

## WHERE WHALES ABOUT

OW THE SHETLANDERS SEEK THE GIANTS OF THE DEEP.

The Story of an Industry that Needs Strength, Courage and Endurance in the Workers—How the Washerwomen of the Shetlands Make Merry.

LONDON, Jan. 15.—When your tourist fancy leads you into Scotland, go further. It is but a little sea-journey from Aberdeen, Peterhead or Wick to the Shetland Islands. Their people are very hospitable, possessing many pleasant ancient customs; and there is no end to modern historic and pagan monuments of strange and curious interest. Not the least of your pleasures there will be witnessing a "drive o' caing whales," which you are almost certain to do, if your visit to the islands happens in May or June.

The Peterhead and other whaling ships formerly completed their crews at Lerwick, and these times were always periods of great activity. Of late years Shetland's interest in whaling has been principally confined to driving the monsters ashore. This exciting work is often tremendously profitable. In 1845 a great shoal of 1540 "caing" whales were driven ashore in Quendale Bay, the southernmost bay of Shetland, lying between Sumberg and fiftal Heads; and in June, two years ago, a shoal of several hundred was successfully landed on the east coast.

Until quite recently these shore whales were illy requited for their captures. The financially omnivorous landlord, called the "laird" here, true to his octopus instincts, claimed the right, up to 1839, to tax the poor Shetlanders one-half of the entire proceeds of all whales driven into shoal water opposite, or upon the shores of, their domains; "a sort of riparian right on the Almighty for what was sent to save men from starvation on account of rents and other burdens imposed by the 'laird' himself," an old Shetlander explained to me.

As the value of the blubber will average \$30 per ton, the "laird" often thus secured from \$2,000 to \$5,000 as his "right" in a single catch. From 1839 to 1888 the "lairds" were considerable enough to rob the whalers of but one-third. In September of that year the claim was resisted in the courts; the whalers won their cause; and the "lairds" have since been compelled to content themselves with the meager enjoyment of witnessing, rather than profiting by, the hazardous work.

When a drove of "caing" whales appear on the coast, the news spreads like oil-drops on marble. As the whole town of St. Ives, Cornwall, goes mad when a shoal of pilchers is sighted, so does every live Shetlander, desert every other vocation, even to a wedding, to join in the "drive." A rush is made by the men for the boats, while women and children wildly collect guns, ammunition, harpoons, sythes, lances, knives and even bags of stone, indeed anything portable which may assist in the hoped-for destruction.

The whalers make all haste and splendid cunning in getting between the whales and the open sea. Their fleet of all manner of craft then gradually closes in upon the "pack" or "drove," directing by the splendid manoeuvres of the different boats the course of the whales to a shallow bay. So expert are these Shetland whalers in driving that a shoal of whales is seldom lost, if time is given for forming the "drive" well outside the "drove." If the whales once enter the chosen bay, their pursuers come to close quarters, and then the conflict begins.

Finding the water becoming shallow the terrified whales endeavor to make for the open sea, but are met at every point by a perfect wall of boats, altogether filled with hundreds and sometimes thousands of men seemingly desperate in their efforts at capture; and the howling, shouting, screaming lashing of water, discharging of fire-arms, stone-throwing, and rushing to and fro of the equally desperate whale, form as exciting a scene as one ever witnessed outside a genuine field of battle. Occasionally a few break through the line and escape. As a rule the school is doomed. Once driven into shoal water where they can only flounder in mighty struggles, or high and dry on land, where they often toss themselves in their mad efforts to escape, their butchery, which is always a savage and sickening sight, proceeds with wonderful dispatch. In their bloody work the hardy and powerful Shetland women take a gleeful and almost frenzied part.

The dripping thing they call a river, the Manzanares, at Madrid, Spain, comes down from the cold, gray heights to the north, and winds half away around the city from the northwest to the southeast. What water flows through it, breaks in sandy shallows, forming innumerable islands, and curiously bounded strips of land, all accessible at most seasons by any barefoot boy or girl; and it is an odd fact that though there are two vast and pretentious bridges across it, Puente de Segovia, nearly 700 feet long with nine arches, designed by the architect Herrera, and the Puente de Toledo, nearly 400 in length, crowned by the statues of San Isidro and his holy wife, its sole use to the city of Madrid is that of an endlessly-used and all-sufficient wash-tub.

Ten thousand women soak and splash within its scant waters every day. Not an article of clothing is elsewhere washed. No other than these Manzanares lavanderas are permitted to labor as laundresses; and for three miles up and down the stream, from opposite the infantry and artillery barracks upon the heights of Montana del Principe, past the windows of the queen regent's apartments in the royal palace, and circling around away beyond Toledo Gate, the moving dots of red and blue

and grey, comprise this great army of Amazons with arms and legs on them like tree trunks; with voluptuous breasts and shapely necks; hard-muscled and bronzed as Turks; the most arduous toilers, the wickedest blackguards, and withal the sunniest tempered souls in Spain.

