

## ON THE CORAL ISLAND.

PEOPLE OF THE LOW-LYING MICRONESIAN GROUPS.

Tree Climbing Done by the Natives—Three Trees that Sustain Life—Widows who Prize the Skulls of Their Husbands—Trade Possibilities Described.

'Seen in the offing ten or fifteen miles away, the first view of a coral island shows a grove of trees growing apparently from the water,' said Capt. Byron Snow, who for years commanded a trading schooner sailing among the islands of Micronesia.

'Nearer at hand the white line of breakers against the reef appears, and lastly the low land rising from four to ten feet above the surface. Among the trees are scattered the houses of the people, and in the Gilbert group of islands, the great manaba or council house. It is your ship is to touch at the island you find the channel leading from the open sea into the central lagoon, and if the wind and currents are favourable sail easily in and drop anchor in a smooth sheltered haven. Except in a certain piratical islands which you are supposed to have sense to avoid, the people receive you hospitably and invite you into the houses, where they offer you palm juice, fresh or fermented molasses and water, or green coconuts, which you eat with a spoon. The high-pitched roofs of the houses, thatched with pandanus leaves, rest on low posts, and there are no sides, so that when you sit down on the mat spread for you on the floor the interior arrangements of all the other houses in the village are open to your view.

'In the days when I traded among the Micronesian islands coconut oil was the principal thing the natives had to traffic with. They obtained it by scraping coconut meat fine with a knife or shell and then pressing the oil out in a rude handpress operated with a long lever. Half a dozen natives would sit on this lever, like American country boys on the top of a fence, while the oil dripped down into a calabash set to catch it. It was a job that suited excellently their ideas of labor. But their way of getting the coconut, from the tree in the first place was something to strike a white man as work that he would rather let out than try to do himself. Of course, they had to climb for it, and to get up the fifty feet or so of smooth-barked trunk to where the nuts were they used several different methods. The usual one was to cut notches in the tree large enough to give a hold to the great toe, and up these the islanders would walk as easily and surely as a sailor would climb the ratlines. The first climbing of the tree, the work of cutting notches, took some little time, but after that the native looked on the palm trunk as a ladder.

'Another way was for the climber to tie his feet together a few inches apart. Then, putting one hand around the trunk, with the other he would push himself away, at the same time drawing his feet up, one after the other, and keeping the cord that tied them pressed against the tree to keep him from slipping back. Then he would straighten himself up for a fresh start. In this manner a man would work himself up a tree trunk very fast. But the star performance was for the climber to use no helps, but simply clasp the trunk with both hands to keep him from falling backward and walk straight up the tree. Most of the young men made a point of climbing in this way, if there was any haste to get the coconuts or if people were looking on. The coconut oil that they obtained the natives bartered with the traders for fishhooks, plane irons, large knives, scented oils, beads and tobacco. In recent years the preparation of copra for shipment has taken the place of the production of oil, and a greater variety of goods is demanded in the Micronesian trade, owing to the civilization introduced by American missionaries. Tobacco the Christianized natives never use, while the unconverted islander may be known by his pipe, which, when not in use is carried about stuck through a hole in his ear.

'Were it not for the three species of indigenous wild trees that grow on the coral islands the people there would be badly off for the means of living. The soil is poor, often barren, and the only cultivated plant is a species of taro, a variety of the root eaten in the Hawaiian Islands in the form of poi. There are no streams, springs or wells on the coral islands, and for water the inhabitants have to depend on rain pools. As their are in the moist latitudes, where rain falls nearly every day of the year, this water supply is reasonable safe and certain, but the salt spray of the ocean, driven into the pools, often makes them brackish. From the coconut the islanders obtain food drink and fibres for use in weaving. Breadfruit is a staple food, and the trunk of the tree on which it grows serves, when hollowed out with fire and axes, for the canoes and proas in which the natives

make their voyages. The drupes of the pandanus trees are used to some extent as food, and the long narrow pandanus leaves are sewn into garments and sails, plaited into hats and mats and used for thatching the houses. Fish are caught in abundance, though care has to be taken in selecting those to be served, as some varieties found about the reefs are poisonous to eat. Cattle, sheep or goats placed on these island soon die. Pigs manage to eke out a living and, with some starving dogs, are the only domestic quadrupeds kept by the natives. There are a few land birds and flowers on the coral groups, and white people who reside upon these islands find the conditions very trying to health.

