

WAIFS AND STRAYS.

A RELIC OF TOM MOORE.—A little book of French epigrams which once belonged to Thomas Moore was sold lately in London for a few shillings. It contains one or two translations in pencil on the fly-leaves. They are altered and polished most carefully, but do not seem to have ever been published. One is as follows:

Clodio, that scribbling, chattering poet,
To me the other morning said,
"Which of my works do you like best?"
I answered, "Those I have not read."

Another is varied several times:

Prometheus, to punish his pilfering art,
Had a vulture to feed day and night on his heart,
Hadst thou, my good friend, been in his situation,
Alas for the bird! 'twould have died of starvation.

VALUE OF AUTOGRAPHS.—Sir William Fraser has actually just paid £230 sterling for the original manuscript of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard;" the same relic having been sold twenty years ago for only £122. Fifty pounds was the sum paid for a very precious relic: the handwriting of a Queen of England: a letter from Queen Elizabeth to Henry IV. of France. Twenty guineas was given for a letter from Galileo to his pupil Castelli; forty-eight pounds for a letter from Mary, Queen of Scots, to M. de la Motte. Two autograph letters of Napoleon I. fetched thirty-four pounds, and a letter from Nelson to Lady Hamilton brought in not less than seventy guineas.

ORIGIN OF THE SANDWICH.—Lord Sandwich was once a famous statesman in England. He was a great minister, but also a great gambler. One day he had never moved from the gaming table. Suddenly he felt hungry. He cried to the servant to bring him something to eat. They brought a slice of beef and two pieces of bread. Placing them together so as not to lose time, he devoured the first "sandwich," for so the lunch was called, and has since been known.

A TEST OF LIFE.—Is the patient really dead or not? is at all times a very anxious question. A medical practitioner of Cremona proposes a simple method by which the question may be answered with certainty. It is, to inject a drop of ammonia beneath the skin, when, if death be present, no effect, or next to none, is produced; but if there be life, then a red spot appears at the place of injection. A test so easily applied as this should remove all apprehension of being buried alive.

CURIOSITIES OF THE COLD.—Every generation has its unexampled experiences, betokening that the weather in particular and things in general are out of joint. The Strait of Dardanelles and the Black Sea were entirely frozen over in 642, while the snow in some places drifted to the depth of ninety feet, and the upheaped ice broke down the walls of cities and the battlements of towers. In 850 the Adriatic was entirely frozen over; in 1207 most of the travellers in Germany were frozen to death on the roads; in 1233 the Po was frozen from Cremona to the sea, snowdrifts made the road everywhere impassable, wine casks burst, and the forest trees split by the frost with astounding noise; in 1250 a fine forest near Ravenna was killed by frost; in 1256 the Cattagat was frozen between Norway and Jutland; in 1282 the houses in Austria were buried in snow; in 1292 the Rhine was frozen; in 1314 all the rivers in Italy were frozen; in 1384 the Rhine, Scheidt, and Adriatic were frozen; in 1467 the wine in Flanders was cut with hatchets; in 1580 the Great and Little Belt were frozen; in 1694 the forest trees and oaks in England split with the frost; in 1592 the starved wolves entered Vienna, and boldly attacked men and horses; and in 1540 the Zuyder Zee was frozen over.

MAX ADELER ON LIME.—Dr. Wilkes, in his recent work on physiology, remarks that "It is estimated that the bones of every adult person require to be fed with lime enough to make a marble mantel every eight months." It will be perceived, says Max Adler, therefore, that in the course of about ten years each of us eats three or four mantel pieces and a few sets of front door steps. And in a long life I suppose it is fair to estimate that a healthy American could devour the capital at Washington, and perhaps two or three medium-sized quarries besides. It was awful to think of the consequences if a man should be shut off from his supply of lime for a while, and then let loose in a cemetery. An ordinary tomb-stone would hardly be enough for a lunch for him.

LONDON.—The 'Leisure Hour' says:—The metropolis of the British Empire, the largest city the world ever saw, covers, within fifteen miles radius of Charing Cross, nearly seven hundred square miles, and numbers within these boundaries four millions of inhabitants. It comprises a hundred thousand foreigners from every region of the globe. The port of London has every day upon its waters a thousand ships and nine thousand sailors. Upwards of a hundred and twenty persons are added to the population daily, or forty thousand yearly, a birth taking place every five minutes, and a death every eight minutes. On an average, twenty-eight miles of streets are opened and nine thousand new houses built every year. In its postal districts there is a yearly delivery of 238,000,000 of letters. On the police registrar there are the names of one hundred and twenty thousand habitual criminals, increasing by many thousands every year. More than one third of all the crime of the country is committed in London, or at least brought to light there. There are as many beer-shops and gin-palaces as would, if their fronts were placed side by side, reach from Charing Cross to Portsmouth, a distance of seventy-three miles, and thirty-eight thousand drunkards are annually brought before its magistrates. The shops open on Sundays would form streets sixty miles long. It is estimated that there are above a million of the people who are practically heathen, wholly neglecting the ordinances of religion. At least nine hundred additional churches and chapels would be required for the wants of the people.

