

IN OLD CHURCH YARDS

MANY STRANGE STORIES COULD BE TOLD ABOUT THEM.

Time Was When They Were Not the Quiet Spots They Now Are—Games, Dancing, Feasts, and Other Performances Took Place in Them—Practice of Dancing at Feasts Appears to Have Been Almost Universal in Wales.

In the old churchyards of England could read their own story, it would be strange and interesting. Time was when they were not the quiet spots they now are. Games, dancing, feasts, miracle plays and various other entertaining performances took place in them. Dancing, as an expression of religious emotion, was practised by the old peoples of the world. Probably the early Christians may have desired in all honesty to show their joy in the same manner. The results were not fortunate. One of the popes had to prohibit dances in the churches. In 858 the Bishop of Orleans condemned the dancing of women in the presbytery, at festivals. In 1209 the theatrical dances in the churches were forbidden, and two church councils not long afterward condemned all dancing in churches or churchyards.

The practice of dancing on feasts appears to have been almost universal in Wales. The people did not dance on the graves, but on the north side, where there were no graves. Probably this part of the churchyard, being more even ground, would be more convenient for dancers, and probably, too, the superstition (so common in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire) that it is unlucky to tread on the graves, may have had some influence. The eastern portion of the churchyard is regarded as the most honored, next the south, then the west, and last of all the north, from the belief that in this order the dead may rise. Hence felons and notoriously bad characters were buried on the north side of the church.

It is not difficult to trace the connection between the morris dancing and the church. When the fifth crusade succeeded in effecting the capture of Constantinople, the Latins in their joy celebrated the event by solemn dances in the great church of St. Sophia. The almost invariable subject of the morris dance, as apart from the miracle play, was drawn from the crusading legend of St. George rescuing a Christian maiden from her Turkish masters, while the joy was invariably celebrated in the morris (i.e., Moorish) dance. It is generally agreed that the morris dance was introduced in England in the sixteenth century.

Miracle plays continued to be represented in churchyards as long as they were played in churches, but they were never so popular in the open air as in the church. Easter and Whitsuntide were the great seasons for these performances. On Sundays and holidays the churchyard was a public playground. On those days people went to mass in the morning and devoted the rest of the day to amusements. Centuries have elapsed since many of the churchyard games were introduced, but they were exceedingly popular for a long period, lingering even to within a century ago. The merry-making was carried to such excess that prohibitions and condemnations were launched against them. In the tenth century a canon was enacted warning the people not to spend in drunkenness and debauchery the season (the week) specially designated for devotion and prayer. In Scotland the provincial synod enacted in 1225 that "dances and games which engender lasciviousness be not performed in churches and churchyards," and also that "wrestling matches or sports be not suffered to take place there upon any of the festivals."

An act of Edward I goes further by forbidding fairs and markets to be held in churchyards. Games and secular business in churchyards were forbidden by the synod of Exeter in 1287. "We strictly enjoin on parish priests that they publicly proclaim in their churches that no one presume to carry on combats, dances or other improper sports in the churchyards, especially on the eves of feasts of saints, or stage plays or farces."

A game of ball used to be played in a Staffordshire churchyard. The vicar tried to stop the practice, but was baffled by the perseverance of the boys. He gave orders that when he died he should be buried in the place and that an altar tombstone should be placed on his grave, saying that though he failed to stop the ballplaying in his lifetime he would stop it after his death. He succeeded.

In the west of England single stick (or "cudgel playing," as it was then called), was nearly always practiced in the churchyards, and in Devonshire a favorite amusement in churchyards was wrestling matches. The boys at Westminster school played a game called nine holes in cloisters, and many of these holes are still to be seen, although some have been obliterated by the work of restoration. Fox and geese boards are on the cloister benches at Gloucester cathedral and elsewhere; several are on the twelfth century tomb of Lord Stourton's (so-called) at Salisbury, now on the nave of that cathedral. Cock-fighting was a frequent pastime, even on Sundays immediately after the services. In the days of yore "throwing at cocks" was a popular sport. Shrove Tuesday being especially set apart for it.

Many of the old English fairs owe their origin to the church. The village (or town) fair usually took place on the feast of the patron saint of the parish church. The annual fairs were, often held in the churchyard, especially where the church guarded some famous shrine or sacred relic to which the pilgrims resorted. Perhaps the shrine of St. Thomas a Beckett at Canterbury was the most celebrated, but the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham almost surpassed it.

American boys are quickly taking to making concrete pottery and it is easily learned. It is necessary first to make the wooden forms in which the concrete is poured to harden. The concrete is purchased dry, moistened to form a plaster and then poured into the moulds together with broken stones to harden. The colors are light and dark gray, though other shades are often mixed into the concrete to give any desired tone. After some practice even the apprentice will learn how to inlay his work with broken pieces of glass, pottery, making something novel and beautiful. Garden urns, immense flower crocks, pedestals and the like may be made by the ingenious boy.

