's Little Brother—Yes, father himself says she'll be a drug in the market if she doesn't catch on to some fellow soon.

Making a Job of It.

The firemen continued their exertions until after 3 o'clock, by which hour all the damage that could be done was at an end.—Newcastle (England) Chronicle.

An Ancient Traveler's Outfit.

A small "Traveler's Guide," dated 1780, contains a good deal of advice as to the luggage which should be carried. "Take," says the book, "two suits of clothes, one coffee colored and one blue; a chest flannel, a pair of leather breeches, a sleeping suit, three pairs of stockings, two pairs of gloves, two wigs, one hair bag (?), two caps, two hats, two pairs of shoes, one pair of slippers, six 'undershirts,' four 'overshirts,' six neckties, six collars, six handkerchiefs, four pairs of cuffs, three cravats, two pairs of cotton hose, two pairs of socks." But this is not all, as is shown by the following items: "Take a Bible, a book of sermons, a 'Traveler's Guide,' two albums, a diary, a quire of white paper, quills and ink, an almanac, a mirror, a silver watch, a silver snuff-box, a silver spoon, a pair of silver shoe buckles, a silver tie pin, three silver studs, a gold seal ring, a knife and fork with silver handles, a sewing case, an opera glass, a compass, a wax light and a tinder box, a toothbrush, a silver toothpick, a sword, a silver mounted cane, a padlock with which to fasten your door at night inside, a clothes brush, a box of medicine."—Pall Mall Gazette.

Fishes That Cannot Swim.

More than one species of fish is met with which cannot swim, the most singular of which perhaps is the maltha, a Brazilian fish, whose organs of locomotion only enable it to crawl or walk or hop after the manner of a toad, to which animal this fish to some extent bears a resemblance, and it is provided with a long upturned snout. The anterior pectoral fins of the maltha, which are quite small, are not capable of acting on the water, but can only move backward and forward, having truly the form of thin paws. Both these and the ventral and anal fins are very different from the similar fins in other fishes and could not serve for swimming at all. Other examples of non-swimming fishes include the sea horse, another most peculiarly shaped inhabitant of the sea, which resembles the knight in a set of chessmen, and the starfish, of which there are many specimens, which mostly walk and crawl on the shore or rocks, both being unable to swim.

The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time.—Jefferson.

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