

CURIOUS CUSTOMS

Norman French Still Used In Lawmaking In England.

RUSSIAN OFFICIAL FARCES.

Amusing History of a Royal Daily Ration of Rum and the Astonishing Story of a Stolid Sentry and an Innocent Grass Plot.

In Europe there is perhaps nothing more astonishing to the American mind than the persistency with which certain old customs are maintained. The Romans, for instance, keep up the saturnalia of their ancient pagan ancestors in a harmless way, and the Florentines go on one morning of the year to catch crickets in the grass simply because the Etruscans did the same thing 2,000 years ago.

John Bull has always had an affection for the old ways. So persistent is he in keeping to the forms and traditions of the past that his French neighbor over the way has dubbed the United Kingdom a "museum of antiquities" among modern nations. It is somewhat odd that the Norman French of Edward the Confessor should still be the language, the legal voice, of parliament, but so it is in a way. Whenever a bill has passed the commons the clerk before he forwards it to the house of lords writes upon it, according to the ancient usage, "Soit baillie aux seigneurs" (Let it be sent to the lords). If it is sent from the peers to the commons it bears the like indorsement, "Soit baillie aux communes" (Let it be sent to the commons).

Should a bill pass both houses it needs only the royal assent to become a law. Here the Norman French appears again. The commons, summoned by the usher of the black rod, are admitted to the bar of the house of lords to hear the statement of his majesty's commissioners. When all are assembled the lord chancellor makes a sign to his assistant, who reads the title of the bill and then says in a loud voice, "Le roi le veult" (The king wills it). In the case of financial bills the form is this: "Le roi remercie ses bons sujets, accepte leur benevolence, et ainsi le veult" (The king thanks his good subjects, accepts their faith and so wills it). For private bills the form is, "Soit fait comme il est desire" (Let it be done as is desired). Sometimes, if the bill is of special importance, the sanction of his majesty is given in person. In such a case the king, seated on the throne at one end of the chamber, bows his assent as the clerk reads the title.

The inflexibility of Russian official orders has resulted in some queer and needless fixtures in the official system. Quite a ludicrous discovery of this sort was made by the Empress Catherine, who was the mother of that Emperor Paul who was assassinated in 1801. Catherine at one time was inspired by some passing whim of economy to scrutinize the imperial house-keeping accounts. To her amazement, she found among other queer items that "one bottle of rum daily" was charged to the heir apparent. Inasmuch as her son, Nasednik, then a young man, had never evinced any signs of intemperate habits, his mother was greatly astonished. Going over the accounts to ascertain how long this sort of thing had been enduring, she found to her still greater astonishment that the said expenditure went back to the day of his birth, and, indeed, far beyond it.

So, it appeared, the heir to the throne had not only been charged with drinking over thirty dozen bottles of fine Jamaica rum ever since he was born, but for a long time before that. It is hardly necessary to add that the empress made a thorough investigation of this queer entry. Finally, by the aid of an antiquarian, she at last reached the original entry.

A century or so before the imperial physician had prescribed for the Nasednik of the period, "on account of a violent toothache, a teaspoonful of rum, to be taken with sugar." This dose was given for several days in succession, and the nurse in charge had deemed it more fitting to the imperial dignity, as well as more profitable to herself, to purchase a new bottle of rum each day. No one had ever given the order to discontinue the purchase, and it had gone on for a century, the rum having constituted one of the perquisites of the court nurse.

When Bismarck during the term of his mission as ambassador at St. Petersburg was walking one afternoon in the summer garden he met the emperor, who invited the diplomatist to continue his stroll with him. Soon Bismarck noticed a sentry stationed in the middle of a large grass plot. He asked what the soldier was doing there. The czar did not know. The aid-de-camp did not know. So inquiry was made of the sentry himself.

"It is ordered," was his reply. Every official gave the same answer, "It is ordered" but nobody knew by whom. A sentry had always stood guard in the middle of that innocent grass plot. The archives were searched, but in vain. Finally an aged official found who gave the explanation. He had had it from his father that the Empress Catherine had once seen a snowdrop ready to bloom in that plot and had ordered a sentry to stand guard and allow no one to pluck it. For more than a century the watch had been maintained because "it was ordered" and because no one had ever dreamed of disobeying the order or questioning any one as to the reason therefor.—New York Press.

