

VESTAL VIRGINS.

They Kept the Sacred Fires Alight in Ancient Rome.

Ovid tells us that the first temple of Vesta at Rome was constructed of wattle walls and roofed with thatch, like the primitive huts of the inhabitants. It was little other than a circular covered fireplace and was tended by the unmarried girls of the community. It served as the public hearth of Rome, and on it glowed, unextinguished throughout the year, the sacred fire which was supposed to have been brought from Troy and the continuance of which was thought to be linked with the fortunes of the city.

The name Vesta is believed to be derived from the same root as the Sanskrit was, which means "to dwell, to inhabit," and shows that she was the goddess of home, and home had the hearth as its focus. A town, a state, is but a large family, and what the domestic hearth was to the house the temple of the perpetual fire became to the city. Every town had its vesta, or common hearth, and the colonies derived their fire from the mother hearth.

Should a vestal maiden allow the sacred fire to become extinguished she was beaten till her blood flowed, and the new fire was solemnly rekindled by rubbing together of dry wood or by focusing of sun's rays. The circular form and domed-roof of the temple of Vesta were survivals of the prehistoric huts of the aborigines, which were invariably round.—Cornhill Magazine.

RAIN FORMATION.

Cold Air Squeezes the Moisture Out of Warm Air.

Warm air is capable of holding more moisture in suspension than is cold air. When by any means a layer or current of warm air which is saturated with moisture is suddenly cooled a portion of the vapor must fall as rain. Cold shrinks the heated air as pressure does a wet sponge and with precisely the same results. In mountainous countries this cooling down of the warm and damp air is most commonly produced by the air being brought into the neighborhood of mountain tops, which are cold.

It is for this reason that in such countries the showers mostly originate among the mountains and come through the valleys out upon the plains.

It will be easily understood that the higher the mountain the more striking will be the effects produced. If it be a snow capped peak in a tropical region a cloud will be formed such as to conceal the summit all the time. This cloud will be constantly growing on the side of the mountain toward which the currents of warm and moist air are set, for on that side the air is being cooled down, but after it has been driven over the peak it will waste away as rapidly, for it is then coming in contact with warmer air again.

From such high peaks the cloud rarely breaks away as a shower. All the surplus moisture of the air is deposited in the form of rain or snow upon the peaks over which the air passes.

The Jellyfish.

The bay of Naples abounds in medusae, or jellyfish, often growing as large as two feet in diameter and weighing fifty and sixty pounds. Some of them shine at night with a greenish light and are known as noctiluca (night lanterns) by the natives. The jellyfish sometimes make migrations in great groups, sometimes so large and so thick as to impede the navigation of vessels, like the floating plants in the Sargasso sea of the tropics. These shoals of medusae, as they are called, may be so dense that a piece of timber plunged in among them will be held upright as if stuck in the mud, and ordinary rowboats cannot force their way through them. Their migrations have never been explained. They are irregular and occur at no particular season of the year and under no particular influences.

The Record of Raindrops.

It is by carefully noting small and apparently insignificant things and facts that men of science are enabled to reach some of their most surprising and interesting conclusions. In many places the surface of rocks, which millions of years ago must have formed sandy or muddy seabeaches, is found to be pitted with the impressions of raindrops. In England it has been noticed that in many cases the eastern sides of these depressions are the more deeply pitted, indicating that the raindrops which formed them were driven before a west wind. From this the conclusion is drawn that in the remote epoch when the pits were formed the majority of the storms in England came from the west, just as they do today.—Harper's Weekly.

A Tree in a Thunderstorm.

Every one is aware that it is not wise to seek a tree's shelter in a thunderstorm, but if you must take refuge there then climb to the topmost branches. It has been proved that the upper boughs of trees during a storm would be the safest position, and it is said that birds in the branches are seldom killed. When the tree is struck by lightning it is the trunk which, presumably from its greater dryness, is a bad conductor and which therefore suffers the most.

Very Like a Bull.

An Irish litterateur when eating an apple pie flavored with a few green gooseberries exclaimed with gusto, "Ah, what a delicious apple pie it would be if it was all made of green gooseberries!"

