

LIFE IN THE CONGO.

A WHITE WOMAN TELLS OF THEIR STRANGE CUSTOMS.

Where a man Never Sees or Speaks to His Mother-in-law—A Married Man's Paradise—Natives Count Their Mothers by the Dozen.

The family relations among the natives of the French Congo differ much from those in other parts of Africa. My surprise was great when one of our laborers asked permission to go to his mother's funeral, for he had told me only a few days before that his mother had been dead for years. When I told him he was not telling the truth he said: 'Oh, he be them other mother.' This led me to investigate the matter. I soon found that the natives sometimes count their mothers by the dozen. Every wife of their father's and all female relatives of their mothers are called mother, and due respect is given to them. In fact, aunts and cousins are treated with greater politeness than the mother.

The children belong in every case to the mother's family, the father having no right to them whatever, except to take care of them when they are very small and nurse the babies when the mother is busy. This is quite a task when a man has a dozen or more wives. As soon as the children are three years old they go to live with their grandmother or one of their mothers' sisters, and if this sister is married her children exchange places. The natives consider the father unnecessary as soon as the children can live with their mother's relatives. A little girl was drowned and her father grieved greatly for her. Some other men laughed at him, saying, 'She is your wife's daughter, what are you crying for? If it were your own child you might cry,' meaning that it is his sister's child was killed he ought to care, but not for his own.

Still, we find children on good terms with their father, and visiting him sometimes. Mother-in-laws are queer things there. Before a marriage the mother of the girl generally has a great deal to say about her future son-in-law. But as soon as all is settled and the girl has gone to her husband's home, the mother dare not look upon her son-in-law. If she wants to visit her daughter she sends word the day before and the husband disappears. If by some chance they meet the man runs away and the woman covers her face. If they need to have any conversation one remains inside the house the other on the outside, the bamboo walls separating them. Under these circumstances there is not much interfering by mothers-in-law. Lucky man, for it would be rather hard with forty wives and forty mothers-in-law to contend with.

The children take the name of their father, besides their given name. Free natives have a certain lot of names to choose from, often the name of a bird or plant, but slaves have different names, such as 'fence,' 'hard life,' 'gate,' and so on. One can always tell a slave from a free person by his name. Free natives have another name derived from some forbidden food. Some dare not eat chicken, for their name is Chicken (N'Suen); others do not eat goats (N'Canby); others may not eat monkey (N'Chimpy). Certain kinds of fish are forbidden to some, bananas to others, and only rice and the staple food, meacea, are free to all. Now this name extends not only to the blood relations, but also to members of different families in different tribes. When a stranger comes to town they ascertain his family name and if persons of the same name live there, he is their guest, otherwise the chief entertains him. I often wonder to see the natives treat him royally simply because he bears their name. The natives firmly believe if any one eats forbidden food he will become sick and perhaps die. Even if they are very hungry and there is nothing else to eat, they will not touch forbidden food. As civilization advances these things will be changed, but at present the natives are afraid that someone will bewitch them if they eat what is forbidden.

Natives of the French Congo do not believe that any of them die a natural death, but insist that every dead person was bewitched. This does not mean anything supernatural, but simply means poisoned. This is actually true in many cases. Even if real sickness did exist, death is hastened by a dose of poison. They are too lazy to care for a sick person for weeks and months, so they put him out of the way in most cases. Even if the murderer is known, they are slow to accuse him, and will call a witch doctor to find the evildoer. The doctor can accuse any one with impunity, and every one will abide by his judgment and the punishment will be administered. In some cases the delinquent will be killed during the trial, but if he happens to be a rich man he is left off upon the payment of money. Sometimes when they cannot fix the crime upon any particular person they will pick out some man who has a little money and he has to pay the penalty unless he runs away to another tribe. A boy was poisoned by his uncle because the little fellow was too smart for him. The father called at the mission and told us about it, and said he was on his way to find a witch doctor. We tried to persuade him not to do this, but he said that he dared not accuse his wife's brother, because her family would take her away, but if the doctor accused him no one could blame the father. The

doctor had all necessary information, and after a good deal of drinking and dancing he picked out the murderer and made him pay for it. After he paid the money the thing was settled.

Another case ended in the death of the homicide. A man threw a stone at his wife and broke her back. She died the next day. Her brother called a jury, consisting of six influential men, the King among them. They ordered the man to appear before them and told him he must drink the Saxywood mixture, and if he was innocent it would not hurt him. He dropped dead as soon as he swallowed it, as they well knew he would. They threw the body away, and this was the end. Only a few persons knew what had become of him until months had elapsed.

