

THE CUCKOO.

Curious Superstitions That Are Connected With the Bird.

There is a popular belief that whatever one is doing when first one hears the cuckoo that will be what one will most frequently do during the year. In many parts of Scotland and in the northern counties of England people turn their money in their pockets on hearing the first call of the cuckoo, as this, they say, insures a lucky year. In the counties bordering in Wales not only do they do this, but they also have a wish at the same time, this wish being kept secret, of course. To have a gold coin in one's pocket when the cuckoo's call is first heard insures good luck for the rest of the year. The German peasants declare that after St. John's day the bird changes into a sparrow hawk.

The Danes have a curious legend regarding this bird. When the village girls hear its first call they kiss their hands and repeat, "Cuckoo, cuckoo, when shall I be married?" As many times as the bird calls "cuckoo" in answer, so many years will the maiden have to wait. The old folk, bent and bowed with rheumatism and age, ask instead, "Cuckoo, cuckoo, when shall I be released from this world's cares?" and the answer comes in the same way. So occupied is the poor bird in answering these questions, say the Danes, that she never has time to build her nest, so is forced to lay her eggs in the nest of another bird.—Planet.

A GREWSOME BEQUEST.

Extraordinary Legacy by the Father of Lord Audley.

Probably the most grewsome bequest ever named in a will was that made by Philip Thicknesse, a dissipated Englishman, who died in 1792. Some years before his death he had quarreled bitterly with his son, Lord Audley, and to spite him had placed on the outside of the family mansion a board bearing this inscription in large black letters:

"Boots and shoes mended, carpets beat, etc., etc., by P. Thicknesse, father of Lord Audley."
Finding he was about to die, he sent for his lawyer and drew up a will containing the following extraordinary clause: "I leave my right hand, to be cut off after my death, to my son, Lord Audley. I desire it may be sent to him in hopes that such a slight may remind him of his duty to God after having so long abandoned the duty he owed to a father who once so affectionately loved him."

The dead man's wishes were scrupulously carried out, and his severed hand, enclosed in a hermetically sealed leaden casket, was forwarded to his son. There is no record as to how Lord Audley received his unwelcome legacy or how he disposed of it.—New York Press.

Beggars of Bombay.

The nuisance caused by beggars in Bombay has assumed unbearable proportions. The orientals practice charity as a religious obligation and relieve poverty where they find it. Recitals from Kabit and Marabal never fail to touch the innermost chords of the natives with their innate reverence for spiritualism, and the faker backs up his appeal for alms with profuse quotations from the poets. Then there are lay beggars and religious beggars, the ash besmeared ascetics who practice mendicancy as a hereditary profession. Last and not least are the unfortunate sufferers from the loss of limbs or eyes or some fell disease disabling for work and drives them to beggary as the last resource. These latter have a genuine claim on our charity, but as there are so few asylums in India for the halt, the maim and the blind the streets and byways of towns are flooded with beggars, pitiful types of suffering humanity.—Rash Gaftar.

The Lace Curtain.

Just why there must be lace curtains even where there is no piano or rubber plant or gilt chair has never been explained to the entire satisfaction of man. He only knows that there must and lets it go at that. It often seems to him that if he could have his way, which is out of the question, of course, there wouldn't be lace curtains, at least above the cellar floor. They are in the way when windows are to be lowered or raised; they are apt to blow into the gas and burn down the house, and alarm is constantly sounded for fear the man will soil or tear them. They do not serve to keep out the light when there is too much of it, and the dog can't toast himself in the sun without getting tangled in them. Still, there are lace curtains everywhere, and that is all there is to it.—Providence Tribune.

Suspension Bridges.

There is no doubt that the first idea of a suspension bridge was suggested to primitive man by the interlacing of tree branches and parasitical plants across rivers. Probably monkeys used them before men did. In very mountainous countries, such as Tibet and Peru, they have apparently been used since the dawn of history, possibly earlier.

Who Taught Her Caution?

Isabel, aged four, was talking to an imaginary friend over the telephone, when her mother heard her say: "Wait a minute, Rocky. My brother is right here listening to all you say, and my mother is in the room too. Don't tell me about it now."—Delineator.

Careless.

