

A TOWN OF CLAY-EATERS.

THE INHABITANTS HOLD SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

At Which Clay and Corn Whiskey are the Refreshments—The Clay Contains Arsenic, and is Very Hurtful—The Town is in Georgia, Near a Large City.

Scotsboro, Georgia, is a town of other days, about five miles south of the thriving city of Milledgeville, and the crumbling remains of a few brick buildings here and there are monuments to the glory of departed time, and an old fashioned rose-bush is sometimes found blooming in the pine thickets, reminding one strikingly of what was in the long ago.

This old town marks a radical change in the soil and vegetation, for there the Piedmont escarpment ends and the late geological formation begins. The clay gives up its red hue and takes on a loamy whiteness, interspersed with extensive sand beds. The long leaf pine begins to pop up, and the undergrowth also changes.

What is more remarkable, the people change. Instead of the red faced, sturdy farmer, buoyant with strength and health, full of vigor and rejoicing in the consciousness of his own robust nature, there comes a class of people with faces so worn and haggard that it sends a shudder through your every soul to look at them. A little inquiry about the neighborhood will put onto some appalling facts, and the shudder of pity will increase to an agony of alarm when you learn that these mortals are clay eaters, real and genuine.

For the sake of information it might be well to state that a clay eater is one who eats clay. This definition, however simple, carries weight when it is taken into consideration that these beings make a regular practice, a fixed habit, of dining upon dainty morsels of kaolin. Chew it? Oh, yes, they chew it with as much enjoyment as a cow gets out of her cud, and swallow it with more eagerness and relish than a small boy does a green apple. Incredulous as it may appear, whole families have the habit. From the father, and grandfather, too, if he has chanced to survive, down to the skinny faced little tot who cries for his share, they all eat clay regularly and eagerly.

This depraved taste fixes itself upon them in early childhood, and as they grow older the habit becomes stronger and stronger until it is an utter impossibility to break off. It is said to be more powerful than the whisky, opium, morphine, cocaine or any other habit yet known. Of course heredity has much to do with it, and thus the habit is transmitted from generation to generation with singular precision.

There is no mistaking clay eaters. Their countenances have a distinctly original and unearthly cast, reminding you more of "a death's head with a bone in its mouth" than anything else. The children have large eyes, set deep in the head and accentuated by high, skinny cheek bones. These eyes lack lustre, and they glare with leaden stupidity from the cadaverous hollows. And, as for the men and women, compared with theirs the face of an Egyptian mummy would look fresh and beautiful.

The milky whiteness of the skin, which they have in childhood, has changed into a parched brown, which falls in folds about their eyes and neck. Deep wrinkles radiate from their mouths and spread in every conceivable direction. You can easily trace them, as they serve for convenient aqueducts to tobacco juice.

The clay which they devour is not, as some have supposed, the red variety so common through the middle Georgia, but a peculiar white kind, with a soft and greasy feel, and found only in certain localities. It is said to contain arsenic, thus accounting for the force of the habit and its effect upon the system.

The clay eaters are not without social instincts. They are said to hold festivals, or rather dinings, the menu of which is made up mainly of clay.

For instance, one of the patriarchs will decide to celebrate, and invitations are issued to all the families in the neighborhood. After several wild "breakdowns" the tempting glebe is passed around for refreshments. "Corn liquor, of course, is a necessary adjunct.

These things make no attempt at regular work. They ek out their existence in the winter by selling kindling wood in town, and during the summer the most energetic pick and sell blackberries and huckleberries, which grow in profusion there. Some of them own donkeys, and these attached to the little two wheeled nondescript vehicles, are familiar sights along the public highways leading to Milledgeville.

Last winter returning from a hunt in the lower part of the county, I was forced by the rain to take shelter in the dwelling place of a full fledged clay eater. The house, if such it might be called, was built in the regulation log cabin style. The building was set back some distance from the road, and a well beaten path led through the weeds to the doorway, from which the blanched faces of some half dozen children peered forth curiously. It was a squalid den. There were two windows, utterly destitute of glass, stuffed with old rags and paper to keep out the chill, while the rain beat drearily and the wind whistled dismally between the old rotten logs. It is customary to daub up the cracks in a log house with clay, but the absence of it there could be explained.

The plank floor, laid directly upon the ground, was broken in many places, and the damp, green mold oozed up through the numerous cracks. Of furniture there was none except a poor apology for a bed over in the corner. A large pile of corn-cobs in the other corner appeared to be the nightly resting place of the children.

This gloomy interior was somewhat cheered by the fitful blaze of a pineknot on the hearth. A small cur, composed mainly of ribs, had already asserted his right of way.

One thing is certain—however squalid and wretched these mortals may be, there is always on hand a bountiful supply of children, and they follow fast in the footsteps of their fathers.

Numerous efforts at different times have been made to better the condition of the clay eaters. Preachers of every denomination have tried their skill at turning them

from the error of their way, but to all appearances they have wasted their ammunition. They are barbarians still, and they die as they have lived—in the midst of the deepest squalor and misery, unwept, unmoaned, unloved.