Upon the death of a king eight slaves were killed, simply because the old man had been sick for a long time. More would have been sacrificed, but the natives found out that the mission knew about it, and they were afraid we would inform the Government. Our King was the chief culprit in this case, and we told him to beware. These things are carried on under the very eyes of the government, and very little is done to prevent them. It seems that the officials do not go to Africa to do good to the natives and to educate and civilize them, but only to draw a double salary and have a good time. It will be a long time before witches and witch doctors are a thing of the past.

THE DELICATE TOMCOD.

How to Catch and to Cook Him—A Dainty Morsel.

While the scientific fisherman may have packed up and put away the tackle with which he has fought the weakfish, the bass, the fierce bluefish or in fresher waters the gentle trout and the rushing black bass, there are many good men and true who, between times of pickerel, take a turn at the lovely tomcod. Why it should be considered infra dig to go after this merry little fish is hard to say, for it requires quite some knowledge to make fairly sure of a mess, even if they are fast biters and easy to land when once they start feeding. The reason for their popularity is due to one item above all others, and this is, that when eaten the same day they have been caught they are one of the most delicate and delicious morsels of the finny tribe. This is why the fisherman risks the smiles of his superior minded, if less epicurean, companions of the summer, and these bright frosty autumn days goes a tomcodding.

This little fish is a traveller; during the summer he is away, possibly hunting cool waters up Maine way, or, as many fishermen declare, seeks out at sea the greater depths; but as soon as the leaves have mingled with the browning grass and the water rolls up with a crispness to its waves lacking in the summer, then the tomcods are in evidence almost anywhere between the Massachusetts coast and New Jersey. They rarely appear to get beyond Hatteras and seem most plentiful along the Connecticut and Long Island coasts. They are caught in the tiny bays of Staten Island, in Cheesapeake Creek, in the lower bay, along the creek places of the Raritan and Passaic (very few here of late years), and perhaps the best place is the large and shallow creeks, which vary considerably in depth at each tide, in the neighborhood of Little Neck Bay, around Douglaston or further down at Mattituck Creek, or across to the Connecticut coast, around Indian Harbor, at Greenwich and along the West Chester meadows, nearer home. Douglaston, however, is the accepted place, and Alley Creek, which extends back through the meadows, finally running up and merging in fresh water streams from the higher lands, is the cream of the tomcod haunts around New York. The day to choose is one when it is high water at Sandy Hook about 11 a. m., that will make it high water in the Douglaston creeks about 2.30 p. m., and a train should be taken to get to the fishing ground not later than 9.30 a. m., so as to get the first of the tide. Leave the train at Douglaston and walk back over the trestle to the drawbridge and then fish from the pier and stringpieces. There will be no lack of company if it be clear, not too cold, and there will be fish enough to go around.

A light springy rod is the best, and forty to fifty feet of line is all that will be wanted. A heavy sinker is necessary—one which will hold to the bottom in face of the tide, which rushes through the draw with considerable force. The fish are whimsical and may delay biting for an hour after the flood rolls in, but when they do bite they make up for the delay, and no matter what may seem to attract at various times, the one staple diet is sand worms cut small, a piece to each hook, three of which should be attached to a fine gut leader, which should be placed about twenty-eight inches above the sinker. With three feet of water in the run the tomcod will be biting and then there will be fun which can only be compared to the fun of snapper fishing in August in the landlocked bays; it is not how many fish you can catch, it is rather how fast can the bait be put on and fish unhooked. Up they come at every drop of the bait, a flapping, flopping fellow, a cod-fish in miniature, six inches long, but as sweet as a nut when eaten. Right up to high water they will bite freely, and then

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the basket is well filled, and after a warm at the drawman's shed it is time for home, which is reached in little over half an hour (thirty-seven minutes to Long Island City), and then the fish should be quickly cleaned, wiped, not washed, sprinkled lightly with salt, and fried with tiny slivers of bacon, they should be almost eaten out of the pan. For a change wipe dry and make of one shallot (or tiny onion) cut exceedingly fine, half a teaspoonful of tarragon herb, also chopped very fine, and twelve capers, cut small; place these in an earthen bowl with half a teaspoonful of English mustard, two raw yolks of eggs, a teaspoonful of vinegar added, a drop at a time, half a pinch of salt, and a third of a pinch of pepper; stir constantly and add slowly a wineglassful of olive oil. It should be the consistency of thick cream which will not run; if too thick, add a little vinegar. Eat quickly and acknowledge that the humble little tomcod is more than the equal of the finest smelt. Prepare at least thirty fish for each guest.

LOOK IN MINING.

Two Blasts That Showed a Miner Where He Made His Mistake.

