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MISCELLANY.

From the New-York Journal of Commerce.

Of all the Christmas custom that we have ever witnessed or read of—save that of public worship—one that Coleridge mentions as prevailing in the north of Germany, pleases us most.

The children, he says, make little presents to their parents and to each other, and parents to their children. For three or four months before Christmas the girls are all busy, and the boys save up their pocket money, to make or purchase these presents. What the present is to be is cautiously kept secret, and the girls have a world of contrivances to conceal it.—The evening before Christmas day, one of the parlors is lighted up by the children, into which the parents must not go, and here the presents intended for them, are laid out in great order—the children still concealing in their pockets what they intend for each other. Here the parents are introduced, and each presents his little gift—after which they bring out the rest, one by one from their pockets, and present them with kisses and embraces. When I witnessed this scene, says Coleridge, there were eight or nine children, and the eldest daughter and the mother wept aloud for joy, and tears ran down the face of the father, and he clasped all his children so tight to his breast, it seemed as if he did it to stifle the sob that was rising within him—I was very much affected. On the next day, in the great parlor, the parents lay out on the table the presents for the children; and a scene of more sober joy succeeds, as on this day after an old custom, the mother says privately to each of her daughters, and the father to his sons, that which he has observed most praise-worthy and that which was most faulty in their conduct during the year.

Effects of Ivy on Trees.—It appears to be a vulgar prejudice that ivy kills the trees it clings to. If it rooted itself, as is erroneously supposed, in their bark, and fed on their juices, it might merit the accusation of a destroyer; but it derives its nourishment wholly from the ground where it is rooted; and the supposed roots are only tendrils or holdfasts to enable it to climb. The opinion of its injuring trees seems to have arisen (and very naturally too) from the fact that it prefers to climb up a dead or dying branch, and will not attach itself to very young wood at all. Mr. Repton, the Landscape gardener, gives numerous facts to show that trees overrun with ivy, so far from being injured by it, grow most luxuriantly.—Evelyn says, that when ivy is stripped from trees, they are often killed by cold in the ensuing winter.

A day well spent secures repose.

From the Geneva (N. Y.) Gazette, Dec. 31.

A curiosity.—A man in Hector, Tompkins county, while hewing a stick of timber, a few days since, discovered in the centre of the tree, and enveloped in the solid wood, several distinct marks of an axe or hatchet, and several of the chips, which had not been entirely severed from the body, perfectly sound. The dead bark above the wound extended about half way round the tree; which leads to the determination on its size at the time it received the wound, indicating that the tree must have been a sapling of not more than three or four inches through. When the marks were discovered it was from three to four feet through, and the marks and chips in the centre. The tree was a white oak, which is of comparatively slow growth. Judging from its size, and the depth of the wood over the wound, the marks could not have been made less than two hundred or two hundred and fifty years ago. The incision has all the appearance of having been made with a sharp instrument of either iron or steel. Each blow penetrated an inch or more into the wood; which forbids the idea that it could have been done with a stone hatchet, which were in use among the Indians before the introduction of the arts into this country. If the incisions were made by steel or iron, which is undoubtedly the case, then either the arts and civilization were partially introduced among the nations which inhabit the borders of the Seneca Lake; or, which is much the most probable, the blows in this tree were inflicted much longer ago than two hundred and fifty years.

This may perhaps add another to the innumerable evidences already known, that this country was formerly inhabited by a people far advanced in civilization and the arts.

Sagacity of the Horse.—Having recently noticed, in a foreign paper, that a man falling from his horse into a river was seized by the animal and safely brought ashore, reminds us of a letter received from Steubenville, Ohio, in June last, addressed to a son of the editor, then in the village:—"Joseph L. returned home last evening, and this morning related to me, with tears in his eyes, a most remarkable and almost incredible circumstance. Arriving at a creek, which the late heavy rains had rendered it hazardous to swim, he dismounted from his horse, and attempted to cross the creek on a tree which had fallen across, it holding the bridle in his hand, and compelling the horse to swim alongside. After he arrived about midway the current became so rapid that Natty could not keep his course, but broke from him, and Joseph fell from the tree into the creek. He caught by a limb, and the horse swam to the shore, and then halted and turned round to see what had become of his rider. His situation, consequently, was of great danger, as he found it impossible to regain the tree. At this critical moment, Natty plunged into the creek on the opposite side of the tree, swam round it to where Joseph was, stopped quietly until he mounted him, and then swam to the shore with Joseph on his back! This story, incredible as it may seem, you will believe to be true. What a noble animal, and how much the more must you now prize him.—Broome Republican.

From the Schoharie (N. Y.) Republican.

Reader, perhaps you never heard of the boy who took a stent, (as the phrase is down east,) to mow three acres of grass, in as many days? Presuming you have not, we will relate it. On the first morning he views the field:—Pooh! (said he) I can mow it in two days, so he played that day. The next morning he looked at it again, and after scratching his head and ruminating a short time on the subject, he came to the conclusion that if he worked "right smart," he could accomplish his task in one day—so he spent that day as the day before. On the morning of the third and last day, he arose late, and it was near 10 o'clock before he reached the field. After casting his eyes over it, he began to doubt whether he could accomplish the task in one day; the field looked considerable larger than it did the day previous. He stretched himself under a shade tree, to reflect upon the subject; presently he heard the dinner horn—it was noon! He jumped up—swung his scythe over his shoulder, and turned his face homeward, muttering to himself that he "wan't-going to kill himself, if the grass never got mowed;" and that he'd "be darn'd to darnation, if there was a man in the six countries, that could mow that confounded big piece of meadow in one day," and for his part, "he should'ent try it." So, after eating his dinner, he went to play as usual.

As a specimen of nonsense too abundantly conveyed in letters from Washington, we quote the following sentence from an account published in New York, of a ball which the British Ambassador recently gave at Washington:

"Mr. V. is a bachelor, of forty-six or eight—good looking, plain, and affable. The ladies are all dying in love with him."

The British tourist, who reads this, will note on his tablets—"The American ladies all fall desperately in love with plain British bachelors beyond the grand climacteric, especially if they happen to be his Majesty's representatives and give balls and suppers."—*Nat. Gaz.*

The Sex in Virginia.—Gov. Giles, in his message to the Legislature on the 2d inst. makes honorable mention of the fact, "that, for the last four years, but one white woman had been convicted of a penitentiary offence within the Commonwealth of Virginia, and that only two white women have been confined in the penitentiary for the last two years." The free white population of the State exceeds 660,000 souls. "How wonderful the fact," continues the Governor, "that only one white woman has been convicted of a penitentiary offence within the last four years!"

Recipe for Salting Beef.—Salt and water have a wonderful penchant, chemically yepeled affinity, for each other. Get therefore a tub of pure water, rain or river water is the best, let it be nearly full, and put the tongs or two pieces of thin wood across it, and set your beef on them, distant about an inch from the water, heap as much salt as it will hold on your beef, let it stand for four and twenty hours, you may take it off and boil it, and you will find it as salt as if it had been in pickle six weeks.

A miser was lately found dead in Paris, on a filthy bed, still grasping the key of his coffers; he had hoarded about 600,000 francs, 100,000 of which were concealed in different kitchen utensils.

Human nature, like a kaleidoscope, presents a new combination every look you take at it.