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POOR WHITES.

SOME PHASES OF SOUTHERN LIFE DESCRIBED.

Killing a Fly at Thirteen Feet.

The poor white is an institution known only in the slave states. He is a man who has no ancestry, no history, no nothing. He may own a patch of very poor land somewhere on the hills, where land is so poor that no one else wants it, and on that is a cabin which only such as he would live in from choice. The mild climate makes living in such hovels in something like comfort possible, for except in exceptional seasons fuel is not necessary, except for cooking purposes, and, as they have very little to cook, that doesn't bother them very much. The inside of the house needs no special finish, nor the outside either, for that matter. Indeed, a house at all is well nigh superfluous for these people. It is useful when it rains, or during the few weeks of cold weather.

They live by all sorts of work that is not exactly work. As for clothing, that is the last thing they think of. A garment is worn so long as a thread of it remains, and as it is only replaced at long intervals, should not be considered as an expense.

They live by the very slowest cultivation of the little ground they occupy, by woodcraft, fishing and those nondescript employments that just escape absolute savagery. In the old times they were the terror of the large planters, for they carried on an illicit trade with the slaves, and had a very faint idea of the rights of property. No slave ever had a keener scent for a fat snot or knew the bearings of henrosts better than those very poor whites, who fringed the plantations, making a miserable border to what the planters themselves intended for a very attractive picture.

His wife is a woman whose hair has seldom known the luxury of a comb, and who has not probably, had water touch her skin all over since her wedding day. She is frowsy, dirty, uncleanly, tank and entirely homely, a homeliness bad enough in and of itself, but which is rendered still more hideous by her frightful habits. She is addicted to snuff-dipping, which is rubbing the gums of the teeth with snuff by the aid of a splintered stick, and she smokes the most muscular tobacco in a short, black pipe with even more relish than her husband. Clothes! Her entire wardrobe would be dear at a dollar, and she never hopes for a reinforcement. Stockings are a superfluity, and on the rare occasions when she does wear them they are full of holes and down at the heels—mere ghosts of stockings—shadows—as it were. She can swear somewhat, and be excessively pious at times; and, as for soiling, no woman on earth is her match.

The famed helmsman of Billingsgate would find fourteen more disdain than steeled in the middle-aged wives of the Tennessee poor whites.

There is another class which is neither poor white nor planter. It is the man who owns anywhere from one hundred to two hundred acres of ground, some of it good, though a part is always bad, who in the north would be called a farmer proper. His dwelling is something better than a cabin, though rather a poor apology for a house, and his surroundings are invariably slovenly. He has land enough to become rich if he knew how to work it, or rather if he would work it himself. He is not as a rule very much in debt, for his way of living is simple, and his expenses are not much; but he is so dependent upon others for everything that he does not get anything ahead and lives perpetually from hand to mouth. He chews tobacco with a vigor and earnestness that would make him rich were there any profit in tobacco chewing, and he loves to smoke as he does his life. He can smoke and chew at the same time, and as for whisky, that never comes amiss.

But he works just as little as possible, and all things in the way of dodging work are possible to him. He considers work as beneath him, and only does it when some dire necessity compels. He looks down upon the negro with much more disdain than the great planter ever did, and no man can talk more eloquently about labor than he.

I interviewed a regular specimen of this class, a man who might have been well-to-do if he had had a particle of thrift or industry. He was leaning against the wall of the plantation, chewing tobacco in a vacant sort of way, and killing flies with the juice as though that was the principal business of his life. He could kill a fly every time at thirteen feet, and was tolerably sure at fifteen, though sometimes at that distance he missed. At thirteen the fly was doomed. He found himself in a red sea of nicotine, drowned and poisoned at the same time.

"How are you getting on?"

"Poo'ly, poo'ly."

"What's the matter with you? The country appears to be good."

"Dah kentry's good enough, but wal kin a sile is good enough, but wal kin a sile do when he can't control labor?"

"How many acres have you?"

"Bout two hundred."

"Any boys?"

"Four grown up and two gahls."

"What do you want to control labor for? Aren't five full grown men enough for two hundred acres of land? Why don't you work the land yourself, and be independent of outside labor?"

"We work! We work! Str-a-anger, work is for niggabs. We can't work in this clim!"

Inasmuch as the pay for a "nigger" labor is somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty cents a day, the employer furnishing him with his pork and meal at his own price, and the keeping the books, it would seem that there would be some trouble in controlling labor. Very few people would make kindly to labor under these conditions.

Very like the one I conversed with on the Short Line road between Cincinnati and Louisville.

He was sitting on a rough bench under the overhanging porch of the regular crossroads grocery, also killing flies with tobacco juice. They attain wonderful proficiency in this style of marksmanship, for they have nothing else to do, and chewing tobacco is a great help to thought, which is why there are so many statesmen among them.

He was a tall, gaunt man, with sandy hair and a beard which had not known steel for many a day. He disdained a coat or vest, and his trousers were held to their place by a single suspender, home-made. The trousers did not require much support, for there was but little of them. They were of the material known as Kentucky jean, and had been originally lined with cotton, but the jean had been cut out just below the thigh, leaving the legs covered only by the cotton lining.

"How are the crops this season, looking?"

"Why is this?"

"The niggabs won't work stiddy, and the craps ain't taken care of."

"Why don't you take care of them?"

"Me?"

(This with an expression that was horrifying. In the meantime, a half-dozen flies had been deluged, the old gentleman keeping his eyes not on his interrogator, but on the flies that were sporting on the floor, little dreaming of the relentless fate that was pursuing them.)

"Excuse me, but why did you cut the woolen off the legs of your trousers?"

"They wuz too hot for this sorter weather."

"What will you do when it gets colder?"

"The Lord'll provide."

And another fly died the death.

It is well that this class of men have so implicit a faith in the Lord, for if He didn't care for them they would certainly starve.

A Happy Editor.

The newest and most novel method of conducting a newspaper has been introduced in Orizaba, Mexico, where a journal has been started that is to appear only when the editor finds it convenient and feels like preparing an issue.

There is something in this, and if its originator does not secure it by patent, all future papers will profit by it, for it opens a prospect which brightens the birth of but few infant sheets—long life.

A daily, weekly or monthly publication must be prompt in appearance; but an occasional paper, with the occasional few and far between, is just the acme of ideal journalism. If hard times, financial panic or other disaster bear hard upon the fortunes of this go-as-you-please editor, he can rest his brains between times, and always come out in flying colors. If he chokes him, he may be a whole self into himself. With no cry for "more copy," no blundering typos to bury, and no devil to torment him, who would not be a semi-occasional editor?

Hebrew Faith.

Mr. Charles Jacobi, of Baltimore, Md., a well-known citizen, had suffered for months with acute rheumatism in his ankle and foot. Finally he used St. Jacobs Oil, the great pain-killer, and was relieved by the first application.

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