

### Alexander and the Africans.

On his way to conquer the world, Alexander, the Macedonian, reached a country in Africa where the people, separated from the rest of the world, dwelt peacefully in huts, and knew nothing of wars and conquerors. Alexander was led into the presence of the ruler of this people, who received him hospitably. The ruler placed before him dates, figs, and bread, but all of gold.

"Do you eat gold here?" asked Alexander.

"I put it before you," replied the ruler, "because you have nourishing food in your own country, and could not have come here to seek it."

"Your gold did not entice me here," replied Alexander, "but I would learn your customs."

"Indeed!" replied the other; "then stay with us as long as you will."

While they were conversing, two citizens came to ask for judgment.

The plaintiff said: "I bought a piece of land of this man, and in digging it I have found a treasure. This is not mine; I only purchased the land, and not the treasures which were hidden in it; but still he from whom I bought it will not receive it back."

The defendant answered: "I am not as conscientious as my fellow-citizen. I sold the land and all that it contained, and, therefore, the treasure."

The judge repeated their words, that he might be certain he had understood the case, and after some reflection he said: "You have a son, my friend, have you not?"

"Yes."

"And you have a daughter?"

"Yes."

"Well, your son shall marry his daughter, and the treasure shall be given to the pair for a marriage portion."

Alexander appeared surprised.

"Is my decision unrighteous?" asked the ruler.

"Oh, no," replied Alexander: "but it surprises me."

"How would the case have been settled in your country?"

"To tell the truth," answered Alexander, "the two men would have been put under guard, and the treasure seized for the king."

"For the king?" asked the ruler, in astonishment. "Does the sun shine in your country?"

"Oh, yes."

"Does it rain there?"

"Certainly."

"Singular! are there tame, grass-eating animals there?"

"Of many kinds."

"Then," said the ruler, "it must be on account of these innocent animals that the all-good Being allows the sun to shine and the rain to fall. You men do not deserve it."

### WONDERFUL TESTS.

#### HOW PEOPLE CAN BREATHE AND LIVE IN NOXIOUS GASES.

Mr. Fleuss has recently given at Portsmouth, before officers of the Admiralty, an exhibiton of his new diving dress and apparatus for enabling persons to live and work in noxious gases. A diving dress and helmet are only used by Mr. Fleuss for the sake of warmth and personal comfort when below the water, neither being in any way necessary to enable him to breathe. He carries below with him the raw material of life, in the shape of a supply of concentrated oxygen contained in a small reservoir or tank, which he slings over his shoulder like a knapsack. At every respiration he draws from his stock by means of a tube and mouthpiece; the exhausted gas, after being strained through a sponge saturated with caustic soda, returns to replenish the tank, the impure ingredients alone being permitted to escape. In this way the diver can remain under water for three hours, and can penetrate into situations which are impossible to the ordinary diver, who is compelled to drag a lengthening pipe at every step, and is always liable to the danger of getting entangled with the means which supply him with air. Mr. Fleuss descended into the Steam Basin, which he traversed from end to end without experiencing any difficulty, either as regards locomotion or breathing. On the following day he demonstrated his ability to work in smoke and poisonous gases. The test on this occasion was a remarkably severe one. A fire was

kindled in the wastehouse with all kinds of dockyard refuse, the smoke given off being of the densest and most pungent description. Mr. Fleuss carried the same magazine with him as before, but divested himself of the diving-dress, his only protection being a pair of goggles which covered his eyes and fitted tightly upon his nostrils. Thus armed and provided he entered the smoke, in which he was willing to remain an hour or more, but at the end of half an hour he was desired to come out, as it was considered if he could remain in the midst of such fumes for that length of time, a longer trial was superfluous. On emerging Mr. Fleuss was apparently as fresh as when he began.—[From a London Letter.]

### Mother Carey's Chickens.

The stormy petrel, known to sailors as the Mother Carey's chicken, is hated by them after a most illogical manner because it foretells an approaching storm, and, therefore, by a curious process of reasoning, is taken for its cause.

This bird, says Woods' Natural History, has long been celebrated for the manner in which it passes over the waves, pattering with its webbed feet and flapping its wings so as to keep itself just above the surface. It thus traverses the ocean with wonderful ease, the billows rolling beneath its feet and passing away under the bird without in the least disturbing it. It is mostly on the move in windy weather, because the marine creatures are flung to the surface by the chopping waves, and can be easily picked up as the bird pursues its course. It feeds on the little fish, crustaceans, and mollusks which are found in abundance on the surface of the sea, especially on the floating masses of algae, and will for days keep pace with a ship for the purpose of picking up the refuse food thrown overboard. Indeed, to throw the garbage of fish into the sea is a tolerably certain method of attracting these birds, who are sharp-sighted, and seldom fail to perceive any thing eatable.

It is believed that the petrel does not dive. The word petrel is given to the bird on account of its powers of walking on the water, as is related of St. Peter. It does not frequent land, except during the breeding season, and can repose on the surface of the ocean, settling itself just at the mean level of the waves, and rising and falling quietly with the swell. The petrel breeds on the northern coasts of England, laying a white egg in some convenient recess, a rabbit burrow being often employed for the purpose.

This bird possesses a singular amount of oil, and has the power of throwing it from the mouth when terrified. It is said that this oil, which is very pure, is collected largely in St. Kilda by catching the bird on its egg, where it sits very closely, and making it discharge the oil into a vessel. The bird is then released, and another taken. The inhabitants of the Faroe Islands make a curious use of this bird when young and very fat, by simply drawing a wick through the body and lighting it at the end which projects from the beak. This unique lamp will burn for a considerable period.

Sometimes the petrel appears in flocks, and has been driven southwards by violent storms, some having been shot on the Thames, others in Oxfordshire, and some near Birmingham. The general color of this bird is sooty black, and the outer edge of the tertials and the upper tail coverts are white. Its length is barely six inches.

### Asbestos.

Asbestos—from a Greek word meaning inconsumable—is a variety of the horriblende group of minerals, and the chemical composition of the whole family is chiefly silica, magnesia, alumina, and ferrous oxide; but the qualities vary widely. In colour it is usually from white to grey and green—sometimes yellow, when impregnated with iron—with fine crystalline flexible fibres of silky lustre, feels somewhat oily to the touch, although in its native state it is little suggestive of the use for which it may be made available as the rough iron ore is of a chronometer. A few years ago asbestos was supposed to be very rare; but, since there has been a demand for it in considerable quantities, new sources of supply have been opened up, and it is now found in many parts of Europe and America.