THE OLD BATES HOUSE.

A Hotel That Once Startled Indianapolis With Its Innovations.

I remember that when Indianapolis became a great railroad center and a city of enormous proportions—population from 15,000 to 20,000, according to the creative capacity of the imagination making the estimate—a wonderful hotel was built there and called the Bates House.

Its splendors were the subject of wondering comment throughout the west. It had washstands with decorated pottery on them in all its more expensive rooms so that a guest sojourning there need not go down to the common washroom for his morning ablution and dry his hands and face on a jack towel.

There were combs and brushes in the rooms, too, so that if one wanted to smooth his hair he was not obliged to resort to the appliances of that sort that were hung by chains to the wash-room walls.

Moreover, if a man going to the Bates House for a sojourn chose to pay a trifle extra he might have a room all to himself.

But all these subjects of wonderment shrink to nothingness by comparison when the proprietors of the Bates House printed on their breakfast bills of fare an announcement that thereafter each guest's breakfast would be cooked after his order for it was given, together with an appeal for patience on the part of the breakfasters—a patience that the proprietors promised to reward with hot and freshly prepared dishes.

This innovation was so radical that it excited discussion hotter even than the Bates House breakfasts. Opinions differed as to the right of a hotel keeper to make his guests wait for the cooking of their breakfasts. To some minds the thing presented itself as an invasion of personal liberty and therefore of the constitutional rights of the citizen.—Edward Eggleston's "Recollections."

A FRAGRANT TRAIN.

Cut Flower Limited Express a Unique Feature in France.

Every night during the winter months a special train, popularly called the "Rapide des Fleurs"—the cut flower limited express—of ten cars, leaves Toulon for Paris over the line of the Paris, Lyons and Mediterranean railway, carrying cut flowers in baskets and cardboard boxes from all stations on the line from Nice to Toulon to the Paris markets. Certain cars are switched off to Frankfort, Berlin and Munich; others continue to Brussels and others to Calais, where their perishable freight is rushed to the markets of London and Manchester.

Certain shipments reach St. Petersburg and Vienna, and the facilities thus offered the flower growers of southern France are unique in the transportation world. A special train crews sort these tens of thousands of parcels en route, the eight or ten sorters handling the baskets as carefully as the mails are handled.

The cut flower industry of southern France began with the impetus first given by Alphonse Karr, the scrivain, as he was known when he settled in St. Raphael in the latter part of the last century.

Today the violets of Hyeres, like the roses and carnations of Antibes and the narcissus and Roman hyacinths of Ollioules, Le Pradet and Carqueiranne, are found in the shops of Paris scarce eighteen hours after they were growing in the open air on the Mediterranean shores.

Cuteness of Madmen.

In Sir William Butler's autobiography there is an amusing story about six insane soldiers who escaped while the corporal who had brought them on board the trooper was leaving at Durban and who mingled with the 1,800 sane men on the decks. The problem of the voyage was to find who were the six madmen. By the time the boat reached Cape Town twenty-six men were officially under observation, and not one of the six was among them. In the end the crazed half dozen were identified as those who had taken an especially eager part in the lunatic hunt.

Not His Language.

Lord Robson, at the dinner of the Glamorgan society, told the story of a Welsh witness in a Glamorganshire case who, having been sworn to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, was asked if he could speak English or would like an interpreter. "No," he replied; "I can speak some English, but I cannot speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."—St. James Gazette.

Good Fellowship.

Biggs—You should join our club, old man, if only for the good fellowship of the thing. Miggs—I intend to. Brown, one of your members, took my name only last week. Hasn't he said anything about it? Biggs—No; we don't speak to each other.—Boston Transcript.

Dangers of Carelessness.

Lion Tamer (to assistant)—You've left his cage open again. One of these days some one will come along and steal him.—London Opinion.

More Like a Lover.

Miss Sweet—My brother is wedded to his art. Mr. Slink—Wedded? Nonsense! He's perfectly devoted to it.—Exchange.

One life, a little gleam of time between two eternities.—Carlyle.

