

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

IN NOVEMBER.

THE ruddy sunset lies
Banked along the west,
In flocks with sweep and rise
The birds are going to rest.

The air clings and cools,
And the reeds look cold
Standing above the pools
Like rods of beaten gold.

The flaunting golden-rod
Has lost her worldly mood,
She's given herself to God
And taken a nun's hood.

The wild and wanton horde
That kept the summer revel
Have taken the serge and cord
And given the slip to the devil.

The winter's loose somewhere,
Gathering snow for a fight;
From the feel of the air
I think it will freeze to-night.

—D. C. Scott, in *Scribner's Magazine*.

STRANGE BEDS.

THE old traveller to whom "lions" and sights have ceased to be novelties, who is not easily stirred to enthusiasm or emotion over the charms and wonders of travel, who has left off regarding journeys as contributing to the pleasure of a holiday, gets often into the habit of distinguishing the places he has visited by their beds. Speak to him of Rome, his face will not light up with enthusiasm at the remembrance of grey ruins, of historical palaces, of galleries of priceless art treasures, of associations with the history of the world for two thousand five hundred years, but he simply murmurs "pulex irritans." Speak to him of Spain, and he shudders at the recollections of nights passed in the company of foes more galling even than "pulex irritans." Allude to the South of France, and he dwells almost ecstatically upon the comfort of the Riviera bed, with its spotless drapery and its quaint, tent-like canopy, and speaks of the nightly dash beneath the gauzy curtain in order to bar entrance to, it may be, but one mosquito, whose hum, alternately loud and faint, would be a potent banisher of sleep. Allusion to mosquitoes opens the flood gates of the old traveller's memory. He will tell us how the noise made by the Hongkong variety is like the rushing of wind through trees. He will cite the mosquito of the West Indies in general, and of St. Kitts in particular, as the most irrepressible and voracious of its species; active and aggressive in broad daylight as in the still night, and impartial in its attentions to climate-hardened resident or juicy newcomer. From mosquitoes he ranges by association of ideas to other creatures with an affection for the human bedroom, and talks of the lizards which run up and down the walls in Singapore, of the snakes who love the Sahib's boots and blanket in India, of the centipedes and scorpions which render a barefooted journey across a Venezuelan or Brazilian bedroom a rash proceeding. As for the beds themselves, our friend, if he is not practising upon the credulity of us untravelled folk, says that he has slept upon every sort of bed which the necessity, the ingenuity, the benevolence, and the malignity of man have been able to invent. So we hear of the Japanese teahouse bed, made up in a few seconds on the mats with quilt, "futong," and that terrible wooden pillow with its roll of paper on the top, which, it may be supposed, has disappeared with the old national method of dressing the hair. We hear of the hammock slung in the stuffy 'tween deck of the South Sea whaler, of the bunk under the joss-house on the Chinese junk, of the luxurious staterooms and cabins of the great ocean liners, of beds in trans-continental emigrant cars, until we feel it time to assert ourselves and show that one need not go out of Britain in order to find strange beds. Have not all of us who have been blessed with health and strength to enjoy an average number of holidays had varied experiences of strange beds? During our peregrinations have we not made such queer acquaintances among beds that a look at the outside of an inn is sufficient for us to be able to say what sort of a bed we may expect?—*Globe*.

THE beautiful martens take up their abode in the rockiest parts of the woods and where the pines grow thickly. They are strictly abnormal in their habits; and seen among the shaggy pine foliage the rich yellow of their throats is sharply set off by the deep brown of the thick glossy fur. With us they do not make their nests and produce their young in the pine trees, but among the loose craggy rocks. Martens rarely show themselves till evening. They prey upon rabbits, hares, partridges, pheasants, and small birds; and when we say that, like the rest of the mustelidæ, they kill for a love of killing, it is not hard to understand why the keeper's hand is against them. Sometimes they do great harm in the coverts, and the old man shoots them, traps them, and does them to death with various subtle engines of his own machination. To-day the marten is rare; soon it will be extinct altogether.

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