

IN THE TENNESSEE HILLS.

A Month Among the Mysterious Tribe of Malungeons.

Living in a Land of Promise—Degraded Human Beings Whose Homes Are in a Country of Natural Wealth and Beauty—Huge Families Huddled to Huts with Earthen Floors and No Windows.

During a recent tour among the Malungeons, the mysterious mountain tribe whose origin has baffled research, I stayed at the cabin of one Gowens. The polite prefix Mr. or Mrs. is unknown in that region. A majority of the Malungeons live within five miles of Sneedville, the county seat of Hancock County, and their habitations are windowless log huts. The march of progress since the war has reached the Malungeons in the ability to raise tobacco. Otherwise they are as nearly savage as they were a quarter of a century ago. Their orchards are the wonder of the country round, and always have been. But the fruit, as fruit, goes no further than the still-houses.

They live upon corn bread and wild honey, coffee and tobacco. I chafe tobacco among their articles of food from the fact that all use it constantly, men, women and children.

Gowens' house, where I was guest, is a double log cabin with two rooms, without daubing or windows. There were eleven in Gowens' family, and the widower

and the shed, but the other rooms has a floor of oak logs with the bark still on them and laid side by side, just as they came from the forest. A bed of dry, last year's leaves was the only furnishing the room could boast.

The cooking and eating were done in the connecting shed, and a large coffee pot always occupied a low shelf just above the table, for Calloway, like most of the Malungeons, is a slave to coffee and drinks it instead of water throughout the day and night.



A MALUNGEON GRAY-PYRAMID.

Calloway himself is a king, a royal good fellow, who, seated upon a great stump that marks the site of a giant beech that grew precisely in the center of the site selected by the Indian for his shed, or ballway, would entertain me by the hour with his songs and banjo-pickings and stories of his grandfather.

The man's very instincts are Indian. He sleeps in leaves, indoors or out, as he feels inclined. He smokes almost unceasingly; so often, in fact, that his wife, Ann Calloway, finds it necessary to cultivate a "teibacy spot" for her "ole man ter smoke up."

They have fourteen children and grandchildren, but Calloway is especially fond of Dorcas, who, he declares, "shows the injun in her."

And truly she does, with her dark, swollen face, black hair and small eyes. Dorcas, however, is a true type of the Malungeon belle.

The district school was a most interesting place. The teacher, a full-blooded Malungeon,



A MALUNGEON BOARDING-HOUSE NEAR THEIR KEEHIT SPRING.

brother and his five children increased the number to seventeen. In one room were three beds—brown ticks filled with leaves—in another two, while a big white tick of new straw occupied the front porch. The porch was a rude platform of rattling planks.

was a curiosity. His learning was limited to a meager knowledge of Webster's old blue-back spelling book, the only volume used in this district. He was very nervous at my call, and was, moreover, determined not to begin lessons until we left. We were equally determined not to leave until he did begin. He sat upon the extreme end of a long bench and issued his orders in a voice calculated to wake the dead.

The Malungeon are very loyal to their dead, denying the usual food and clothing it necessary in order to provide fine tombs. They mourn departed friends and kinsmen for years.



DORCAS, A MALUNGEON BEAUTY.

Mrs. Gowens wore a garment, a shirt, that barely covered her brown knees. The waist was of dark cotton, copiously "plugged" with yellow domestic on either breast and across the shoulder blade. She was smoking a pipe, seated on the bare earth, with two brown babies pulling at her breast. She told me the family lived "mos'ly on fruit in apple time" and I considered did the other pigs squealing at the fence.

The Gowens family, however, live on Blackwater; the people of the ridge own neither cattle, dogs, pigs nor cats—nothing indeed that requires food and drink.

One old squaw was the mother of seventeen living children. The number ten is very popular in children, but the rule is not imperative, some mothers having as many as twenty-two.

A MALUNGEON BOARDING-HOUSE.

The Blackwater country abounds in excellent mineral springs, and of late years the people from the valley go thither to drink the water. There is only one boarding-house, a low one-and-a-half-story building, with one room front and one back, and a loft reached by a ladder.



THE GOWENS RESIDENCE IN BLACKWATER CREEK.

There is no window in the house, and lamps or candles have never been lighted in the place. The family sit in darkness after sundown, go to bed in darkness and rise in darkness. The proprietor is the father of twelve children, none of whom can read or write. The father, however, is very progressive and continually on the watch for the railroad that is coming "ter the Ridge."

He will first ask the traveler's name, as do all of the Malungeons, then:

"Wher f'm? Next, How old are yer? and then comes the all-important:

"Did yer hear an' thim' er ther railroad comin' up ther Ridge?"

The Malungeons are very like the negroes in the matter of worship. They believe very strongly in the efficacy of water in religion, it being their custom to immerse converts by three dips, first forward. They shout, sing, and in short are extremely full of noise and enthusiasm on "meet'n' day." On other days they steal, lie, drink, and are as idle and filthy as humanity can be.

I attended preaching at one of their churches in Big Sycamore Creek one cool day in August. The church was built of logs—no windows, but an



ALLOWAY COLLINS—MY GRAYBEARD IS A FULL-BLOODED CHEROKEE.

opening sawed at one end, through which the people came and went. There were no benches, but stout logs answered for seats.

The congregation was a collection of Malungeons, whites and negroes. The negro children are all the offspring of white or Malungeon mothers, for the races in Sycamore Swamp are exceedingly mixed as well as immoral.

The Malungeons do not use the "you uns" and "we us" of the Tennessee mountaineer.

ON THE RIDGE.

On the Ridge, the real stronghold of this peculiar people, life is a great deal harder than in the swamp or on Blackwater Creek. They live more like Indians than the dwellers in the valley, and are entirely content with their life. I visited several huts, spending a month among them, living on corn bread, honey and black, sugarless coffee.

They were as utter strangers the day I left as on the day I arrived among them.

Calloway Collins is an Indian if ever one set foot on Tennessee soil. He is very fond of his red skin, high cheek-bones and Indian-like appearance.

His cabin has two rooms, connected by a kind of shed. There are dirt floors in one room