'Although the natives of the Micronesian coral islands are naturally warlike and given to killing one another in private quarrels, they have never been known as cannibals. The unconverted islanders are great liars and thievish. They are kind to children, but treat their women cruelly, beating or stabbing them on little or no provocation. Old people receive but little consideration among them. The bodies of adults of both sexes are elaborately tattooed, except in the generation that has grown up in the Marshall and Gilbert islands since Germany and England seized upon the respective groups some fifteen or sixteen years ago. Now the practice of tattooing seems dying out in islands where Europeans reside, and none of the converted natives undergo it.

Among the heathen natives of the Gilbert Islands a strange burial custom prevails. When a man has died his body is brought to the manaba a great council house, and is laid out in state. Women sit by it day after day for weeks. Most of the time the body is covered by a mat and frequently beneath the same mat lies the dead man's wife mourning over her loss. When at last the corpse is about to be buried the widow often keeps the skull and makes it her constant companion, carrying it with her wherever she goes. A man is generally buried under his own house, and only a few inches below the surface of the ground, owing to the belief of the survivors that if there should be room left for another corpse above him there would soon be another to fill the place. But sometimes the body is rolled up in mats and laid away in the loft of the house. The religion of the Micronesians is a sort of Spiritism, in which persons pretend to hold intercourse with disembodied spirits that manifest themselves, not by knockings or tipping but by whistling.

'All the eagerness to gobble up the Micronesian islands which Germany, England, and Spain have in recent years displayed is a playing for position in the world's warfare, with the aim to secure naval and telegraphic bases rather than develop pro-

duction and commerce in the islands themselves. Beyond the shipment of a limited amount of copra there are no commercial possibilities in either of the coral groups, the Marshalls, or the Gilberts. The Caroline Archipelago is more promising, having the fine volcanic islands of Kusaie, Ponape, Ruk, Yap, and the Pelews among its minor coral groups, affording harbors among the best in the Pacific. It is a vast pity that the United States have not secured the Carolines, both for naval bases and for the laying of an ocean cable, which connecting San Francisco and Manila, should follow the ocean plateau from which the islands of this archipelago rise, rather than try to span the deep chasm that divides Honolulu from Guam.'

## GERMAN TOYS FOR CHILDREN.

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The American child is usually credited with keen powers of observation, says the New York Commercial Advertiser. Just what he thinks of some of his elaborate toys would make interesting reading. His cars and his Brooklyn bridge, his Niagara falls and his Grand Central depot are all 'made in Germany.' No wonder the wonders of America are wonders indeed to the child who has learned all about them in the nursery. The German idea of a fountain is not the Madison square nor the Central park idea at all. It includes tritons and dolphins and mermaids and Germania in a steel corset in the centre of the basin. A signal-tower toy made in Germany would bewilder a railroad president. It looks like a filigree windmill and is painted every shade from pale rose to deep green. The fire engines and 'hook and ladder companies' must grieve the small boy who has seen and waxed ecstatic over 'the real thing.' German toy-makers cater to the American markets, which accounts for the startling reproductions of our national institutions. Every spring the toy fair at Leipzig blossoms forth in ocean steamers, brownstone doll-houses, railway trestles, trains of cars, yachts, warehouses and other American luxuries and necessities in miniature. But the resemblance is only near enough to the original to satisfy the artless manufacturer. It exercises the American child's imagination and taxes his memory to recall where he has seen something that this or that toy reminds him of. If he is energetic and patriotic he repaints his cable car or fire engine and tears down the German flags from the towers of Brooklyn bridge. A great effort to be truly American was made by one toymaker this season. He made a railway station and painted its two gothic towers pale green and pale blue respectively; then he fitted up one tower as a



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'waiting room' and the other as the station 'master's office. The names of these departments were printed in English over the door of each. The arch, which joined the two towers and beneath which passengers had to pass to buy tickets before rushing out on the tracks beyond, bore a clock, flanked by the German coat-of-arms. Above this, in big black letters, 'Central station. Bahnhof,' is printed, and from the flagstaff floats a Swiss flag. But the funniest feature is the 'waiting room.' It is furnished with small round tables, on each of which is a glass of beer. Shades of American lunch-counter pies and sandwiches!

