

THEY WENT TO CHURCH.

Preferred it to Work Though They Were "Atheists."

Attendance at church service is obligatory upon the part of soldiers at certain English posts, and amusing stories are told of the excuses that are sometimes resorted to in order to escape this requirement.

At one post where a number of recruits were temporarily stationed an old sergeant was ordered to ascertain to what religious sect each man belonged, and to see that he joined the party told of for that particular form of worship.

Some of the men had no liking for church, and declared themselves to be atheists. But the sergeant was a Scotsman and a man of experience.

"Ah, weel," he said, "then ye hae no need to kape holy the Sabbath, and the stables hae no been cleaned off lately." And he ordered them to clean out the stables. This occupied practically the whole day, and the men lost their usual Sunday afternoon leave.

Next Sunday a broad smile crept over the face of the sergeant when he heard that the atheists had joined the church of England.

The Joke Was on Her.

A woman member of the bar in New York gives the following correspondence with the reservation that no names shall be quoted: "I am one of the few women," she says, "who can see a joke even if aimed at myself. I do not feel that in this case I came off first best. The letter was from a man lawyer and was as follows: 'Dear Miss Blank. We agree to the compromise as promised in your favor of this date. Not because your client has a just right to such settlement, but from the fact that we do not care to open a contest with a woman lawyer. To which the reply was sent: 'Gentlemen, I note yours agreeing to a settlement, although I cannot congratulate you on your gallantry in begging the question. Like the original Adam, you seem inclined to hide behind a woman's petticoat.' And the following letter closed the correspondence: 'Dear Miss Blank: If you will turn to the early pages of Genesis you will discover that Eve did not wear a petticoat.'"

Mexican Pottery.

Almost every one of the tourists who visit Mexico during the Winter season carries away some specimen of modern Mexican pottery, be it the gray, blue, and red Guadalupe, the green-glass of Oaxaca, the terra cotta inlaid with chips of broken china-ware from Cuernavaca, or the blue and white pottery of Puebla, often called for purposes of sale "Talavera."

This particular pottery is in itself very attractive, the characteristic type being that of a grayish-white ground partially covered with a pattern usually of deep Delft blue with which browns and yellows are sometimes sparingly used in combination. The patterns are generally heraldic and almost invariably crude and medieval in design.

French Opium Smokers.

Dr. Jeannelme, one of the professors at the Paris Faculty of Medicine, states that the opium habit is much more common among French navy officers than is generally supposed, and he thinks it quite possible that the prevalence of this curse may explain the numerous disasters which have overtaken the French navy of late. Dr. Jeannelme sets the number of opium smokers in the colonial infantry regiments at 15 per cent, in the foreign legion at 20 per cent, and among Europeans in native regiments at 25 per cent. He says that opium dens abound at Toulon, Brest, Lorient, Rochefort, Cherbourg and Paris.

Making Stagnation Money.

It is a curious coincidence that most of the "stage" money dashed by villains in melodramas, and for which there is so much blood-letting and murder in sensational plays, is made in Washington, almost within the shadow of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The demand for it has caused it to develop into quite a little industry. It is widely used as "property" for regular dramatic productions and also for amateur theatricals. It is engraved on green paper like "greenbacks."

The Harbor at Manila.

The amount of money spent in the harbor of Manila and the Pasig River during the past year totaled at nearly four and a half million dollars. It is now the best and safest harbor in the Orient. Breakwaters and large covered docks have been constructed and channels cleared. The improvements are not yet completed.

Mrs. Armitage had a negro servant who continually prated of a certain Mrs. Reed for whom she formerly worked, weary of hearing Mrs. Reed quoted so often, the mistress asked one day:

"Well, Samantha, what kind of work did you do at Mrs. Reed's, any way?"

"Well, honey, I cooked for her, I did, an' I cleaned for her, I swept for her, an' I washed her Fussional appearances."—Lippincott's.

The society reporters always speak of a bride being "led to the altar," but as though a bride couldn't find her way to the altar.

RELIGIOUS PAGEANT.

Where Fashionable Men and Women Do Penance for Their Sins.