Think of it! With all the luxuries and enlightenment of the nineteenth century about them, living almost in sight of one of Georgia's most thriving cities, watching daily the trains speeding on to the busy marts, while the wires above their heads flash the happenings of the world, these beings, human like ourselves, are living the lives of forlorn animals, with no pleasant recollections of the past, no happiness in the present and no hope for the future.

REPORTED HIM TO SHERMAN.
It was Rather Late, but the Union General Was Pleased.

When the National Convention of Lawyers met in the West some years ago, Mr. Du Bignon was sent to represent Georgia, his native state. Being one of the rising young men of his region, he was also invited to respond to the toast, "The Young Manhood of the South," at the large banquet to be given.

The young lawyer prepared his reply with care, feeling he had done his best, which was all the bar could expect of him. His toast was the tenth in line, and the toastmaster had pronounced in distinct tones the title of the toast, and added that Mr. Fleming Du Bignon of Georgia would reply.

The lawyer rose slowly to his feet, glancing as he did so down the long double line of expectant, polite, upturned faces smiling at him, encouraging him to proceed.

His "piece" was all clearly in mind; he remembered every planned gesture, every turn and "point" he proposed to make. "Gentlemen of the bar," he began, "I—"

"Gen. Sherman," delightedly broke in the toastmaster, and "Sherman!" "Sherman!" was echoed all down the table, which saw dozens of men stand to their feet to greet the great soldier-lawyer as he entered the room.

Gen. Sherman had promised to attend this convention, but had been detained by other engagements until this late hour, and his advent was hailed with a burst of welcome as he advanced shaking hands with him, creating quite a hubbub.

When it finally subsided the toastmaster turned again to the young Georgian and said:

"Will Mr. Du Bignon now proceed with the toast. 'The Young Manhood of the South?'"

The Georgian sat for an instant dazed. He was young and the excitement breaking into his speech had "floored" him.

What was he going to do? What was he going to say? Every line of his prepared speech had left him, every bit of his plan of thought had deserted him. To stand there a complete dillard; to be unable to respond to the toast that involved all his patriotism, when that speech was intended to show the Northerners just what the Southerners could do and be! It was humiliating; it was agonizing.

All this, however, did not occupy the space of time it takes to tell it. It flashed through his brain like lightning, and even during the latter part of these thoughts he was rising mechanically to his feet.

He stood still a second and saw Gen. Sherman's face looking at him with interest. The silence was appalling! He felt that every one was thinking, "Poor fellow, he doesn't know what to say."

In a quiet tone, in which, however, he felt a quiver, he commenced:

"Gentlemen, I am confounded! The advent of so noted a warrior as Gen. Sherman has made me forget every word of my speech—the men all looked anxious and interested—but I think you can scarcely wonder at my confusion. Georgians are so used to the fact of Gen. Sherman following them that it is enough to simply paralyze any one of them to be asked to follow the General." There was a pause for an instant over the young fellow's audacity, and then the room rang with appreciative applause of his excellent wit.

Men leaned over their plates and immediately fixed themselves into attitudes of interest. They at once perceived that at least an original young chap was going to speak.

Mr. Du Bignon felt the personal magnetism he had excited reflect on himself, and continued with more assurance.

He said that he would tell a story about the young manhood of the south, the very young manhood, including his first impressions of Gen. Sherman.

The time was the civil war, the place Milledgeville, Ga. "I was only a little shaver," he started, "staying at home, taking care of my mother and younger brother. All the men had gone to the war. The cry started early in the morning, 'Sherman is coming!' It increased from a whisper to a frightened shout. The old negroes who were at home left the field and plough and gathered in their cabins, exactly as if it had been said, 'The judgment day is coming!' People stood irresolute in the street, not knowing what to do, or whether it was best to go anywhere.

"And later on he came. Soldiers and horses, they began to fill the town and the people's houses, and fear was the prevailing element.

"I insisted that my Shetland pony and my brother's pet rooster must be saved. My mother equally insisted that I was to stay in the house, for it not the solders would carry me away. I was made a prisoner, but opened a window, and when I saw one of the soldiers go under our house and catch the rooster and wring its neck I was certain that my pony would go next. So, jumping out of the window, I ran to the soldier, and doubling up my fist, cried: 'Dog gone you, you old Yankee, if you take that pony I'll report you to Gen. Sherman.'"

"He stopped for an instant, and then continued courteously: 'General, he did take my pony, and this is my first opportunity to report to you.'"

Mr. Du Bignon of Georgia won the day. Men cheered him as he took his seat for his cleverness, and Gen. Sherman jumped up and said: "Will some one present me to the young rebel?"

Edison as a Practical Joker.

Edison is a great lover of practical jokes. Once upon a time when the phonograph was more of a novelty than it is at the present time he hid one of these machines in a grandmother's clock which stood in a guest chamber. One night as a friend was

preparing to get into bed he suddenly heard a voice exclaim, "Eleven o'clock; one hour more." He crept into bed and lay perfectly still, frightened out of his life and hardly daring to breathe. At midnight he heard the same voice again exclaim, "Twelve o'clock; prepare to die." This was more than mortal flesh could stand, and springing out of bed, with a shriek, he flew out of the room into the arms of Edison and another friend, who had been sitting up awaiting his appearance.