DAY DREAMS.

A far-off light, Like a pale star-gleam on the wings of dream, Floats through the dark to me. Of things that are yet to be,

A dream of Faith That shines through the mists of years, Till the long, long night is fast in light, And laughter blooms from tears.

A dream of Hope That lives though all else be dead, Hope crowned at last when the pain is past, And the last of the tears are shed.

A dream of Love, The Love that cannot fail— For white-er befall, Love conquers all, And death shall not prevail.

Will my dream come true? Some day on a far-off shore Will Death lie dead on his shrouded bed, And Sorrow be no more?

Some glad spring dawn Will there blossom peace from pain? Will the hidden good be understood, And lost souls found again?

Yes, for I know That only the good can live. On that morning fair, sometime, somewhere, All else will Love forgive.

Lillian Leveridge, Coe, Hill, Ont.

The Thrice Exquisite Gems.

Theodosis Garrison. The Little Cherubs whispered, "What strange, new soul is this Who cometh with a robe besmirched Unto the Place of Bliss?"

Then spake the Eldest Angel— "The robe he wears is fair— The groping fingers of the poor Have held and blessed him there."

The Little Cherubs whispered, "Who comes to be our guest With dust about his garments' hem And stains upon his breast?"

Then spake the Eldest Angel, "Most lovely is the stain— The tears of those he comforted, Who may not weep again."

The Little Cherubs whispered, "What strange, new soul is he Who cometh with a burden here And bears it tenderly?"

Then spake the Eldest Angel— "He bears his life's award— The burden of men's broken hearts To place before the Lord."

"The dust upon his garments' hem— My lips shall bow to it; The stains upon the breast of him Are gems thrice exquisite Oh, little foolish Cherubs,

What truth is this ye miss? There comes no saint to Paradise Who does not come like this."

Russia's Heavy Toll on Liquor. Since 1601 the taxation of alcohol has constituted a bulwark of Russian finance. The manufacture and sale of spirits has passed through many and varied regimes, but along with the desire to check drunkenness and to promote the health and economic welfare of the peasantry has always gone the idea of increasing revenue. Government monopoly was really initiated by Czar Alexander III, who in 1885 requested the Finance Minister (Bunge) to draw up a plan for an experimental monopoly. The existing excise system had, however, so increased in productivity that neither Bunge nor his successor, Vishnigradski, cared to tamper with it. It remained for Witte, in pursuance of his monopolistic policy, to introduce the system in operation to-day, which not only brings the government a vastly increased revenue (697,503,834 rubles in 1906, as compared with 387,000,000 in 1894, the last year of the general excise), but transfers a vast mass of political and economic influence from the local authorities to the central administration. But it has made a nation of drunkards.

All Customs Have an Origin. The custom of hanging up the stocking on Christmas eve arose from an incident in the life of the good St. Nicholas. When overtaken by a severe storm he took refuge in a convent and the next day, being Christmas, he preached so impressively to the nuns that they asked him to come the next year and preach again. On his second visit, also on a Christmas eve, before going to bed, he asked each of the nuns to lend him a stocking, and he filled the lot with sugar plums in return for their hospitality.

In the making of mince pies, which form a part of a regular Christmas feast, mince was the only meat formerly used, as a commemoration of the flocks that were watched on the holy night by the shepherds of Bethlehem. The spices were supposed to be suggestive of the wise men from the east—the "and of spices."

Balancing the Acts of Socialism. Socialists are not all demagogues working for their own ends, but some are absolutely unselfish in trying to do something for the common good. Is there anything essentially un-Christian in the common ownership of land, and the means of production? But we have got somehow to make the transfer without breaking either the sixth or the eighth Commandment. What I cannot agree with in Socialism is the un-Christian setting of class against class in public speeches, that capital and labor are enemies, and that absolute equality is possible. There is just as much selfishness and greed amongst any other class, and if we are going to have a Socialistic State we should want more religion than ever before.

Chinese Estimate of Character. Missionaries who know the inner life of their middle class say that the Chinese rank the professions in this order: 1—The learning of the scholar and the authority of the official. 2—The farmer with his benedictions of food and clothing. 3—Shelter and comfort of the carpenter and smith and mechanic. 4—The merchant with his commerce and his bargaining-trades. 5—The soldier and sailor with their hostility to peace come last.

Thus the average Chinese is a man of patience and poise, of untrusting industry, with common honesty, of economical habits, is studious and thoughtful, with a peacefulness of spirit. What wonder that such traits of character should stand the strain of centuries?

ISAAC WALTON.

A Sketch of a Man Whose Early Career Was Interesting.



