

# THE ONLY PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO NEVER LAUGH

ONLY one tribe of people in all the world never laugh.

The people with whom the civilization is unknown, to whom a man is a phenomenon, and a smile an unlooked-for thing are the Veddas—the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon.

Every man, woman and child of which is as solemn as a hardened old Irish soldier at a meal of porridge.

And, leaving out the truth of the proverb "laugh and grow fat," the Veddas are the slenderest, most unadorned people in the world—so thin that the Irish who could not tell whether he had stomachache or lameness would be called plump among them.

The connection between their extreme stolidness and their lack of mirth has not yet been traced, but it is believed that the person who could make them laugh would add pounds to their weight in a year's time. It is not even alleged that their failure to laugh has any connection with the fact that they are under British rule and probably forced to listen to English jokes.

For nearly 2,000 years, according to the best chronicles, these people, now almost extinct, have preserved the same characteristics, and in one, so far as history reveals, has ever seen a smile on the face of one of them or heard a laugh while in their section of Ceylon.

## Government Tries to Fatten Them.

Year by year they have grown thinner and less numerous until they promise to disappear altogether, mostly by death, but probably some of them will get so thin as to be invisible if they keep up the process of physical degeneration long enough. The government has tried to fatten them by feeding them, but the experiment has not been a success.

The Veddas are divided into three distinct groups. The rock Veddas who dwell almost entirely among the granite boulders, in caves or cliffs in the rock, and who are skilled archers, bringing down bats, owls, crows, and kites which constitute their principal food. They will not, for religious reasons, touch the bear, elephant, or buffalo. The second group is the village Veddas, and live in small huts along the eastern coast and cultivate mainly in a small extent, and the third are the coast Veddas, now numbering less than 200 who have settled down in the coast jungles and take out an existence by helping the Moors cut timber or aiding the fishermen.

These three small groups are all that remain of the original inhabitants, and they have no intercourse with each other.

## Unable to Make Them Smile.

The Veddas of the rock are, if possible, the most solemn group of the three, and all efforts to teach them even to smile have proved unavailing.

Why these people do not smile is a mystery. They alone of all the people of the earth know nothing of the sensation of laughter. An English scientist, who recently journeyed to Ceylon for the purpose of investigating this question, persuaded some of the rock Veddas to permit him to tickle them in the ribs and in the middle of their feet with straws, and never caught even the flicker of a smile on their faces, nor did he ever succeed in making one of them squint and laugh aloud during the operation.

They are not only as absolutely lacking in humor as the recent faces composites, but appear to lack the physical power to express any feeling akin to humor.

## Unable to Tell Lies.

Another strange thing about the Veddas and one which may possibly be connected with their lack of humor is the fact that every one of them is a George Washington, and unable to tell a lie or to conceive of any one else telling a lie. They cannot even believe that any one would take the prop-



Vedda Woman.



Vedda Man

the earth—he tried burlesque, tried pantomime, tried everything, and the net result was failure even to produce a quiver of the lips or a twinkle of the eye.

His friends say the Veddas probably laughed heartily after he left them, but he contends that they cannot laugh, and that the nerves that produce laughter are dead or dormant in them.

erty of any one else, and association with civilization has failed to convince them that it is possible. When anything is missing since the advent of other peoples into Ceylon the fact that it is missing is charged to the article itself.

The language of the Veddas is closely allied to that of the Cingalese, and is extremely limited, although the scientific persons who have made the recent investigations avow that this limit of language does not account for the fact that they do not tell lies. They simply cannot understand that any person can tell an untruth—possibly because they have never yet met any promoter of an industrial stack.

It is probable that their lack of humor, and consequent inability either to lie or to laugh, results from their lack of imagination. They seem utterly unable to imagine anything—they have no God, no belief in or thought of a future life, no religion, no ceremonies, no temples, no idols, no act of worship, and, on the whole, they are as unimaginative as the ordinary short story writer.

## Peaceable, Gentle, and Quiet.

With all this—or, rather, without all this—the Veddas are a peaceable, gentle, quiet people. They take wives without any marriage ceremony and are faithful and constant to them, supporting them to death. When their wives are unfaithful they take them back, and the wife's relatives punish the man.

The Englishman who recently spent months among them strove to excite their sense of the ridiculous, and failed, tried to see if they would laugh at the slight injury of himself—a thing which excites laughter among every other people of



FROM TIBET.



Peasant of central Tibet.

TO PLUMPEN ARMS.



Marion Martinson says you can make your arms plump by rubbing olive oil into them.

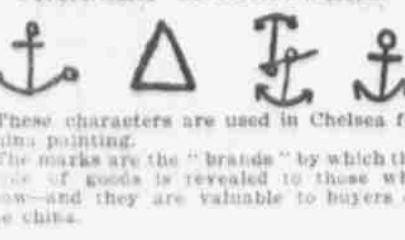
IRON HAND.



In an old chateau near Nuremberg is preserved the iron hand of Goetz von Berlichingen, whose exploits Goethe celebrated in a drama bearing the warrior's name. This famous German knight of the late fifteenth century, having lost his hand in war, supplied its place by a glove of iron so constructed that his members moved by an internal mechanism.

With this glove the maimed warrior could grasp objects and wield the sword or battle as he before he received his wound.

## CHELSEA CHARACTERS.



These characters are used in Chelsea for china painting.

The marks are the "brands" by which the work of goods is revealed to those who know—and they are valuable to buyers of fine china.

STUFFED YAKS OF TIBET.



Yaks are sacred with the Tibetans and they are honored even after death. Stuffed yaks shown in the picture are hanging about the gateway at Graung-jong. They were fitted with artificial eyes with their tongues protruding in a fierce manner.

## ART IN MAORI CARVING.



Maori carving of wood, ivory, and precious metals is wonderful. The photograph shows the intricate nature of the native art.

## AFGHAN PALANQUIN USED FOR WOUNDED.



This palanquin or tahlti-rawan is used by the Afghan people for conveying their sick and wounded.

TEN FEET WIDE.



In one of the principal streets of the old Norman city of Rouen stands a house ten feet wide. A watchmaker occupies it.

## TURET DOOR CHARM.



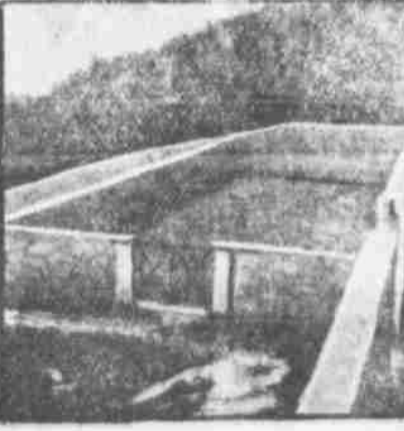
Charms of this sort are used on the doorways of Tibet. They are said to keep evil spirits away.

FAVORITES OF THE KAISER.



These three dachshunds are the favorites of William II. of Germany and his constant companions when he walks.

## SUICIDES' GRAVEYARD.



The ruined gamblers who kill themselves at Monte Carlo are buried together in this cemetery within half a mile of the Casino.

## AGED CYCLIST.



T. W. Davis is the champion bicyclist of his age in the world. He is 77 years old and has ridden 122,541 miles on his bicycle. He began bicycling at the age of 61.

## FULL DRESS.



Magasawar soldier in marching equipment.

## NEW SUNDIAL.



Recently invented by Prof. C. Crehore.