SHOOTING A HORSE.

The Way to Instantly End His Misery Should He Break a Leg.

When a horse falls in the harness his natural inclination is to get up again. The shock of the fall has excited him more or less, and in his efforts to arise he may further injure himself as well as the harness.

The first action should be to sit on his head, pointing his nose upward with one hand, to keep him from struggling until the traces and all other attachments to the vehicle can be unfastened. If two persons are present this can be done without difficulty.

If a horse breaks his leg the most humane as well as the most sensible action is to shoot him on the spot. It is true that cases are on record where broken legs have been successfully treated by means of suspending the horse in a sling and pulleys, but the experiments in this direction have almost invariably met with failure.

To shoot a suffering animal and kill him instantly is not so simple a matter as it at first appears, says Country Life in America. Many shots are sometimes fired before death results. How and where should a horse be shot?

In the center of every horse's forehead a little above the line of the eyes is a little swirl something like a cowlick. Three inches above this swirl is the exact spot to lodge the bullet to insure its piercing the brain. The bullet should not be of less than 38 caliber.

For sprains hot or cold bandages are recommended. Fomentations promptly applied sometimes prevent permanent lameness. Spraining of the back sinews is only too common and unless promptly and properly treated results in knuckling and other complications. Blistering, firing and even nerving are resorted to, but it should be borne in mind that these drastic measures are often unnecessarily taken. Rest, turning out where practicable under favorable conditions, and massage often effect a cure.

Not infrequently a horse will pick up a nail. It is unnecessary to say that the first aid is to remove the nail. If suppuration ensue poultice the wound and give the animal rest until well. It may be well to remove the shoe for a time. Great care should be taken that the nail be not broken off flush with the sole and left there to fester. Horses are peculiarly susceptible to tetanus, or lockjaw, and a nail often causes it.

Hypnotizing Lobsters.

"Hypnotize lobsters? Sure thing you can," said the man in South street. "See here," he said, picking up an active one by the body behind the claws. He stroked it down the tail three or four times, and the lobster became very stiff and still. He set it on the floor against the wall, standing it up. He took four or five more lobsters and treated them the same way. "Now watch 'em for a minute," he said, looking at the row of prospective chafing dish fillers. The first lobster gradually became limp and fell on the floor with a crash. This woke the third lobster in the row, for it, too, fell forward. Then two more fell. They all started to make off, but he caught them as they tried to scuttle away. "Sure thing," said the South street man; "it's as easy to hypnotize 'em here as on Broadway."—New York Sun.

Falling Up Out of a Balloon.

If a man falls out of a rising aeroplane or balloon he will not go toward the earth, but will continue rising into the air for an appreciable time. If the air machine were stopped in its ascent at the time it could catch the man as he came down. If the airship were ascending at the rate of thirty-two feet a second the man would rise sixteen feet before beginning to fall toward the earth. Thus, by reducing the speed of its ascent, the vessel might keep by the side of the man and rescue him. The reason why the man rises is the same as the reason for a bullet's rising when shot from a gun into the air—both the man and the bullet are given a velocity upward, and it takes some time for gravity to negative that velocity.—Harper's Weekly.

Side Issues.

"Brother Hardesty, how much are you going to give for the support of the gospel this year?"

"Why, Brother Askum, if I ain't helpin' to support it when I give \$15 to the organ fund, \$6 to the chandelier fund, \$5 to the carpet fund, donate two tons of coal, chip in for the janitor fund and furnish most of the groceries when we have a church supper of course I'll put down somethin'. How much do you want?"—Chicago Tribune.

Pa Was Right.

"Pa says you keep almost everything here," said the small son of the village editor.

"I guess your pa's about right," replied the owner of the general store.

"And pa says," continued the little chap, "the reason you keep so many things is because you don't advertise."—Chicago News.

Soulless Contributors.

"The congregation numbered thirty-two souls this morning," remarked the parson.

"Thirty souls," corrected the deacon. "We got two plugged nickels in the collection box."—Kansas City Journal.

A Household Jewel.

"Is your new maid competent?" "Very. She can even fool agents and peddlers into believing that she's mistress of the house."—Detroit Free Press.

NAVAL GUN POINTERS.