There are three grades in this labor. They are the mistresses, or amas, the overseers or ayudantes, and the lavanderas themselves. All are women. The first are the agents who receive the work from the hotels, great houses, and the city agencies, in huge lots, and are responsible for its safe return. The ayudantes or overseers are really the forewomen of from a dozen to a score of lavanderas each; and they are responsible for work placed in their hands by the amas. At five in the morning, winter or summer, the lavanderas will be seen, many of them with children trundling beside them, creeping along from the barrios abajos or lower quarters of the city toward the Manzanares.

Near the river is an asilo or asylum, a refuge for their children. Here the lavanderas first deposits her charges where they have food, care and training free, until she returns for the little ones at night. Then she saunters to a venta de lavanderas, or cheap washerwoman's inn and takes her copeta of brandy, or cup of coffee, and at once repairs to her own banca, or little washing-box or station, provided for each washer. By six o'clock you might count from 5,000 to 8,000 of these strange creatures at work.

The entire sloping, sandy banks are covered with drying poles. At this time of the year the water from the mountains is of icy temperature. But it seems to make no difference with their labors. Here and there are huge cauldrons of boiling water. From time to time a trifle of this is poured in the little hollow where each one toils in the sand and water; but this seems to be done more from habit than necessity. Each lavandera brings her own huge roll of bread, perhaps a bit of cheese, a clasp-knife to prevent undue liberties from the straggling soldiery near, as well as to use in cutting bread; and just before noon they breakfast in huge wooden sheds on salt fish, potatoes and coffee with a measure of red wine provided by the amas, duplicating this meal as a dinner, at four in the afternoon.

They eat like animals, and the moment their food is disposed of, the tinkle of the guitar is heard, and you or any kindly disposed passer may dance with them, as I did, until the 30 minutes allowed them for food and refresco have expired. On these occasions, every one dances, girls of eighteen and women of eighty, and the scenes along Manzanares are very picturesque and interesting. But when I tell you that one of these iron-framed benches must wash and dry ready for the "starching," which is done by the criadas in the city, pieces of linen equaling the cleansing of 70 sheets, in order to earn 25 cents a day, the poetical sense in it all is with the interested onlooker, rather than with the drudging lavanderas of the Manzanares.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

## HOW COINS ARE SWEATED.

An Industry That Thrives Where Gold is in Common Circulation.

A few years ago the coin-sweater was content with his chamois-leather bag in which to "shake up" the coins until he had obtained the desired amount of "dust." Sweating, however, has advanced with the times, and the methods now adopted, although more intricate, are certainly more effective.

Under the old system the coins only grated against each other and the raised portions suffered most. Consequently, a coin—gold, for obvious reasons, being chosen for preference—could not be lightened to any very great extent, or the head and tail would soon be entirely obliterated. This difficulty has however been practically surmounted, and our sweaters of today remove the gold equally from all parts of the surface on both sides in such a manner that the devices will be as plain and "sharp" as before the coin was operated on.

The degree of perfection which has been reached may be imagined when we state that, if he wishes, a sweater is able to take three or four shillings' worth of gold from each individual sovereign of good condition which passes through his hands, with scarcely any chance of detection. In appearance the coin will be precisely the same as before, the only difference being that it is lighter.

The *modus operandi* of some of those who—at a profit—largely increase the amount of "wear and tear" loss in our coinage, is as follows: First of all, a small battery—similar to those used for small articles by electro-platers and gilders—is procured, and a chemical solution is also made up. The tip of one of the wires of the battery is then immersed in this solution. To the other wire a sovereign is attached and this is also placed in the solution.

The coin thus acts as an anode, as in electro-gilding, and the action of the battery is to "throw off" fine particles of gold from it, which become loosely attached to the tip of the other, the negative wire, in the form of fine crystals. When a coin has been sufficiently sweated, the crystals are shaken from the wire into the solution, and another new coin is operated on similarly.

This is continued until the solution is considered "rich" enough, when it is precipitated melted and sold to the refiner. Supposing only a dozen coins are dealt with each day, and the very small quantity of half a penny weight being, on an average, taken from each, there remains a very considerable margin of profit after deducting the cost of the solution and acids used. The coins change colour somewhat but this is altered before they are passed, as we shall explain.

Other sweaters do similar work without the aid of electricity. Under that process the main desideratum is a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acids, the action of which "eats" away any gold coins placed in it.

This method is not so cleanly as the previous one, and the fumes of the acids are very poisonous. The proceeds are recovered by "throwing down," drying and melting the resulting gold crystals, and the coins are brought to their natural color by being "annealed"—made red hot—and plunged into weak hydrochloric acid.

After being rubbed with a fine wire brush, the coin is passed, and again pursues "its mission of mercy or woe," its deficiency in the matter of weight being rarely discovered until it is paid into a bank.—Cassell's Journal

## MODIFIED HIS PRESCRIPTION.

The Doctor Who Experiments is Found in Many Countries.

Mr. Oscanyan, in his book, "The Sultan and his People," says that a Turkish physician was called to visit a man who was very ill of typhus fever. The doctor considered the case hopeless, but prescribed for the patient and took his leave. The next day, in passing by, he inquired of a servant at the door if his master was dead.