## ROMANCE OF A ROYAL WILL.

Bavarian Princess and her Husband Restored to Social Standing.

The will of the late empress of Austria brings to light a romance of the royal court that had long been forgotten. Five years ago the empress's favorite granddaughter, Princess Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Prince Leopold of Bavaria, and the Archduchess Gisela of Austria, eloped with a young officer in the Bavarian army, Lieut. Seefried, who was both penniless and plebeian. It was a case of love at first sight for both, and this modern Romeo and Juliet couple thought neither of rank nor royal blood. They made no concealment of their love, and the young lieutenant boldly asked the old emperor of Austria for the hand of this beautiful princess in marriage. The Emperor Francis Joseph was horrified at his granddaughters' choice of a penniless and lowly born army officer for a husband. Consent to their union was emphatically refused. The upshot was that the princess and the lieutenant eloped and were married in Switzerland. Lieut. Seefried was immediately expelled from the Bavarian army, and Prince Leopold in his wrath forbade the young couple to ever again cross the Bavarian frontier. The Empress of Austria, however, who had a tender heart and knew what love was, interceded for her granddaughter. Through her efforts

Lieut. Seefried was admitted into the Austrian army and created a baron, but both he and his wife were rigidly excluded from the Austrian and Bavarian courts. Baron Seefried and the princess lived quietly and contentedly in a small provincial town, where his regiment was quartered, and are regarded as a model married couple. And now in her will the empress has shown that she had never forgotten the youthful lovers. She begs the emperor, as a dying request, to use his influence in behalf of Baron Seefried and his princess wife. She further conveys an entreaty to her own daughter, the Arch-duchess Gisela, and her son-in-law, Prince Leopold of Bavaria, to extend full pardon to their daughter for her youthful indiscretion. This appeal from the dead empress has, of course, met with a ready response. Baron Seefried has been placed on the retired list of the Austrian army by the emperor and given permission to return to Bavaria with his wife. Then he will enter the German diplomatic service, and both will take their proper rank as the children of a royal family.

## Emerson on Newspapers.

Many years ago Emerson, in a letter to a college boy, said: Newspapers have done much to abbreviate expression and so to improve style. They are to occupy during your generation a large share of the attention, and the most studious and engaged man can neglect them only at his cost. But have little to do with them. Learn how to get their best, too, without their getting yours. Do not read when the mind is creative, and do not read them thoroughly, column by column. Remember they are made for everybody, and don't try to get what isn't meant for you. The miscellany, for instance, should not receive your attention. There is a great secret in knowing what to keep out of the mind as well as what to put in. You can't quote from a newspaper. Like some insects, it died the day it was born.'

## The Heaviest Man on Earth.

If the greatest were the test of avoirdupois the place of honor would be filled by Maurice Canon, a native of the small frontier town of Stein, in the state of Constance. This man is said to weigh not less than fifty stone, and may claim to be the heaviest man on earth. He measures over 100 inches around the waist and 64 around the thigh. His enormous weight does not apparently inconvenience him, for he is active and in robust health. He is a well-to-do, middle-aged farmer, and, though his gigantic proportions naturally make him an object of curiosity to his neighbors, he has declined all offers to stray from his native fields.—Humanitarian.

## How It Stood.

Smith: 'You and Jones don't seem to be as friendly as you were. Does he owe you money?'

Brown: 'No, not exactly—but he wanted to.'

An optimist is a person who can feel cheerful when he is in a bad humour.

We barely get a glimpse of ourselves in the mirror of time as it flashes by.

Some folk were married and are happy and others are married and were happy.

Slander, like chickens, may come home to roost, and the standing joke may tread on your own sensibilities.

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