

PAY-DAY IS PLAY DAY AT THIS COLORFUL TURPENTINE CAMP

Once a Month at Bear Creek Camp, Jazz and
Moonshine Reign Supreme

Below is a true and vivid picture of conditions in a typical Southern turpentine camp. The workmen in these camps have their own unique and interesting code of life. This article was prepared exclusively for the Illustrated Feature Section.



"Brownskin," the pretty belle of Bear Creek Camp.

By EYE G. BILLINGS

LUCY Price, Slim Price's lady friend, hummed a wanton tune at her house. In some mysterious manner such unrestrained tunes spread from house to house at a turpentine camp though no two persons sing the same words.

"Does Slim Price lose all his money playing skin? Then I'm roamin' with Ginger Linn," chanted Lucy.

It was early in the morning of pay day at Bear Creek camp. The women folks had all washed the family clothing the day before at the public washing stand and everything was set for the big monthly blowout.

Pay day comes but once a month—the first Saturday of the month, the usual turpentine camp pay day, and as there is no money between times it is anticipated with much eagerness. No one person has much money due on this joyous day, but from nine to twelve hundred dollars will be released at Bear Creek camp which works about 200 men.

Nine, ten, eleven or twelve hundred dollars will be quite effective toward jazzing up the celebration for a day or two, for this is as long as it lasts. It is a sort of community-interest day, as everybody falls into the jazz spell, the moonshine parties, elaborate repasts, and heartily enjoys the general picnic.

Bear Creek camp, like all other turpentine towns, has a commissary operated by the owner of the still,

and the laborers, all of whom are colored except the main boss and the foreman, are given trade checks or the commissary. This camp store handles groceries, overalls, shirts, and other vital necessities and the tickets are punched as things are bought. On pay day the balance due is paid in cash. Goods are not cheap at the commissary—not on your old-fashioned tintage—and a man and woman with several children have to shave under the hide if they have any coin due on pay day.

Naturally not very much cash can be expected, as the wages of ordinary labor is \$1.25 a day, or once in a while during extra-good times, \$1.50. This is the price paid gum chippers, tree tappers and other common labor. Experienced still helpers and teamsters sometimes draw two and a half or three dollars a day. Their number is limited.

It is no wonder, therefore, that pay day is the bright spot of the month—the family pot and frying pan are even helped by a garden. The land of the pine woods is sterile, white sand from the top of the ground to the strata of limestone rock underneath—that is why

it was never cleared into farms. There are no gardens at Bear Creek camp.

Bear Creek and other turpentine camps are not collections of tents as might be inferred—the living quarters are dilapidated, ramshackle box houses furnished by the owner of the camp.

The last wages were paid about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. While it was going on white sick-and-accident insurance agents, and other small-time installment collectors, hung around with the tenacity of fleas in sheepskins so they would not miss their doles. A brown-skinned girl who sold cosmetics—stuff for straightening hair, lipsticks, rouge, cold creams and perfumes was on the job. She had been visiting the camp on pay day for some time. The men folks called her "Brownskin."

In the afternoon parties of men and women, boys and girls, went to town in trucks in use at the camp and those who owned automobiles, which were old and rattly, drove themselves to town. All returned by dark.

When the crowd came back, powerful "shine" came back with it. It was made from either corn or joint-cane syrup, or joint-cane syrup skimmings, and had a kick like a Missouri mule charged with lightning. Everybody took a healthy drink. There might have been an

Murderous "Skin" and Crisscross Love Affairs
Play Havoc with Community Morals.

other clamors could be heard all round. The women were dressed in their best clothes and rushed proudly from house to house to exhibit them. All painted and powdered and lipsticked. Even the old women had their faces covered with rouge, and frolicked around like 16-year-olds, trying to vamp the men in order to wheedle them out of some of their pay day money.

Lucy Price flirted openly with Ginger Linn while Slim Price flirted, though not quite so openly, with "Brownskin." Slim feared his wife's keen-cutting butcher knife. Other men and women baited each other in the same manner. Old man Trouble stayed away, too, at least in the early part of the evening.

Bear Creek camp has no jook house—dance hall and gambling dive—but the crowd always finds a floo where it can dance to the tunes made by Henry Robinson's fiddle and Sam Markham's banjo. The evening was brightened till more by a wedding—Buck Middleton, the boss of the camp, married Bud Phillips and Sookie Keen by reading a few paragraphs from the Saturday Evening Post. No license was necessary. The crowd whooped and laughed, but gave no special indications that anything unusual in the wedding ceremony was noticed.

"Skin"

The big feature of pay day at Bear Creek, as at other camps, for the men is "skin," a game of cards eminently suited to men who believe in jo-mo men and other forms of voodoo manifestation. There is



Slim Price, a favorite with the ladies, and a master of the strange game of "skin."



Cleanin' up for the monthly pay-day frolic.

exception or two but it is doubtful—no enumerator would have worn out the point of his fountain pen tallying the number.

By 8 o'clock, therefore, everybody was in the seventh heaven of delight—they were at least as high as the tree-tops and were eagles instead of mud-puddle ducks. Whooping, shouting, singing and

no science in the game whatever, except that it affords card sharps a first-class chance to "skin" the other players.

The game of "skin" stopped the dance and the women drifted together in groups to laugh, talk and chew tobacco. The game was started by Ginger Linn issuing a challenge, "Who faces me in a game of

skin?" Slim Price answered, "I take you up!"

Ginger had only been at the camp for two or three weeks and had several dollars won "skinning" at another camp before coming to Bear Creek and Slim had money won in the same way at a nearby town a few nights before. Lucy was en-

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In a place where women chew tobacco and chant, "Bring me a drink of red hot shine out of the bottle of dat ole man o' mine," anything is liable to happen. And anything does happen in this graphic account of a monthly pleasure-mad festival.