Little is known of Isaac Walton's early life and education, beyond the fact of his birth at Stafford, 1593, and that he went to London, while still a youth. In 1624 he lived on Fleet street, as a linen-draper. There he formed a friendship with Dr. Donne, who, in 1623, became vicar of St Dunstan's-in-the-West. Walton was one of the vestry, for in the parish register (1644) an entry relates to the selecting of a vestry-man "in room of Izaak Walton, lately departed out of this parish." Dr. Donne died in 1631, and Walton's life of his friend was the commencement of his literary work and the first of that series of "Lives," which, together with "The Complete Angler" (1653) have gained for him an immortality of fame.

In 1626 Walton married Rachel Flood, Arch-bishop Cranmer's niece; she died in 1640. Walton retired from business in 1643, and lived for years in Clerkenwell, and later left London altogether. In 1647 he married Anne, sister of Dr. Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells; she died in 1660. The last years of his life were spent at Winchester, where he died December 15th, 1683, at the age of ninety; buried in Prior Silkestead's Chapel, Winchester Cathedral.

His prayer-book (1639, folio), now in the British Museum, is in good condition, and contains, in addition to the usual services, Prayers for Parliament (consisting of the 67th Psalm and several Collects), and "certain godly prayers to be used for sundry purposes," as well as the Sternhold and Hopkins' Metrical Psalms. But its chief interest lies in the autograph entries on the front page. First are births, baptisms, and deaths of several of his children; then follows his second wife's death—"Ann Walton, senior, dyed the 17th of April, about one o'clock in the night, and was buried in the Virgin's Chapel in the Cathedral of Worcester the 20th day." She was a woman of remarkable prudence and of primitive piety. Her great and general knowledge, being adorned with such true humility and blest with so much Christian meekness, made her worthy of a more memorable monument."

Remarkable Russian Sect. Among the numerous religious sects in Russia the most remarkable and influential are the Subbotniki, or Sabbatarians. They first appeared in the reign of Catharine II, toward the end of the eighteenth century. The members of this sect practice the rite of circumcision, do not believe in Christ, accept only the Old Testament and observe the Sabbath on Saturday. They also slaughter cattle and fowls according to the Jewish law, use praying shawls, and wear zizit (fringes), praying with covered heads from Hebrew prayer books, with a Russian translation. They are industrious, hospitable and can read and write. Up to 1820 they lived for the most part in Moscow, Saratov, Tula, Orel, etc. In the reign of Alexander I they enjoyed freedom. Nevertheless, the Russian clergy of Mohylev killed about 150 Subbotniki and their leaders. The son of one of the leaders was tortured with hot irons and then burned at the stake. In the reign of Nicholas I many wished to embrace Judaism, and settled in the Pale of Settlement (the Ghetto), but the Government banished them to Siberia and the Caucasus. The Subbotniki number about two millions, and dress like the orthodox Russians.

God Bless Our Home. God bless our Home and Kag, Loud let our anthems ring For Home and King. Grant us our heart's desire, And with Thy Cleansing fire, True love and strength inspire For Home and King.

Blest memory of our dead Whose blood was bravely shed For Nation young Through whom victorious We now are prosperous, May their brave deeds for us Always be sung.

May Thine Almighty power Vibrate from shore to shore And give us faith, Faith in ourselves to prove Our strength from God above, And Canada to love Through life till death.—Fane Sewell, Nov. 14th, 1909.

From Pilot to Samurai. In 1600 William Adams, a Kentish pilot, arrived in Japan in command of a Dutch ship. On landing, he was taken prisoner and sent to Osaka to the Emperor, who attached Adams to his personal service. Later we read of the exploit teaching his royal master "geometry and understanding of the art of mathematics." Adams was well provided for, and commanded to build ships for deep-sea sailing. He was thus the founder of the Japanese fleet. Before long he was created samurai, and an estate was given him.

Surely no romance of that romantic age was stranger than the rise of this plain English pilot, with only his simple honesty and common sense to help him. He was in such extraordinary favor with the greatest and shrewdest of Japanese rulers that "The Emperor esteemeth him much, and he may go in and speak to him at all times when Kinges and Princes are kept out."

Adams' only cause for regret in his great fortune was that he was never allowed to visit his native land. His services were too precious to be spared.

SMILING CONQUERORS.

Lessons to be Learned From the Interesting Human Lives.

Better than poems, essays or sermons is the lesson of contentment to be learned from the interesting human lives which surround us. Heroes and martyrs elbow us daily in the streets, but there is none to sing their praises, or tell their courageous history. What a world this would be were we all awake to the wonders of it, instead of being perception muffled by conventionality and indifference!

