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# WOMEN AS SHOEBLACKS.

They Are Numerous in France and Some Have Married Rich Customers.

A custom is rapidly gaining ground in France, and especially in Toulon and certain other towns, which, it may safely be prophesied, will not find much imitation in this country. This is the employment of women as street shoeblicks.

The French women shoeblicks are most coquettishly gotten up, and as to their caps and frills have somewhat the appearance of hospital nurses, and it is surprising that though their occupation is a tolerably dirty one, they always seem clean and tidy; some of them are doing the polishing in gaudy gloves.

In the towns in which they are employed they certainly are a success particularly, especially where English and American visitors, who generally seem to treat the whole affair as a good joke, are numerous.

It is said that one reason for the occupation being a popular one among women of a certain grade in life is that many of the fair polishers have married opulent customers who have been impressed by their shining qualities.

A Hardy Cactus. There grows upon the sands of the Atlantic coast, at least as far north as the Virginia line, a little cactus with a pretty yellow flower. It flourishes in the driest seasons and where nought but bare sand is visible for many square yards. The secret of its sturdy growth amid hard conditions is found, perhaps, in the character of its roots.

They are long and tough, like twine and most important part of those dominions it seldom rises. George W. Bell told the Royal Botanical society the other day that during last year England had had 1,314 hours of sunshine out of a possible 4,380, and that, he said, was better than for the last five years, of which the average was 1,087 hours. He related as a remarkable fact that one day recently the sun had shone in the society's gardens for eight and a half consecutive hours, an almost unprecedented thing at this season of the year.

A Great German's Prescription. Diseased blood, constipation, and kidney, liver and bowel troubles are cured by Karl's Clover Root Tea. For sale by H. E. Warren.

PERSONAL PARAGRAPHS. ALEXIS COLUMBUS, a former shipbuilder, now ninety-seven years old, who claims to be a lineal descendant of great Christopher, has been discovered in Buffalo, N. Y.

REV. INA CHASE, Indiana's ex-preacher-governor, was by turns school-teacher, soldier, clergyman, lieutenant governor, governor and bank organizer under Zimri Dwiglins. EDWARD E. HALE says that his notion of happiness is that a person who sleeps nine hours out of every twenty-four and lives in the open air two or three hours of every day will be in good health if he does not drink liquor. THE variations which time works in family names was well illustrated at the Scotch family gathering in Chicago. Various members of the clan spell their names McLean, MacLean, McLain, McLellan and McLane. The chief's name is spelled Maclean.

# CHINA'S MAIL SYSTEM.

How Letters Are Transported in the Flowery Kingdom.

Individuals and Firms Manage the Post Office and Perform Efficient Service—Guarding Against Robbery—A Government System to Be Established.

In a report just published by the state department, Samuel Gracey, United States consul at Foochow, China, tells how the mail is carried in the "flowery kingdom." China has not yet established government post offices or a postal system for the masses of the people, with all her adoption of modern ways, but private enterprise is depended upon to render communication easy between various parts of the empire. This private transmission of mail is conducted through what are called "letter shops." No stamps are used, but the "chop" or sign of the keeper of the "letter shop" is always placed upon the envelope.

In this country when the government wishes to send a communication it incloses it in an envelope marked "official" or "public-free" and it goes through the mail as other letters except that no postage is paid. In China imperial edicts and other official communications are carried from city to city and province to province by couriers. Generally they make the trip afoot, but in case of great haste they are provided with horses at convenient relay stations. Official letters or dispatches are thus conveyed in cases of urgency two hundred or two hundred and fifty miles a day. In districts where transmission of official communications is frequent each station master is required to keep on hand from ten to twenty horses or donkeys, and the local representative of the government is held responsible for all delays that occur. These official couriers, who correspond to our star route mail carriers, are not allowed to carry private dispatches or letters, their operations being restricted to the transmission of government communications.

The public is served by the "letter shops," a carrier system organized by private enterprise transmitting the mail from one station to another. Consul Gracey says at the treaty ports the letter shops are used by natives only, but in the interior, or at places not reached by the foreign postal arrangement, they are employed by foreigners as well, though chiefly by missionaries. "These speak well of the system for its security," he says, "but they do not consider it all that could be desired in respect to quickness of delivery. It somewhat resembles our express business, as it transmits parcels of moderate size and weight. It is said to possess two decided advantages over our western system—insurance against loss and monthly settlement of accounts. All the letters and parcels to be sent may be registered and insured."

