

cents per string. Others are generally sold in lots not strung. The buyer, however, is not guided in his purchase by the number of sponges on a string, but by what a certain lot will weigh, and the weight is never given, but the buyer must estimate it. Hence practical experience is needed in the purchasing of the sponges.

Sponges are offered for sale on five days of the week at the sponge exchange. They are landed from the vessels, and each cargo is piled up by itself. The weight is entirely unknown. The buyers examine the lots, and each man hands in a private tender, in writing, for the lot, and it is awarded, on opening the tenders, to the highest bidder. A successful buyer must be able to judge correctly by his eye and experience just how many pounds of good sponges he will be able to get out of a given lot when it has been carefully worked up. Nearly all the sponges are bought by resident agents, who buy for New York, London, and Paris houses, shipping the goods to their principals. A few merchants handle sponges on their own account.

Along the southern coast of Florida the sponge business is in a flourishing condition, and has been for years, with its headquarters at Key West, and hundreds of the people of that vicinity are engaged all the time in gathering, curing, and shipping sponges. Many natives of the Bahamas visit Florida from time to time and find employment in the sponge business; though all the crews necessary to introduce the business on the Gulf coast of Florida, men well versed in the industry, can be obtained easily at Key West, without the least necessity of importing labor into the State from the Bahamas. It is said that the sponges growing along the Florida coast are much superior to the sponges of the Bahamas.

#### THE KHEVSURS OF THE CAUCASUS.

MONSIEUR V. DINGELSTEDT has published some notes on this singular people in *Le Globe* (tome xxx. No. 2), an abstract of which appears in the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* for September. The name is derived from the Georgian word *Khêvi*, signifying a mountain gorge, and is unknown among the people to whom it is applied. They call themselves after the different localities they inhabit not by any collective name. Their country is situated to the east of the Pass of the Cross, on both slopes of the central chain of the Caucasus, to the west and north-west of the mountain Bôrbalo, and has an area of about 570 square miles. Its mean altitude is over 6,500 feet, and it contains peaks rising above the limit of eternal snow, which, in the central part of the Caucasus, is at an elevation of 10,600 feet. About seven thousand persons inhabit this wild region, in a bleak climate, where the cultivable soil is of small extent and the vegetation poor.

In the summer the Khevsurs feed cattle and sheep on the rich grass which springs up on the mountain slopes, but in the winter forage is difficult to obtain, and the animals and their owners often succumb to famine. The Khevsurs, in contrast to the other mountaineers of the Caucasus, are plain in appearance, of rather short stature, and with large hands and feet, though they are muscular and agile. A great variety is observable in the color of their eyes and hair, their stature, and even in the form of their skulls, and this diversity may be ascribed to a mixture of race. Their original ancestors were probably Georgians, who, some time before the twelfth century, took refuge in the mountains. These were probably joined by men of other races, who, for various reasons were obliged to fly from their native lands, or were attracted by the life of brigandage which the Khevsurs led up to recent times. Their Georgian ancestors had reached a fairly high standard of civilization, but in their savage solitudes the Khevsurs have relapsed into semi-barbarism, and have now a fierce and defiant expression. They wear coats of mail, brassards, and helmets, like cavaliers of the Middle Ages. They live in communities consisting of one or several villages, under the nominal authority of a chief called a *Khevisberi*. These villages are grouped around some spot supposed to be sacred to a saint, and this religious bond has taken the place of the old tribal unity.

The Chevsurs have a vague belief in one God, but they never address him in prayer, and their rites consist in sacrifices and invocations to various saints, Christian and pagan, among which Saint George is held in high repute. Most of the work falls on

the women, while the men spend their time in idleness. Marriages are concluded either with Christian or pagan rites. The wife brings with her a dowry of cattle and a trousseau. The offspring of the cattle belong to the house of the husband, but the original herd is the private property of the wife, and any loss must be made good by the husband. The wife has no share in the property of her husband at his decease. It is divided among his male heirs, and, in default of these, goes to the community. So, too, the wife's property is divided among her sons, her trousseau only being left to her daughters.

Monogamy is the rule, but custom permits a man to repudiate his wife when she grows old, or if she bears no children, and to take another, provided that he gives an indemnity of five or six cows to the parents of the former. In other cases divorce is easily effected, but is seldom resorted to. The dead are buried in vast caves. They are dressed in coats of mail, and sometimes musical instruments are placed in their hands. Festivals are held in their honor five times, or, in the case of poor families, twice a year, when there is a lavish display of hospitality, and quarrels frequently take place.

#### NOTES AND NEWS.

In the last paragraph on page 192 of *Science* for Oct. 2, "An initial velocity of seven miles a second," should read, "An initial velocity of six miles a second."

— Amos E. Woodward, late assistant geologist on the Geological Survey of Missouri, died of pneumonia at Castle, Mont., in the last week of September. During his connection with the Missouri survey, Mr. Woodward's special subject was the mineral waters of the State, though he also conducted much other work in the laboratory. He was a painstaking, ambitious, and most industrious worker, and was held in high esteem by those who knew him.

— The flesh-colored, hydrated manganese sulphide which is obtained by the addition of ammonium sulphide to a solution of manganize chloride, on standing, or more rapidly on boiling with water, changes color to green. This green sulphide when washed and dried yields a powder of the same color, which is also unstable, being oxidized by mere exposure to air. It is, however, according to P. de Clermont and H. Guiot (*Mining and Engineering Journ.*), rendered permanent by removing its water of hydration, which is effected by heating it moderately in a current of hydrogen sulphide, carbon dioxide, or ammonia. Thus prepared it is suitable for application in paper staining, etc.

— Dr. L. Webster Fox is of opinion, says *Nature*, that savage races possess the perception of color to a greater degree than do civilized races. In a lecture lately delivered before the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, he stated that he had just concluded an examination of 250 Indian children, of whom 100 were boys. Had he selected 100 white boys from various parts of the United States, he would have found at least five of them color-blind: among the Indian boys he did not discover a single case of color-blindness. Some years ago he examined 250 Indian boys, and found two color-blind, a very low percentage when compared with the whites. Among the Indian girls he did not find any. Considering that only two females in every 1,000 among whites are color-blind, he does not think it surprising that he did not find any examples among the Indian girls.

— Some time ago the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria organized an excursion to the Kent group of islands, the object being to collect specimens, and to determine whether the group is most nearly related with Victoria, to which it is closest geographically, or with Tasmania. At the annual *conversazione* of the club, held recently, as we learn from *Nature*, Mr. C. A. Topp, the retiring president, referred to the results of the expedition. The bulk of the fauna and flora were found to be common to Victoria and Tasmania, but there were six or seven varieties of birds peculiar to Tasmania to two peculiar to Victoria. The conclusion was that the islands had been separated from Tasmania after that island was disjoined from the mainland. Among the plants, several