

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

FROM A TRAVELER'S NOTE BOOK.

By an ancient charter of the town of Alnwick, in Northumberland, every freeman, on his initiation, is compelled to jump into a muddy pool, and scramble to the opposite bank. This custom was imposed by King John, who is said, when traveling once in the neighborhood, to have stuck in a morass and been bemired. As a punishment to the townsfolk for not keeping their roads in better condition, he ordered that henceforth this disagreeable rite should be observed by every new freeman of the town; and, as its charter has never been altered, the custom has continued down to the present day.

In the year 590 there appeared a comet, to whose influence was ascribed a dreadful epidemic which was raging in that year, and in which crisis the sufferers were attacked with fits of sneezing that were often followed by death. Therefore it became a custom that when such fits were discovered, the bystanders gave their blessing to the sufferer, saying, "God bless you!" Such is the origin of the blessing which is still occasionally given when a person sneezes.

Kissing as a religious act was practiced at the time of the patriarch Job, B. C. 2130; who protests (Job xxxi. 26-28) that he had not kissed his hand to the sun or the moon. This mark of devotion was paid to Baal (see 1 Kings, xix. 18) B. C. 910. Dr. Winsemius declares that the custom was unknown in England till the Princess Rowena, daughter of Hengist, King of Friesland, pressed her lips to the cup, and saluted Vortigern with a little kiss, A. D. 449. From a passage in Evelyn's Diary, it appears that men kissed each other in the streets of London towards the end of the seventeenth century. In many parts of Germany it is no uncommon sight to see men, even now, kissing each other in public.

In the winter season the Esquimaux live in huts built of snow, and we may imagine what must have been the necessity and distress that could first have suggested to a human being the idea of using such an unpromising material as a means of protecting himself from cold. Be that as it may, the snow "igloo," or hut, affords not only security from the inclemency of the weather, but more comfort than either stone or wooden buildings without fire. The construction of them requires considerable tact, and is always performed by the men, two being required for it, one outside and the other inside. Blocks of snow are first cut out with some sharp instrument from the spot that is intended to form the floor of the dwelling, and raised on edge, inclining a little inward around the cavity. These blocks are generally about two feet in

length, two in breadth, and eight inches thick, and are joined close together. In this manner the edifice is erected, contracting at each successive tier, until there only remains a small aperture at the top, which is filled by a slab of clear ice, that serves both as a keystone to the arch and a window to light the dwelling. An embankment of snow is raised around the wall, and covered with skins, which answer the double purpose of beds and seats. The inside of the hut presents the figure of an arch or dome; the usual dimensions are ten or twelve feet in diameter, and about eight feet in height at the centre. Sometimes two or three families congregate under the same roof, having separate apartments communicating with the main building, that are used as bedrooms. The entrance to the "igloo" is effected through a winding covered passage, which stands open by day, but is closed up at night by placing slabs of ice at the angle of each bend, and thus the inmates are perfectly secured against the severest cold.

Japanese night shops are kept by very poor dealers, who come out between eight and nine o'clock in the evening, and stay till eleven or even later. Their mode of doing business is very simple. Each merchant spreads his meagre display of goods on a mat in the gutter, on the corner of which he sits, keeping a sharp lookout for the depredators who crowd about his exposed property. The wares on sale are of the cheapest description, of course, but are attractively arranged, and make a pretty appearance often in the weird chiaro oscuro of the torch-lamp of tallow-saturated paper. Generally second-hand, but sometimes new, they comprise almost all kinds of goods in common request, such as domestic utensils, books, sandals, getas, chopsticks, mats, flowers and "curios" of every conceivable and inconceivable shape and purpose. Some stocks are, collectively, of considerable value, but in many cases a five-dollar note would buy out the entire establishment. But to most of their customers such an amount of ready cash is undreamed-of wealth; and few of the transactions amount to a higher sum than that for which copper coins can suffice as a medium of exchange. Most of these tradesmen have other occupations during the daytime, or go about the streets with boxes on their backs, picking up trifles at low prices when they can find a promising bargain within their capital. Some, again, are sent out by established houses to work off cheap and damaged goods. When not engaged in business, they may be found in very dirty houses, called by the Japanese *uradana*, or back-shops, in inner-courts and miserable localities where they make a shift to live. But despite their deep poverty, they seem to share the happy disposition of their nation, and

a passer-by who stops to examine their wares will find them polite, pleasant and clever. And occasionally it will be worth his while to examine the wares, as, now and then, really pretty articles may be picked up at very low prices. And the purchaser, sharp as he may think his bargain, may rest assured that he has sent one poor soul happy to bed that night over unaccustomed profits.

THE SWINOMISH (W. T.) COUNTRY.

Mr. Samuel Calhoun says: "New settlers are constantly coming in, and further back on the flats, toward the bluff lands, new claims are being rapidly taken up, while those already taken elsewhere, are being immensely improved. The farmers are now busily engaged in constructing new dykes, and in repairing and making more permanent their old ones. The acreage in grain will be largely increased next season. In my own neighborhood, there will be 8,000 acres in grain next summer, against 6,000 last season. Next fall no less than 10,000 tons of grain, consisting principally of our famed oats, will be exported from this locality."

Weston, in Umatilla county, has nearly doubled in size during the past year, and is now a very flourishing little town. It is incorporated, has the best public school building in Eastern Oregon, and its live and enterprising citizens support a very neat and spicy weekly paper, the *Weston Leader*.

Centreville, about three miles from Weston, was laid out less than one year ago, and already contains twenty-five houses, used for business and dwellings. It is very pleasantly located, on Wild Horse creek, in the midst of a rich agricultural section, and is a natural location for a flourishing village.

Never in the history of scientific mining have the mines of Southern Oregon been in better shape for operations. Every miner is now ready, and his claim is rigged up with a view of doing the most work in the least time.

THE WEST SHORE for December comes to us with some of the best illustrations of Pacific coast scenery that it has ever been our lot to behold. It is full of racy descriptions and other interesting reading matter. This magazine (for such it is), should be on the table in every parlor on the Pacific slope.—*Idahoan*.