Before a letter is mailed or delivered to the carrier its contents are displayed, and the keeper of the letter shop then signs his "chop" or sign, so that its point of origin may be ascertained. Parcels may be transmitted in the same manner, the charge for carrying being a percentage of their declared value. The shopkeeper gives a receipt for the letter or package, and he thus becomes responsible for its safe delivery or its return to the sender, with seal unbroken. In some parts of the empire, the consuls say, about two-thirds of the expense of transmission is being by the sender, the remainder being collected from the receiver. Thus the shop is secured against entire loss from transient customers and the sender has some guarantee that his letter will be conveyed with dispatch. Native merchants who are regular customers keep an open account with the shop and make their settlements monthly. In some of the larger cities and towns the letter shops are numerous, but in many remote villages there are none. In Shanghai there are nearly two hundred. Some of the shops employ solicitors who go from house to house working up trade, competition in many cities being strong. In the northern provinces the shopkeepers imitate the government and employ a system of mounted carriers. Horses or donkeys are used, the relay stations being about ten miles apart. Each carrier or messenger is entrusted with seventy or eighty pounds of mail matter, and travels about five miles an hour—much slower than the government carriers. For short distances and in central and southern China the messenger travels on foot at a rapid gait. When the messenger arrives at a station he hands over the letter shop to the carrier. "He starts at once," says Consul Gracey, "no matter what may be the hour of the day or night, and regardless of winds, rain, heat or cold, he continues the journey until he, too, has completed his service and handed the parcel over to a third messenger, and thus it reaches its destination."

This "pony express" like that which was in use across the western plains of the United States forty years ago, is sometimes subject to interruption by highwaymen, but the Chinese have a way of compensating such villainy and thus protecting their postal service. The robber bands of each district collect blackmail from the shopkeepers, and for regular sums paid they not only do not molest the messengers themselves, but they agree to keep their messengers from taking any large sums engaged in the carrying business and in transporting travelers by carts between given points are in the habit of contracting with the brigands for the safe passage of their goods and customers. "Thus," comments the consul, "the evil of mail or express robbery, common enough in more civilized countries, is recognized as probable and only provided for. Although, of course, not legal, this practice is quite common and is not removed from the custom of some other nations in licensing social evil that cannot be entirely suppressed."

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Don't require an itemized report of every dollar placed in her hands, even should she make an unwise expenditure; consider how many times you have given her the example.—Good Housekeeping.

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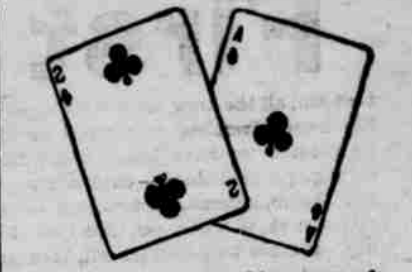
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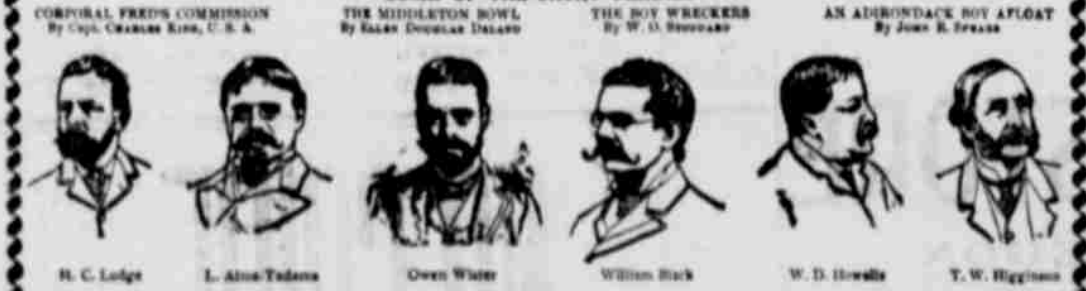
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