The writer once met a noble-hearted woman whose hopeful spirit, sunny disposition and Christian resignation preached a long-to-be-remembered sermon. The text might well have been, "The joy of the Lord is our strength." For twelve weary years this unassuming saint had been a sufferer from insomnia, her maximum of sleep amounting to but three hours out of the twenty-four, while sometimes but two hours' fitful slumber fell to her share. Under her physician's orders much of the day was spent in the open air, but not once could she experience the blissful sense of drowsiness, that vestibule of blessed sleep.

Notwithstanding this living death, one never saw the invalid "blue" or anything less than cheerful, and at times she was brimful of life and overflowing with irrepressible fun. "I would dearly love to sleep just one whole night through, once again," she said musingly one day, "but remedies fail, and physicians and friends advise in vain. Some day it must end in death—or madness, I suppose, but I'm going to keep smiling and hopeful till that day comes." A moment later her courtly, devoted husband entered, with the tender concern his face always wore toward his brave little wife, and instantly the heroic woman threw all thought of coming ill to the winds, and soon we were laughing merrily over one of her witty stories.

"It is a comely fashion to be glad. Joy is the grace we say to God," Jean Ingelow sweetly tells us. It might not be a bad idea to commit the lines to memory, and repeat them on the "blue Mondays," rumpled Fridays and busy Saturdays of our hurried, oft-times discontented lives. Happiness is a wayside flower, free to all who will pluck it, not a rare orchid only to be purchased by the rich. There is a bit of joy in every floating, fleecy cloud, every golden sunset tint of evening sky. There is music in the free winds of heaven if hearts are a-tune to catch the harmony. And, best of all, there is the thought of our Father's approving smile, that sunlight of His presence so sweet, so invigorating, so marvellous that we may learn to rejoice even "under the shadow."

Too Many of Them in Canada. Toronto Star.

Henry Ingelwood is a human drone. He would rather loaf than labor. He prefers jail life to honest toil, but, contrary to his expectations, he is now enjoying both. Ingelwood came to Canada lately from the Channel Islands. He is a husky well-developed youth of twenty years, well able to work. Recently he went into Court Street Police Station and asked to be locked up. He had neither friends nor funds, and no work, he said. The assistant caretaker at Court street is a young man from the Channel Islands, and he with a touch of brotherhood took Ingelwood home to stay with him that night, and gave him an outfit of clothing, a grip to carry the clothes, and a few dollars thrown in. Next morning a policeman gave the youth employment.

Henry was taken to the meetings of the Channel Islands Society, and received sympathy and some hard cash. One member gave him a room free of charge for a couple of weeks. But he soon tired of his light tasks at the policeman's house. He told his employer he had a new job. The same day he went to Agnes Street Police Station, and asked to be locked up. Inspector Cuddy took him to the Salvation Army, but the air of industry at the barracks did not suit Henry. Once more he presented himself to the police, and put up the same old plea. This time he landed in court, and the magistrate, hearing of his laziness, sentenced him for 90 days. A quiet tip was sent to the jail, regarding Ingelwood's antipathy to work, and he now labors hard day by day. "The Lord made him able to work, and we'll make him willing," said a jail official.

Curious Facts About Shoes. Shoes among the ancient Jews were made of leather, linen, rush or wood; soldiers' shoes were sometimes made of brass or iron. Greeks' shoes were peculiar; they reached to the middle of the legs. They also used sandals. The Romans made use of two kinds, the soles, or sandal, which covered the sole of the foot and was worn at home and in company, and the calceus, which covered the whole foot and was always worn with the toga when the user went abroad. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the greatest princes of Europe wore wooden shoes. In the reign of William Rufus, of England, in the eleventh century, a great "swell," "Robert the Horned," used shoes with sharp points, stuffed with tow and twisted like rams' horns. Slippers were worn before Shakespeare's time.

Noise of Anti-Bible Critics. General Grant related that when a lieutenant he was one day travelling on horseback with a brother officer, across Western prairies. A sound of wolves was heard, and his companion, more familiar with the habits of those animals than he, asked how many he thought were in the pack. Grant really believed there were about 150, but fearing too extravagant a guess, he replied nonchalantly, "a dozen." By and by the animals could be seen; there were but two. There are mistletoes to-day who, like Grant, judge of the weight and influence of some university professors by the attention they create, and multiplying their numbers and magnifying their importance, echo their vagaries with general spiritual depreciation.

The End of the World. London suffered from several earthquake shocks in 1761, and prophecies of the total destruction of the city were rife. April 5 was predicted for the catastrophe, and for days before the date roads were thronged with the vehicles of those seeking safety in flight, in spite of the threat of one of the papers of the day to publish the names of all such cowards. Even the most courageous elected to pass their nights out of doors, Hyde park being the most popular camping ground. But nothing ever so got on the nerves of Europe as the coming of the first thousandth year of the Christian era. The churches were thronged, the masses deserted, and all good Christians slept in the open in readiness for that end of the world.

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