

BRITISH SUPERSTITIONS

Odd Fancies Which Control Humble Folks' Doings—Midnight Has Its Due Influence on the Impressionable.

At the approach of midnight on Hallow E'en the girls in the moorland districts used to go into the gardens to gather sage leaves, one leaf at each stroke of the clock. Then they said, they would see the face of their future husbands. A common proverb, too, was, "Where the sage thrives the mistress is master." Sage is chopped still, in some parts, and put in the milk cheeses in layers, but only for Christmas use. Parsley is supposed to have some special virtue. It goes, they say, seven times to the devil before coming up. In Anjou, thick collars of green parsley are tied round cats whose kittens have been taken from them, to prevent milk fever. Marsh marigolds—kingcups—used to be hung on either side the outer door to keep out evil spirits, but it was unlucky to take these flowers indoors. Hawthorn blossoms were not supposed to bring death to a house, as is said in the southern counties, but to bring fevers. There might be reason in this, in the hermetically sealed rooms of the past. By and by, the best way to make an almond-flavored essence for sweets is to crack hawthorn blossoms into wide-necked bottles, fill up with spirits, and cork tightly.

The Elder for Witches.

Burning the wood of the elder will bring all manner of evil to the house; in old-fashioned cottage gardens it was planted to keep away the influences of witch or wizard. Willow wood is used in some trades, but it is unlucky to make whipstocks of it. In the Carpathians I have seen it much used for making ornamental cigar holders. Cabbages, the Staffordshire folks say, will never get hearts if planted when the moon is on the wane. Strangely enough, at our Antipodes, the Maoris hold firmly that the sweet potato will never thrive unless planted when the moon is on the increase. Also the tubers must be laid north and south. If the eggs of a swallow are taken into a cowhouse the cows will give milk streaked with blood. I have a friend in New Zealand whose favorite cow did this because she fondled a little dog in her presence just at milking time, a strange evidence of her jealousy.

A Corona of Bees.

One of the sisters who had care of the bees in the convent garden at Stone told Mr. Wells Bladen of that town that on the death of their lady foundress in 1868 the bees found their way into the church where she lay in state, and when the sister, who was very fond of her bees, went there she saw a beautiful sight. They had swarmed in a circle round the coffin, about a foot and a half above it—some forming a corona round the head. "Oh, I forgot to tell the bees, they will go!" she cried. And indeed they all went; she never saw them again. A most comical superstition is that if you are boiling black puddings—a local dainty—if you prick them and think of the greatest idiot you know, it will keep them from bursting; another odd one, that if you comb your hair out of doors and the birds get any of the stray hairs and put them in their nests, you will suffer from headache.

A Bad Bake Day.

In Staffordshire it is unlucky to bake bread on a Friday; if you are obliged to do it, you must mark the dough with a cross, or the witches will prevent its rising. In the New Forest, on the contrary, bread baked on a Friday is said to keep good for seven years, and also to cure certain complaints. In a Surrey shepherd's cottage I have seen numbers of little loaves hanging from the rafters in the best room, which I was told had been baked on successive Good Fridays. The shepherd told me he had brought the custom from Hampshire, and none of his neighbors knew the virtue of these loaves.

A quaint Christmas song of the Midlands runs:

The first day of Christmas
My true love sent me
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves,
Part of the June pear tree.

I am inclined to think that June pear must originally have been juniper.—Pall Mall Gazette.

A Kiss Tax.

The ancient town of Hungerford, in England, is the scene of a curious fete each year on the first Tuesday after Easter. Under a primeval and time honored arrangement the authorities exact a toll from every male and female inhabitant within certain boundaries, the masculine stax being one penny and the female levy a sooty kiss. Two burly bearded fellows, carrying massive wands of office, proceed from house to house levying these quaint taxes, and it is recognized on the day in question any youth may with impunity embrace any maiden whom he encounters.

The result is that a veritable carnival of osculation takes place yearly in Hungerford, and it attracts various visitors to the quaint little town, many of whom participate, though not entitled to do so, in the delights of the day.

Jersey Lily's Turn at Criticism.

Mrs. Langtry was discussing the other day the recent marriage of the octogenarian Marquis of Donegal with a young Canadian girl. She said it reminded her of an incident in the life of her father. Her father was a clergyman, and there came to him to be married one day a man of 70 and a girl of 18. The minister whispered, when this ill-assorted couple came and stood before him: "The font is at the other end of the church." "What do we want with the font? We are here to be married," said the old man. "Oh, I beg your pardon," the clergyman rejoined. "I thought you had brought this young girl here to be christened."

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Little wonder that men and women grow old before their time and find their health capital wasted away. Little wonder that men find their efforts crowned with failure, and women fall victims to the ills that are peculiar to their sex. Little wonder that gloom and despondency tempt many to put an end to their burdened life.

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CHINAMAN AT A TELEPHONE

Celestial Gets the Worth of His Money Every Time.

