

**A MODERN DAMASCUS.**

Ernest H. Heinrichs writes to the Pittsburg "Despatch" from Solingen, Germany, as follows:—

Of all the places of industry in Germany there is not one whose very name is so apt to make your blood run cold, and make you think of murder and death, as the mention of this little town on the Wupper. Wherever you go knives, forks, daggers, and swords are always confronting you. Whenever you talk to anybody you are always forcibly entertained with a voluble speech about instruments of death. As I jumped off the train at the little station the guard at once asked me did I want to see the manufacture of knives in Solingen. A few steps further the hotel porter took hold of me and said: "Our house is exactly opposite the great sword manufactory, which you have undoubtedly come to see!"

So it kept on. Whomsoever I addressed on my way up the hill from that little station to the town, the invariable addition of the direct answer to my question was: "I suppose you have come here to look at our grand cutlery establishments?"

Even the chambermaid at the hotel, when she handed me the brilliantly blackened boots the next morning, volunteered the information: Mine Herr, if you want to go through some of the knife or sabre factories, I will send you somebody to show you the way." But I replied that if she could not go with me herself I would not take a substitute, but go alone. And I did.

You do not want a guide here. Just walk out into the street, listen to the noise of the hammer which strikes the anvil, the file when it goes over the steel, or the scraping which is produced by the instrument when it is held against the grindstone. You must be as deaf as a post if you do not hear quite enough of such noise before you have gone many yards.

How many factories there are really in Solingen is hard telling. There are 25,000 inhabitants, and with the exception of women, infants, and old people, everybody is engaged in making some part or other of cutlery. This industry has been going on in this place for nearly 1,000 years. Tradition has it that Count Adolf IV. of Berg, who was the owner of Solingen, went to the crusade with Emperor Frederick II. of Germany in the thirteenth century, and on his travels in the Holy Land came to Damascus in Syria. Here the nobleman observed the manufacture of all kinds of weapons, and he learned it there himself. On his return he at once started a factory in Solingen, and since then Solingen weapons have become so famous that they are now considered to be unequalled in the world. English manufacture is not able to compete with the German any longer in this particular. Even the English Government order the finer swords in Solingen, and the large weapon manufactory of Wiersbach, Kirschbaum & Co., in Solingen, is now occupied with the making of 3,000 swords for English officers. I had the opportunity of seeing one of these weapons, and they are certainly admirable.

Mr. Koch, one of the foremen, took one in his hand, and putting the point on the ground, he bent it so as to have the handle almost touch the ground without breaking the blade. He then showed it to me, and the weapon was as straight as a line. The gentleman then took me into the yard, where a number of heavy sandstones were lying about.

"Here you are," he said. "See if you can knock a piece out of that sword on that stone."

I took the handle in both hands and struck the stone with all my might. But to my astonishment a piece flew off the stone, while the sword did not even show the least evidence of the blow.

"Everyone of these weapons has to stand that test," I was informed, "or we do not put the mark of our firm on it, nor do we deliver it as a first-class weapon."

I went all through this factory, which employs over 1,000 men exclusively in the manufacture of fine weapons. They are now filling an order for the German Government of a new bayonet. Eight hundred thousand are to be made, and the firm delivers 1,500 a day. The weapon is 12 inches long, and the Government pays 6 marks for each of them, when finished.

**Over-Reading.**

We are partly bamboozled by tradition from our youth up we are deafened on all sides by advice to "read and improve our minds." The inference is that the mind is improved by reading. But that inference is open to serious question. For my part, I should be willing to hazard the statement that twice as many minds have been injured by reading than have been benefited by it, and not a small proportion of the former have been made entirely worthless by the practice. It is just like dram-drinking; it is intellectual dram-drinking—and "intellectual" is scarcely the word to use in that connection. One reason is, no doubt, that the drama in question are, for the most part, of very inferior stuff. But even if it were of the best stuff imaginable, the detrimental effect would remain. The finest madeira, if swallowed in sufficiently copious doses, will produce delirium tremens; and the most unexceptionable books, if they are also too numerous, will bring on mental dyspepsia. The mind becomes a mere sack to hold other people's ideas, instead of a machine to generate ideas of its own. And the ideas thus acquired are of no use to it. The mind has lost the power to work them up into flesh and blood of wisdom. They remain a heterogeneous and incongruous mass. Foreign material, whether physical or intellectual, should be taken in with discrimination and moderation, and thoroughly assimilated. Unless you need it and like it, you cannot make it yours; whether you swallow it or not, it really stays outside of you.

**Chinese Superstitions.**

A girl who is partaking of the last meal she is to eat in her father's houses previous to her marriage, sits at the table with her parents and brothers; but she must eat no more than half the bowl of rice set before her, else her departure will be followed by continual scarcity in the domicile she is leaving.

