

DEVIL'S RIVER NEWS.

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NO. 969

The Store on the Corner

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ORIENTAL COURTESY.

The Formality of a Welcome to a House in Damascus.

Ased Ullah's house is in what seems to be a mean quarter of the town. It is but a seeming. All Damascus houses front upon mean streets and are hidden and barred. The street is narrow, walled, rough enough underfoot, painted thick with vivid sunshine and deep shadow—a mystery of direction, too, and of detail, turning unexpectedly, forever revealing the surprise of low arches and steep alleys, of fenced tombs and wells in the wall. It is but a step from the flowing confusion of man and beast and noisy trading of the Suk et Tawleh, but remains quiet, traversed by apprentices upon errands, veiled women in black, who slip along the walls of unfrequented places, sheiks and scholars in softly tinted robes. There is a gigantic porter at the gate, as at the gates of the men of wealth and quality of the town, to unlock the way and shout a warning to the wife of Ahmed Ased Ullah, providing against the scandal of a surprise in the garden.

Here, then, upon cushions under the light, with his pens and his tools and his collection of old masterpieces, secluded from the vehement business of the bazaar and the troubling politics of the town, sits Ahmed Ased Ullah, the writer, unused to the company of travelers from abroad, but mildly wishful for it.

"Your day be happy," says Ahmed Ased Ullah, according to the form, beaming inquisitively over his great spectacles.

"And yours both happy and blessed." "My house," he replies, his interest quite detached from the compliment, genially expressing itself rather in a glowing, diffident smile, childlike in frank delight, "is honored in your presence."

"But, no," is the protestation; "the honor is to such as may by grace be permitted to visit the homes of the distinguished."

"God forbid," says Ahmed Ased Ullah, with pious formality, "that it should be considered so in this case!"

"God forbid, indeed, that it should be presumed otherwise!" Ahmed Ased Ullah swiftly touches his breast, his thin white beard, his forehead, offering the service of his heart, his lips, his mind, in agreement with the polite custom, and accepts in return an expression of devotion precisely similar in form and sincerity, all the while continuing with remarkable rapidity to jump his finger tips from breast to brow, as if with the determination to multiply his politeness beyond the possibility of being matched, displaying in the ceremony an agility which nothing but lifelong practice could achieve.

"By your favor," says he at last, bowing an invitation to enter.

"It is by your grace." And the gentle welcome to the divan of Ahmed Ased Ullah is accomplished.—Norman Duncan in Harper's.

The Narrow Path.

There are occasional doubts in the minds of the elders of the Morse family as to the quickness of Bobby's wits, but there has never been any doubt that a lesson once learned by him, however slowly, is forever after remembered.

"Won't you shake hands with me, Bobby?" asked one of his sister's admirers, but Bobby hung back.

"I don't care to," he said, with terrible distinctness.

"Don't you like me?" asked the unwelcome visitor.

"No, I don't," replied Bobby, and then there was a shocked chorus from the family.

"Bobby," said his aunt reproachfully as she withdrew him from the public gaze, "why did you say such a rude thing to Mr. Brown?"

"Because, aunty," said her wringing charge, "I got spanked last week for not telling the truth, and I shan't never take any risks again!"

Pressing.

A Frenchman asked a New Yorker: "What is ze meaning of ze Americaine word 'press'?" I have looked in ze dictionary and find ze press newspapers, ze press ze printing machine, ze press ze grand crowd, ze press for ze cider, ze press for ze cotton, ze press for ze girl to embrace, ze press for ze hat, ze press for ze clothes—oh, so many kinds of ze press I am weary.

"Well, monsieur, the press you mean probably means to exert pressure—that is, to importune, to persuade, to squeeze, to—'Ah, zat is ze word! Merci! What grand language when one leete word have so many translations! Being a gentleman of no importance, our visit appeared one night at a swel party and was vociferous in the praise of a certain singer who sang to the host he cried: 'Sing me ze grand favor! Sing me ze lady to sing one m'."

FUJI MOUNTAIN.

The Spell Cast by Japan's Matchless Cone of Pearl.

Other mountains may be painted with some fair degree of truth and justice—even the beautiful Jungfrau—but not so Fuji. Its loveliness is so delicate and its moods so ever changing and evanescent that, no matter how skilled the artist, the most he can ever hope to accomplish is only to give some faint idea of its charm of a moment. The spell cast by the softness, grace and symmetry of that matchless cone of pearl floating in the sky is far beyond his reach.

