

A QUEER RELIGIOUS SECT.

PECULIARITIES AND VIRTUES OF THE SHERMANITES.

Their Origin Unknown.—Other Sects Heathen.

The other day a rough-looking countryman walked into a general supply store in Birmingham, Ala., and stated to the proprietor that he wanted to purchase \$100 worth of goods on credit.

The man wore his hair long like a woman, and his beard reached almost to his waist. His clothes were all made at home; they were ill-fitting and of the cheapest material, and altogether he was a strange specimen of humanity.

"What is your name?" asked the merchant, when the man stated his business.

"John Smith," answered the countryman.

"When can you pay for the goods?"

"I'll pay you in November, when I sell my cotton crop."

"All right, Mr. Smith; you can have the goods."

The goods were soon loaded on Smith's wagon, and he drove away without giving the merchant a note or any kind of security.

"Do you know the man?" I asked.

"Never saw him before."

"Will he pay you for those goods?"

"Certainly."

"Because he is a Shermanite. He is a member of a remarkable religious society, and if he failed to pay a debt he would be expelled from his church and driven from the community in which he lives, in disgrace. I may not see or hear of him again until next November, but if he is living he will come and pay me every cent he owes me."

The Shermanites all wear their hair long like this one, and they are easily recognized anywhere."

In Lead's valley, in the northwestern part of this country, there is a colony of Shermanites.

There are about 100 families, and a happier, more contented people could not be found in the world. Their religious rites and ceremonies are peculiar.

They founded the society none of them seems to know, but it is very old, as the fathers and grandfathers of the present generation were Shermanites.

They claim to follow the teachings of the New Testament in spirit and letter and they believe that only Shermanites will enter the kingdom of heaven.

They have churches and preachers, and worship in a manner similar to many other religious sects. One of their peculiar rites is the washing of feet. A footwashing service is held once every month, at which the preacher washes the feet of every member of the church. The members then in turn wash the feet of the preacher and of each other. The service usually lasts all day, being interspersed with singing and praying.

Members of all other religions denominations they regard as heathen, and send missionaries among them instead of sending them to foreign lands. Shermanites never cut their hair or beard, claiming that Christ never patronized barber shops. In every home may be found ancient wood carvings representing Christ and His Apostles as wearing long hair and beard. A Shermanite who falls from grace is lost for ever, and he must always live up to certain moral and business rules, which are very rigid. To pay all debts is a part of their religion. No man can be saved, they say, who does not pay his neighbor what he owes him. They are an industrious people; industry is a part of their creed.

The Shermanites are all small farmers, but most of them own their farm and some stock. Many of them are compelled to purchase a few supplies in this city every summer, for which they are unable to pay cash. Where their peculiar religion is known they have no trouble in obtaining all the credit they want. They give no notes or securities of any kind, but merchants who have done business with them for years have never lost a dollar due from a Shermanite customer. Their preachers accept no pay for preaching the Gospel, working on their farms during the week as hard as any member of the church. Divorce is something unknown among these people, and the women are all virtuous. Drunkenness is another vice unknown among these people, as they follow to the letter the advice of the Apostle, who said, "Be temperate in all things." Their homes are models of neatness and comfort, and the stranger is always welcome within their gates. It would be almost an insult to tender them payment for food, lodging, or any other favor shown a stranger. The Shermanites make few converts to their peculiar religion, but they lose no members, and seem happy and contented by holding their own.

One remarkable thing about them is that they will have nothing to do with courts and lawyers. A lawsuit in which a Shermanite was plaintiff can not be found on the court records of this country. They never seek legal advice unless it is actually necessary, and their differences are settled by arbitration, mutual friends being the arbitrators, and the civil courts are never under any circumstances resorted to. They seek in every way possible to avoid jury duty or being summoned as witnesses in any cases. They take no part in politics, and a Shermanite was never known to hold an office of any kind. Some of them vote at every election, but they have no campaign clubs in their community, and every man is allowed to vote as he pleases. Many of them never vote at all.

