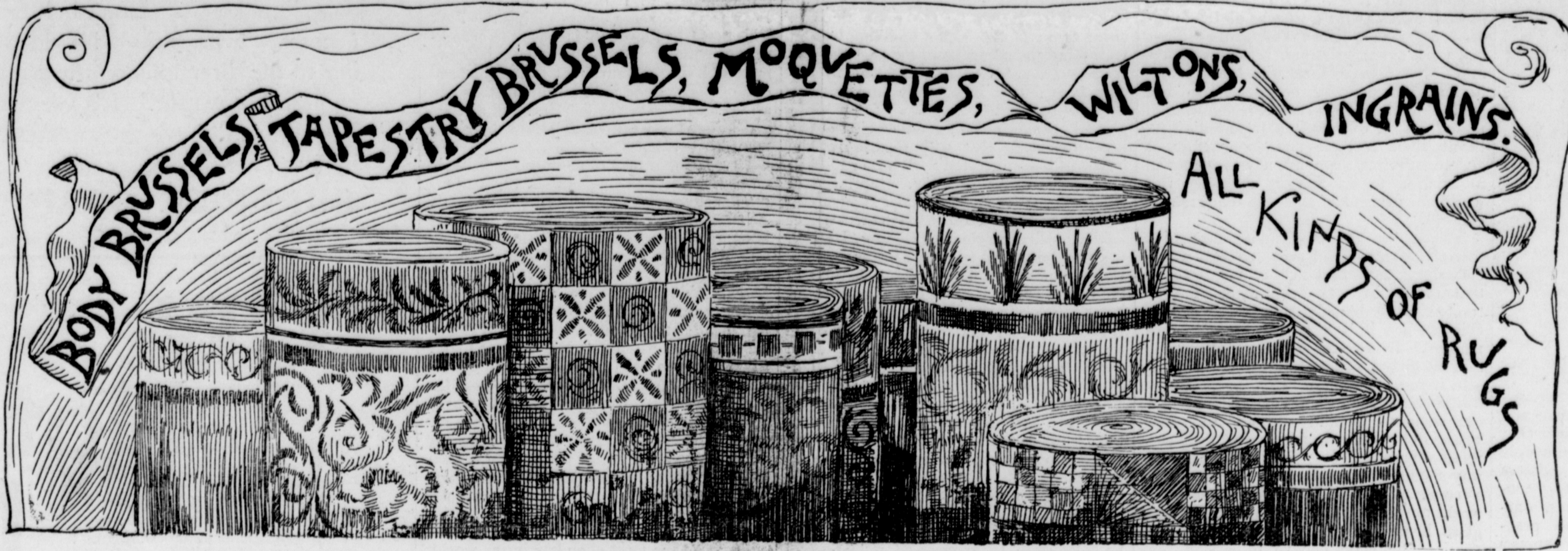


ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1893.

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OLD BRITISH CUSTOMS.

SOME OF WHICH ARE STILL IN VOGUE IN THE VILLAGES.

Folk-Doings and Observances That Are to Be Found in England, Scotland and Ireland—Curious Traditions that Have a Firm Hold on the People.

LONDON, July 3.—It is a common and pathetic lament of most writers, and particularly of those writers who shut themselves up in the shadowy recesses of some moldy club, with the opposite street facade for the limit of their horizon of actual observation, that the good old days and their good old ways are dead and beautiful things of the past. The change in conditions of life and living in England, Scotland and Ireland have certainly been greater during this century than in all the five centuries immediately preceding; and this has of necessity made obsolete many ancient customs and observances that are perhaps just as well to have survived in literary remembrance only; but in most of those things holding fast the gentler and dearer traditions of a people in home, sporting, social and even religious life, there is a surprising record of sturdy retention.

Down in scarred and earth-rent old Cornwall little indeed has been any manner of change for hundreds of years. It is within the memory of those now living when old folk were constantly lamenting in their ancient language, "Cornock ewe all ne cea ver yen poble young!"—Cornish is all forgot with the young people!—but there has been no one to lament in truth the departure of old customs in the rugged land of "Tres, Pol and Pen." See what a host of these dear old drolls, and these but a few out of hundreds, even a yankee can find and remember: The "Takin' Sunday" when all the lads and lasses meet to select "pairedners" for Mazard (cherry) Fair, that most beloved and ancient fair at Praze; the "growder" selling and growder, or scrubbing day; the "watching" over night for the May-day's coming; the blessing of apple trees on St. James' Day, and at Christmas time; "rook" day on the great estates, when all the peasant folk can shoot rooks to their heart's content and luxuriate in pot-pie made of the young rooks for a fortnight thereafter; "cob-nutting" that ferocious contest between Cornish lads, and quite as wonderful kite-flying by grave old miners; that immemorial custom of mothers of bestowing gifts to the first person met, when returning from a christening; the "taking of the New Year" into houses invariably by men first on account of the ill luck always following a woman's accidental first entrance, a custom always as universal in Scotland, Ireland and some portions of the north of England; the saturnalia of flowers at Heiston, called Furry, (Flora) Day, as ancient as the Duchy itself; and the "huers" of Carringgladen and Porthminster Hills, St. Ives, and their horn-blowing add bush-waving, as the gals of pilchers are sighted.

