

THE TERRIBLE KNOT.

The Dreadful Punishment of a Murderer in Russia.

Masof had murdered a man, a woman and a little boy. Before the magistrate he made a full confession of his guilt.

He was marched out to punishment in company with two forgers, all St. Petersburg turning out to witness the spectacle.

"The stake prepared for him was a strong block of wood fixed in the ground with three grooves at the top and two rings near the bottom; the middle groove was for the neck, and the two others for the arms, the rings below to look round the ankles, about the stakes were laid out on skins, especially where the knot-master stood, upon which lay his whips, marking-irons, pinners, etc.

An officer then read a paper to the people, signifying that forgery upon the Imperial bank being a capital crime, and two of the prisoners convicted of it were condemned to receive eleven blows with the knout, to have their nostrils pulled out, and be banished for life to Siberia; the murderer of so many persons to receive 399 blows, to be branded three times in the face, have his nostrils pulled out, and (if then alive) to be banished for life to the mines of Siberia.

"The executioner and his assistants then stripped him, tied his hands across, and led him to the post. After fixing his ankles they bent his neck and arms over it, and drew the rope with which his hands were tied through the ring on the opposite side, which seemed to stretch all the muscles of his back. He then retired about four or five yards from him, and taking up one of the knouts, worked it with one of his hands to give it proper elasticity. Walking toward the criminal with four or five steady steps, then taking a spring he struck a perpendicular stroke with a heavy, load crack. The first stroke cut from the right side of the bottom of the neck to the left armpit. The effect was visible in a moment, and by the violence of his screams afforded reason to suppose that the pain was very great. The second was about half an inch below the first, and so on till twenty-five, when, changing the whip, the operator erased the former wound, striking from the left side to the right, and afterward quite perpendicular. The strokes were given with the greatest regularity. Between each a person might deliberately count eight, the executioner always walking slowly to and from the stake.

"His cries were now so terrible that some of the spectators were obliged to turn their backs and put their fingers in their ears. All was quiet and silent, and the crack of the knout was heard a great distance. After receiving 300 lashes the culprit's voice grew faint, and during the last 100 he showed no signs of life whatever, the whole of the upper part of the back being beaten to a black mummy. After the last blow the assistants lifted up the face by the hair, and the executioner struck three or four times with an instrument that left the initial of murder, throwing each time a handful of black dust into the wound, after which, at two pulls he tore the gristle of his nose, and loosened him from the block. The whole lasted about three-quarters of an hour, and it was generally thought that he had been dead some time; however, he made a feeble attempt to put on his coat, and recovered sufficiently to be able to make some reparations to society by working in the iron mines."

Ben Butler's Nerve. Butler would have made a duelist of himself had he been born in a state and at a time when the code of honor held good. But being educated in Massachusetts never fights duels, and Butler's nerve has had to be expended in other ways. A notable instance of this occurred in 1856, when Butler was a young practitioner at Lowell. The Buchanan campaign was in full progress and a great meeting was being held in the largest hall of the city. Rufus Choate, the great lawyer, was addressing the meeting, and his eloquence had thrown them into the wildest enthusiasm, when a jar was felt and a crash was heard. The cry went forth, "The floor is sinking." Every one turned pale and the audience rose for a stampede, when Butler came to the front of the platform beside Mr. Choate, and, calling the audience to halt, said there was no danger; that the architect of the building was present, and that he would go with him and examine the building, and report to allay their fears. This quieted the audience. Butler and the architect made an immediate examination of the hall and found the danger very great. Butler at once returned and smilingly assured the audience there was no present danger, but as the hall was over crowded, he advised them to quietly adjourn to the public square and there Mr. Choate would finish his speech. The crowd went quietly out and the catastrophe was averted. As Butler stepped on the platform he had whispered to Mr. Choate with a half laugh in order to deceive the audience. This is what he said: "Mr. Choate I must clear this house or we shall all be in hell in five minutes."