Every nature worshiper visiting Japan has fallen in adoration at the foot of Fuji, and foreign writers and poets have followed their Japanese brothers in vainly attempting to describe the feelings with which they have been inspired.

Who that has seen the snow clad crest gleaming so white and pure against the deep blue of the winter sky will not admit that the mountain is worthy of all the praise that has been bestowed upon it, and more.

It is not only the physical charms of the mountain that cast so powerful a spell, though they alone would make of Fuji an object of homage to every lover of the beautiful in any land on earth, but it is also the wondrous web of legend spun around the snowy peak that is as charming and full of delightful mystery and sentiment as the moods of its beauty are capricious and fitful—a delicious combination that marks Fuji as unique among all the mountains of the earth.

Fuji is a dormant volcano—an isolated cone, tapering from a circumference of about a hundred miles at its base to but a fortieth part of that distance at the summit. It cannot be accounted extinct, for at the eastern side of the mountain top the ash is very hot in places, testifying to the presence of fissures leading to the fires below, which may at any time burst forth again.

Tradition tells us that Fuji rose from the earth in a single night, while simultaneously a great depression appeared in the earth, 150 miles away to the southwest, which is now filled with the waters of Lake Biwa.

Geologists say that Fuji is but a young volcano, not yet having destroyed its beauty by bursting the crater rim—a fate that usually overtakes mountains of this nature sooner or later.—Herbert G. Ponting in Metropolitan Magazine.

Why Foam on Ink is White.

The foam was white. "How white the foam is!" said the pretty girl in a voice muffled by the sable stole drawn across her red mouth. "Yet the sea is green. Why, then, isn't the foam green?"

But the young sophomore laughed in derision of such ignorance.

"Gee, you are ignorant!" he said. "Beer is brown, but its foam is white too. Shake up black ink and you get white foam. Shake up red ink and the result is the same."

"A body that reflects all the light it receives without absorbing any is always white. All bodies powdered into tiny diamond form, so that they throw back the light from many facets, absorb none of it and are white by consequence. Powdered black marble, for instance, is white. And foam is water powdered into these small diamonds, and hence its whiteness."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Speaking the Truth.

The person arrived unexpectedly to remain for supper with a large colored family in Kentucky. Immediately the cabin was in commotion, and mammy swept away the swarm of little pickaninnies with a few well timed warnings and reminders as to table manners. When supper was ready the possum and taters were tempting, and little Susie watched with despairing eyes the delectable viands diminish and fade away into nothing ere her turn came. When the person had almost finished mammy turned to Susie and said:

"Have some mo' possum, honey?" A pair of indignant eyes flashed. "Mo! I ain't had some yet!" exploded Susie.—Judge.

Schools For Thieves.

In Tokyo, there are regular schools in which thieving is taught by professionals. In Japan, as elsewhere, there is honor among thieves, and the entire "thieves' colony" in the capital of Japan is governed by rules that are rigorously enforced. Their "codex," or body of rules, prescribes that the youngest beggars and thieves shall retain 10 per cent of their earnings; pickpockets of the second class retain from 30 to 40 per cent, while the most skillful thieves keep from 50 to 60 per cent of their earnings!

The greater part of what then remains is employed in keeping the thieves' academies in efficient working order.

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WHO WAS WRONG?

A Lawyer's Opinion on a Lease and a Court's Decision.
Some years ago an attorney was called in by a large company and handed a lease.
"Give us your opinion," said the president. "We have a great deal of this sort of legal business, and it is only fair to say that your opinion may mean much to us and to yourself."
The lawyer went through the document with some care, but quickly and on the spot.
"Um—will you tell me what firm drew up this instrument?" he asked at length.
"No firm at all," was the reply. "For five years we have drawn every lease made by our company right in this office. My subordinate here, Mr. Johns, is the only man we have ever found who thoroughly understands the complications and conditions of such transactions as we enter into."
The attorney's face brightened. "This is one of the best drawn leases I have ever examined," he said heartily. "You are wise to handle such matters inside your own organization. I commend your business judgment."
"Can you suggest any improvements?"
"None whatever," declared the lawyer.
"Can you discern any flaws?"
"No—emphatically! Mr. Johns," continued the attorney, turning to the president's assistant, "I want to congratulate you, as a lawyer, upon your thorough grasp of this most difficult branch. In my opinion this instrument is unassailable. It will hold in the highest court of this state."
"That is what we want—your honest opinion," said the president. "You have given it, and we are much obliged to you and shall be pleased to have a bill for your service. My dear sir, the highest court in the state declared this lease null and void last week, and we lost a \$10,000 suit upon it!"—Circle Magazine.

