

FOUGHT UNDER WATER.

A Mink Drowned While Killing a Muskrat in an Adirondack Pool.

The muddled water of a half-frozen cove down on the flats told that something unusual had happened not long before. Plainly yet was the tale when a stiffening furred body rose to the surface of the little open space of water.

A hungry mink had come that way along a string of coves looking for something to eat. The mice were shy, and he could not catch them. Of fish there were none, but a lone muskrat, diving for roots and after a minute beneath the water's surface rising again, offered a prey at once a fighter and of goodly taste. A mink likes to kill a fighter. He will go a long way from brooks, upon hill and even mountain tops, looking for one, woodsmen say. He tackles martens or weasels, and is especially fond of a big muskrat.

The mink crouched on the edge of the ice a moment; then, as the muskrat rose, he sprang for his prey. The muskrat quickly threw up his head and caught the mink by a paw. The mink got hold of the muskrat's neck, a skin-hold only. They rolled and kicked the water high in the air, throwing it ten feet away into the snow. The mink could have killed the muskrat had they been in the snow or on the ground, but in the water the muskrat was too powerful. At last they dived, and above them the water boiled and grew yellow with mud.

Under water the mink was as badly off as at the surface. At last the mink's breath gave out, and, letting go, he tried to rise, but the muskrat would not release his hold on the mink's leg. So at last the mink, after much struggling, died. But his hold on the muskrat's throat, though at first only a skin hold, had later been forced back, and the big vein had been cut. The mink rose to the surface, and the muskrat tried to swim away, but died, and rose as the other had done.

THE SEVEN STARS.

A Strange Superstition of the Ancient Egyptians.

In ancient Egypt the body of Osiris was always sealed up in the ark during the month of November, because the people believed that the seven stars were seven brothers sailing their ships across the sky and carrying with them the souls of the dead. The people of ancient Gaul believed that the angels and the souls of great men held a celestial festival on that particular night in November, when both the full moon and the seven stars were on the meridian at the same hour. The Hot-tentots of South Africa and the Abipones of South America each claim that the seven stars are their deceased fathers and grandfathers. Oakes says: "Certain tribes in both Africa and South America hold that the seven stars is (are) their father (fathers), and welcome their return with festivities and much rejoicing." The ancient Mexicans always sacrificed a human being and kindled a sacred fire (made of seven firebrands) on his back when the seven stars and the moon were on a certain meridian together. The Peruvians also had seven stars ceremonies, but without sacrifice, at about the time the Mexicans were carrying on their paganistic rites. The ancient Druids believed the seven stars to be boats, which carried souls to the judgment seat of the "god of the dead."

A Thief's Clever Ruse.

A man, wearing a large cape coat entered a London store when the proprietor was alone, and asked to be shown some ladies' cloaks, as he wished to give his wife a little surprise. After a careful inspection, he fixed upon one, and asked the shopkeeper if he had a young lady at hand, to put on the cloak to see how it looked. The proprietor regretted that none of the ladies of the establishment were in at that moment. "Well," said the man, "perhaps you wouldn't object to putting it on yourself?" The unsuspecting shopkeeper slipped on the cloak, buttoned it, and tured round in all directions. "Magnificent!" exclaimed the purchaser, with seeming ecstasy. But at the same time he grabbed the till, which he hid under his cape, and bolted out of the store. The horrified proprietor rushed after him into the street, where, however, he was seized by the passers-by, who dragged him back into his store in the supposition that the poor fellow had gone mad, and before he could explain matters the rogue had disappeared.

What Querns Are.

The quern is among the oldest and most primitive of mechanisms for the grinding of grain. There is a fixed stone and above it a rotating one. There is a hole in the middle of the upper, or movable stone, into which the grain is dropped. A stick fixed into the upper stone permits of it being moved around. A wooden spindle runs through both stones. It is a good machine, but useless to-day. Nevertheless, the quern, with but very little variations, precisely as it was used in pre-historic times, is made and sold and grinds its grain to-day in the Orkney and Hebridian islands. What a patent flour-making mill of the present day would cost we do not know, but a few years ago a good quern could be made in Shetland for about one dollar.

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