

[Correspondence New York World]

## 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 in 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 Saunderville, 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-homes.

They live upon corn bread and wild honey, coffee and tobacco. I saw 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 door or windows. There were eleven in Gowen's family, and the widower

and the shed, but the other room 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 MALUNGEOON GRAVE-YARD.

Calloway himself is a king, a royal good fellow, who, seated upon a great stump that marks the spot of a giant beech that grew prettily in the center of the site selected by the Indian for his dwelling, or hall-way, 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 "terrible spot" for her "old man to smoke up."

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

And truly she does, with her dark, wollen 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 MALUNGEOON BOARDING-HOUSE NEAR THE HERMIT SPRINGS.

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 pine-bean

was a curiosity. His learning was limited to meager knowledge of Webster's old blue-back spelling book, the only volume used in that 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 intoned his orders in a voice calculated to wake the dead.

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



DORCAS, A MALUNGEOON BELLE.

Mrs. Gowens wore a garment, a skirt, that barely covered her brown knee. The waist was of dark cotton, coarsely "plugged" with yellow domestic on either breast and across the shoulder blade. She was smoking a pipe, nestled on the bare earth, while two brown babies pulled at her breast. She told me the family lived "mostly on fruit in apple time" but 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 MALUNGEOON 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 sunset, 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 "over the Ridge."

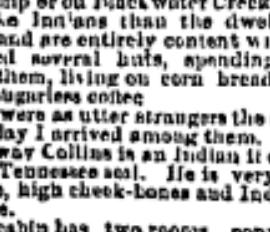
He will first ask the traveler's name, as do all of the Malungeons, then:

"Where I'm next, how old are you? and then comes the all-important:

"Did you hear on this' er the railroad comin' up the 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, face forward. They shout, sing, and in short are exuberant in 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 with no windows, but an



ALLOWAY COLLINS—MY GRANDDAD IS A FULL-BLOODED NEGRO.

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 us" and "we us" of the Tennessee mountaineer.

#### ON THE RIDGE.

On the Ridge, the real stronghold of this peculiar people, lies 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, sugared 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 doors in one room