Where the light is sharpest, the shadow is deepest; and it is close to Ostend the bright, the haughty, the fashionable and the gay—that a most solemn religious ceremony is annually observed, and that at the moment when this queen of watering places with all her attractions is at her fullest, says the New York Tribune.

The scene is Furnes, a small town not far from Dunkirk, on the French frontier, within easy reach of Ostend, and the time is the last Sunday in July, the date—originally in May—having been changed, perhaps, in order to convenience summer visitors.

The religious ceremony, which brings hundreds of people into the little town in pilgrim's garb, consists of a penitential procession through the streets, the story of Christ's life and passion being set forth by living characters as described in the New Testament, with certain introductory elements from the Old.

What makes the procession especially striking is the part played by the penitents, who publicly play many of the characters or perform other acts of contrition, and who for hours tramp through the ill paved streets under a broiling summer sun or stumble barefoot through water and mud in wet weather. Thus the part of Christ at the moment of His crucifixion has for many years been taken by a burgomaster of an important neighboring town, and like his great Prototype, he drags an enormous cross. Behind him comes a crowd of men and women, who also carry great solid crosses, which are borne in different positions according to a vow. They are completely disguised, these men and women, being covered with black garments from head to foot, so that except for height it is impossible to tell a man from a woman.

More leaders of fashion of both sexes than any one realizes slip away quietly from Ostend and elsewhere when the Furnes procession comes on, and, completely disguised, take their places among the penitents, having previously obtained certificate of repentance from their religious adviser, and the secret of identity is closely kept. Only the finer turn of a woman's nose, or the extra care bestowed on the man's feet, the glimpse of fine lace under the coarse black skirt, the cultivated tone in a voice of prayer, give any indication as to the position of those who pass along in the procession. All are completely covered with heavily boled for the features; all wear black gloves, so that the hands may afford no clue, and ostentatiously carry white handkerchiefs, large and coarse (presumably for penitential tears), and all are barefoot.

This curious penitential procession seems to have originated in 1100, when Count Robert of Flanders came from Palestine, bringing home a piece of the true cross. He founded a local branch of the Society of the Cross, which adopted this method—then much in vogue, like mystery plays—of teaching the ignorant the Bible story by exemplification.

The great Furnes procession starts at 3:30 o'clock from a small street behind the church, so as to allow of pilgrims coming from some distance. Playing the penitent in the Furnes procession is, it must be explained, no light and easy task. It means downright hard work, for, muffled as the pilgrims are, it involves replacing horses and dragging great carts and lorries or bearing on the shoulders awkward, heavy platforms, on which are placed the wooden figures that represent the stations of the cross with which the procession of living characters is diversified. It means staggering along with top-heavy banners without seeing where you are going, the hard stones bruising delicate feet; it means carrying metal explanatory notices in aching arms for hours at a time, and all the while reciting penitential psalms. No playing the repentant sinner at Furnes is far too arduous for any one to undertake who is not in earnest.

Hundreds of barefoot penitents appear, dragging as best they can—some in one position, some in another, according to their vows—enormous heavy crosses. Slipping and stumbling under the weight, and gasping with fatigue as they slowly pass along, every now and then some more delicate or feeble penitent drops from the ranks, to be restored by those near. A few moments' rest and they go forward again to finish their penance. Round and round the town goes the procession till scarce a street has not been visited, then so back to the Grande Place, where the cortege disappears round the corner whence it emerged, looking as if the Middle Ages had swallowed it up till next year. The penitents slip away unostentatiously and return secretly to their homes.—The Sphere.

Science's Strange Discovery.

The crescent-shaped sand dunes which move in thousands across the desert of Islay, near La Joya, Peru, have been investigated by Astronomer S. I. Bailey, who found the points of a crescent to be 160 feet apart, while the convex side measured 477 feet and the greatest width was more than 100 feet. The estimated weight was 8,000 tons, yet it was carried 125 feet a year by the prevailing south winds.

A WONDERFUL CAVE.

Was Discovered Near Enghoul Belgium Revealing Beautiful Chambers.

