

TEXT INSCRIBED BEDS.

A PECULIAR CUSTOM LONG PREVAIL IN NORWAY.

The Homes of the Peasants—Huge and Ancient Kitchens—Farm Folk of Fine Presence and Noble Tread—Inner Life of a Strange People.

London, Dec. 16. The interior of Norwegian peasant homes never present that warm, cheery, snug, restful and almost somnolent atmosphere of the Cumberland statesman's home, but it is still a place of simple comfort and plenty, and is often most characteristic and picturesque. If the ceilings be low, there is always plenty of room. I have come upon many a bonder's kitchen from twenty to thirty feet square, and houses in whose great living-rooms the whole family, and I mean by this the three or four families of each gaard or farm-house, with a goodly part of the neighborhood, could all be fed at a wedding or funeral supper, or engage in dancing, of which they are very fond, at one time without serious inconvenience to the assemblage.

These old kitchens are very ancient. Some are from 300 to 400 years old, and were the original and sole dwelling places of the founders of the family. Some have the remains of the central cone-shaped holes in the roof through which air and light once exclusively came, as is still found in some of the Scottish crofter huts of Lewis and Skye.

The living-room is a more pretentious apartment. Huge pine rafters stretch from wall to wall and their natural reddish tint is deepened by age to a rich hue of rose-wood. Often the windows have deep casements, with little diamond-shaped panes, and in summer time they are bright and winsome with plants and flowers. This room always has its wide high fire-place, and occasionally two of them on opposite sides of the room. In one corner, near the fire-place is a cupboard, wide, deep and extending from floor to ceiling, and it is not flaming with paint it will be covered with a profusion of carving, often in imitation of various articles of table-ware.

There are a number of shelves always laid on pegs or perched on grotesque carved brackets: and the stools and chairs are a curious collection of home hand-work. I have seen in many peasants' houses more than a score of chairs carved out of solid cross-sections of huge pine trees. The seat is hollowed deep and wide; the back is worked out thin and round with a fine oval top in which is cut a curved hole for the hand, in order to easily move the chair from place to place; wide well-fashioned and carved arm-rests are at each side; and the bottom of this curious piece of furniture is always worked out as true, thin and perfect as an inverted chopping-bowl or cauldron kettle.

Usually the heads of the household sleep in this comfortable living-room, and the bed will always be found in the long recess behind the angle of the stairs. In many instances the beds are simply bunks built against the wall; and in most of these the chief portion of the bed clothing observable will be skins of sheep, or of the reindeer, beautifully dressed and the hide itself cured as soft as loosely woven wool. In not a few of the more pretentious peasant homes the beds in these recesses are sufficiently wonderful for exhibition at world's fairs. They are big enough for giants to rest in, and are from four to five feet above the floor. Steps lead up to them, and the single corner-post and the side rail which shows, in addition to being carved or painted in the most fantastic manner, will be covered, along with the sides of the ascending steps, with painted texts and mottoes, while a gaily painted rude panel let down from the ceiling above the front of the bed bears in flaming letters the names of the bonder and his wife and the date of their marriage.

In the larger gards there will be a best room, but narrower, and if this is not possessed, the chamber above the large living-room bears the same relation to the Norwegian peasant home. It is in either case a sort of show room, where the possessions of the female members of the family are on exhibition, and a sort of huge family closet. Its furniture is always as rude and simple and of as primitive construction as that in other portions of the house, but it is more gaudily painted. Curious old pine bureaus and chiffoniers are here, marvelous in design and coloring, red, yellow, and blue paint predominating. These contain the family underwear and all the general drapery.

One always has painted upon it the maiden name of the housewife, and the date of her marriage, forming a sort of permanent marriage certificate; and undoubtedly in this, packed carefully away in aromatic leaves and bits of ancient finery, will be found that most glorious bauble to eyes and heart of all Norwegian women, the huge bridal-crown of hand-wrought silver or gilt. I have been shown some which were said to be over 600 years old, and no doubt there are hundreds of these huge and gaudy relics in Norway which have descended in unbroken line from mother to daughter since the days of Olaf the Saint and Hakon the Good.

If this room be the chamber, all around the wall will be ranged a curious collection of little pine trunks or chests. Some are elaborately carved, and all are gaudily

painted. When a daughter of the house passes from girlhood to maidenhood she is given one of these chests. Her name is painted or carved upon it; and from this moment the highest ambition of her life aside from honorable marriage is the filling of this chest with bedding, underwear, trinkets, silver ornaments and gowns, so that by the time she is betrothed she can make a fine showing of accumulated knick-knacks and necessary articles to her lover and her envious companions; and there is no sacrifice she will not make or drudgery she will not cheerfully undertake to worthily accomplish this object.

