

AMONG THE SHATTERS.

QUEER LIFE IN THE PINE BARRENS OF LOWER DELAWARE.

A Trip Through the Peach Region to Lewes and Among the Primitive People Who Live There—Wrestling with the "Agy"—Civilization.

Journeying southward over the Delaware division of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore railroad one gets a fairly intelligent impression of the magnitude of peach cultivation in the Delaware peninsula. A few miles below New Castle an abundant growth of trees and the large number of wagons and men scattered here and there in the open fields indicate the commencement of the great peach belt, and as the train penetrates still further there is a greater density of trees, humming in the track upon either side until they seem to expand into an interminable wilderness of intertwining trunks, boughs and leaves, weighted down with fruit. Long lines of cars are side tracked at the different stations, loading with crates and baskets for shipment to Philadelphia, New York and the eastern markets, the fruit coming not only from the prolific orchards skirting the main state, but from the numerous feeders which ramify the country.

Every mile the train covers you get deeper and deeper into the region. It is peaches, peaches everywhere, until you become absolutely suffocated. The very atmosphere is impregnated with the aroma that is wafted through the car windows from the depths of the orchards. Numerous little urchins, almost before the wheels have ceased to gyrate, are climbing on the cars like pirates boarding an ocean prize. They impudently thrust their baskets in your face and vociferously importune you to buy of their stock. Every other man on the car is a grower, a buyer, a worker or a speculator, or in some way interested in the business.

"Harrington! Change cars for Lewes!" shouts the brakeman. At twilight the train comes to a halt at the station at Lewes, the historic old town of Sussex county, with its antique, moss covered houses, almost hidden from view in the midst of a grand old forest of oak and pine trees. While looking about for a suitable conveyance a venerable looking negro, driving a cadaverous ox attached to a rickety old backboard, came along. I found the old fellow to be quite communicative, and readily agreed to take me for a consideration, and in a short time we were off for the Cape, leaving a crowd of people gazing curiously after us.

At last we reached open country and arrived at Cape Henlopen light house. Here for miles, stretching along the ocean front, is a great pine forest inhabited by a community of people whose manners and customs are similar to those of the "crackers" of Georgia. Near the light tower the road diverges to the right and runs parallel with the ocean beach for a long distance. We followed it for a mile and a half, when we turned abruptly into a by path and plunged into the dismal looking place. Suddenly we were greeted by the shouts of a troop of dirty, ragged looking children, who seemed to have sprung up out of the bushes. The driver explained that we had struck the "claris," which I interpreted as meaning the clearings, and so they proved to be.

These clearings are located at short intervals and consist of from one-half to an acre of arable land in a comparatively good state of cultivation. Upon this ground is raised an abundance of vegetables and cabbage; sweet and round potatoes are stowed away in large quantities for winter use. There are cherry, apple, peach, pear and plum trees, and some of the more aesthetic and intelligent delight in lolling in the shade of the silver maple or gathering exquisite bouquets from the luxuriant flower beds set off in one corner of the clearing. The manner in which the houses are constructed is from which the appellation of "pine shatter" is derived, and, indeed, it is no misnomer. The houses are one story high, built of pine slabs, some with and some without the bark, and are put together substantially. The roof is constructed of pine shatters. These shatters are the refuse from pine trees, such as cones, leaves, twigs, etc., which are mixed with a composition of boiled sea water and clay, which forms a compact mass absolutely impervious to water. The chimney is of hard clay and ascends from the outside of the house.

These people are evidently great economists of space, for here in one of these small rooms a whole family, frequently consisting of six and seven persons, eat, sleep and cook. A large open fire place, with a swinging crane, from which is suspended the old fashioned iron dinner pot, an antique bedstead, two or three chairs and an immense chest complete the furniture. There is no sign of carpet, and no attempt is made at interior decoration, except that the slabs have once upon a time been whitewashed, for they are now so beset with soot and smoke it is hard to distinguish the presence of the whitewash. A few pictures, cut from national newspapers, which, in some unaccountable manner, found their way into the dismal abodes of the shatter, are pasted on the slabs, and fishing nets, eelwells and lobster traps are ranged in an orderly exhibition overhead, emitting a rank and wooden odor. As the end of the shatter the inmates' heads were turned to

and drinking purposes, and besides the barrel the ubiquitous "gourd," so famous everywhere in the southern country as a drinking utensil. Sitting in the shade of a tree near one of these houses, knitting a seine and smoking a dirty clay pipe, was a thin, sallow faced man, barefooted and bareheaded. He was talkative. He said that he had been "nigh on to death," but was now "feelin' right smart." A slatternly looking woman, with a hoe in her hand, came up and entered at once into conversation. Taking a rub of snuff—they are all inveterate snuff takers—she replaced the paper carefully in her pocket and began in a most voluble tongue to expatiate upon the family misfortune: "Yes, the old man over thar had the aggy for morn'n a year."

The community is diminishing, however, for the encroachments of progressive civilization and the development of internal improvements has somewhat scattered them. A great many have vacated the clearings for the near by towns. They are, comparatively speaking, an industrious people, and just at this season find plenty of employment in the fruit orchards or drying houses, earning from 50 to 90 cents per day, and yet they are happy and contented and seem to thrive upon this pittance. They enjoy an advantage over the poorly paid laborer in the cities, because during the summer they can make their "clearing" produce enough vegetables to last them through the winter. Besides, they have no house rent to pay, and such luxuries as fish and oysters they get for nothing. Few of the old residents can read or write, and illiteracy at one time predominated to a great extent. The younger generation, however, have better facilities for securing an education, and many of the young attend the Lewes schools.—Philadelphia Times.