If a bride breaks the heel of her shoe in going from her father's to her husband's house, it is ominous of unhappiness in her new relations.

A piece of bacon and a parcel of sugar are hung on the back of a bride's sedan chair as a sop to the demons who might molest her while on her journey. The "Three Beneficial Ones" are fond of salt and spices, and the "White Tiger" likes sweets.

The sun attracts large bodies. That is why the biggest peaches always get on top of the basket.

room to the other I observed rows of immense grindstones, some of them eight feet in diameter. In this factory I saw 40 stones and in the front of each sat a grinder. He has a little wooden seat, wears a woollen shirt, no cap, and a pair of overalls. But over the latter up to his knees he has wooden gaiters, made out of four pieces of wood. His feet are also enclosed in wooden shoes. The stones are turned by steam and watered automatically. In the front of this stone the man sits from six o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock at noon. Then he has an hour for dinner, when he sits down again from one o'clock until six in the evening. He has a boy who brings him the instruments as he wants them. The grinding department is the most important in the entire factory, and the grinder has to be very skilful. He has to have a keen eye, he must know when to press the steel hard against the stone and when not. A single scraping of the stone too much spoils the whole weapon, and it has to be thrown away. Most of the other work is mechanical, while here it is intelligence that does the work satisfactorily.

From the grinding stone the piece of steel comes bright and sharp. It is now taken to the burnishing rooms. This part of the work is chiefly performed by boys, who vary in age from 12 to 16 years. In this place there are a number of wheels, but they are very small. Some of them are of stone, others are covered with leather, which, if the article has to receive a polish, is covered with a powder which lends the blade a high polish. The nob and the back of the handle are now brilliantly burnished and the weapon is already very dangerous. But still it is unfinished. The different holes which are made in the handle, the one which fastens the blade on the gun and several others, are now bored. This is done, however, by machinery, and takes but a very short time. Then the handle is covered with leather, and now that the blade itself is thoroughly completed it is taken to the controlling room.

In this department we find, as a rule, a number of old men, who have been at work for the firm for long years. They are not able to do actual hard work, but still in this department their services are indispensable. Their duty is, in fact, to examine the article and see whether there is a blemish anywhere. As soon as he detects a flaw he knows where it is done, whether in the burnishing, the grinding, the rolling, or any other department, and the man who is found to have made the mistake has to make it good, or, in other words, he has to pay for the damage.

Things of that kind very often lead to great unpleasantness, and were it not for the iron discipline which is everywhere maintained Solingen would be the scene of bloody war every day.

When the weapon leaves the controlling department it is taken to the room where the sheath has been made, and after that the thing is packed and shipped. This process is gone through with every other article of cutlery—scissors, knives, etc.

I was also for a day in the celebrated knife factory of J. A. Heuckles, the largest in the world. The firm makes its own steel, and has machinery which is unsurpassed. Their patents for hardening steel are very valuable. Here I saw penknives made that were so small that they are used as watch charms, and every blade in them as sharp as possible. Then again I saw a common kitchen knife sold at 1 mark per dozen; and also a penknife which cost 35 marks that had no less than 22 different blades. Heuckles's factory employs 1,100 men. Besides the workmen, however, who are occupied in the firm's own buildings, they give also employment to a number of families who live in the vicinity of the town. These people go every Saturday to the offices and deliver their finished work. Then they take their goods home again. The earnings of these people, who work day by day, morning, noon, and evening, are not very large. The boys make about 50 to 60 cents a day, and the men's wages vary from 75 cents to \$1. But more than that gets no one, and the men seem to be satisfied—perhaps because they know it is no use to kick.

**AS YOU LIKE IT.**

By the way, it might interest literary aspirants, applying for Century recognition, to know that the number of manuscripts the Century receives per month is about 1,000.

The complaint in Chicago is that next to the woman with a baby carriage the little girl on a tricycle is making life a burden and pedestrianism dangerous on the streets.

I have seldom seen much ostentation and much learning met together. The sun, rising and declining, makes long shadows; and at midday, when he is his highest, none at all.

This has been a good season for bears in Maine. A Lewiston furrier says that he has already bought 55 skins, and thinks the crop will beat last year's, which was 344 pelts.

Spiders, ants, alligator eggs, lizard eggs, snakes and other things are eaten by the various tribes that inhabit the earth. This serves to show how far the people are from starvation.

A schooner has brought to Boston a fish weighing 175 pounds, caught in deep-sea fishing, that no one can name. It is almost as broad as long, bright red and covered with silver spots.

A Chicago dead beat is said to be making a handsome living now by advertising for a wife, and requiring all applicants to inclose stamp for reply. His mail has to be sent up in a wheelbarrow.