It is said the custom of having twelve men on a jury, established by King Alfred in England, was borrowed by him from an old Breton law in Ireland which referred all disputes about land to the decision of twelve men.

Argument for Cremation.

In all the cemeteries in Italy which I have visited—Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Bologna, Rome, Naples—the system of burial is the same. The poor are simply interred in the earth in the quadrangular spaces, surrounded by colonnades and chapels. The rich are covered up in vaults in chapels, or beneath the stone flooring of the arcades, or in niches along the walls, one above the other from floor to ceiling, in all cases going through a process, more or less rapid, of putrefactive decay. Soil and aspect affect the rapidity of the process; but I was assured that about ten years was the period which must elapse before a body can be regarded as inoffensive or injurious to the living.

"Compare this with the two hours required by the practice of cremation, and compare the Italian cemeteries with our own over-crowded hot-beds of corruption. In this metropolitan district, in the twenty-five years 1859-1883, the deaths registered amounting 138,314. Of course the dead have been buried, and with scarcely an exception in and around London. Grant that in ten years a body may become harmless—although I do not at all believe that it does so within twenty years in our soil and climate—can any imagination conceive the enormous mass of decaying animal matter by which we are surrounded? Could any one be surprised at the outbreak of some devastating pestilence—a hundred-fold more destructive than the plague or black death of the middle ages? And ought not every sanitary reformer to aid in the revival of the ancient practice which would convert the existing cemeteries, so rapidly becoming sources of danger to the public health, into permanently beautiful gardens, receptacles for vases and cinerary urns, which would encourage sculpture, mural decoration and colored glass-work; while in our country churches the ashes of the people might again repose in death near the scenes of their work in life, perfectly harmless, instead of polluting the earth of the churchyard and the water drunk by the surviving people, or being carried far from their homes and places of worship to some distant cemetery, which before long must become overcrowded and pestilential. Public sentiment may for a time revolt at an innovation, but a very little reflection will bring most people to agree with part of the bishop of Manchester's address on consecrating a new cemetery. He said: "Here is another hundred acres of land withdrawn from the food-producing area of the country for ever. In the same sense in which the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, I hold that the earth was made not for the dead, but for the living. No intelligent faith can suppose that any Christian doctrine is affected by the manner in which, or the time in which, this mortal body of ours crumbles into dust."

"Continued to London Times. A South Carolina Court-Room. In the crowd around the court-room may be seen all sorts and conditions of men; broken-down politicians and ex-leaders sit beside the able lawyers from Columbia and Charleston; professional gamblers who can their iron banks here under the very noses of the local authorities, are 'bob-nobbling' and making friends with the 'lambis' they desire to fleece; the 'crackers' sit in open-mouthed amazement and admiration as the speaker—who is urging the conviction of an illicit distiller—pounds on the table and stamps his feet and pours forth his flood of eloquence; the women slyly smoke their pipes; the judge nods drowsily, and the clerk of the court yawns, for this is tiresome work to them; on every side squalor reigns supreme. The benches are dirty and uncomfortable, the floors are covered with mud of that peculiar loathsome character that abounds here, and the windows look as if they had not been washed since that period from which everything dates here, 'befo' de wah.' The court has been in session here two weeks, and during that time nearly half a hundred illicit distillers have been tried, and most of them convicted. Correspondence of the Philadelphia Press.

The Massachusetts legislators want higher salaries. But they won't strike. Ah, no. There isn't enough sand in the average legislator to enable him to go out. He wants all he can get. Nature made the member of the legislature with two hands, so that he could gesture with one and grab with the other. But he won't strike. He will demand more and more, and more and more. But when it comes to the pinch he would legislate for nothing and find himself rather than not legislate at all.—Burlington Hawkeye.

As the man who makes hats is a hater, and the individual who makes vats is a vatter, you should never be lost for a reply when any one asks you what is the matter. Tell him that it's the man who makes hats.

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