

## STRANGE SECTS.

THERE were never so many strange sects in the world as to-day. Great Britain alone has over two hundred religious denominations. Happily, however, Great Britain has no adherents of the remarkable sects which are to be found in Russia and some parts of America.

An extraordinary case of fanaticism was reported not long ago from Southern Russia where a number of church members were walled up alive at their own request. For a long time nothing was known of their fate, but at length some incident led to a confession on the part of the perpetrator of the deed, and their skeletons attested the truth of his tale. They had gone to death as to a festival, convinced that it was a short and easy way to the winning of a martyr's crown. The madman who acted as executioner was quite convinced of the sanctity of the act.

In the same district of Russia is a sect whose dominating principle is the mortification of the flesh. A member of this sect, an inhabitant of a monastery near Uralsk, was not long ago buried up to the armpits in a cave, and when discovered six pieces of consecrated communion bread lay before him, with lighted lamps, tapers, and a bottle of water. When found, the man had been buried a week, having requested a friend to bury him because he was anxious to be saved by mortifying the flesh. He had begged his friend to return in a week, by which time he hoped to have found salvation.

Still another case comes from the Taransk district of Russia, where, in the middle of a forest some peasants came across a large hole in the ground, several feet deep. On removing the pieces of wood which covered it up, they found that two women were lying inside. One was already dead, and the other who had had no food for nine days, was almost a skeleton. It transpired that both the women belonged to a sect which believed suicide by starvation to be the highest form of religious devotion, and had thrown themselves into this hole with the idea of carrying out their creed. An official inquiry showed that there are several hundred adherents of this sect, and that from time to time members have been known to disappear, never to be heard of again.

A sect in South America calling themselves the True Believers, have a strange creed. Among their Articles of Faith is that there is a mythical and unseen rider of a Bay Horse and another of a Black Horse. The latter rides about the country at all times, but when the coming of the Messiah is near or the earthquake which will destroy the earth, the Rider of the Bay Horse will warn them so that they may be on their knees praying when the appointed time comes; for their cherished desire is, that when the end of the world is at hand they may be on their knees praying.

SPEAKING of missing things, a needle in a haystack is nothing to a railway time-table in a country house.

## A TRIUMPH OF TEMPERANCE.

Our temperance friends are very naturally making the most of the fact that the recent battle of the Atbara, in the Soudan, was won on tea and coffee. Lady Elizabeth Biddulph, who has just returned from Cairo, assures us that the Sirdar sent back all the beer from the front. This was his first warning. When a supply of whiskey was sent to take its place, he simply offered it for refreshment to the sands of the desert, and they drank it to the last drop. Whiskey might have led to a very different result at the Atbara, as it matured to liquid fire in the brains of the consumers, under a tropical sun. The men were so exhausted by the long night march and the fierce battle, that they slept, in the full glare of the sun, immediately after the victory. The Sirdar let them have their sleep out, though he had ordered their immediate withdrawal from the neighbourhood of the pestilential camp. If there had been any whiskey at hand, it might have been impossible to move the whole army. The battle was fought on Nile water, purified by the Pasteur filter, and then converted into the cup that cheers. The "Daily News" remarks that the publicans must feel but slight interest in this war, and our temperance friends will, of course, make a note of it for future reference.

A FARMER, away from home for the first time, becoming somewhat anxious about the condition of his live stock, telegraphed home: "Is things all right at the barn?—John Breen."

His stable boy, whose conversation was proverbially laconic, immediately telegraphed back: "Things is.—Robert."

ONCE, when Madge was a very little girl, her father found her chubby hands full of the blossoms of a beautiful tea-rose on which he had bestowed great care. "My dear," said he, "didn't I tell you not to pick one of these flowers without leave?"—"But, papa," said Madge, innocently, "all these had leaves."

A YOUNG lady dismissed the young man to whom she was engaged because he drank. A few days after she had told him she would never speak to him again, a little boy brought a note from the wretched young man which read thus:

"Heartless, yet still beloved, Fanny.—My sufferings are more than I can bear; I cannot live without your love. I have therefore just taken poison, the effect of which I am already beginning to feel. When you read these lines I shall have joined the great silent majority. Shed a silent tear over my tomb in remembrance of the happy days gone by.—Your dead George."

When the young lady had finished reading the note she asked the little boy who brought it what he was waiting for.

"The gemmen tole me ter wait for an answer," was the reply.