ECCENTRIC BRIGNOLI.

Some of the Peculiarities of the Once Famous Tenor.

Brignoli, the great tenor, was so careful of his voice when he had to sing that he would not speak at all and was in the habit of writing his wishes on a piece of paper. During the last years of his life he lived at the Everett House, New York, when not on the road. It took him at least three-quarters of an hour to go from his room to the sidewalk. He must get used to the changes very gradually. Leaving the room, he would pace up and down the hall for ten or fifteen minutes until thoroughly "acclimatized," as he himself would say, and from there would go to the lobby to experience for twenty minutes a slightly lower degree of temperature.

At the end of half an hour he usually reached the vestibule, where he would pass another quarter, opening the outer door occasionally to get a taste of the fresh air. When thoroughly acclimatized here he buttoned his greatcoat close about him and stepped out on the pavement.

Brignoli never was known to be ready to go on the stage to sing his part. He had to wait one minute or several minutes before appearing. In this he was a great trouble to managers. "Just give me one minute more," he would beg, and when that was up he would plead for another and another till all patience was exhausted.

THE 'GREEN FIEND.

Absinth Was Originally a Harmless Medical Remedy.

Absinth, the green fiend that saturates fashionable France, was originally an extremely harmless medical remedy.

It was a French physician who first used it. His name was Ordinaire, and he was living as a refugee at Couvet, in Switzerland, at the close of the eighteenth century. Like many other country doctors at that time, he was also a druggist, and his favorite remedy was a certain elixir of absinth of which he alone had the secret.

At his death he bequeathed the formula to his housekeeper, Mlle. Grandpierre, and she sold it to the daughters of Lieutenant Henriod. They cultivated in their little garden the herbs necessary for concocting it, and after they had distilled a certain quantity of the liquid they sold it on commission to itinerant peddlers, who quickly disposed of it in the adjacent towns and villages.

Finally, during the first decade of the nineteenth century, a wealthy distiller purchased the formula, and very soon afterward he placed on the market the modern absinth, which differs greatly from the old medical remedy, since the latter contained no alcohol and very little absinth.

A Painter's Troubles.

The desire of the Bank of England officials to discover forgers has sometimes led to curious mistakes. On one occasion the painter, George Morland, in his eagerness to avoid his duns, retired to an obscure hiding place in Hackney, where his anxious looks and secluded manner of life induced some of his neighbors to believe him a forger of notes then in existence. The directors, on being informed, dispatched some dexterous detectives to the residence, but Morland's suspicious were aroused by their movements in front of the house and, thinking them burglars, escaped from the back to London. Mrs. Morland informed the visitors of her husband's name and showed them some unfinished pictures. The facts were reported to the directors, who presented Morland with two twenty-pound notes by way of compensation for the alarm.

She Didn't Dance.

In 1730 a gentleman living in Hampshire, England, named Samuel Baldwin, died after a rather stormy and most unhappy married life. In his will he directed that all his vast estate be given his wife on condition that she should dance upon his grave from time to time. As the will further instructed that his remains should be taken by boat to the Needles and from there cast into the sea, this, of course, prevented his widow from fulfilling the conditions of the will and thus lost her the property. He, however, had his revenge for the various tempers she had exhibited during their life together and for the remarks she often made that she "would yet dance upon his grave."—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

His Job.

Joe—I have got a good job at last, Ben, the boy.
Ben—What be doin'?
Joe—Oh, I'm a cashier in a p'lice ord's, and a rattlin' good job it is.
Ben—A cashier in a p'lice ord's, Joe. What's that? I never 'eard of that afore.
Joe—Duty! I counts the coppers as they come in.—London Answers.

Pretty icy.

"So she treated you coldly?"
"Coldly! Say, I'd have had to have a sextant and an artificial horizon to be able to find out what latitude I was in if I had been there for that purpose."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Sad Thought.

He—Why are you so sad, darling?
She—I was just thinking, dearest, that this is the last evening we can be together till tomorrow.—Chicago News.

The first sure symptom of a mind in health is rest of heart and pleasure felt at home.—Young.

FLIGHT OF THE EARTH.

