

A STRANGE FIRE LEGEND

The Curious Story Told by the South Sea Islanders.

The south sea islanders tell a curious story of the origin of fire. If they are to be believed, they came into possession of that useful element in the following manner: A great whale was once washed ashore upon one of their islands during the prevalence of a terrible hurricane. The monster became entangled in a grove of tall trees (a species of evergreens whose branches readily ignite) and while gnashing his teeth in his impotent rage struck out a spark which lighted the grove and consumed both trees and whale. Fires which are said to have been perpetuated since the day of the "great whale fire" may yet be seen burning in many parts of the islands.

Another fire legend, believed in by the inhabitants of the islands to the north of the ones in which the "great whale fire" is preserved, is to the effect that a great air dragon (probably lightning) breathed upon a tall tree and set its branches on fire. From the coals left from this fire they learned of its great value and have ever since used the element for domestic purposes and in their religious ceremonies. They also have a tradition that the time will come when the dragon will return for the fire and that no man will be able to withstand him and save the sacred spark except he be a person born with pink eyes, fair skin and white hair. For this reason the birth of an albino is always hailed as a good omen and his or her person guarded with jealous care, so as to preserve life to its utmost limit. Marquette mentions seeing a "fire god" or "fire guard" (albinos) while on his visit to the islands who was believed to be at least 155 years old and who had always been provided for by the tribe.

Refines, who made south sea island myths and legends a study for years, is of the opinion that the return of the dragon for his fire is symbolic of death and the flight of the spirit.

THE STAFF OF LIFE.

According to Tradition, Pan Taught Mankind How to Make Bread.

Man has not always eaten the fine wheat bread which is so frequently served today, and yet it would be necessary to go far back into prehistoric times to find the period in which some kind of bread was first made. Sarah, who cooked for Abraham, the "father of nations," made bread just as her ancestors had made it for hundreds of years before her time. She prepared a paste of flour and water and, having shaped it into round, flat pieces, buried it in the ashes of the hearth. It was many years before the Jewish people knew any other kind of bread, although there were times when these flat cakes were baked upon the gridiron until they were dry and brittle enough to be broken by the hand.

According to tradition, it was Bannu who first taught mankind how to make bread. According to the same authority, it was the goddess Ceres who taught the Greeks how to cultivate corn and Megalarte and Megalome who instructed them in the art of kneading flour and baking loaves in ovens. So successful were their pupils, however, that at one time no less than seventy-two kinds of bread were evolved out of various combinations of milk, oil, honey, cheese and wine with the flour of that period.

For a very long time the Romans were eaters of gruel, the art of parching corn and of converting it into flour having been taught to them by King Numa (715 B. C.), while the baking of the compound was only introduced with the worship of Pomax. Permanent public bakerhouses were in use in Rome as early as 630 B. C. Strangely enough, however, in the midst of the bewildering progress of the centuries bread is one thing that has shown but little improvement.

England Afloat.

England's naval supremacy began in 1588 with the defeat of the renowned Spanish armada. This fleet consisted of 130 vessels, carrying 2,500 cannon and 30,000 men, while the English navy consisted of but fifty vessels no bigger than yachts and thirty of the queen's ships. When the conflict was over the Spaniards had lost eighty ships and 10,000 men. A medal struck to commemorate this great event had for its motto, "He sent out his arrows, and he scattered them."

What a "Hurricane" is.

"Hurricane" is the old Spanish name for a West Indies cyclone, but it is used by modern meteorologists to designate a long continued wind of extreme violence. In Beaumont's scale the different winds are classed as "light," "gentle," "fresh" and "strong" breezes. The next is a "stiff" breeze, then a "strong" wind, and then we strike the "gales." The "gales" run through three or four classes, the last merging into the "hurricane."

An Apt Retort.

"Fools sometimes ask questions that wise men cannot answer," remarked the professor in the course of his lecture. "Then that explains why so many of us get plucked in our examinations," said the flippant student.—Home Notes.

Shifting a Burden.

"Aren't you the man I gave a pie to the other day?" "Yes, lady." "What did you do with it?" "I gave it to my mother; her's stronger than I."—New York Press.

What a man can do is his greatest ornament, and he always consults his dignity by doing it.—Carlyle.

Not a Cent.

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OLD LEAP YEAR LAWS.

When Women Proposed Six Centuries Ago the Man Had to Accept.

In two countries, at least, and more than 600 years ago laws were passed which gave women the right of proposing marriage. These enactments went even farther than this. They also stipulated that if the man whose hand they had sought should refuse he should incur a heavy fine.

A searcher among the ancient records of Scotland discovered an act of the Scottish parliament, which was passed in the year 1283, which runs as follows:

"It is statut and ordaind that during the rein of his majest Megeate, ilk for the years knowne as Lepe Year, ilk mayden ladye of batthe highle and lowe estat shall have liberte to bespeke ye man she likes, albeit gif he refuses to talk hir to be his lawful wyfe, he shall be mulcted in ye sum of ane hundris or less, as his estat may be, except and awis gif he can make it appeare that he is betrothit ane ither woman, he then shall be free."