The excuse set up for W. A. Smith, defaulting discount clerk in a Philadelphia bank, is that he was completely nicotineated by excessive smoking, and that his downfall was due to this fact.

Some one is always wanting special legislation. Here comes a Connecticut man advocating the passage of a law compelling railway restaurant keepers to date their apple pies and sandwiches.

If young men in this country put half as much energy into their daily work as they do into playing ball, the young men of this country would be rich enough to marry before they were two years older.

The South has a new word "melonaires," and the New Orleans *Picayune* says that it applies only to those "who ship the succulent and luscious circumbiteous Southern fruits to the Northern metropolises."

There are two sunflower stalks of natural growth at Rochelle, Fla., one of which has 1,000 and the other 1,136 blooms and buds. The stalks are about ten feet high, with branches reaching out about six feet.

Gen. Boulanger has had his hair cut short, and now brushes it up in military fashion. As long as he was the idol of the masses he wore his hair long, daubed it heavily with pomade, and parted it in the middle.

While three young men were passing ball on the city lot this noon a dove flew swiftly around a corner, was struck by the ball which had been thrown before the bird was in sight, and was killed instantly.

A society has been formed out in Oregon for the importation of German song birds, to be turned loose in the country, where it is hoped they will increase, multiply and make music in the now silent woods.

The cable tells us that Emperor William kissed the Czarina's hand twice. When Europe has had time to think over it William will probably be charged with giving her Majesty a kiss and then taking it back.

The long distance telephone service between New York and other cities connected is increasing satisfactorily. It is expected that New York and Buffalo will be connected by fall. This will be the longest telephone in the country.

The most splendid entertainment given at Peterhof during the visit of Emperor William was the State dinner on Sunday week, which took place at 7, and 190 covers were laid. There were 5,000 roses on the tables. Plates, epergnes, dishes, and covers were solid gold.

Donald Dinnie, the noted Scotch athlete, has been posing as a model to a Melbourne sculptor. The sculptor has a commission to produce a statue of Wallace, the hero of Scotland, for the Botanical Gardens of the City of Ballarat, and the stalwart Donald is the model.

Says Sam Jones: "The best thing on this earth is a happy marriage, and the worst thing an unhappy marriage. Whom 'God hath joined together let no man put asunder.' But whom the devil has joined let them go to Chicago." At latest advices Chicago was filling up quite rapidly.

A restaurant keeper at the London Zoo ordered an employee to take two barrels of buns to the bear pit, meaning to the refreshment bar near the pit. The man took him at his word and dumped the buns to the bears. The animals were knee deep in them when the restaurant keeper found out what had been done, and ordered the employee to go down into the pit and get the buns back. The man handed in his resignation.

A European keeper in goal at Lahore, India, heard knocks at his door at a late hour at night, and thinking there were thieves about went out by a roundabout way to catch them. Seeing nothing, he returned and found a large baboon seated at his round table, warming himself by the lamp light. The animal attacked him and a desperate encounter resulted in the death of the baboon and the dangerous wounding of the warder.

Miss Jessie Keyes, of Boston, has a remarkable record, and it is doubtful if there can be found a parallel to it. She entered a public school in that city at the age of seven and graduated at the high school commencement the other day at the age of eighteen. During the period of eleven years she neither lost a day by absence nor a minute by tardiness, and she stood seventh in a class of forty-four. It is remarkable that in all this time sickness, a funeral or a wedding has not occurred to necessitate her absence from school, but with commendable foresight she arranged to catch the measles during vacation, and the only funeral she was called to attend occurred on Saturday.

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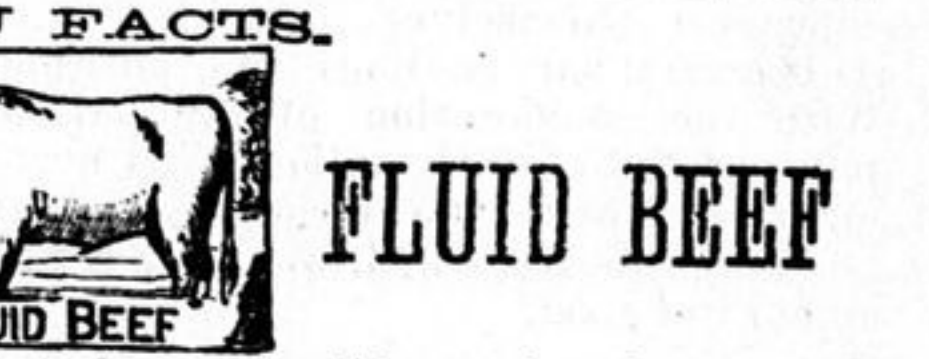
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