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Egypt's Cotton Crop.

Eight or ten years ago Egypt was insolvent. Today she is bristling with prosperity. The position of the fellahs is constantly improving. The corvee is abolished, and the people have no more compulsory labor, except to keep the Nile within bounds at high flood, for which they are paid. The land taxes are gradually being reduced, and extortion and corruption seem to have been stamped out. She sells cereals necessary to pay for the imported articles necessary to maintain her simple standard of life. I can't help thinking that cotton—or the money it produces—has played a part of no small importance in the work of administration that has brought all these blessings. A birdseye view of the area of cotton cultivation would give the outline of a half opened fan. From the point of the delta near Cairo it stretches nearly to Port Said on the northeast and beyond Alexandria on the northwest, this simile being helped by the great are curving into the Mediterranean, the narrow strip devoted to cotton along the Nile from Cairo, 100 miles southward, forming the handle. This area is veined with innumerable canals, branching from the Rosetta and Damietta arms of the Nile, which distribute the vitalizing waters.

Hoyt and the Honest Musician.

Charley Hoyt, the humorous playwright, said: "A few years ago I was playing in one night towns, and finding I should be late in reaching one of them, I telegraphed ahead for the orchestra to meet me at the theatre upon the arrival of the 6:30 train, so as to rehearse before the performance began. I arrived upon a bleak fall afternoon and rushed hurriedly to the cheerless looking little theatre. All within was dull and cold, and the gathering gloom gave a sepulchral appearance to all within. Up and down the stage walked a wizened man smoking a huge pipe, with a tremendous cornet under his arm.

"Where is the orchestra?" I asked.

"It has gone across the river to play at a dance—all but me," answered the ghostly figure.

"And are you all I've to depend upon for music?"

"That's all in sight," said the strange cornet performer.

"And I suppose you are full of music and a great player, then?"

"No," said the isolated musician. "I ain't worth a d—, or I'd be at the dance too."

WOLVES IN THE MAINE WOODS.

Are They Going with the Deer From the Forests of Canada?

That a wolf was shot a few days ago near a lumber camp in Piscataquis county, Me., is a circumstance that all hunters of antlered game in the Pine Tree State must view with concern. The appearing of this animal so far within the borders of the State is ominous of an invasion of wolves from Canada attracted to the Maine woods, as are the city sportsmen, by the extraordinary abundance of game. Unlike the generality of human hunters they observe no close time, and no restrictions limit their slaughter.

For more than thirty years the wolf has been a rare animal in Maine, where in early history he ranged in packs, destroying the farmers' sheep as well as the inoffensive creatures of the woods, and sometimes attacking the belated traveller upon wood roads or chasing hunters into camp. Their general disappearance from the Maine forests was supposed to be due to their following the deer and caribou in the migration that great herds of these creatures made into New Brunswick and Lower Canada many years ago.

It has been expected by old hunters that the wolves would return with the deer, but so far, with isolated exceptions, their presence has not been reported from any quarters, and the books of the State Treasury show only few and scattered payments of bounties for wolf scalps in a long term of years. There have been accounts of deer killed by dogs in the deeply trodden snow paths of their winter "yards," but no instances have been reported, publicly at least, where such slaughter was laid to wolves.

Should it prove true that the unparalleled abundance of antlered game in the Maine woods is due not wholly to natural increase, but in part to a general movement from Canadian forests to a region where at present they seem exempt from the attacks of wolves, then the prowling marauder recently killed may be the forerunner of droves of wolves coming to harry the deer hampered by the deep winter snows, and to break with their long howls the stillness of the winter nights about the logging camps.

In that event the game commissioners of Maine, backed by the sporting clubs and all true sportsmen of the state, will have to deal with another problem than the perennial one of the skulking human poacher. Liberal bounties for the killing and the intrinsic value of the wolves' skins, will stimulate the hunting down of these animals, but the beasts are wary, shy of the traps, and are prolific breeders, and when they have found the way over the border into Maine their numbers will naturally be constantly recruited by fresh comers from Canada.

Like a Tale of Victoria and Albert.

A pretty little story about Her Majesty Wilhelmina, the girl-Queen of Holland, has just found its way into the Dutch papers. The Queen is at present only fourteen years of age, and she is credited with even a larger measure of caprice and precocity than is usually granted to less exalted ladies at that interesting period of life. Her mother the Queen-Regent, therefore, thinks it well at times to deal somewhat severely with Wilhelmina's little ways. Lately the young Queen, desiring to speak to her mother, knocked—not, perhaps, in the most dignified fashion—at the door of the room in which the Queen-Regent was engaged. "Who is there?" "It is the Queen of Holland!" imperiously. "Then she must not enter," peremptorily. At this rebuff the little Queen suddenly changed her tactics, and softening her tones, said winningly, "Mamma, it is your own little daughter that loves you and would like to kiss you." "You may come in." And so Wilhelmina wins her way into the hearts of the most phlegmatic of Dutchmen.

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