Rushing Through Space at the Rate of a Million Miles a Day.

Our dear old earth, which seems immovable and solid as we go about our daily work or travel over its furrowed surface, is yet spinning and rolling and swaying in complex but orderly motion. Its axial rotation gives us day and night. Its circuit round the sun brings the seasons and the year. The circling of the poles produces the procession of the equinoxes. The planets perturb in its courses. The plane of its orbit sways up and down, and its perihelion is slowly shifted. The moon swings round a center of gravity common to both, while the sun and all our system speed onward to some far distant goal. And, if the bright star in the constellation Taurus is the central point round which this vast orbit sweeps, then Aleyone is the center of the universe for us.

As far as astronomers can judge, this motion through the vast abyss of interstellar space is at the rate of about a million miles a day, and it is in the direction of the constellation Hercules. The motion through space is believed to be away from Argus and toward Hercules. Some have thought that Aleyone in the Pleiades is somewhere near the center of the vast circuit swept over by the sun and his attendant worlds. If this is true, that beautiful star as it silently twinkles in the constellation Taurus becomes of surpassing interest to mankind.—Chicago Tribune.

HE WAS NOT IMMORTAL.

A Test That Proved It Was Possible to Kill a Spaniard.

Early in the sixteenth century the natives of Porto Rico plotted to kill the Spaniards on the island. There was much doubt, however, as to whether or not it was possible to kill a Spaniard. Many of the natives insisted that it was not. Finally it was decided to make an experiment.

A young Spaniard who was passing through an Indian village was hospitably received and fed, and then a number of natives accompanied him on his journey. When he arrived at a river his companions offered to carry him across.

The young man accepted and was taken up by two men and carried into the water on their shoulders. Arriving near the middle of the river, they threw him in and held him down until he ceased to struggle.

Then they carried him ashore with profuse apologies, loudly proclaiming that they stumbled by accident and calling upon him to arise and continue his journey. But the young man did not move, and finally the natives were convinced that he was actually dead.

Having secured the proof they wanted, the leaders of the rebellion at once began a general attack upon the Spaniards.—Blackwood's Magazine.

Unearned Gratitude.

A sample of the late Dr. William Everett's caustic repartee:

"I always experience a sense of deep obligation to you whenever I meet you or hear of you," said George Babbitt to Dr. Everett one morning when they found themselves pacing the deck of an ocean steamer together.

"Why so?" piped the doctor.
"Because," said Mr. Babbitt, "I recall that I was once so fortunate as to win the Boylston prize for oratory at Harvard, and you were chairman of the board of judges."

"I remember it perfectly well," rejoined the brusque doctor. "The judges were five in number. At the conclusion of the speaking we retired to consider the merits of the contestants. It was moved that you be awarded a first prize. On that motion the vote was 3 to 2 in your favor. I was one of the two."—Boston Transcript.

Bleeding by Bowshot.

That all diseases can be cured by bleeding is still firmly believed by several savage tribes and especially by the Papuan negroes. When one of their physicians becomes convinced that it is necessary to bleed a patient he goes several feet in front of him, and then, drawing his bow, he fits a sharp pointed arrow to it and, after careful aim, fires the arrow into the vein which he desires to open. The arrow, it is said, invariably goes straight to the mark, and the thorn or splinter of glass with which it is tipped does the work as successfully as a lancet. Moreover, the patients never show the slightest fear, since they are convinced that from the moment the arrows pierce their veins they will begin to recover.

The Producer.

"It must be annoying to have to ask your husband for money," said the intrusive woman.
"I wouldn't think of doing so," replied Mrs. Cumrox. "We insist on family games of bridge and in that way avoid being under the slightest obligations for what he contributes."—Washington Star.

Encouraged.

Old Lady—I want you to take back that parrot you sold me. I find that it swears very badly. Bird Dealer—Well, madam, it's a very young bird. It'll learn to swear better when it's a bit older.—Human Life.

A Good Deal of a Change.

A man who sent us a poem beginning "When twilight dews are falling fast upon the rosy leaf" has since married Rosa Lee, and now the weekly dews are falling faster upon him.

A wise man never loses anything if he has himself.—Montaigne.

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