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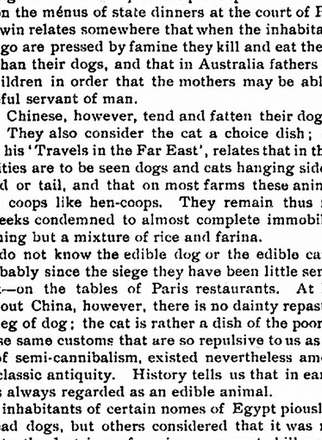
THE DOG AS AN ARTICLE OF FOOD

THE following paper on the dog as an article of food in general, and on the Chinese edible dog in particular, is contributed to *La Nature* (Paris, July 24) by M. Paul Mégnin, who tells us, among other things, that the hairless dog commonly supposed to be the one that figures in Chinese banquets is not the species ordinarily eaten in the Flowery Kingdom. Says M. Mégnin:

"'The more we know of men, the more we like dogs,' writes misanthropically that great friend of animals, A. Toussenel.

"Perhaps it is because the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire do not know man sufficiently well that they still regard the dog



THE CHOW-CHOW, OR EDIBLE DOG OF CHINA.

as an edible animal, and as one of the most savory of morsels. But it is to be hoped that in the progress of civilization a day will come when these brave animals—'candidates for humanity,' according to Michelet's picturesque expression—will no longer figure on the ménus of state dinners at the court of Peking.

"Darwin relates somewhere that when the inhabitants of Terra del Fuego are pressed by famine they kill and eat their old women rather than their dogs, and that in Australia fathers will sacrifice their children in order that the mothers may be able to nourish this useful servant of man.

"The Chinese, however, tend and fatten their dogs carefully—to eat. They also consider the cat a choice dish; the Abbé Le Noir, in his 'Travels in the Far East', relates that in the markets of many cities are to be seen dogs and cats hanging side by side, by the head or tail, and that on most farms these animals are kept in little coops like hen-coops. They remain thus from two to three weeks condemned to almost complete immobility, and are fed nothing but a mixture of rice and farina.

"We do not know the edible dog or the edible cat in France, and probably since the siege they have been little served—openly at least—on the tables of Paris restaurants. At Peking, and throughout China, however, there is no dainty repast without its filet or leg of dog; the cat is rather a dish of the poorer classes.

"These same customs that are so repulsive to us as to seem like a kind of semi-cannibalism, existed nevertheless among the peoples of classic antiquity. History tells us that in early times the dog was always regarded as an edible animal.

"The inhabitants of certain nomes of Egypt piously embalmed their dead dogs, but others considered that it was more in conformity to the doctrines of a wise economy to kill and eat them. Plutarch tells us that the dwellers in Cynopolis, where dogs were honored as divine, made war on the Oxyrinchis, who had committed the sacrilege of eating dogs. In his book on Diet, Hippocrates, speaking of common articles of food, is of the opinion that the flesh of the dog gives heat and strength, but is difficult of digestion. . . .

"'Our fathers,' says Pliny, 'regarded small dogs as so pure a food that they used them as expiatory victims. . . . Even to-day young dogs' flesh is served at feasts held in honor of the gods.' And further on: 'This meat was used in the installation feast of the pontiffs.' According to Apicius, who has left us a curious treatise 'On Cookery,' the Romans ate also adult dogs. . . .

"The savages of North America, for lack of provisions, often sacrifice their companions of the chase. . . . We are told that before the introduction of cattle the Spaniards in Mexico used the native dogs so freely as food that the species has now completely disappeared. According to Captain Cook, the natives of New Zealand ate their dogs and clothed themselves in the skins. Forster adds: 'They love the flesh passionately, and prefer it to that of the pig.' The Greenlanders and the Kamchatkans also sometimes eat their dogs, but only when reduced to this cruel extremity by famine.

"In Africa dogs form the food of certain negro tribes; in the Ashantee country the flesh is eaten both fresh and dried. And it appears that in the Lower Kongo region, among the Batékés, there is a custom that must make every friend of dumb beasts rage with indignation—before killing a dog for food, it is maltreated and tortured, to make the flesh more tender. . . .

"Among the Chinese the dog is yet regarded as an ordinary article of food, even an epicure's delicacy.

"Their *chow-chow*, or edible dog, resembles the Pomeranian dog. It has a large forehead, rather pointed muzzle; . . . the ear is short, erect, and directed forward; the eyes are small and black, the body short and stout. . . . Two varieties of coat are distinguished; one with long hair (the animal with this is regarded as the greatest delicacy), the other with short hair.

"There are three varieties of color: some are bright red all over, which is the aristocratic variety; others are of a dark tawny color with black muzzle, and finally there is the light tawny chow-chow with light muzzle; this is the most common. The general character of this race is to have bluish-black tongue and lips; this color is acquired; when the dog is young the tongue is red and it grows dark slowly in the course of two or three weeks; very rarely the tongue is dark at birth. The chow-chow is rare in France; there are only two or three specimens of it. . . . A few months ago the Zoological Gardens received as a gift a family of long-haired chow-chows and one of short-haired Laos—also an edible species. In England, the Prince of Wales . . . has three pairs of Chinese dogs of this species in his kennels at Sandringham.

"It is commonly believed that the edible dog of China is the quite common species whose purplish skin is entirely without hair except near the head; but the hairless dogs of China—so-called improperly, since they are found in Asiatic Turkey—are so because subject to a disease that is sometimes hereditary.

"As to the manner of preparing the dog for the table, it is quite similar to that which we employ for sucking-pig. In China, there is no great feast, no official banquet, without a chow-chow as *pièce de résistance*, prepared in the most scientific manner."
—*Translated for* THE LITERARY DIGEST.

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