Visitor—So that's Miss Overton. Don't you think she carries her age remarkably well? Artist—No, I don't. She has dropped several years of it to my personal knowledge.—Illustrated Bits.

MODERN TROGLODYTES.

The Matmatas, the Cave Dwellers of Tunisia, Africa.

One of the strangest of capital cities is that of the troglodytes, or Matmatas, the cave dwellers of Tunisia, Africa. It contains about 2,000 inhabitants, and the principle of its architecture is to dig into the earth rather than to build upon it. These troglodytes are to be found between the town of Gabes, on the Tunisian coast, and the sand hills of the Sahara. The country is a high, rocky plateau, barren, sun baked and swept by the sirocco. When a Matmata wants a new dwelling he chooses his spot, traces a circle and then digs until he has reached the desired depth, which varies according to the number of stories he requires.

The rooms consist of caves hollowed out in the sides of the circular pit, the bottom of which forms a patio, or courtyard, which is the usual feature of a Moorish house. Besides the rooms, a passage is also dug, communicating with the outside world, and a door is made at the other end. The soil, which is a kind of malleable clay, is easily cut and lends itself well to excavation, the roof of each room requiring no support as long as it is arched. These underground dwellings are not damp.—Chicago News.

POSITION FOR SLEEP.

A Variety of Opinions Among Eminent French Medical Men.

A number of eminent French medical men have given their opinion to the Matin of Paris on what they consider the healthiest position for sleep.

Dr. Delorme, army medical inspector, declares that the natural position is to lie flat on one's back. Professor Debone and Dr. Daveniere of the School of Hygiene are of the same opinion and point out that lying on either side causes pressure of the arm, which may eventually bring about paralysis.

Dr. Landouzy of the medical faculty says that the best position is the most comfortable position, and this is acquired by habit. It would be well, however, to accustom oneself to sleeping on the right side. Dr. Letulle of the Medical academy maintains emphatically that the sleeper should always lie on the right side and thus avoid indigestion and heart troubles.

In startling contradiction comes a statement from a heart specialist, Dr. Huchard: "I always sleep on my left side, and I think it is quite immaterial whether you lie on your left or right side. The idea, however, that those who cannot lie on the left side suffer from heart affection is quite erroneous."

What Brown Did.

Mrs. and Mr. Brown—that isn't the usual way of putting it, but it was the way they ranked—had been invited to a party where, Mrs. Brown understood, there was to be a host of literary lions. Mrs. Brown is an extremely handsome woman and just enough of a coquette to attract men about her wherever she goes.

Not long after they had arrived Mrs. Brown had four men around her, while Brown was pretending to be interested in some books scattered around on a corner table. Mrs. Brown inquired of the men in turn as to just what sort of literature they produced. One confessed he was a coffee broker, another was a doctor, the third was a machinery salesman. The fourth man admitted cheerfully that his only service to literature was reading books and newspapers. At this point Brown joined the group, and the coffee broker suggested to the lady that she might ask the newcomer what he did.

"Oh," remarked Mrs. Brown, placing B. at once in the discard, "he's my husband."—Exchange.

Extinct.

"Bessie," said the teacher of the class which taught all about birds—in the school prospectus it was called the "ornithological division"—"give me the name of one bird which is now extinct."

Bessie wrinkled her brows. "What's extinct, please?" she asked. "No longer existent," explained the teacher. "Can you name one?" "Yes," piped Bessie readily. "Dick." "Dick—Dick?" repeated the teacher. "And what kind of bird is a 'Dick,' please?" "Our canary," answered Bessie. "The cat extirpated him."

Marquis.

The designation marquis is the second in the five orders of English nobility. The term originally indicated persons who had the care of the marches of a country. The word marches is the plural of mark, which in its political sense signifies boundaries. Such were the lands on the borders of England and Scotland and of England and Wales.

Early Football Players.

Football was for many years the national game of Florence. The season was from January to March, and the ladies and gentlemen of Florence and the populace as well went to assemble on the Piazza Santa Gioce to witness the game, which was called "calcio," from the word meaning "to kick." The last game was played in 1739.

Corrected.

Employer (angrily)—Young man, what do you mean by sitting there doing nothing for the last half hour? Don't you know better than to waste your time in that way? Office Boy—I ain't wastin' my time. It was some of yours.—Chicago News.