Quarrymen near Enghoul, Belgium, unexpectedly opened a passage into a great and previously unknown cavern. Its existence, however, had been suspected by a local mineralogist, Mr. Z. Doudou, on account of the disappearance of small streams in the neighborhood. Mr. Doudou at once began an exploration of the new cavern, which has since been continued. It contains many large and beautiful chambers, but it especially is remarkable for its concretions and for a kind of mineral snow covering the floors, so light that a breath sends it whirling. In some places are found little basins filled with limpid water, which has begun to cover itself with a fine film of crystalline glass. The innumerable crystal stalactites in the cave are remarkable for the musical tones they give forth at the slightest touch.

Railways in India.

The length of railway in operation in British India was appreciably extended during the decade ending with 1906, inclusive, the length of line in working at the close of 1906 being 29,977 and the progress made during the ten years being 7,880 miles. The chief extension was in State lines, which expanded during the ten years to the extent of 5,046 miles. The length of State lines now in operation amounts to a mileage of 21,917. Of the original guaranteed systems the Andhra Railway is now the only one left. It comprised last year 904 miles of line. Native States have been judiciously encouraged to develop railway communication, and the aggregate length of these native State lines had grown from 2,002 miles in 1901 to 4,711 miles in 1906. Of the 29,977 miles of line in operation in India at the close of last year all but 116 miles were more or less under Government control.

European Ostrich Farm.

Some interesting facts have been published concerning the success of the experimental ostrich farm started two years ago near Nice. There were originally thirty-two birds—twenty-five from California and seven from Abyssinia. Their progeny, up to the present, numbers 110. The cost of maintenance is said to average £2 10s per bird per annum, while the average value of a set of plumes is given at £40, and the average life of an ostrich is estimated at eighty years.—London Tit-Bits.

Three Sherwoods.

Mrs. Catherine Sherwood, at the age of 52, gave birth to triplets, who were named respectively Franklin, Francis and Frederick. They all became sea captains and all lived to be more than seventy years old. It is related of the brothers that while in Charleston, S. C., they all went into the same barber shop one day to get shaved, one in the early morning, one at noon and the other in the evening, and the barber said that he never saw a man whose beard grew so rapidly as that man's did.

Latest Watches For the Blind.

On the face of one of the latest watches designed for the use of blind people the hours are indicated by movable buttons in relief on the dial. A strong pointer shows the minutes. The blind person passes his fingers over the dial; the button indicating the hour he finds to be depressed, while the position of the hand gives the minutes. The buttons are held by a circular plate beneath the dial, which has at one point on its circumference a notch into which the buttons drop, one after the other, as the plate revolves with the movement of the works. This plate serves instead of the ordinary hour hand of a watch.

A Suffolk Ballot.

A ballot on novel lines has been taken at Glemsford, in Suffolk, where the workers in a mat factory had all received three months' notice. The employers were approached and a deputization of the men suggested a 10 per cent reduction in wages in order to keep the works going. To ascertain if this would be accepted by all a ballot was taken. Each man was given an original "voting paper" in the form of a bean and a pea, and the voting urn was a plain jar. The bean was a vote for the reduced pay, the pea against. Seventy-five beans were placed in the jar and only nineteen peas. Work will therefore continue as usual.

Warts Communicable.

"Recent experiments show that the popular belief that warts are communicable is warranted," says a writer. "Inoculation of healthy tissue with fluid obtained from a wart will cause the growth of a similar excrescence. It is thought that these growths contain an ultra-microscopic germ to which is due the transmission from one person to another. At all events, persons who have warts should take measures to have them removed at once."

Unique Spire Torn Down.

A spire that was unique in church architecture has just been torn down at Providence, R. I., it being that of the Jefferson Street Baptist church, which was entirely of brick even to the apex, each brick being especially fashioned for the place it occupied.

LONDON IS STEREOTYPED.

Builder Thinks Sameness of Small Houses Causes Village Effect.

A colonial visitor to England writes in the Builder his impressions of England and London from a builder's point of view. He notes that the most remarkable feature in the vast growth of little two story houses in the last twenty-five years is the uniformity of their plan of arrangement.