Then there are the Beltain fires, as in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, older than Christianity itself; the "touch-pipe" or siesta of the Cornish miner, "above grass" and below; the "vagrom fairs" or wild, barbaric conveying by children of all vagabond traveling shows; the "wiping of the shoe" by the pilcher-packing fishwives of St. Ives, or daubing the stranger's shoes with oil, for which a half-crown "for luck of the fair maids that teed and clothe the poor" (the pilchers) must be paid, or a hustling or a ducking will follow; the very ancient harvest-home custom of "crying the neck" which consists of elevating a small sheaf of the best heads of grain three times and crying "The Neck!" as a token that the field is done, and a signal for farm-side generosity and jollity; and those quaint old customs at Cornish funerals of "carryin'

the box" (the coffin), "layin' oot" the corpse, "watchin'," which is nearly equivalent in all essentials to the Irish wake, the display of the "bierers" (bearers) and their unique coffin-tackle, the slow, weird, psalm-chanting processions to the churchyard, the wailing of all females at the church, the compensation of the "passon" in coin in the presence of the multitude; the final "cheerin'" of the mourners at the homes of the latter, and the gallons of "shnaegrum" at the public house, over which the lamented "Coden Jack" is paid the highest eulogy known to Cornish genius, "E knowed tin!"

In England generally the great number of old customs surviving, and almost prevailing, is far more remarkable to those who will see, than can the absence of their like be either striking or lamentable save to those of completely opaque vision. In modern London, modern as Paris or New York, in most of its cosmopolitan characteristics, there are no end of ancient customs still in vogue, especially among the extremes of society, from the costermongers' annual outlandish parade to the Lord Mayor's banquet. There is a no greater nest of these odd old ceremonials and things than may at any time be observed in and about parliament and the house of lords; while for every half dozen court ceremonials in vogue during the time of Elizabeth that have been discarded, any person of intelligence can point out a score, equally antique, curious, and some might insist ridiculous, which have been dauntlessly retained.

As I have previously shown in these articles, English villages and village life are in most particulars as charming and characterful as they were at any time at or beyond a century ago. The customs remain with these practically the same; and the change in essentials is largely in the imagination of those who remove to the cities, and who are themselves subject to such radical change that their former provincial environment seems mean and deformed from the new and wondrous view. But coming directly to the most important and effective illustration that can be made, take life in and about the great English, or for that matter Scottish and Irish, noblemen's estates. As British institutions and sociology go, these provide the highest possible example. With few exceptions—such as the discontinuance of home-brewing of ale, and the provision of a servants' hall in place of the common table—the entire regime of these splendid places remains the same as in the time when the old robber barons' fortified stone barrels with ditches around them were transformed into princely Elizabethan castle or hall.

In nearly every detail of relations between lord and tenant; between tenant and hind; in the management of the home demesne; in the force of retainers and their duties—from steward or agent, down past head forester and under foresters, head gamekeeper, helpers and "beaters," head gardener and under gardeners, lodge-keepers, and all house servants—there remains, strong and fixed and seemingly unchangeable, every olden custom, observance, duty, gratuity, and pleasant or unpleasant association of master and man that have, for nearly a quarter of a thousand years, provided the most interesting pages of English literature and secured the almost unshaken admiration, if not always affection, of those who have, despite all political turmoil, held the British nation together; all of which is not in defense of a system, but the statement of a historic fact and practical illustration of a most interesting sociological spectacle.

Generalizing, there are innumerable ancient customs and observances remaining in England peculiar to its people which are

almost as unconscious as fadeless. The greatest host of these are of a half religious and half social nature, solely the outgrowth of the influence of the Church of England, which are so much a part of national and individual life, even among dissenters, that their existence is almost unrecognizable among the people themselves. The single instance that the ancient candle and christening feasts and ceremonies are greatly revived, and often more extravagant than in former times, is sufficiently illustrative. I have heard the town crier announcing the arrival of the coach at old Warwick town, and grotesquely uniformed Sergeants at Mace—"robin red-breasts" they are locally called—stride about within the walls of ancient Londonderry precisely as they did before the long siege. Derby Day, the memorable movable feast and outing, and the statutory feast of the twelfth of August, are religiously kept. Parliament always adjourns for the first, and nothing but impending national calamity could tempt it to meet at the time dedicated to the opening slaughter of grouse.

