

careless, and Cyrus took the opportunity to drain off the Euphrates into the distant artificial lake. Then he marched his soldiers into the city along the bed of the stream, and, finding the river gates open, proceeded to the very door of the palace, where an orgy was progressing. Belsazzar came forward, sword in hand, and was slain.

By way of parenthesis, a few curious little facts about Babylon are worth mentioning. There was one large tribe among the people which gave to its women authority, the men looking to them for control, as wives ordinarily look to their husbands. The rate of interest charged for money, as shown by tables dug up, was three, four, and five per cent. Frequent memoranda have been discovered in clay, as to full prices and cut prices. A simple system of divorce was provided. If either party did not like one's mate, the match could be declared off at any time by returning the purchase money, and canceling the marriage contract. There were no physicians in Babylon, but the sick were brought or came to the market place where their fellow citizens were obliged by law to inspect them and to give advice, in case they had ever suffered similar troubles.

Cyrus did not destroy Babylon after he captured the city. But the town ceasing to be the abode of dominion, shrunk, and about 300 B. C., a large part of its inhabitants migrated and much of its enclosed territory was plowed up. What remains of the city is found today in the shape of enormous mounds which archaeologists are fond of digging into.—*Ex.*

A KIND-HEARTED DRUGGIST.

Mark Twain was present at the banquet of the National Wholesale Druggists' Association at its recent meeting in Washington, and in return for his dinner related the following story:

"About a thousand years ago, approximately, I was apprenticed as a printer's devil to learn the trade, in common with three other boys about my own age. There came to the village a long-legged individual of about 19 from one of the interior counties; fish-eyed, no expression and without the suggestion of a smile—couldn't have smiled for a salary.

"We took him for a fool and thought we would try to scare him to death. We went to the village druggist and borrowed a skeleton. The skeleton didn't belong to the druggist, but he had imported it for the village doctor, because the doctor thought he would send away for it, having some delicacy about using — [Laughter.]

"The price of the skeleton at that time was \$50. I don't know how high they go now, but probably higher, on account of the tariff. [Laughter.] We borrowed the skeleton about 9 o'clock last night, and we got this man—Nicodemus Dodge was his name—we got him down town out of the way, and then we put the skeleton in his bed.

He lived in a little one-storied log cabin in the middle of a vacant lot.

"We left him to get home by himself. We enjoyed the result in the light of anticipation, but by and by we began to drop into silence. The possible consequences were preying upon us. Suppose that it frightens him into madness, overturns his reason and sends him screeching through the streets. We shall spend sleepless nights the rest of our days.

"Everybody was afraid. By and by it was forced to the lips of one of us that we had better go at once and see what had happened. Loaded down with crime we approached that hut and peeped through the window. The long-legged critter was sitting on his bed with a hunk of ginger-bread in his hand, and between the bites he played a tune on a jews' harp.

"There he sat perfectly happy, and all around him on the bed were toys and jim cricks and striped candy. The darned cuss, had gone and sold that skeleton for \$50. [Laughter.] The druggist's \$50 skeleton was gone. We went in tears to the druggist and explained the matter. We couldn't have raised that \$50 in 250 years.

"We were getting board and clothing for the first year, clothing and board for the second year, and both of them for the third year. But the druggist forgave us on the spot, but he said he would like us to let him have our skeletons when we were done with them.

"There couldn't be anything fairer than that. We spouted our skeletons and went away comfortable. But from that time the druggist's prosperity ceased. That was one of the most unfortunate speculations he ever went into. After some years one of the boys went and got drowned. That was one skeleton gone, and I tell you the druggist felt pretty badly about it.

"A few years after another of the boys went up in a balloon. He was to get \$5 an hour for it. When he gets back they will be owing him \$1,000,000. The druggist's property was decreasing right along. After a few more years the third boy tried an experiment to see if a dynamite charge would go. It went all right.

"They found some of him, perhaps a vest pocketful. Still it was enough to show that some more of that estate had gone. The druggist was getting along in years, and he commenced to correspond with me. I have been the best correspondent he has. He is the sweetest natured man I ever saw—always mild and polite and never wants to hurry me at all.

"I get a letter from him every now and then and he never refers to my form as a skeleton; says: 'Well, how is it getting along—is it in good repair?' I got a night-rate message from him recently—and he was getting old and the property was depreciating in value, and if I could let him have a part of it now he would give time on the balance. [Laughter.]

"Think of the graceful way in which he does everything—the generosity of it all. You cannot find a

finer character than that. It is the gracious characteristic of all druggists. So, out of my heart, I wish you all prosperity and every happiness."—*Pharmaceutical Era.*

THE MAIDEN AND THE MISTLETOE

Everybody knows the quaint old custom attached to this same branch of mistletoe—how any fair one seized beneath it might then and there be rewarded for her hardihood by a kiss. And so Christmas passed with our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, with one continuous round of games and carols and feasting and good cheer. That Christmas is now a thing of the past, but, though most of the old observances are now only matters of tradition, the spirit of the day survives. The Scots were the first to throw a damper upon the boisterous observance of the season, the abbot of unreason being abolished in Scotland by act of parliament in 1555. Pretty soon his colleague, the lord of misrule, met a similar fate in England. The Puritanic denunciation of the revelry which attended his sway—and, in fact, of most of the other observances of the festival—ended his reign. During Queen Mary's reign the mayor and sheriff of London were forbidden to entertain the lord of misrule, and shortly after plays and masks were prohibited. The Christmas holiday was included in the list of holidays abolished in 1647, and parish officers who encouraged the celebration of the day in the churches or the decoration of the church buildings were subjected to punishment. Later on there was a reaction, and the lord of misrule attempted to regain his throne. His efforts amounted to but little, however, and he became a thing of the past.

CHRISTMAS HYMN.

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold.
"Peace on the earth, good-will to men,
From heaven's all gracious King,"
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long,
Beneath the angel strains have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man at war with man hears not
The love song that they bring;
Oh! hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look, now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.

For, lo, the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.