A year or two later a law almost similar to the Scottish enactment was passed in France and received the approval of the king. It is also said that before Columbus sailed on his famous voyage to the westward a similar privilege was granted to the maidens of Genoa and Florence.

There is no record extant of any fines imposed under the conditions of this Scotch law and no trace of statistics regarding the number of spinsters who took advantage of it or of the similar regulations in France, but the custom seems to have taken firm hold upon the popular mind about that time. The next mention of it is dated nearly 400 years later, and it is a curious little treatise called "Love, Courtship and Matrimony," which was published in London in 1698. In this quaint work the "privilege" is thus alluded to:

"Albeit it now becomes a part of the common law in regard to social relations of life that, as often as every leap year doth return, the ladies have the sole privilege during the time it continues of making love either by words or looks, no man will be entitled to benefit of clergy who doth in any wise treat her proposal with slight or contumely."

Up to within about a century ago it was one of the unwritten laws of leap year that if a man should decline a proposal he should soften the disappointment which his answer would bring about by the presentation of a silk dress to the unsuccessful suitor for his hand.

A curious leap year superstition is still to be met with in some parts of New England, and that is that during leap year the "beans grow on the wrong side of the pod."

An Incautious Critic.

Almost the last work that Sir Edwin Landseer was engaged on was a life sized picture of Nell Gwynn passing through an archway on a white palfrey. This picture, in which the horse alone was finished, was bought by one of the Rothschild family and given to Sir John Millais to complete. One morning a celebrated art critic called and was much impressed with this work. "All to be sure," he said, going up close and examining a deerhound, which almost breathed in the foreground of the picture. "How easily one can recognize Landseer's dog! Wonderful, isn't it?" "Yes, it is wonderful," remarked Sir John, lighting another pipe. "I finished painting that dog yesterday and have done the whole of it myself." That critic was sorry he spoke.

Another Reason.

Aunt Emeline is the best loved woman in Saymouth, for her charity is alike of hand and heart. Like many other excellent persons, Aunt Emeline is not a church member, but she is a regular attendant at the village church, which is so near her cottage as to seem under the same roof. When, at the close of a recent sermon, the minister requested all those present who had never united with the church to retire at the end of service, everybody was surprised to see Aunt Emeline rise and start down the aisle.

The Old Menhaden.

The oily character of the menhaden is familiar. It is caught for its oil, which is tried out in factories. Menhaden fishermen use purse nets, which are tarred to preserve them. To keep their hands from sticking to the tarred nets they rub on them a freshly caught menhaden, handling it somewhat as they would a cake of soap. So oily is the menhaden, that the simple pressure thus applied is enough to bring through the scales oil sufficient for the purpose.

Pleasant Job.

"Oh, George, I'm so glad you've come," exclaimed the sweet girl. "Father is so excited and disturbed. Do go in and calm him." "Very well," replied Mr. Lovett, "what's the matter with him?" "Why—er—I just told him you wanted to marry me."—Philadelphia Press.

A Mesa Trick.

"What do you do to make talk when you call on a new girl?" "I usually start by telling a joke." "But the rest of the evening?" "That can be filled up in explaining the joke."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Foresee misfortunes that thou mayest strive to prevent them, but whenever they happen bear them with magnanimity.—Zoroaster.

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POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

Some men don't care how dull business is if it is equally bad with their rivals.

About the third time some people show you a kindness you find they want to sell you something.

Patience is that which you have to have with others, but which no one is entitled upon to have with you.

Society is a good deal like our rich kin—we are mighty nice to its face, but make fun of it behind its back.

Some people are like a worthless team of horses—always have to be helped when it comes to pulling a load uphill.

There is one way of starting on the pathway to get rich which is seldom traveled these days—running a store and living over it.

It sometimes happens that deference is shown a man not in recognition of his greatness, but because he will be cranky of it isn't.—Atchison Globe.

They Had No Dinner.

The absentmindedness of a certain well known Scotch professor is notorious. Not long ago he invited a few select friends to dine with him, and upon their arrival, some short time before the hour set apart for dinner, the professor suggested a walk through the conservatory and grounds until the gong should sound the dinner hour. After spending a short time inspecting flowers, plants, etc., host and guests came suddenly to a small gate at the end of the lawn. "Ah," said the professor to his astonished guests, "assuredly this will be a much nearer way home for you than going back to the front." And, all unconscious of his invitation to dinner, he opened the gate and bowed his guests out.

Ironing Board.

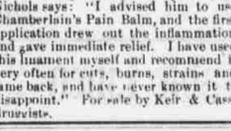
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