WHAT ABOUT THAT \$2.00?

Post and Creditor.
A Paris contemporary tells this story about Joseph Mery, the French poet: A creditor called one morning early to ask payment of an account. He interviewed the poet in bed and expressed sorrow at having to trouble him, but would be settled the account. "With pleasure," replied Mery. "Have the goodness to open the first drawer of that cabinet." "I have, sir," replied the creditor, "but there is nothing there." "Indeed? Well, try the next." "There is nothing in it." "That is strange. Try the third." "There is nothing in there either." "Look on the mantelshelf." "But it is the same as the drawers." "It is incredible. Have you looked on the table?" "Yes." "And in the secretaire?" "Yes, and there is nothing." "In my clothes?" "Yes; I have turned out all the pockets." "Ah, well," replied Mery, with the greatest composure, "if there is no money in the drawers or on the mantel or in the table or in the secretaire or in my pockets, how in the name of all that's wonderful can I give you anything?"

A Borneo Parasite.
A famous rarity in the vegetable world of Borneo is the rafflesia, the buah pakmah of Malays. The plant is one of the most degraded of parasites, and so completely does it submerge itself in the tissues of its host that the only part which ever shows itself to the external world is the enormous flower. The diameter of the flower measures about two feet. The odor is repulsive, and there is not one feature of beauty to recommend it to man. It appears, however, to hold an important place in the pharmacopoeia of the natives, who perhaps imagine that the plant to which nature has given so uninviting an exterior must possess some hidden virtue in the way of compensation. Various species of rafflesia are known in Borneo, and, oddly enough, their hosts are invariably species of vine (cissus).

Ancient Inkstands.
An inkstand that was probably in use 3,400 years ago is in a museum in Berlin. It is of Egyptian make and is supposed to belong to the eighteenth or nineteenth dynasty or somewhere about 1500 B. C., although its real age can only be judged of approximately. It is made of wood and has two compartments, an upper one provided with two holes, one for black and one for red ink and a lower one for holding reed pens. The black and the red inks are certainties, for some still remains, in a dry condition, within the receptacles. Another ancient inkstand is supposed to have been intended for the use of a schoolboy. It would certainly hold ink enough for a schoolboy's needs, for it has no fewer than four ink holes. Both inkstands were found at Thebes.

OLD FASHIONED SHOOTING.

The Record of Lord Malmesbury and Slow Firing Guns.

The second Lord Malmesbury, besides being one of the best shots of his day, was without question the most painstaking and careful chronicler of his sport who ever fired a gun. For forty seasons, ending with the year 1840, he kept a record of every cartridge he fired and the result of the shot—a feat which may have a parallel, but is hardly likely to be beaten. He fired in all 54,987 shots and accounted for 38,454 head of game, besides 480 which he did not add to his figures; they were the birds he killed when he hit more than one with the same shot. As for walking, there never was such an untiring pursuer of every bird and beast that could be entered in a game book. He calculated that he was out for four hours a day for ninety days in the year, which made 14,480 hours walking in forty years, and since he walked at the rate of two and a half miles an hour he remarks that in all he must have covered 36,300 miles, "very nearly once and a half the circumference of the globe." He was never in bed for a day and not thirty days confined to the house by accident or illness, though, to be sure, his violent exercise affected his heart, and he died at sixty-four.

The list of his hits and misses are particularly interesting when you compare his records of shots at birds like snipe and woodcock, which were as difficult to hit in his day as they are in ours, with the kind of figures which would be likely or possible with modern guns. In the season 1819-20, for instance, Lord Malmesbury fired eighty-three shots at woodcock and bagged forty-five, and out of 411 shots at snipe he actually got 216, which is somewhat better than one out of two. Any snipe shot today would be pleased with a record of three out of five, taking the wilder, twistier snipe of late autumn and winter with the home bred snipe killed in August and September. You read these records and those of men like John Mytton, who would make a point of invariably killing fifty brace of partridges to his own gun on the first day of the season, and wonder how with their slow firing guns and their bad shot patterns they managed to kill even one bird in four. "A gun never shoots twice alike," Colonel Hawker wrote, and he shot with the best guns he could buy. How did they manage it?

Somehow, with guns which their great-grandchildren would not burden a keeper with, they did contrive to shoot as well as we do, and somehow the pictures made of them while they were shooting give you the idea that they enjoyed the shooting more.—London Spectator.