The first settlers of this Shermanite colony came to Alabama from South

THE HOUSEHOLD.

"WEDDING 'AT HOMES' FOR PEOPLE OF SMALL INCOMES."

BY C. E. C. WIGGALL.

Now that fashionable weddings so seldom take place in the morning, the expense and difficulties of a smart wedding-breakfast are quite dispensed with, and simple, and unadorned champagne are quite a thing of the past, or at least quite unnecessary.

I am not writing for people who think that a cup of milk, or tea, or worse than indifferent lukewarm coffee, and a wedge of bridecake, or a flake of bread-and-butter, are quite enough to honor even the friends who drive in from a distance to see "Milly" or "dear 'George' married!

Not surely if at any time honor should be done to the dear son or daughter, and the resources of the household taxed to the utmost, it is at this, the wedding time. And besides this, the father and mother of the bride are naturally anxious to make the best of themselves and their belongings before the members of the other family that is to be so closely united with them.

We will suppose, then, that the wedding is to take place in the country—in a vicarage or other house containing over a dozen rooms of average size on the ground floor.

The greater part of the furniture should be removed from the study and dining room, and the chairs and tables from the smaller room into the "present abode," and the larger one into a reception room for the guests, with a few chairs and tables around the walls, but no tables or knock-knacks as traps for the unwary left in the room.

If it is a summer wedding, I should remove flower and fire-irons, and fill in the hearthstone with a layer of dried moss—to be bought in penny packets. And upon the mantel, or rather in it, stand small cups and jars full of scarlet poppies, purple irises, or tall white dog-daisies, and disguise the whole with a few sprigs of ferns, and a few fire-plugs with tall fronds of bracken. Hang a few pictures, or a few pieces of artistic arrangement to the room at once.

Arrange the presents on a table in the center of the small room as prettily as possible, with the giver's name on each one, as, unless you have a garden, the only amusement you can offer your guests that of looking at the wedding gifts. Of course, if you are blessed with a garden, have tennis and archery going, or croquet for the elders and tennis for the younger members of the party.

Supposing the wedding to take place at two o'clock, the guests must all go straight to the church, and the house-party, bridegroom, and relations, driven there also, the bridesmaids taking their stand in the church porch to await the coming of the bride and the groom who is to give her away.

But as this paper does not concern the wedding, but merely the "At Home" afterwards, we will imagine the return of the bride and groom, and the bridegroom driving there also, the bridesmaids taking their stand in the church porch to await the coming of the bride and the groom who is to give her away.

Many of us who pride ourselves on our good manners are singularly blind as to what is due to the guests who are visiting people unknown to us, or who are entertaining guests whom we have never met before, or are more assured as to some of the points of etiquette toward our own guests and to our own hosts when we make an occasional fitting return from home.

It is a well-known fact, and one that is saying that the best manners in all cases are those which hurt no one. This is true as a general law, but there are some points where we must be hurt another, and which yet may be settled one for all by a few rules.

If you have an acquaintance who is entertaining friends, and who wishes you to meet, it is your duty to call promptly, and if possible offer some hospitable gift to both guests and hosts.

If the party is a reversal, and your friend is visiting people unknown to you, never go to see your friend without leaving a card for the hostess. If you give an entertaining party, and your friend, be very sure to invite her hosts also. It does not follow that your invitation will be accepted, but if it is, the hostess must be treated as the guest of honor and shown every deference. If, for instance, the entertainment is a luncheon for young ladies, she may be asked to take the seat at the end of the table opposite to your own.

If the mutual friend is your guest, you may be sure that, if she is a woman of good-breeding, she, in turn, will have no objection to your doing so, and you may think best to decline it and insist upon her going alone. Nor will she receive you at home, and you may think best to decline it and insist upon her going alone.

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