In Continental centers which are developing suburbs there is a certain individuality in the small houses. Speculative houses built by the dozen are very exceptional on the Continent. But in England a house built to suit the taste of an individual is so rare as to pass unnoticed among the tens of thousands of villas and cottages erected by speculative builders. He continues:

"As London is approached on the southern side the remarkable character of the modern English mode of living in suburban cottages is apparent. London seems to a foreigner like some monstrous overgrown village or collection of villages with interminable rows of little two story cottages, interspersed with fields, lawns and parks.

All that constituted a town or city in the old times and in the olden sense has of course long since been swallowed up in this gigantic labyrinth and the country thus transmogrified is inhabited by a people who, to judge by the singularly stereotyped appearance of their houses, are content with as remarkable stereotyping of their domestic arrangements."

Making True Diamonds.

The production of artificial diamonds has long been a dream of the experimenter. The conditions under nature are pretty well understood; and on a small scale they have for some time been duplicated in the laboratory and even—though scarcely unwittingly—in the workshop. Nothing more is necessary than to reduce carbon—a bit of coal or graphite or lampblack—to a liquid condition, combine it with a solvent and maintain it under great pressure until it cools, when crystals of the pure carbon will form just as do crystals of quartz or sugar or salt under like conditions—and these crystals of carbon constitute true diamonds. But the difficulty lies in the extreme reluctance with which carbon assumes the liquid state. Under pressure, to be sure, it will liquefy, but the pressure is about fifteen tons to the square inch. In the depths of the earth, such a pressure may be applied by the weight of geological strata; but how may it be attained in the laboratory?

A most ingenious answer to this question was found by Professor Henri Moissan, of Paris. It is based on the well known fact that the metal iron has the property—which it shares with a few other substances, including water—of expanding instead of contracting as it passes from the liquid to the solid state; combined with the further fact that liquid iron absorbs or dissolves carbon, much as water does sugar, in increasing quantity with increasing temperature. Moissan fills an iron receptacle with pure iron and pure carbon obtained by calcining sugar, closes it tightly, and rapidly heats it to the highest temperature attainable in an electric furnace, bringing it to a degree of heat at which the iron begins to melt, and the iron volatilizes in clouds.

The dazzling fiery receptacle is then lifted out and plunged instantly into cold water, until its outer surface is cooled and hardened, thus forming a shell of iron that holds the interior contents with an inflexible grip. As this molten interior matter cools, the carbon separates from the iron solvent in liquid drops, and under the almost unimaginable pressure of expansion of the solidifying iron these liquid drops become solid crystals of diamond.—Every body's.

"There's Many a Slip."

The proverb, "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," is probably the oldest of all the familiar English sayings. Its origin is found in the following ancient Greek legend told by Lycophron. Ancaeus, the son of the god Poseidon, a King of the Leleges of Samos, took great pride in his vineyards, and treated most harshly the slaves who worked them.

A prophet predicted that as a punishment for his cruelty he would not live to enjoy the wine pressed from his grapes. The harvesting and the winemaking passed in safety, and finally Ancaeus stood feasting at the prophecy with the first cup of wine in his hand. But the beer replied to the King's mockery "Many things happen between the cup and the lip." At that moment a wild boar broke into the vineyard and Ancaeus setting the cup down untasted hurried off to direct the chase, in which he was killed.

Largest Retail Drug Store.

The greatest drug store in the world is said to be found in Russia. It exists in Moscow and is 203 years old. Its title is the Old Nikola's Pharmacy and since 1833 it has been in the family of the present proprietor. It is a building of imposing dimensions, with many departments including one of professional education for the staff, which numbers 700 persons. About 2,000 prescriptions are said to be dispensed daily.

BOTTLE TREE OF AUSTRALIA.

Peculiarity of Trees Found Growing Near the Coasts.

The vegetation of Australia is different from that of any other country. The various species number about ten thousand, which is a far greater number than is to be found in Europe. A peculiarity of the trees found growing near the coasts is the vertical direction of the foliage, which allows the sunlight to pass easily through the leaves. Many curious trees are found, but none is more remarkable than the bottle tree, or baobob. The peculiarity of the tree is found in its abnormal trunk, which, as compared with other forest trees, is out of all proportion to its branches. Sometimes the trunk is nearly spherical, resembling a huge inverted turnip.

