

INTERESTING ITEMS.

It is not generally known that, in addition to the famous decoration for merit which he recently bestowed by the German Emperor on Prince Bismarck, there is another German order *pour le merit*, which was founded in 1866 and consists of a star with the portrait of Frederick the Great. This decoration is exclusively military, and the only knights are the Kaiser, the Crown Prince, Prince Frederick Charles, and Count von Moltke.

Kido, an attaché of Japanese Legation at Berlin, recently embarked at Marseilles for Yokohama. To make sure that if he died at sea his body would not be consigned to the deep, he took with him a beautiful coffin and everything necessary for embalment. All his papers, and his will in such an event are to remain in a box which has been placed in the hands of the Captain of the steamer *Sindh*. Gen. Kaweggi, the Japanese Prefect of Police, who was in Paris four years ago, took a similar precaution and died at sea.

A letter purporting to give a description by an eye witness of the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots will be published at the end of the present year. It has been found in a manuscript book among the papers of Lord Ellock, the Judge, who died in 1793. The book is all written in one hand, apparently in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the account of the execution is a copy of a letter sent by special desire. Lord Ellock's father managed the affairs of the Duke of Perth and of other families devoted to the Stuart cause, and it is conjectured that the document is a copy of a letter written by a member of one of these families.

The Russian Government has forbidden the use of the names of members of the imperial family by any but first-class steamers it being held to be an offence against the Emperor to call a dirty cargo boat Alexander III. The Chief of the St. Petersburg police has also ordered the proprietors of all hotels, restaurants, and tea houses to remove the portraits of the Emperor and other members of the imperial family from their public rooms, because their customers do not always show the proper respect to

the representations of the imperial features by taking off their hats immediately on entering and leaving the premises.

Dying in Strange Positions.

While coming back to the hospital we found Ike Green, of my company, hanging across a fence dead. He gave out while we were on the skirmish line, and he was not able to get into a wagon. After getting rested, I suppose he started to hunt us up, and while climbing over a fence he was struck by a bullet, and there he stopped. The ball passed through his stomach and spine. He was no coward, else he would have faced the other way when he had such a good chance.

Several dead men have been found in hollow logs or behind logs or rocks, as though they had been wounded and crawled in there to protect themselves. One poor fellow sat beside a big tree with a Bible in his hand. He had been passed a dozen times or more during the day by ambulance drivers and burial squads, but they had all thought that he was alive. He had been shot in the thigh, and he had gone to this tree for protection, taking his Bible out, he thought, no doubt, that he would find consolation in reading it, but while sitting there a ball cut him through the back of the neck deep enough to break the spinal cord. His head dropped forward a little, and there he sat. — [Pittsburg Dispatch.]

The Chinese Baby's First Shave

When a Chinese boy is one month old, his head is shaved and a bladder is drawn over it, and as his head grows the bladder bursts and the cue spouts forth. The first shave is made the occasion of a magnificent banquet and the guests are expected to make the host a handsome present in coin for the newly shaven baby, with which a bank account is started to his credit. This is the most pleasant feature of the affair for the baby, as the razor always pulls, and he cannot take part in the feast.

Among the last victims of cholera at Naples was an old woman aged 103 years.

SCIENTIFIC GOSSIP.

Very lately, and following up recent researches, Dr. Heinech, of Frankfurt, has detected the existence of bacteria upon half-mark pieces which had been long in circulation.

An optical telegraph was established on Lacroix Peak, in Reunion, and Vert Peak, in Mauritius, on the night of July 12-13, when messages were freely exchanged between the two islands.

The eucalyptus, or Australian blue-gum tree, is now grown in every civilized country almost where frosts do not occur, but, being by nature adapted to act as an evaporating machine, it will not destroy malaria or keep off mosquitoes if planted in a dry and not in a marshy soil.

A chestnut at the foot of Mount Etna is believed to be the largest and oldest tree in Europe. It is hollow, and large enough to admit two carriages driving abreast to pass through it. The main trunk has a circumference of 212 feet. This grizzly giant is said to measure 92 feet in height.