"Dead!" was the reply; "no, he is much better."

The doctor hastened upstairs to obtain the solution of the miracle.

"Why," said the convalescent, "I was consumed with thirst, and I drank a pint of the juice of pickled cabbage."

"Wonderful!" quoth the doctor, and out came his tablets, on which he made his inscription: "Cured of typhus fever, Mehmed Agha, an upholsterer, by drinking a pint of pickled cabbage juice."

Soon after, the doctor was called to another patient, a dealer in embroidered handkerchiefs, who was suffering from the same malady. He forthwith prescribed "a pint of pickled cabbage juice."

On calling the next day to congratulate the patient on his recovery, he was astonished to be told that the man was dead.

In his bewilderment at these phenomena, he came to the safe conclusion, and duly noticed it in his memoranda, that "although in cases of typhus fever pickled cabbage juice is an efficient remedy, it is not to be used unless the patient be by profession an upholsterer."

## When England Had Slaves.

The following, extracted from Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 1771, is perhaps the last advertisement of a slave for sale in England: "November 11, 1771. To be Sold by Auction, on Saturday, the 30th day of November instant, at the House of Mrs. Webb, in the City of Litchfield, and known as the sign of the Baker's Arms, between the Hours of Three and Five in the Evening of the same day, and subject to Articles that will be then and there produced (except sold by private Contract before the Time of which Notice will be given to the Public) by John Heeley of Walsall, Auctioneer and Salesman, A Negro Boy from Africa, supposed to be about Ten or Eleven years of Age. He is remarkably strait, well-proportioned, speaks tolerably good English, of a mild Disposition, friendly, officious, sound, healthy, fond of Labour, and for Colour an excellent fine Black. For particulars enquire of the said John Heeley."

## Drinking Out of a Lady's Shoe.

In London a century ago it was no uncommon practice on the part of the "fast lady" to drink bumpers to the health of a lady out of her shoe. The Earl of Cork, in an amusing paper in the Connoisseur, relates an incident of this kind, and, to carry the compliment still further, he states that the shoe was ordered to be dressed and served up for supper. "The cook set himself seriously to work upon it; he pulled the upper part (which was of fine damask) into shreds, and tossed it up into a ragout, minced the sole, cut the wooden heel into thin slices, fried them in batter, and placed them around the dish for garnish. The company testified their affection for the lady by eating heartily of this exquisite impromptu." Within the last score of years, at a dinner of Irish squires, the health of a beautiful girl, whose feet were as pretty as her face, was drank in champagne from one of her satin shoes, which an admirer of the lady had contrived to obtain possession of.

Out of every 1,000 acres of arable land in Great Britain in 1871, about 194 were devoted to the cultivation of wheat. In 1891 only 140 in every 1,000 acres were so utilised.

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## People Who Fall Safely.

A fall, as a rule, injures a drunken man much less than a sober one, because the controlling power of the mind being rendered nil through intoxication, the body falls as an inert mass, and thus the chances of injury are lessened; for, strange though it may appear, it is no less a fact that the most numerous cases of injury arising from a fall are caused by the effort, voluntary or otherwise, to avert the consequences, thus straining the muscles and tendons. Very rarely are injurious effects from a fall known in a lunatic asylum, for the same simple reason—the mind has no influence over the action of the body; and it is a remarkable and well-known fact to those who have to deal with such cases that whatever injuries are so caused heal much more rapidly than in the case of sane people, the mind having more to do with retarding or assisting nature's efforts than is generally known or realized.

## The Dominating School Girl.

In our Anglo-Saxon social system the young girl is everywhere, and if the shade of Sterne will allow me to say so, we temper the wind of our realism to the sensitive innocence of the ubiquitous lamb. We like to believe that our women are better than those of foreign nations. We owe it to them to put more faith in them because they are our own, our dear mothers and wives and sisters and daughters, for whom, if we be men, we mean to do all that men can do. But we are all men and women nevertheless, and human, and we have the thoughts and the understanding of men and women, and not of school girls. Yet the school girl practically decides what we are to hear at the theatre, and, so far as our own language is concerned, determines to a great extent what we are to read.—F. Marion Crawford in the Forum.

## Birds Killed By Unkind Words.

The Boston Journal says it is well known that birds are sensitive to tones of the voice, and are terrified at loud, angry words. A lady who wished to make a bobolink stop singing, at last scolded it in a loud voice, and then took up a scarf and shook it in rebuke at the caged bird. In a moment the bird was still, but a short time after made a fluttering about the cage. Its owner turned to the bird, and was shocked to see it fall dead. In one case a canary bird and in the other a mocking-bird died within five minutes after having been spoken to in a violent, angry tone.

The late Ben. Butler was absolutely without sense of fear. When he entered Baltimore he and his troops were soaking wet from a heavy rainfall. Presently Captain Farmer of Lowell reported:—"General, I have been informed that this hill (Federal Hill) is mined, and that we shall all be blown up."—"Well, Captain," said Butler, "there will be one comfort in that. We shall at least get dry."

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