If this room be the chamber still, numbers of bunks are built against the opposite wall. Depending from ropes strung across the ceiling are rows of dresses. Many are woefully plain, but here and there are glints of tinsel and gimp, bits of wonderful coloring in grotesque embroidery and flashings of silver buttons, clasps and brooches. Along the walls here and there are hung curious embroideries, chiefly in wool. Plainly some are scarfs and wrappings, others seem to be patterns for bodices or best aprons; but most of them simply express the Norwegian peasant woman's ambition to provide unmistakable evidences of her skill with the needle. Brighter than all these, however, are the flowers which fill the windows of every Norwegian home. Huge luchsias and gorgeous geraniums are most common; and these with the wonderful luxuriance of the wild mountain flora almost bring to Norway in summer the seeming of the order and bloom of wanton tropic lands.

The inbred sturdiness and independence of character of all Norwegian peasants are best illustrated in the simple yet skilfully made belongings of these hamlet homes. Their handicraft is wonderful. The timber for their homes has been felled and fashioned by themselves. Every structure in the country—farmhouse, storhaus, dairy, bake-house, barn, smithy, shed and bell tower, is built by the peasant himself. Every article of furniture he possesses has been wrought by his own hand. He beats out his cutlery on his own anvil, and carves its handles. All the utensils of the dairy—cheese-molds, tubs, ferkins, bowls, churns, milking-pails, and presses, are of wood and of home manufacture. Yokes for the saeter-girl's necks, baskets, saddles, harness, snow-ploughs, and even comfortable stoll-carts and sledges are all made in the little family workshop during the long winter months.

The peasant tans hides for the family supply of boots and shoes, and makes all the latter by his own fireplace. Nearly every article of clothing is made on the premises by the housewife and her daughters. The wool is carded and spun at home, the stockings, blouses and scarfs are knit at home, and the woolen cloth for the family clothing is woven in the chamber, the "best-room," or in the huge old kitchens. Even the buttons of wood, of horn or even of brass or silver are products of home-craft, and are often beautifully carved. In scores of peasants' homes where I have tarried the eye could not discover a single article of utility or ornament, save the glass in the windows, the oil lamps, the sparse supply of crockery and the huge clock reaching from floor to ceiling, which was not completely a product of Norwegian peasant ingenuity and skill.

The Norwegian peasant is equally independent of the rest of the world in all the food necessities of life. His chief articles of food are supplied by his own herds. Milk, butter, cream, and cheese are found in startling quantities in the lowliest peasant's home. One or two cows are kept at the farm-house for summer use. The remainder of the herd are at the mountain saeters, from which comes an endless procession of mountaineers and saeter-girls, often accompanied by sore-footed ponies, all laden with huge panniers of butter and cheese or flasks of sour milk and whey. The butter and cheese are constantly being conveyed to the fard-side markets, or are stored against the winter's needs; while the sour milk is used for food and the whey aids materially in fattening the swine. There are thus always animals for killing, the flesh usually being dried.

The every day food of these sturdy Norwegian folk consist largely of "groed," a sort of thick gruel or stirabout of oat meal or barley meal or both, of milk fresh, sour, or curdled or boiled, of cheese, or of which there are several varieties powerful in resistance, odor and sustaining qualities, and brown and black bread. The great and universal staple, however, is "fladbrod," or flatbread. It is very light and sustenance of these folk as was the bannock once to the Scottish peasantry. Every peasant's house has not merely a pile of it to draw upon, but often whole casks filled with the hearty, wholesome food. It is simply a dough of barley and oatmeal, unfermented and containing a little salt, rolled to the thinness of waters of great circumference and baked upon an iron plate, like a large griddle over a "slow" fire.

If the ordinary housewife in other countries regards the family bread-baking as a little task, she would quail before the stint of providing the required supply of "fladbrod" at a Norwegian bonder's gaard. It is about one strong woman's task, to judge by the immense quantities consumed. And I never entered a cottage or gaard without discovering a grandmother, mother or daughter, crouching before the coals or hovering over some huge stove ornamented with quaint Pompeian figures, dexterously flipping with her thin ladle-like stick the dough upon the steaming iron plate, or as cunningly landing the savory disk, without breaking, upon the ever diminishing, ever increasing pile within the "fladbrod" keg.