THE DEATH-WATCH.—The scientific name of the death-watch is an *ambius less alatum*. It is a beetle of the timber-boring species. The beetles begin their ticking in the spring; the tick is only a call one to the other—if it is not answered, the animal repeats it

It is thus produced: The beetle lifts itself upon its hind legs, and beats its head against the place where it is standing; the usual number of ticks given in succession is from seven to nine, or eleven. In old houses these insects may be heard during the whole day. The noise is exactly like that produced by tapping the nail upon a table. The idea of the ticking of the death-watch foreboding a death is simply a superstition.

WEDDINGS IN BORNEO.—On the wedding-day the bride and bridegroom are brought from opposite ends of the village to the spot where the ceremony is to be performed. They are made to sit on two bars of iron, that blessings as lasting, and health as vigorous may attend the pair. A cigar and betch-leaf, prepared with the areca-nut, are next put into the hands of the bride and bridegroom. One of the priests then waves two fowls over the heads of the couple, and in a long address to the Supreme Being calls down blessings upon the pair, and implores that peace and happiness may attend their union. After the heads of the affianced have been knocked against each other three or four times, the bridegroom puts the prepared leaf and cigar into the mouth of the bride, while she does the same to him, whom she thus acknowledges as her husband.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.—In 1762, when there were only six stage coaches throughout the kingdom, a person named John Crossett, of the Charter-house, London, took alarm, and wrote a pamphlet demanding the suppression of these conveyances, on the ground that they would inflict a serious injury on society. Some of his reasons are both amusing and curious, "These coaches," he says, "make gentlemen come to London upon any small occasion, which otherwise they would not do but upon urgent necessity—nay the convenience of the passage makes their wives often come up, who rather than make such long journeys on horse-back, would stay at home. Here, when they come to town, they must be in the mode, get fine clothes, go to plays and treats, and by these means get such a habit of idleness and love of pleasure that they are weary ever after."

ASSISTING AT AN ECLIPSE.—The Chinese view an eclipse with wonder, mingled with fear and terror, and most of them take some steps to aid the sun or moon, as the case may be, in the hour of need, the principal agents employed being, of course, gongs, and gunpowder, without which no ceremonial observance of any kind is complete. The officials of their several vassals (official residences) go through a regular set ceremonial on these occasions. They call in the aid of the Toasts priests, and an incense vase, and a pair of large candlesticks containing red candles for luck, are placed on a table in the haunting, or audience-hall, but sometimes in the court in front of it. When the eclipse is beginning, the red candles are lighted, and the official enters, dressed in robes of state. He takes some lighted incense sticks in both hands, and bows low in front of the table, waving the incense about according to custom before placing it in the vase. He next proceeds to perform the ceremony of "kou tuo" (literally, knockhead), kneeling down thrice, and knocking his head nine times on the ground. He then gets up, and huge gongs and drums are beaten to frighten the monster away; and finally the priests march round the table in solemn procession, repeating certain prescribed formulas in a sing-song tone, until the termination of the eclipse. The officials are of course always supposed to be successful in their endeavors to rescue the sun and moon from their perilous position, and the ignorant masses in China fully believe that the happy result is brought about by the ceremonies just described.

A CHINESE FUNERAL.

A SPECTATOR sends the following to the 'Grey River Argus':—"An interesting ceremony took place on Tuesday last in the shape of a Chinese funeral. The person interred was a poor fellow named Yung Lum Lan, aged 47 years. He came to Greymouth on Friday last, afflicted with lung disease, which terminated fatally on Sunday last at 5 a.m. Deceased was a native of Canton, and, although there are nearly 1,000 Chinese in Westland, only five of them (those belonging to the firm of Kum Sing Tie, of this town) contributed to his interment. Upon the arrival of the followers at the hospital, where the deceased lay, the body was clothed in a costly suit, and shoes were placed upon his feet, after having the leather part of the soles taken off. The body was then placed in the coffin, and the hands filled with cards, 5 inches by 1 inch, inscribed with Chinese characters, many more of the same description being placed on the body; these were passports entitling him to accommodation at the various castles in the air on the road to glory and joss. After the departure of the funeral cortege from the hospital, the coffin was literally covered with slips of paper, similar pieces being scattered on the road to the burial ground. On arrival the coffin was lowered at the foot of the grave on the surface; a quantity of provisions, consisting of boiled eggs, bacon and rice, preserved lemon and nuts, chopsticks are also provided, and lest he become faint on his way a bottle of Chinese and three diminutive cups will be found useful. An illumination was then made from lighted Chinese painted candles and sandalwood matches, to light him on his way and keep away the evil one; a fire was made at the foot of the grave, in which they burnt a large quantity of golden paper, and, while this was being consumed, a final adieu was taken by each of the mourners placing his two hands together, and, in a stooping position, lifting them to his head and letting them drop to his feet. Chinese brandy, fruit and cakes were then served round to the spectators, of which all partook freely. Strips of pink calico, about 2 feet 6 inches long, enclosing a silver coin (English money), were then distributed to the public, this latter an emblem of 'good will to all' men by the deceased. The whole proceeding was a great novelty to the Europeans, and a Maori or two, who 'kapaei' it—the latter part of the ceremony especially—and I have no hesitation in saying that had their funeral customs been known, and sufficient notice given, the majority of the people of Greymouth would not have missed such a solemn-jolly ceremony."