How They Are Aided by the Telescope Sight and Crossbar.

Perhaps very few outside of the service know of the important part that the telescope and the crossbar sight have played in the development of target work. Before the recent introduction of the telescope and the crossbar the gun pointer strained his eyes in the impossible effort to adjust their focus to three widely separated objects simultaneously, the rear sight a few inches away, the front sight a dozen feet distant from the rear one and the target anywhere from 1,500 to 13,000 yards. Ordnance experts worked over this problem, and the result was the introduction of the telescopic sight and the crossbars—two pieces of crossed wire at the end of the telescope. When these "cut" on the target the gun pointer presses his electric button and the gun does the rest.

It is eminently spectacular, this great gun battery practice. This is from a description given to the writer by an umpire whose station was on one of the ships towing the target: "Through the glasses you could see a needle-like flash from the firing ship, a vessel so far distant that her outline was but an indistinct blur upon the horizon. Having caught the flash, the glass is dropped, the eye goes to the stop watch, and you begin to count—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven—and about then you will hear a faint drone which in the next fraction of a second swells into a mighty roar—the roar of an express rushing at the rate of thirty miles a second. With the roar come a flying of splinters from the target, a geyser leaping a hundred feet in air, then another and another, as the ricocheting shell glances from wave to wave, and then, last of all, the faint, faroff boom of the gun which had hurled the missile."—Harper's Weekly.

DECORATED HIS SHIP.

Sir John Had Little Paint and a Fine Sense of Humor.

It is not often the administration of England's naval affairs is attended with any humorous features, but on one occasion at least an officer of the royal navy contributed quaintly to the archives of the admiralty.

Once, before the days of steel ships, the allowance of paint in the royal navy was very small, and sometimes the officers had to pay large sums in order that their ships might maintain a decent appearance. Sir John Phillimore resorted to a funny expedient either to soften the heart of the navy board or, if that proved impossible, to express his opinion. He painted one side of his yellow frigate black and white and used the rest of the black paint in printing on the other side in large letters, "No more paint!"

The navy board wrote to call his attention to the impropriety of his conduct and signed themselves, as they did officially, "Your affectionate friends." Sir John made reply that he could not obliterate the objectionable letters unless he were given more paint and signed himself, in turn, "Your affectionate friend, John Phillimore."

The naval authorities then called his attention to the impropriety of the signature, to which Sir John responded, acknowledging the letter, stating he regretted that the paint had not been sent and ending, "I am no longer your affectionate friend, John Phillimore."

His frigate was permitted to retain her original yellow, and thus the navy board punished Sir John's impertinence.

The Last Laugh.

Hogan was raffling a clock. He was fairly successful in disposing of tickets in the shop where he worked, but he ran up against trouble when he canvassed his neighbors. Dropping in at a neighbor's house, he tried to sell a ticket on the clock.

"It's a fine timepiece and it'll look fine on yer whatnot er mantel," says Hogan cajolingly.

"Gwan, the old clock doesn't run," replied the neighbor.

"Well," drawled Hogan, changing front completely, "well, perhaps yez won't win it and then y'll have the laugh on the fellow who does."—Milwaukee Free Press.

Lengthening the Day.

A couple of laborers who had been working at the waterworks got into conversation.

"I say, Bob," exclaimed one of the men, "you are a bit of a scholar. Can you tell me who it was that ordered the sun to stand still?"

"I don't know," replied Bob. "Some son of a gun of a contractor who wanted a big day's work out of the laboring man, you can bet."—London Answers.

Could Imitate.

Pater—Can you give my daughter the comforts to which she has been accustomed? Sutor—Yes, sir. I've breakfasted at your home, and I'm certain that I can complain about the coffee, read the paper, demand the discharge of the cook and announce that I'll dine at the club.—Toledo Blade.

Making It Pleasant For Her.

Elderly Relative (sniffing)—Bertha, is it possible that you allow smoking in your parlor? Married Niece—Certainly, auntie. You can smoke your pipe here if you like.—Chicago Tribune.

Plenty of Chances.

It never is necessary to hunt for long or to travel far if one is looking for a chance to do a good deed.—Chicago Record-Herald.

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