

BACK FROM TOWN.

Old friends allus is the best. Halesst like and heartiest; Knewed us first, and don't allow We're so blame much better now!

We thought then the world we went into beat "The Settlement." And the friends "at we'll make there Would but any anywhere!

W'y, of all the good things yit I can't shet of, is to quit Business, and git back to sheer These old comforts waitin' here— These old friends, and these old hands

Sing "Hard Time's 'll come ac'in No More!" and neighbors all jine in! Here's a feller come from town Wants that his old fiddle down

Bank Cars.

New Zealand has set an example which might advantageously be followed in certain parts of this country. In the same way as we have "cathedral cars" it has "traveling banks."

Mr. Bradlaugh's Windfall.

An interesting incident in the life of the late Mr. Bradlaugh, M. P., has escaped notice in the many biographical sketches. At a time when Mr. Bradlaugh was most in need of money he narrowly escaped coming in for a windfall of over £20,000.

He Was Not to Blame.

One day on a railroad car a lady allowed her little boy, who could barely speak distinctly, to play about the car and by and bye, to the horror of all of us, she discovered him complacently sitting outside on the steps.

Trampled His Partner's Ace.

At a social gathering a few evenings ago, the conversation turning upon luck, a gentleman remarked: "All this talk about thirteen being an unlucky number is sheer nonsense. What, for instance, is luckier than holding thirteen trumps at whist?"

Early Leeches.

In America leeches have been known for at least 200 years. They were at first very primitive affairs, being nothing more than deep cellars, the flooring made of boards or stone, upon which was placed a layer of straw or sawdust.

Not in the Second Hand Business.

As Sheridan was entering court one day carrying his books and briefs in a green bag, according to the custom of the time, some of his brother barristers, thinking to play a joke on him, urged some boys to ask him if he had old clothes for sale in his green bag.

A Scotch student had a curious method of studying. He spread out his books where the hearth rug would naturally have been, and lay there at full length learning his task by the light of a fire made from roots of decayed trees which he had dug in a wood near Edinburgh and carried to his lodgings.

It is easy enough to smile when you tread upon rose leaves; but try it when each step leaves blood prints upon the thorns. Some of the lines in your face may curve downward then.

THE CURSE OF SCOTLAND.

There Are Twenty-four Reasons Why the Nine of Diamonds Is Called Unlucky. Every reader has at some period of his or her life heard of the nine of diamonds referred to as "the curse of Scotland;" but why, perhaps, you have never taken the time or trouble to ascertain.

In my "Repository of the Rare and the Wonderful" I find no less than seventeen explanations of the origin of the expression, while Southwick's "Quizzism and Its Key" gives eleven, seven of which are wholly different from the answers given in the work above referred to, making in all twenty-four different accounts of the origin of the expression in the two works.

Perhaps the most satisfactory explanation of the enigma is that which refers it to the massacre of Glencoe. The order for that cruel deed was signed by the Earl of Stair, John Dalrymple, secretary of state for Scotland. The coat of arms of the Dalrymple family bears nine lozenges, resembling diamonds, on its shield. Thus it appears to have been with reference to them that the nine spot of diamonds was called "the curse of Scotland."

In the game of Pope Joan the nine of diamonds is the pope, whom the Scotch Presbyterians consider a curse. It is also said that the Duke of Cumberland wrote his inhuman orders at Culloden on the back of a card, the front of which was marked with nine diamonds.

The "Oracle, or Resolver of Questions," printed in 1770, says that the crown of Scotland had but nine diamonds, and that the Scotch people were too poor to add to the collection.—St. Louis Republic.

An Elevator Incident.

In one of the elevators in a down town building the other day an absent minded man came near departing this life with unbecoming haste. He had stood close by the door when the car stopped at his floor and had allowed two or three other passengers to brush by him. He had made no signs of a desire to step out, but when the elevator resumed its upward course and the door was nearly closed he gave a start and jumped forward until his body projected out of the car and prevented the door from closing.

Even the elevator man had nothing to say for a minute, but when the next floor was reached the whole affair seemed to strike him in a new light. He didn't think of the horror of a life suddenly taken away, of the sickening sight of a crushed and mangled body. "That's what I call a mean man," quoth he with severity. "Want to have me sent to the Tombs, eh? Gad! A man like that ought to get hurt, he had!"—New York Times.

Noble Tree Planters.

I read a very interesting statement recently that the three late dukes of Athole planted in their lifetime 14,000,000 larch trees on their estates. The writer who made this statement seemed to doubt the fact on the ground that he imagined that their graces did so with their own hands, which would necessitate each of them planting 200 trees a day for sixty years. When, however, a man is said to "plant" an estate it does not any more mean that he does so personally than, when it is said that a man "furnishes" a house, he makes his own cabinets and tables, or puts down his own carpets—though our grandfathers and grandmothers, as often as not, actually did the latter, as well as—good souls!—sewing the various strips of carpets together.

If, however, it comes to planting trees with one's own hands, there is still something to be said. Charles II planted nearly all the trees in the avenue at Windsor with his, and some that are now in St. James' park; and George III had a mania for planting his own trees, as well as innumerable grape vines. Her present majesty has planted over 5,000 trees in various places she has visited, and the Prince of Wales cannot be very far behind her in also doing so.—Gallegani's Messenger.

A Terrapin Farm.

