

# YARNS ABOUT THIBET.

## STORIES ABOUT LIFE IN AN ALMOST UNKNOWN COUNTRY.

A section of Middle Asia that has attracted many able Chinese story tellers—some remarkable accounts of strange doings in Chinese writings.

A curious collection of facts respecting Thibet, as represented by various Chinese authors and travelers, has been made by Mr. Woodville Rockhill, who has himself explored that mysterious country of middle Asia.

On New Year's day at the capital city, Lhasa, there begins a season of festivals. One of the entertainments is called the "spectacle of the flying spirits." The performers stretch an enormously large rope made of hide all the way from the top to the bottom of Mount Potala; then they fashion grooved blocks of wood to their ends and slide down the line like many swallowfish from the top of the mountain down to the bottom of the lake. He is also the incarnation of the god which chiefly protects mankind.

On the 30th of the month there is another great sport when the king of the devils is driven away. A priest is chosen to play the part of the top of this mountain dweller the pope of the Buddhist religion, who is called the lama. He is also the incarnation of the god which chiefly protects mankind.

These dice are very big ones, about the size of apples, but the poor fiend has no show at all in the gamble, for his die is blank on every side, while the lama's has the highest number on each of its faces. In Thibet, as in Christian countries, it is always laudable to defeat the devil.

Being beaten, the king of the devils is frightened and runs away, with all the people after him, firing guns and cannon, so that he is obliged to hide at length in a hole in the mountain, where provisions have previously been placed to feed him for a few days while he remains in confinement. There are nearly as many demons in Thibet as there are human inhabitants, and the priests or "lamas" are kept very busy exorcising them, because otherwise they would swarm everywhere and do no end of mischief.

If any one is sick or annoyed in any way the devils are responsible, and the only sensible thing is to go and hire a priest to frighten them off. For this purpose the lama reads aloud from the sacred writings, blows a horn made from a human thigh bone, beats a drum manufactured out of two human skulls, rings a bell and tells over a rosary of skull shaped beads cut out of human skulls.

The lama also do a large business in fortune telling. Sometimes they ascertain the fates with barleycorns; at others they burn sheep bones for the same purpose or gaze into bowls of water.

According to one author there is a very astonishing curiosity in Thibet in the shape of a plant that flies. It resembles a dog in shape, is the color of a tortoise shell and is very tame. If lions or elephants see it they are frightened, "hence it is the king of beasts." There is a kind of black donkey which can cope in fight with the tiger. On the icy peaks of the Himalayas, says this imaginative writer, there is a "snow maggot," resembling the silkworm in appearance and weighing nearly a pound. It is excellent to eat, but too much of it will make one bleed at the nose.

Seventy five from Lhasa is a convent on top of a hill, and a great hole full of white clay that is good to eat. As fast as the clay is eaten more takes its place. Behind the convent is a large lake, and evildoers who go near always tumble into it. The Thibetans used to cast Buddhas in copper, and the smaller they were the more they were worth.

POLYTHEISM IN THIBET. Chinese philosophers say that manners differ every hundred li of distance, and customs are no longer the same every thousand li. Thus the ways of the Thibetans vary, but in most parts it is useful for a woman going to see a priest to smear her face with molasses. If this is not done it is said that she is trying to captivate the lama, by her comelyness—an unpardonable crime. A sign of politeness on meeting a person is to hold up the clasped hands and stick out the tongue. When a man dies one-half of his property goes to charity and the other half to the lama. His family gets nothing.

One of the writers quoted observed that in case of death the corpse is tied up with the head between the knees, and suspended in a rawhide bag from the rafters. A few days later it is taken to the corpse cutter's place, where it is tied to a post. The flesh is then cut off and given to dogs and the bones crushed in a stone mortar, made up with grain into balls, which are also thrown to dogs and vultures. Both these methods of burial are considered highly desirable.

For small misdemeanors men and women are stripped and beaten in the market place. Great criminals are bound with ropes and whipped with a hide ladder. If this does not persuade them to avow their guilt boiling butter is poured on their chests. Supposing that they still protest their innocence, they are suffocated with water or splinters are driven under their nails.—Washington Star.

A Paris Candle Story. "Every traveler who stops at a Paris lodging house," laughed a woman the other day, "has a candle story, and here is mine: We were served with two candles every morning, which we never half used up; these would be taken out, however, and fresh ones appear in their places. Knowing that we were being charged for every candle we determined at least to enjoy added illumination, and my husband looked around for a place to hide them during the daily doing up of the apartment. On the top shelf of a cabinet arrangement in a corner stood a large Japanese vase, wide and deep. Up to Mr. M.—climbed, for in its capacious hollow we found seventeen candles, every one burned down perhaps an inch.