Be not arrogant when fortune smiles nor dejected when she frowns.—Antonius.

BEARS GENERALLY JOLLY.

But Sometimes One Comes Along With a Settled Grouch.

"Rarely are bears born ill tempered. They may show some resentment at the time of their capture when but two months old, but this feeling soon disappears, leaving a jolly rogue ever willing to box and wrestle. I once knew a cub that was a regular terror," says a writer in Collier's, "and he never reformed. He would attack anything regardless of its size or strength."

"At the age of three months he would charge at me, snorting, sniffing and striking with his tiny paws, and when I did not protect myself he seized my trousers leg between his teeth and shook it violently."

"At first I thought that he had been abused by his former owner and that by kind treatment he would soon outgrow his temper; but, no, he had just it in him, and he became more and more dangerous as time sped by."

"Finally he grew large enough to be put in with the mature bears without danger of his squeezing between the bars and escaping, and to the surprise of every one he immediately took charge of the den. Old bears twenty times his size, possibly from some sense of honor, if animals have honor, submitted to cuffs and slaps in the face and actually allowed him to snatch food from their mouths without resenting the insult."

A CLEVER SWINDLE.

Ingenuous Scheme Worked by a Parisian Vagabond.

The manager of a fashionable Paris restaurant fell into a neat trap not very long ago. A man named Daval, who had only recently been released from prison, called a cab and told the driver that he was the Count d'Abbeville and that he had bet a friend a large sum of money that, dressed in a tramp's rags, he would eat a dinner at one of the most exclusive hotels. If the cabman would arrange the matter for him with the manager of the hotel the count would pay him handsomely.

The cabman drove up to a luxurious restaurant, took the manager aside and whispered the information that his disreputable looking fare was really a count in disguise and then related the story of the bet. The manager fell into the trap, and the ex-prisoner was served with an excellent dinner with many wines.

The meal over, the man declared that he was no count and that he had no money. The manager laughed heartily at the splendid way his guest played his part, but by and by the truth dawned on him. A policeman was called in, and the ingenious swindler was led away, imperturbably smoking a five franc cigar.—New York Sun.

The Lion's Rush.

The wisest and most experienced can never tell what a lion will do. Lion hunting, to my mind, has a charm all its own. Nothing compares with it, and no driving of ravines or swamps or catching the great cat at his kill is comparable to the joy and steady excitement of tracking him down. He chooses the ground. You follow him into it. You pit yourself against him. Crouching flat against the yellow earth, perhaps covered only by a few inches of grass, he is almost unbelievably hard to see. His rush and spring from a few yards distance is the fastest thing in the world. No animal can escape it, much less clumsy, slow footed man. He has a chance to pay off on man, the universal lord and master, the wrongs of the animal world, and here in East Africa the lion's revenge fell toll taken on human life and limb mounts high.—Rev. Dr. W. S. Ralston in World's Work.

The Rubber Tree.

The "India rubber" plant—Ficus elastica—is a great tree in the tropical countries in which it flourishes, often reaching as much as a hundred feet high. Imposing, indeed, it looks in such conditions, with a vast leafy crown extending over forty or fifty feet outward on each side of the massive trunk and with immense buttressing roots twisting and winding along above the ground in such a way as to lead the natives of India and Ceylon to call it the "snake tree." Sometimes these roots grow up into the trees and make the free look like the banyan, to which, it may be mentioned, it is botanically related.

The Usual Place.

"Can you swim, Corporal Brown?" asked an elderly major. "Yes, sir." "You can? Where on earth did you learn?" "Not on any earth, sir. I learned in the water!"—London Tit-Bits.

Past Tenses.

"It ees, however," said the distinguished foreigner as he concluded his story, "simply a matter of hearsaid." "You mean 'hearsay,' of course, count?" "Ah, but sis was told me some time ago!"—New York Journal.

Tactful.

"Whatever made you make Brackins a present of a pocket comb? He's as bald as a billiard ball." "That's just it. I want to make him think I never noticed it."

The Only Difficulty.

"The world owes me a living." "That's all right, old man, as long as you can get somebody to stake you while you are trying to collect the bill."—Boston Herald.

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