Until lately most of the supply of sugar in Denmark was imported. Now the material for sugar is provided within the boundaries of the kingdom. Six years ago the Danes made 2,600,000 pounds of beet-root sugar, and four years later the figures rose to 8,600,000 pounds. The production of 1882 exceeded that of 1881 by fully 2,000,000 pounds.

It is stated that the *Tahi Yuen* a powerful "protected" cruiser of 2,355 tons and 2,800 horse-power, carrying two 8½ inch and 5.78 inch Krupp guns (mounted *en barbette*), built for the Chinese Government at Stettin, made several trial trips, without making the full contract speed of 15 knots an hour. But the result has been that the causes of the slow rate clearly revealed themselves, and proved to be easily remedied.

It is said that the French railroad companies are about to adopt an electric gate opener. A catch connected with an electro-magnet keeps the gates closed. When a speaker approaches it closes the circuit, releases the catch, and the gates fly open. The last train as it passes through opens the circuit, and the gates are again closed. The same apparatus rings a bell violently on the approach of a train.

Lead tanks which withstood sulphuric acid perfectly, Mr. S. P. Sharples reports, were soon destroyed by hydrochloric acid. In some recent experiments undertaken to destroy cotton there by means of hot hydrochloric acid it was found that lead-lined vessels were soon rendered useless by it. Even the cold acid could not be kept in wooden tanks lined with lead. Most authors say that lead is only slightly affected by hydrochloric acid.

On brass, a technical journal says, a steel color is developed by using a boiling solution of arsenic chloride, while a careful application of a concentrated solution of sodium sulphide causes a blue coloration. Black being generally used for optical instruments is obtained from a solution of platinum chloride to which tin nitrate has been added. In Japan the brass is bronzed by using a solution of copper sulphate, alum, and verdigris.

Work on the Antwerp International Exhibition, 1885, is advancing rapidly. The buildings are convenient for foreign exhibitors and visitors, as the grounds can easily be reached from the docks, quays, and railway station. Space has already been taken by Belgium, France, Holland, Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Spain, Italy, America, Norway and Sweden, Russia, and Hayti. The buildings will be finished by the end of March next.

Some remarks were recently made by M. F. Tisserand on the subject of the theory of the figure of the planets. His calculations and estimates of their present form were founded upon the assumption that the celestial bodies were originally in the fluid state, subject only to the mutual attraction of their constituent elements, and endowed with a rotary movement with very slight angular velocity. Their outer surface would thus be somewhat of a revolving ellipsoid.

Origin of a Few Oaths.

The courtiers of Louis IX. were wont to indulge in swearing to an extent that was both painful and distressing to the good king, their master, although the penalty prescribed in the statute book for the offence was no less than branding the tongue with a red hot iron for every commission of it. The oaths most offensive to the saintly monarch were the "cordieu," the "tetediens," the "paradies," etc., which still survive in *Moliere* and *Rabelais*. At this time there was at the palace, belonging to one of the ladies of the court, a little pet dog named "Bleu." To elude the harsh sentence of the law, which might deprive them forever of the power of indulging in their favorite pastime, the courtiers determined to substitute for "dieu" the name of the dog. So "cordieu" became "corbleu," "tetedieu" "tetebleu," etc., and the apparently meaningless words are preserved to the present day. "Sacredieu" became "sacredieu," and was finally contracted to "sacra." This last is the most common of French oaths nowadays except "mon Dieu." The dandies of ancient Rome used to swear by all the gods indiscriminately, although it was customary for each one to have his favorite oath. *Castor* and *Pollux* were the favorites among the demi gods to swear by *Gimini*, they meant to swear by *Castor* and *Pollux*, the twins. This oath has come down to us, even to the present day, when the expression "By Jiminy!" is frequently heard. "The deuce!" is a very ancient oath, indeed, as will appear from the derivation to which it is referred—the Latin *Deus*—God. Nowadays it is considered a mild oath to say "the deuce!" It is a curious thing that *deuce* is generally supposed to mean the "devil." So people say, "go to the deuce!" The origin of the phrase "by jingo" is traced to the word *Jinco*—the baser name for God.