"Some former lodger had resented the candle swindle like ourselves, and had put his daily allowance where it would do the proprietor no good. That night a brilliant illumination of nineteen candles, each set in its own groove on the marble top table, gave us something like light. During our stay we hid and accumulated candles, so that we had always enough to read by, and when we left we deposited our overstock in the vase for the benefit of some searching successor."—New York Times.

The Religions of China. The three great religions of China are Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The bulk of the people are Buddhists rather than Confucianists, and there are millions of infidels. The tomb of Confucius is at Mecca, for many of the Chinese, and they make pilgrimages to it. Confucianism is more a philosophy than a religion. It contains many of the beauties which we suppose to be exclusively the properties of Christianity.

groom's row in a negative form was an accolade by Confucius, and as a symbol of morality it is beautiful. The Taoists have more superstitions than the Confucianists. They began about the same time as Confucius, their preacher being one Lao-tse.

The state religion, in connection with which all these religions come in, is the worship of the emperor, who is the son of heaven and the prophet, priest and king of the people. He worships for them in the temple at Pekin. When the great Temple of Heaven was burned down a shudder ran down the 300,000,000 spines of the great Chinese nation. It was thought that this was a warning from heaven that the emperor should be deposed.—Frank G. Carpenter in National Tribune.

Begging Letters from London. "Ever since I was abroad," said a well known New Yorker, "I have been pestered with all sorts of begging letters. They are mostly from the managers of English charitable institutions of various descriptions, though some are from private individuals. The former inclose a variety of printed matter illustrating the purpose and work of the institution. The latter are abject appeals of apparently professional begging letter writers, with which London abounds. I was talking with a friend about it and he said he had the same experience for about two years after he had built a fine house here, a description of which and his health got into the local papers. He was deluged with begging letters from almost every capital in Europe and especially from London.

"These people are the worst and most persistent beggars in the world. Fancy an American mailing begging letters to London! I suppose there must be money in it or they wouldn't do it."—New York Herald.

Fragrant Wood. Few of our native trees have odoriferous wood like the sandal wood of the islands in the Indian ocean; but a few of the conifers on the Pacific slope have sweet scented woods. The pine church at Metlakatla, built by the civilized Indians of Alaska, is so fragrant as if incense was continually floating through the air, from the wood of the great arbutus (Thuja gigantea) of which it is built. Libocedrus decurrens, found further south, is known as "incense cedar" from its fragrance. The yellow cypress (Cupressus nutikensis) and the Monterey cypress (Cupressus macrocarpa) have also sweet woods. In the Atlantic states red cedar and arbutus trees have scented wood.—Mechan's Monthly.

Different Sizes of Feet. "Did you ask what would be considered a small foot? said a pretty shop girl in a big establishment, kneeling before a customer, she deftly fitted on a pair of India rubbers. "Well, I should call No. 3 a small size, and No. 4 even. The average is about 5 7/8 large, although I have seen very nice looking feet that were 7's. I have one customer who wears 7's and another who wears 1's. Quite a contrast, isn't it? The smallest foot on a grown person I ever saw belongs to one of our customers; she wears 1's, child's size, but it isn't pretty a bit; it looks so tottering."—New York Tribune.

BUYING WEDDING RINGS. Most Young People are Very Matter of Fact When Choosing the Band.

Just think of it! One jewelry store on the Bowery claims to sell over 400 wedding rings a year. And yet we hear the cry that "most young people" are buying out of the many stores that supply these golden fetters of matrimony can dispose of such a number within a year, what must the sales amount to when all those that are supplied by other firms are added?

Surely somebody's getting married. Down in the Bowery, near Grand street, there hangs a golden glow large enough to marry all the brides on that side of town. It is hung above a jewelry store, and can be seen as well from the elevated road as from the sidewalk. It was from the window of a down town train that I first caught sight of it. A young couple looking couple that sat near by also noticed the giant emblem of wedlock, and I heard the girl whisper, "Oh, Willie, there's where we got our ring." But Willie didn't look until the car had passed the store; then he raised his eyebrows a little and said, "I see," indifferently, and turned again to the paper he had been perusing. The girl lit her lips and looked down at the gold band upon her unglowed hand. At the next station I left the train and visited the store where Willie had bought the ring. One of the salesman said, in answer to a question, "There isn't as much sentiment in the business as you might suppose. By the time the happy couple arrive here they have got beyond the blushing stage of heart disease, and they buy the ring in the most matter of fact way. Sometimes the man and woman come together, but usually the gentleman comes alone to get the ring.

"Do women ever select and pay for their own wedding rings? Not very often, although there was a lady here last week who did so. When a couple come in together the man picks out a

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