Of late years a number of terrapin farms have been started along the Chesapeake. The biggest farm is on the Patuxent river, and it consists of a large salt water lake, which could accommodate thousands of terrapin if they would breed as rapidly as is desired. The farmer has surrounded this lake with board fences to keep out the muskrats and foxes, which are the terrapin's enemies. He has made hatcheries of boxes partly filled with sand, and so arranged that when the females enter them they cannot get out until they are taken out. He has nurseries for young terrapin, and he keeps the little ones in here until they are ten months old, in order to preserve them from their fathers.—Frank G. Carpenter in Pittsburg Dispatch.

Paying the Piper.

Inquiring Boy (looking up from a book)—What does "paying the piper" mean? Worried Father (absently)—Tell him to call next week. "I said 'the piper,' pa." "Well, if it's a plumber, he needs't call for a month."—Good News.

A GRAVEYARD DANCE.

GHOSTLY CEREMONY WITNESSED IN A JAPANESE CEMETERY.

A Four Days' Feast for Legendary Spirits. Burying Grounds Richly and Luxuriously Decorated with Garlands and Tempting Viands.

Dr. G. H. Colton Salter, who for many years was United States consul in Japan and afterward entered the Chinese government service, gazed thoughtfully into the glowing embers in the grate and after a short pause told the following tale: The many stories published about Indian ghost dances and the Messtah craze remind me of one of the most remarkable incidents I have ever witnessed during my long career in the Orient, and I am sure there are but few Americans or Europeans who have had the opportunity to see the sights of which I am going to tell.

The native religion of the Japanese is, as you know, Buddhism, and there is no creed which is so full of superstition. Some of the ancient beliefs of the Buddhists are calculated to frighten the faithful and vividly portray the horrible punishment that awaits the sinful man after he closes his earthly career, while others, with charming simplicity, show that the greatest aim of the Hindoo religion is the release from existence.

The doctrine of the transmigration of souls and a hope for a better fate in a future life are the principal foundations upon which Buddhism rests. Nagasaki, where I resided for many years, was famed for the splendid festivals in honor of Buddha, or Gautama, the founder of the religion. Owing to the work of missionaries and the consequent spread of Christianity in Japan, many of the religious fetes are no longer publicly observed, and the one of which I am about to speak had its last grand celebration in 1886, just before I left Nagasaki.

It is called the Matsidri and was held during the last week in August or the first week in September, continuing four days. These days were set aside for the reception of the spirits of the dead, who, according to a legendary belief, return once a year to their old homes. For many weeks previous to the festival preparations had been in progress. The houses of the believers had all been carefully swept, cleaned and polished, and the home altars, which are to be found in every native house, had been redecorated and refurbished. The interior of all the buildings had been profusely adorned with flowers, the streets had been repaired and the whole city was clothed in holiday attire.

On the morning of the first day the dead were received with much ceremony in the graveyard, which is in a beautiful grove. Each mound was profusely decorated with lighted lanterns and garlands of many colored paper globes hung from tree to tree. On the top of every grave food of the daintiest kind was spread in a tempting manner and in quantities sufficient to appease the appetites of an army of the hungriest kind of ghosts. On mats spread about the graves sat all the living descendants of the person who had been buried in that particular spot. Not a single tomb was neglected. If in the course of years the family of any one of the silent sleepers had completely died out his grave had been embellished and supplied by strangers.

The spirits were supposed to arrive and depart by water from the sea, and for four days and nights the living commune with their dead and were with them in spirit. The souls of the departed were supposed to hover around the tombs like substantial visible beings, and they were treated with every attention due to sacred and distinguished visitors from the other world.

The night of the second day was devoted to a grand terpsichorean entertainment or spirit dance, and the graveyard was transformed for once into a ball room, where ghostly dancers were supposed to hold revelry.

A SPECTACULAR SIGHT.

The scenes made a strong and everlasting impression on me. The night was perfect, the moon was at its full and the air was fragrant with the perfumes of thousands of flowers. Myriads of lights were flickering on the hillside which surrounded the city, and the colored lanterns swayed gently to and fro, keeping time to the chiming of the silvery bells in the temple tower, which furnished the music for the mystic entertainment. Around an artificial lake in the center of the graveyard the people knelt in silent devotion, worshipping on the shrine of Buddha, whose emblem, the lotus flower, rose from the middle of the lake.

Every one of the four days and nights brought new surprises and ceremonies, many of the latter being held in the temple, the doors of which were closed and guarded against the entrance of infidels. On the last night—the night of nights, as it was called—a grand procession finished the festival. The people marched in parade to escort their spirit visitors to the water front, where they were to depart.

Boatmen carried on their shoulders a gigantic craft built of wood and straw, in which the dead were supposed to be seated, and which was to convey them back to spirit land and to Ohata, the great father beyond the sea. This boat, which is called Fukuy, was a masterpiece of Japanese carpentry. It was ninety feet long and had a stately mast with a huge sail which bore in native characters the inscription, "Naidinamawidi," a word which is symbolic of Gautama's greatness.

This boat, artistically and richly decorated, was launched with much ceremony after the last spirit had been embraced and, figuratively speaking, had taken his seat on board. It was then grabbed out into the sea, and drifting away was finally carried out of sight by the tide. And so ended the last festival of Matsidri ever held publicly in Nagasaki, and the most splendid religious celebration I ever witnessed.—San Francisco Chronicle.

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