DIFFERENCES IN EYESIGHT.

Its Varied Powers in Different Nations Due to Physical Conditions.

It is possible that slight differences may exist in the seeing powers of different nations, due to the effect of physical conditions; thus the inhabitants of mountainous districts and of dry, elevated table lands may have a better sight than dwellers in low, humid and level regions, although just the reverse may be the case. Among European nations the Germans are generally supposed to have weak eyes, owing, some imagine, to their excessive indulgence in tobacco, while others attribute the supposed decay to the form of type used in their books, which requires closer looking at than ours in reading. That they will deteriorate still further in this direction, and from being a spectacle people become a blind one, to the joy of their enemies, is not likely to happen, and probably the decadence has been a great deal exaggerated.

Animals living in darkness become near sighted, and then nearer sighted still, and so on progressively until the vanishing point is reached. In a community or nation a similar decline might begin from much reading of German books, or perpetual smoking of pipes with big china bowls, or from some other unknown cause; but the decay could not progress far, because there is nothing in man to take the place of sight as there is in the blind cave rats and fishes and insects. And if we could survey mankind from China to Peru with all the scientific appliances which are brought to bear on the board school children in London and on the nation generally, the differences in the powers of vision in the various races, nations and tribes would probably appear very insignificant. The mistake which eye specialists and writers on the eye make is that they think too much about the eye. When they affirm that the conditions of our civilization are highly injurious to the sight do they mean all the million conditions or sets of conditions embraced by our system, with the infinite variety of occupations and modes of living which men have, from the light house keeper to the worker underground, whose day is the dim glimmer of the miner's lamp?

"A organ exposed beyond its wont will grow and thus meet increase of demand by increase of supply," Herbert Spencer says, but, he adds, "there is a limit soon reached beyond which it is impossible to go." This increase of demand with use is everywhere now on this organ and now on that, according to our work and way of life, and the eye is in no worse case than the other organs. There are among us many cases of heart complaint; civilization, in such cases, has put too great a strain on that organ, and it has reached the limit beyond which it cannot go. And so with the eye. The total number of defective among us is no doubt very large, for we know that our system of life retards—it cannot effectually prevent—the healthy action of natural selection. Nature pulls one way and we pull the other, compassionately trying to save the unfit from the consequences of their unfitness. The humane instinct compels us, but the cruel instinct of the savage, who hates the sick and the unfit as the inferior animals do, is less painful to contemplate than that mistaken or perverted compassion which seeks to perpetuate unfitness, and in the interest of suffering individuals inflicts a lasting injury on the race. It is a beautiful and sacred thing to minister to the blind and to lead them, but a horrible thing to encourage them to marry and transmit the miserable blind condition to their posterity. Yet this is very common.—Lancet Magazine.

"The art of war, which everybody talks about, is difficult."—Napoleon.

Curiosities of Vegetable Growth.

It is a singular and as yet unexplained fact that in certain species of vegetable growth there are found a variety of stones supposed to be formed and deposited in their tissues from the silicious and calcareous juices circulating in their organisms. Thus, in the bamboo a round stone is found at the joints of the cane called "tabasher." Another curiosity of the sort is the "cocoanut stone," found in the endosperm of the cocoanut to Java and other East India islands. Dr. Kimmins describes it as a pure carbonate of lime. It is sometimes round, sometimes pear shaped, while the appearance is that of a white pearl without much luster. Some of the stones are as large as cherries and as hard as feldspar or opal. They are very rare and are regarded as precious stones by the orientals and charms against disease or evil spirits by the natives. Stones of this kind are sometimes found in the pomegranate and other East India fruits. Apatite has been discovered in the midst of oak wood.—New Orleans Picayune.

The Pastime of Theft.

The sport of thieving, in its various forms, is the most irresistible of all pastimes, writes the late Chief Justice Cockburn in his reminiscences. What lures the doors equal to it? No license to pay for, no permission to ask, no close time, total fitness, great risk, frequent success to constant extension, a community of their own, the whole public their preserve, the delight of eluding the law, and the many chances of escape even after being caught trespassing. If anything could be required to whet their appetite for this game, it would be its contrast with the dullness of a good prison recently left. I hope I'm wrong, but if there be a thoroughly reformed twice convicted thief, I would rather pay a shilling to see him than to see any other wonder in any living show.—Home Journal.

Superiority of Canadian Tea.

Our scientific editor has been at a 3 o'clock Labrador tea. The beverage was a success—rated by some as superior to China teas. It was prepared simply as follows: Leaves of the present season. Boiling water poured on, and kept covered for about twenty minutes; kept nearly to boiling point—but not allowed to boil. Sweetened with refined sugar. Cream or milk added. The dried leaf of Ledum latifolium could be put on the market, allowing the widest margin, at ten cents per pound.—Educational Review.

Montenegro's Only Vocation.

Walter Baring, British agent at Cetinje, Montenegro, reports that there is only one road fit for a wagon in the whole country, and that there is practically no industry. Montenegro securing any pursuit but that of arms. All the tailors, painters, carpenters, masons, and other artisans are foreigners, and all goods except those which are the direct product of agriculture are imported, and are of the commonest description, except the green and white cloth used for men's coats.—New York Sun.

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B. & M. Time Table.

Table with 2 columns: GOING WEST and GOING EAST. Lists train numbers and times for various routes.

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