Haymaking furnishes both the most picturesque and the most suggestive scenes in Norway. The women are constantly in the fields, picturesque in their short skirts, bright bodices and white caps; and men, women and children are all in a sort of wild frenzy in their efforts to save the precious

crop. It is cut with short scythes and sides, and the prized tufts are even secured with the "tolkniv," which every peasant carries, and with shears from every cove-edge or cleft among the savage rocks. The entire crop is cured upon racks or hurdles, and never left upon the ground for drying; and from almost inaccessible places above the farms, the tiny bundles which may be secured among the crags are conveyed to the valleys below on wire runways or tightly stretched ropes. The saeter girls, too, are not idle meanwhile in husbanding fodder for the herds. They are gathering every possible blade of grass, breaking from the birch-trees the tenderest buds and branches, and securing great stacks of reindeer moss. When the terrible winter storms have packed the ice and snow into the chasms and crevices like stone, the peasants in their snow-shoes ascend the heights to the saeters and add this excellent fodder to their store within the sheds and barns.

The religious, social and homelike life of these simple and primitive people could almost be revealed in three simple sentences. They are hereditarily pious and reverent to all sacred things and traditions. Social intercourse finds its chief fruition in christenings, confirmations, weddings and funerals. And the calmness and serenity which seem to characterize the faces of all Norwegian peasants you will meet in homes, seem to assist tell the whole grand national story of that blessed domestic repose which broods where labor thrives, where independence has grown through the centuries into a part of a people's religion, and where false ambitions are almost unknown.

For eight years my wanderings have led me into all civilized lands. The tenderest days and ways have been among their lowly folk. Whether beside the sea among the huts of fishermen, in the city's stifling quarters, with the foresters of the mountains or the cottagers of the valleys, if in a vagrant Gipsy tent, or still if alone in dreary untrodden paths, there has ever been near me the kindly human voice, the helpful human hand and the tender human heart of some one from among those toiling unregarded millions on whose simple, earnest natures and steadfast loyal lives our whole world rests. Among all of these I have nowhere found a folk who must go with me in heart-picture and memory, into that measureless land of Romance wherein my way now leads, with finer and nobler presence and tread than my lowly peasant friends of stern yet glorious "Gamle Norge."

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

AN AUCTIONEER'S STORY.

MUCH EXPOSURE BROUGHT ON A SEVERE ATTACK OF RHEUMATISM.

Bed-Fast For Weeks at a Time—His Trouble Aggravated by an Outbreak of Salt-Rheum—An Experience of Interest to Others.

(From the St. John Sun.)

There are few people in Simcoe County who do not know Mr. Thos. Furlong. For twenty-eight years Mr. Furlong has been a resident of the county, and for twenty-two years has been a travelling agent and an auctioneer, and it is safe to say that he is just as popular as he is well known. In a business of this kind Mr. Furlong is naturally exposed to all kinds of weather, and the result has been that for some years past he has been badly crippled with rheumatism and has suffered great pain and inconvenience. Happily, however, Mr. Furlong has found a release from this suffering, and his recovery has excited so much interest in and about Stavner that "The Sun" during the last week has been the chronicler of his cure and give them for the benefit of others. When seen with regard to the matter, Mr. Furlong expressed the greatest willingness to make public the particulars of his cure in the belief that it might be of benefit to some other sufferer.

"You are of course aware," Mr. Furlong, "that my calling subjects me to more or less inclement weather, and this was the main cause of my suffering. Some nine years ago I first felt the symptoms of rheumatism. I did not pay much attention to it at first, but gradually it became so severe that it was with difficulty that I could hobble around, and my business really became a burden to me. I consulted several physicians who did all they could for me, but without giving me any relief. During a part of the year I was bed-fast for weeks at a time, and I tried the remedies I tried did me no good I began to believe that there was no cure for me, and you will readily understand how despondent I was. To add to my distress I became afflicted with salt-rheum of the hands, and had to keep my hands covered with cloths from one year's end to the other. I had read of some remarkable cures of rheumatism by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, and at last I made up my mind to try them, though I must admit that it was with a doubting heart, for I had spent a great deal of money for other medicines without obtaining any benefit. However, they say that a drowning man will clutch at a straw, and it was with much of this feeling that I purchased the first box of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Before that box was all gone I experienced some relief which warranted me in continuing the treatment, and from that time I steadily progressed toward complete recovery.

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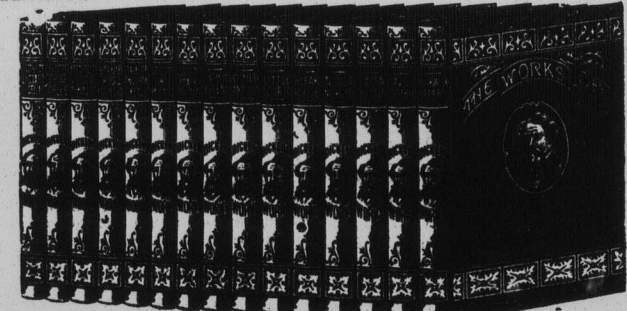
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