'One man cannot see as far into the ground as another,' said John Pritchard of Aspen yesterday, 'and there isn't a little bit of truth in the saying that he can when applied to mining operations. Thousands of instances might be brought forward to prove my position, and I learned the lesson very early in my mining career. The Tom Boy story is an illustration of this. Everybody thought J. Ernest Waters was wild to spend so much money on it, and yet it is today being negotiated for \$2,500,000, after paying more than \$500,000 in dividends in less than two years.'

'I was down in the San Juan country in 1881, and had a claim over on Sultan Mountain, which I called the Jessie. It was a promising crevice, and I worked at it faithfully until I had expended \$500, mainly for grub and powder, living alone in my cabin and frequently working fifteen hours a day. Then I sent home and father sent me \$300 more, which I used up. By that time I had been at work nearly two years, and had driven my tunnel in about 200 feet, every inch of it with my own hands. Then I became discouraged, as I knew father had a mortgage on the old place and couldn't afford to help me any more. I got credit for \$100 and kept at work, driving the tunnel fifty feet further, and then I felt that I was at the end of my rope.

'One day as I was gathering up my tools to quit, a nicely dressed man sauntered up to the tunnel and began to look around. He asked to see the tunnel, which was mostly in solid rock without timbering, and after he had closely examined both walls, asked me if I wanted to sell. I feigned indifference, and after calculating 250 feet of tunneling at \$10 a foot, answered that I might sell it for my price. 'Well, what's your price?' he asked. 'Twenty-five hundred dollars,' I replied, with my heart in my mouth. 'Come down to town and get your money,' was the answer and that night I slept with \$2,500 under my pillow, in clean sheets for the first time in two years. Next morning the purchaser asked me to help him put in a couple of shots, and of course I agreed. When we got to the tunnel he examined the wall and selected a point about 100 feet from the mouth. 'Let's drill a couple of holes here,' he said. The minute he laid hold of the sledge I saw he was a miner, and in a short time we had two beautiful holes in the rock. When the shots went off I could hardly restrain myself from rushing into the tunnel at once, and when the smoke cleared away I was the first on the spot. Which was afterwards found to be three feet thick, and ran over \$100 to the ton. I had left the vein, and the superior knowledge of my purchaser had enabled him to detect the point of departure.

'I stayed around there a week, by which time he had taken out enough ore to pay for the cost of the mine, and then I went home and paid of the mortgage on the farm and I've got the farm yet, though I am still mining. More than \$30,000 was taken out of that hole, and then the vein was lost and has never been found since.—Denver Republican.

WHY HE REMAINED SINGLE.

He Never will Again Take Part in a Political Raid.

'I didn't see you in the parade the other night, Webberly.'

'That's right, and if you ever do see me in a political circus like that I'll buy you a suit of clothes and put no limit on the price.'

'But I thought you were just bubbling over with patriotism.'

'I'm not one bit shy on that commendable article, but you know that old adage about the burnt child and the fire. My whole life would have been different had some kind providence prevented my making just one march with the boys. It was in the old times when we carried odoriferous

Good Words

From

Old Students



(No 2)
* * * The Mathematical Training alone I consider to be worth more than the cost of the whole course.—E. B. Jones, Head Bookkeeper for Messrs. Manchester, Robertson & Allison.

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lamps to illuminate our wide-awake caps and oilcloths capes I was an awkward, impetuous youth with an abiding conviction that any political views held by my father were infallible. On this special occasion there was to be the biggest blowout of the campaign. Of course I had to be among the mounted men, for there was evidence of social standing in being on horseback when helping to perpetuate our free institutions. Well, sir, you should have seen my mount. He was seventeen hands if an inch. No X-rays were required to explore his anatomy. He had a head as long as a rake handle and a look in his eyes that would have warned any one with a grain of commonsense. He was a total stranger to the fact that he was possessed of that pernicious influence which caused the swine to run down to the sea.

'I was head over heels in love with a girl who, politically, was on the other side of the fence. That equine fiend behaved like an angel till we reached her home. Then he acted as though seized with the tremens. He flew in eccentric orbits all over the street, bucking, kicking, rearing, biting and snorting. Had I known enough to be honestly entitled to a vote, I would have jumped off and denounced the horse. But I was fool enough to make a fight for the mastery. To help his cause my lamp fell back, and after the oil had saturated his tail it took fire. I struck an adjacent building between the second and third story windows, caromed on the window sill, knocked down a dozen women and children and was picked up a mental blank. The description of my experience as given in an opposition paper was the most amusing thing the town had ever read. 'You know that I have never married.'—Detroit Free Press.

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