Nearly all the old university and English public school observances and customs are intact. Everybody knows that Guy Fawkes is annually officially and literally searched for in the cellars of parliament-house before the opening of parliament. The ancient custom of "doling" food and clothing to the poor is still observed on St. Thomas day in Kent. That unimpeachable custom of universal guzzling which, in 1874 alone brought the national treasury a revenue of £31,000,000, seems to bravely hold its olden own. Over at great Yarmouth by the sea you will still find in general use the famous ancient two-wheeled "Yarmouth cart," little, narrow and low and with shafts as long as a Cuban volante's. At Coventry the town council meets in St. Mary's Hall, a structure built for this self-same purpose 600 years ago, and many of the oldest ceremonies are preserved, while every year brings its Lady Godiva processions upon which Peeping Toms with wooden heads and leering eyes look down. English lovers still run away to get married after the ancient Scotch fashion of consent before witnesses at Gretna Green.

Over in Derbyshire is still splendidly alive the ancient and beautiful ceremony of "well-dressing;" and in the heart of Wordsworth's Land, beside the very spot where the grand old singer lies, may be annually seen that sweetest of all pious pastoral customs, "rushbearing," a ceremony perhaps a thousand years older than Christianity itself. There are more "hot cross buns" now sold every Good Friday in England than were ever disposed of on that day before the Reformation. Who can close his eyes or his pocket to that hoary English custom of "tipping" which holds the classes and masses so firmly together? That glorious fountain of childish pleasure, the Punch and Judy show, flourishes everywhere and in blessed youth perennial. There is an hundred times the cross-country riding that there was a century ago. Some time since I figured out from reliable data that the rentals of shooting and fishing privileges in Scotland alone annually exceeded £469,612, or \$2,300,000! What must they be for the three kingdoms, and who can truly say that these most ancient and inspiring of British sports are falling into decay? What would the boys and youth of England say to the assertion that "hare-and-bounds," foot-ball, cricket and even wrestling and "putting the stone" were not immeasurably more universal and manfully now done than of yore? And last—because one has to stop somewhere in a recital which, briefly made, would fill every column of this paper—it would not be a venturesome thing for one who had tramped the length and breadth of the British Isles, as I have done, to express the firm belief that, to two, there is today more ringing clatter of better hoof, more jingling of better harness, more rattling of superb coaches and merrier notes from the bugle and horn, and this, too, every whit for pleasure, along the grand hedge-bordered highways of Saxons, Gaels and Celts, than ever known in Britain's palmiest olden coaching days! EDGAR L. WAREMAN



Two Big Stores, Oak Hall.

People have a fad this year of putting their little lads in pants; but pants aren't so nice—and never will be for little boys. Nice Kilt Suits, vest fronts, \$3.75 to \$4.50. Sailor Suits for larger lads \$1.00 to \$5.00. Jersey Sailor Suits \$3.50 to \$4.50.



SCOVIL, FRASER & CO. King St., St. John.

MONCTON'S PANIC IN PORK.

The Great Value of Grease that is Living Grease No More.

There has been a most unprecedented rise in the price of pork within the last few weeks, in Moncton! And if the railway hub only ruled the entire pork market as far as prices went, there is little doubt that the city of Chicago would soon be reimbursed for all the money lost by the World's fair, and her citizens would absolutely wallow in prosperity. But unfortunately Moncton does not even control her own cotton factory now so the chances are largely in favor of the staple of Chicago's industries remaining simply "firm," until the autumn.

This jump in pork which has taken place lately, seems strictly confined to our city and it is the more surprising, when one considers that under ordinary circumstances pork is usually quoted as stationary at this time of the year, and the inference is that he is at home for the summer months occupied with domestic cares, and looking after the wants of his numerous and voracious family. But the circumstances that I am about to relate were not ordinary, far from it, in fact they were most extraordinary, and disastrous for the pig, and how they will turn out for its owner has yet to be seen.

The pig in question was possessed of one of those roving dispositions which so frequently lead their owners into trouble, and he had a passion for the flesh pots of Egypt as represented by the vegetable gardens and grain fields of the neighbors, in which he speedily became such a nuisance that threats against his life and liberty were frequent. Among his regular victims was a well known Moncton merchant who resides on his farm a few miles from the city, and occupies his leisure hours in amateur farming and who had the ill luck to live in close proximity to the pig and his owner. Morning, noon and night the cry went up, "The Pig! the Pig!! the Pig!!! There he is again. He has chewed up most of the celery bed. He has eaten up half the early potatoes." "Mother come quick he is chasing the baby, and he has his mouth wide open, and is grunting just awfully!