Too Imitative by Far.

Mrs. Rensler of Madison Wis., killed a chicken in the presence of her little boys, cutting its head off with a hatchet. The boys became interested in the proceeding and while the mother was in the house the older boy prevailed upon the younger to play the part of chicken and actually had his head on the block and was in the act of chopping off his head when the older brother accidentally noticed the game and stopped the operation before any serious damages had been inflicted.

Comparative Longevity of Sexes

The greater longevity of women, as compared with men, appears to be well borne out by the statistics of every country that have yet been examined. Although nature seems to have a tendency to produce an overplus of male children, the number of women of seventy years of age and over is greatly in excess of that of the men of similar advanced ages. It is true that men, from their occupations, run far more risk from accident than women; that on the whole they are subject to a greater mental strain; that war claims its quota; and that alcoholic and sexual excesses shorten the lives of many. On the other hand, the work and the life of women are usually carried on indoors, under conditions of confinement and lack of light and air which seems unbearable to men; they are also subject to all the sicknesses and perils of child-bearing; while the hygienic sins of a defective education and a life of fashionable dissipation are probably as potent for harm as the vices of the men. If we take the factors which tend to shorten life as equal for the two sexes, then it is plain that the female sex is endowed with the larger share of that constitutional vitality which confers to longevity. It seems probable that this is the case. It is known to be the case with the females of many species of animals, and it seems but natural that the sex upon which the actual labor of reproduction is thrown should have additional vitality to meet the strain.

Let us hear no more, therefore, about the "weaker sex" and the "weaker vessel." Woman can not do as much muscular work as man, but she is formed to last longer. She works at a lower pressure, and thus is less likely to break down than her high-pressure mate. In return for less strength she has more endurance. Thus the chances of matrimony are all in favor of the woman. If wife and husband are of equal age, the former is more likely to have the opportunity to try her luck a second time. The older the husband the better are the wife's chances of survival, and the husband must be considerably younger to have an even chance. Young men who wish to survive their wives should therefore marry the very old maids.

Teacup Fortune Telling.

I have a friend who is quite renowned for her success as a fortune teller through her skill in shaking and tapping a teacup until the grounds or tea leaves in the bottom of the teacup assume in a rude way certain shapes or forms representing people, animals and various other images which she professes to understand as referring in some way to the person whose fortune she happens to be telling at the time. I was present once when she told the fortune of a young lady. The prophecy and the method of making it seemed to me to be very vague; but the gist of it all was that in a short time a young gentleman of extremely prepossessing appearance would arrive, and that he was, in some unexplained way, to exert a powerful influence on the future prospects of the young lady. Wishing to discover what was in the cup to warrant such a forecast, I obtained possession of it without being observed. In the bottom of the cup I saw that the leaves had assumed a form which, with a little aid of the imagination, might be accepted as resembling a very spare, delicate and altogether debilitated young man. With the aid of a teaspoon, and using a few other grounds or leaves that were lying on the bottom of the cup, I quickly changed the young man into a disreputable-looking old tramp, with a big bundle on his back, and accompanied by a ferocious looking bulldog. Then I awaited the result. Presently the young lady whose fortune had been told took up the cup, with a high blush of pleasure, to examine its contents. The moment she saw the dreadful figure of the old tramp she exclaimed, "What a horrid old fright!" Then there was a great commotion, which was only quelled when I acknowledged my guilt. But I had learned something, which was that with a little management and a teaspoon pictures of any kind could be made in a teacup. — [November S. Nicholas.]

At a recent Sunday school meeting, a long-winded clergyman consumed too much time with a wordy address. When he sat down the leader of the meeting unwittingly announced the hymn beginning "Hallelujah 'tis His Day."

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