The peculiar nature of its spongy soft wood is responsible for its rejuvenescence. The tissues contain large quantities of moisture in the form of mucilage, indeed, in time of drought the trees are often felled and the wood broken up into small pieces. This the cattle devour with great relish. The fruit takes the form of a thin-shelled, gourdlike capsule covered with a thin green velvety pile. In fine examples they are equal in size to small coconuts. When ripe they contain a flourlike powder having a peculiar acid flavor not unlike cream of tartar. The fruit remains attached to the branches for a considerable time after the leaves have fallen. The flower which precedes the fruit is white, somewhat like those of the eucalyptus, its center being filled with a sheaf of slender white stamens. The African baobob has the peculiarity of hanging its fruit from the branches by means of long cordlike stems something from a foot and a half to two feet in length. In common with the dragon trees of Tenerife, the baobobs are regarded as the slowest growing trees and the longest lived members of the vegetable world.

This dragon tree of Tenerife was one of the wonders of the vegetable kingdom. It stood near the town of Oratava, on the island of Tenerife, and many travellers examined and measured it. Moysen found it to be seventy-five feet high and forty-eight in girth. Just above the ground it was seventy-nine feet in circumference. Humboldt found it and when he measured it discovered that it had not changed in size since the days of the French adventurers, the Bethencourts, who seized the island in the fifteenth century, some four centuries before the trunk was hollow and a staircase had been erected inside by which one could ascend to the height at which the branches began. This relic of ages was unfortunately destroyed by a hurricane in 1867.

Milan's Great Appetite.

"From early times Milan has enjoyed a reputation for the gorgeously and heaviness of its banquets," writes Rappin Mackenzie from Rome. "Gordoni attributed to the Milanese an insatiable love of the good things of the table in the following words, which have been handed down to us: 'They (the Milanese) can neither take a walk, a drive, or amuse themselves in any way, without conversing on the all engrossing theme of eating. At the play, in the heart of their families, even at the spiritual conference, they cannot resist indulging in their favorite topic.' Even in modern times Milan retains her old reputation. At Christmas time one can see that she eats well. A walk through her streets will reveal shops laden with all good things necessary for the festive season. The beef is prime—none better in all Italy—the turkeys and chickens fattened to a nicety, and the vegetables like one vast garden. Perhaps there is a touch of the barbaric in this display. It is true that in that thriving city of northern Italy they work well and long, giving the lie to those who prate of Latin laziness, but it is truer still that they eat much. A glance back at earlier days reveals the fact that Barotti, in the sixteenth century, draws a comparison between the English and the Lombards, likening them to wolves, not on account of their roughness of manner, for they were ever cordial and hospitable, but because of their rapacity in eating and the number and length of their repasts. In fact, a family now could live for three days on the ample supply which was then deemed necessary for one person. Until Milan felt the influence of France, the Milanese cooking was of a primeval nature. Their banquets were prodigious in length and quality, but lacking in delicacy.

"With eth ssap inoof "The passing of time the fame of these good people increased. The markets of Milan became world-famous. The Verzere was a market for produce of all kinds. There were to be found meat and vegetables in and out of season. Its fame spread throughout the plains of Lombardy, and all neighboring cities knew of its glory.

The French Nobility of Today.

France's nobility is exactly twice as numerous now as it was before the great revolution of 115 years ago, which was aimed at the aristocracy, and by which all titles of nobility were abolished. Previous to that time there were 235 French princes and dukes; today there are 460. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were in all 83,000 titled persons in France, among whom less than 20,000 had a legal right to a coat of arms. There are now, in the thirty-third year of the third republic, 200,000 individuals duly possessed of patents of nobility. At the time when the nobility was all powerful in France the aggregate fortunes of the aristocracy amounted to one-tenth only of the wealth possessed by the nobility today.

Sicily's Big Tree.