These were a few of the battle cries heard daily and hourly at the farm, until life became not only a burden to the entire family, but a sort of prolonged and unwilling indulgence in the pleasures of the chase.

At last after repeated warnings to the owner of the private porker and the demolition of the entire cucumber bed, forbearance ceased to be a virtue and

patience was out of the question so the sorely tried amateur farmer swore a mighty oath that the very next time that pig broke into his garden he would shoot it on sight.

The next time came all too soon! When the rosy morn was shaking the pearly drops of dew from the skirts of her robes, and all nature looked lovely, the pig arose, shook the dew drops from his coat also, and hid himself away to take an early breakfast with his neighbor. He had not half satisfied his appetite with nearly all the early peas, when the lord of the manor caught sight of him, and almost at the same moment caught hold of his trusty rifle. Arrived at the scene of action, he gave the pig a fair chance for his life, that is to say, he gave him a fair start and then the race for life began. Around and around, went the pig, in every direction except the one leading out of the garden, and toward his own residence; over lettuce beds and through patches of sprouting parsnips budding cauliflower and fragrant turnips he pursued his mad career, and his unwilling host pursued him. Just a few more rounds, and the garden would have resembled the desert of Sahara, or the camping grounds at Sussex, recently vacated by our country's brave defenders, when the breathless and furious suburban land owner suddenly raised his rifle to his shoulder, took a rapid sight, and fired. The next moment what was once a living, breathing, grunting pig, full of the joy of life, and burning with ambition to distinguish himself above other pigs, was a quivering mass of new made pork, and if not beautiful in death, at least giving promise of future usefulness, under proper treatment. But alas! to the victor did not belong the spoils, in any sense but one, the spoiled vegetables were all his—but nothing else; and as he handed his still smoking rifle to his wife to hold, and sank exhausted on the verandah to fan his throbbing brow, and consider the best way of disposing of the remains, he realized painfully the difference between shooting large game out on the boundless prairie, and in ones own kitchen garden.

I will draw a veil of merciful silence over the scene which took place between the owner and the slayer of the pig. Suffice it to say that, as I intimated at the beginning of this over true tale, pork went up! It went up almost into the nineties with a rapidity which would have almost taken away the breath of a wheat speculator. No Arab ever prized his steed half as highly as that farmer prized his pig—after it was

dead—and could the delinquent porker have heard the fancy price placed upon his corpse, he would have been almost galvanized into life again, with surprise.

The wrecked garden, the ruined vegetables were nothing but trifles light as air, in the eyes of the late proprietor of the pig. What he wanted was that his lost treasure should be restored to his health and home, and failing that, he wanted compensation with a capital C, or else law, and which he will get, is still an undecided question. The Moncton merchant is willing to pay what the pig was worth and not even retain the captive of his bow and spear, but throw it in as a present to the late owner, who insists on being paid for the pig according to the love he bore it, which seems to be increasing daily, and meanwhile there is a coolness pervading the atmosphere between the two farms which would almost seem to presage an early winter.

GEOFFREY CUTHBERT STRANGE.

Is Not a Moncton Doctor.

Mr. Bond of London, England, who is invariably engaged in the chief medico-legal prosecutions undertaken by the Treasury, distinguished himself greatly in the Wainwright case by the discovery of three bullets, embedded in the brain of the deceased woman, which had been overlooked at the first post-mortem examination. His researches also led to the establishment of identification conclusively. He owed his first appearance in criminal investigations to the fact that he was surgeon of the detective department, and he gave evidence in the Richmond murder, the Letroy and Lamson cases. That he became a surgeon at all was due to the chance that his uncle, who was surgeon to the railway company, asked him to accompany him to Bishop-stoke station, where there had been a dreadful accident. His experiences on that occasion gave Mr. Bond a taste for surgery.

We Have All Known Such Men.

An old Scotch lady, who lived at a considerable distance from the parish church, was in the habit of driving over to the service. Her coachman, when he thought the sermon nearly at an end, would slip out quietly for the purpose of having the carriage ready by the time the service was ended. One Sunday John returned to church, and after hanging about the door for some time became impatient, and popping in his head saw that the minister harangued as hard as ever. Creeping down the aisle toward his mistress, he whispered in her ear:—

"Is he no dune yet?"

"Dune! he's dune half an hour since, but he'll no stop!" she answered, impatiently.

"Progress" in Boston.

PROGRESS is for sale in Boston at the Kings Chapel News Stand, corner of School and Tremont streets.