"A Chinaman at the telephone is a funny thing," remarked a long distance telephone operator in the Denver News a few days ago. "You see, it is impossible to tell whether one person or half a dozen are talking, and we often become mixed up in listening to them. When one is speaking, it seems as if half a dozen were talking, and we often imagine the wires are out of order. To make matters worse the Chinese delight in talking as fast as possible, and we never know whether the Chinaman at this end of the wire is talking or if it is the one at the other end. After the conversation is ended the Chink walks out of the booth with a self satisfied smile on his face and pays for a three minutes' talk. We have lately discovered that he invariably says as much during that time as could have been said by a white man in fifteen minutes."

To be sure, the telephone company is not really "out" anything by the transaction, as it is paid by the minute; but, nevertheless, in the case of Chinamen, the company would be the gainer by charging for volume instead of time. A Chinaman always begins his talk in pidgin English. He says: "Hello. Is this Sam Ling. I bettee you don't know—yi hi ki yi he yay bo benno ne," and so on, and it sounds on the wires as if several persons were at work.

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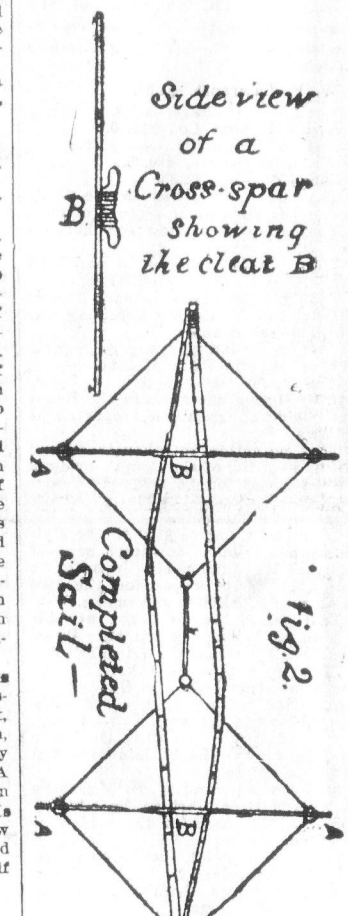
It will doubtless be many years before flying through the air becomes practically possible for all; but a running over the glassy surface of an icebound river or pond, propelled by the wintry blast blowing against artificial wings of cloth, is but a degree removed from it. The friction of the skates on the smooth ice is so small and the motion is so steady and rapid that it is hard to believe that one has not left the earth and is soaring through the air. It is the purpose of this article to describe how any boy or girl can make a pair of these artificial wings. No serious accident caused by this sport is on record.

The construction of this curious sail is as follows: First procure two long bamboo poles and cut off enough from the small end of each to make them both twelve feet long, then lash together the large end of one and the small end of the other with strong cord or wire; bind the other ends firmly in the same way, so that the two poles lie side by side firmly bound together at each end.

For the two masts or cross-spars (A in the Fig.), either bamboo or soft-wood sticks may be used. The length of these is eight, five and a quarter feet each, and if made of bamboo each should be three-eighths to five-eighths of an inch thick. Near the ends of each fix metal knobs or hools and fasten similar knobs at both ends of the main spar. Next whittle two small clews and fasten one firmly on the centre of each mast with cord.

To make the sails, purchase two yards and eight inches of factory cotton, or other suitable stuff, forty inches wide, and cut it in half, making two squares of forty inches each. Bind each firmly around the edge with tape and at each of the "clews" or corners fasten small rings or loops of strong cord to fasten on the knobs at the ends of the spars. Attach the sails to the cross-spars by slipping the rings over the hooks or knobs at their ends and then spring the main spar apart and slip the clews of the cross-spars between the two pieces and turn them so they fit as shown in the Fig. Fasten the outside clews to the knobs at the ends of the main

spars and then spring the main spar apart and slip the clews of the cross-spars between the two pieces and turn them so they fit as shown in the Fig. Fasten the outside clews to the knobs at the ends of the main



A SKATER'S SAIL.

spar and with a cord draw the near-clews together so that both sails will be tight, and the novel arrangement is now ready for a trial trip.

Take the sail to the nearest sheet of ice and, standing with your back to the wind, hold the sail by the centre against your back with your arms and let yourself go before the wind, steering with your skates. There is not much use in giving directions for "tacking" and other sailing manoeuvres, for after a little practice all this will come quite naturally, and any boy or girl will be able to go with ease from any point on a sheet of ice to any other point and return by the aid of the wind alone, no matter in what direction it is blowing.

The dimensions given are about right for a rather large boy, so that a small boy would have to construct a smaller sail, with the main spar about ten feet long and the rest in proportion.

If the sails are made of a fancy striped cloth with brilliantly-colored trimmings attached to the corners, the skater will present a very dashing appearance as he glides over the ice. It need hardly be added that when not in use the sail can be taken apart and the three spars wrapped up in the sails, and tied with the cord which is used to join the inner clews.

The Verb "To Die."

A little 7-year-old Hamiltonian, who is already wrestling with the intricacies of the English grammar, during a recent recitation was asked by his teacher: "Hawley, can you give the principal parts of the verb to die?" "Oh, yes," said Hawley, his face lighted with sober intelligence, "present, die; past, dead; perfect participle, buried!"

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