Sicily boasts the largest tree in the world. It is known as the Chestnut Tree of a Hundred Horses, and is situated at the foot of Mount Etna. It has five enormous branches, each as large as an ordinary tree, issuing from a trunk which is 212 feet in circumference. A large hollow in the trunk is capacious enough to contain a flock of sheep. Its name originated in the story that Queen Joan of Aragon with her nobility and their retainers once took refuge from a violent storm under its spreading branches.

Wairus Whiskers as Toothpicks.

In the Chinatown of every city the grocers sell toothpicks made of wairus whiskers. These are excellent toothpicks, and in China no fashionable diner is complete without a bundle of them. From either side of the mouth of the wairus whiskers, at once stiff and pliable, project. They are about four inches long, and the older the wairus the more elastic are these hairs. When the Alaskians kill a wairus they pluck out the whiskers with tweezers, and bundling them up in neat packets, they ship them, when there are enough, to China.

Everybody is willing to help somebody else, at somebody else's expense.

KILLED THE COBRA.

A Fight Between a Snake and Two Mongooses in Ceylon.

A curious story comes from Ceylon about a fight between a cobra and two mongooses, which was witnessed by a number of residents of Colombo. For a little while the mongooses were averse to attacking the cobra, although they ran round and round it inquiringly. The snake, which was a splendid specimen and beautifully marked, exhibited much alarm as soon as it saw its antagonists, and curled itself up, ready to strike. After some time the mongooses warmed to their work and the fight began in earnest. Again and again they dashed in and seized the snake by the tail or lower coils of its body, jumping out of striking distance before the cobra could touch them. Their ability in this respect was amazing. Tired out with watching them run first one way and then the other, making an occasional dart in and jumping as rapidly back again, a time came when the cobra, failing to turn with sufficient speed to face the mongooses, the latter sprang in, seized the snake by the back of the head and killed it at once.

Horse Knew His Own Stable.

A nice old country clergyman, a trifle over-proud of his worldly wisdom, was in need of a new horse. His old Dobbin had served him many a year, so the minister resolved to take advantage of a horse fair to be held in the neighborhood, and sell his old horse and buy a new one. So off he drove to the fair alone. As he asked such a small price for old Dobbin, he soon made a sale, but to find a horse to replace him seemed a work of difficulty; some were too heavy, some too tall and some far beyond his means. But late in the afternoon he came across just the very thing he wanted.

He took a fancy to the animal right off, and though the price was high, a little haggling brought it within his reach, and, paying just double what Dobbin had brought, he soon had the new beast harnessed in and on his way home.

The horse took the road steadily and quietly, and more and more the minister felt satisfied with his bargain. So it was with a very cheerful voice he hailed his man, as he drove up to the house, to come and admire his purchase.

"The man looked at the horse and then at his master, then back again at the horse. 'Ye have brought back ye're ain best.'"

"No, no," said the minister, springing out of the gig. "It is like him. You see the resemblance? It made me take a fancy to this one at once. But Dobbin has flowing locks, this one is short cropped, and or, his coat is darker, too; think how gray Dobbin was getting."

The man unharassed, continuing to repeat, "It's ye're ain best," and the minister continued to protest, when Dobbin settled the matter by walking quietly off to his own stable and his own familiar stall.—Animal World.

Hallucinations From Starvation.

Disturbances of the mind caused by deprivation of food are described by a French physiologist, Dr. Lassiguardie. "His conclusions were to the effect that fasting promoted the development of the intellectual faculties, especially the imagination. In actual starvation the character changed and became irritable and cruel, with loss of memory and will power, and development of hallucinations, agreeable or distressing. He has recently been studying the miners who were buried for so many days in the mine at Courrières. One miner was not released until after an interval of twenty-five days. He frequently imagined himself at home and talked with his wife and imagined that he found scraps of food, which he ate with relish. Like most of the others, he frequently imagined that he saw bright lights before him. All the miners said that they became very irritable and frequently quarrelled. They all had hallucinations generally agreeable, but nearly all retained their reason, only a few being actual dupes of their imagination."—Journal of American Medical Association (Chicago).

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