

Old Southwest Humor from the *St. Louis Reveille*,
1844–1850

OLD SOUTHWEST
HUMOR
FROM THE
ST. LOUIS



REVEILLE,
1844-1850

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
FRITZ OEHLSCHLAEGER

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For My Parents

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Old Southwest Humor from the *St. Louis Reveille*,
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INTRODUCTION

On June 1, 1844, New York's *Spirit of the Times* devoted column one of its first page to welcoming the birth of a "capital new daily journal," which had "just made its appearance in the beautiful city of St. Louis" under the rather "bizarre and fanciful name" of the *Reveille*. The author of the column, undoubtedly the *Spirit's* editor, William Trotter Porter, complimented the founders of the new paper—his old friends Charles Keemle, Joseph M. Field, and Matthew C. Field—as "a trio comprising an infinite degree of enterprise, tact, genius, and good feeling." Porter promised his own readers that he would "keep them advised of any fluctuation in the state of the literary market of St. Louis, by frequent extracts."¹ During the years in which the *Reveille* appeared, from 1844 to 1850, Porter made good on the promise, reprinting more material from the St. Louis paper than from any other in the country, with the possible exception of the *New Orleans Picayune*.

William T. Porter has himself become known to students of American literature as something like the genius loci, if not quite the founder, of the humor of the Old Southwest, that area in the early nineteenth century corresponding roughly to the states of Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri.² Begun in 1831 as a sporting journal, the *Spirit of the Times* evolved into a major outlet for writing by hundreds of correspondents from the southern and western frontier, most of them writing pseudonymously under such fanciful titles as "The Turkey Runner," "Sugartail," "Yazoo," and "The Man in the Swamp." Among Porter's correspondents were many of the most important creators in this genre, including George Washington Harris, Johnson Jones Hooper, Henry Clay Lewis, Col. C. F. M. Noland, Thomas Bangs Thorpe, Joseph M. Field, John S. Robb, and Sol Smith—the last three of whom were also prominently associated with the *Reveille*. Porter encouraged his correspondents, helped

1. *Spirit of the Times*, June 1, 1844, 1.

2. The standard work on Porter and the *Spirit* is Norris W. Yates's excellent *William T. Porter and the Spirit of the Times* (1957; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977).

several of them to secure book publication for collections of their stories, and partially defined the new school of humor himself through two anthologies that he edited, *The Big Bear of Arkansas* (1845) and *A Quarter Race in Kentucky* (1847). In the preface to the former volume, Porter proudly proclaimed that “a new vein of literature, as original as it is inexhaustible in its source, has been opened in this country.”³ The Big Bear school of humor did not prove inexhaustible; the Civil War brought it to an end, though it did continue to influence such writers as Mark Twain and William Faulkner. But Porter’s claim that the humor of the Old Southwest represented something decidedly new and original in American literature is one that no one today would seriously doubt, especially in light of the steady, if not spectacular, rediscovery of this material that has taken place since the 1930s, stimulated by the pioneering work of Franklin J. Meine and Walter Blair.⁴

Porter’s column of welcome to the *Reveille* thus marks a significant moment in American literary history, one in which the guiding spirit of Southwest humor recognized a new enterprise that would itself become a major outlet for frontier humor. The *Daily Reveille* first appeared on May 14, 1844, and from the start the paper had a humorous cast. To explain how the paper had gotten its unusual name, the first number included an amusing account of the great labors in lexicography that the editors had gone through in searching for a title. Finally they “resolved themselves

3. *The Big Bear of Arkansas and Other Sketches, Illustrative of Characters and Incidents in the South and South-West* (1845; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1973), vii.

4. Serious scholarly study of Old Southwest humor dates from Meine’s *Tall Tales of the Southwest: An Anthology of Southern and Southwestern Humor, 1830-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930) and Blair’s *Native American Humor* (New York: American Book Company, 1937). Also important in that decade were Constance Rourke’s *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931) and Bernard DeVoto’s *Mark Twain’s America* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932). In the years since these pioneering works, scholars have produced a steady, if small, stream of scholarly editions, biographies, and critical studies. For a valuable bibliography of these, see Charles E. Davis and Martha B. Hudson, “Humor of the Old Southwest: A Checklist of Criticism,” in *The Frontier Humorists: Critical Views*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975), 303-23. Additionally, more recent bibliography can be found in the annual checklist of writings about Southern literature in the spring number of the *Mississippi Quarterly*.

into a state of despair, and *The Reveille* being pronounced, unan-
imously the very worst name of the lot, it was, without further
delay, adopted as their title."⁵ On July 15, 1844, the first issue of the
Weekly Reveille appeared, at a price of three dollars annually (five
dollars for the *Daily*). Perhaps inspired by the example of the *Spirit*
of the *Times*, the editors of the *Reveille* announced in this issue that
they would maintain a neutral stance in politics:

None need look to find us philosophical, aristocrat-
ical, agricultural, horticultural, democratical, mechan-
ical, political, polemical, critical, quizzical or anything
else in particular, though the probability is that we
shall be a little of each in general, and a good deal of
one or the other on occasion.⁶

The *Daily*, which began as a four-page folio sheet, was pub-
lished six days a week, including Sundays, a policy which at first
occasioned some criticism from the local churches. The *Weekly*
featured consecutively dated columns of news, gossip, and liter-
ary fare reprinted from its daily parent. Undoubtedly, as Nicholas
Joost has suggested, a major reason for the publication of a
weekly "was the convenience with which a weekly packet of
news, gossip, verse, and light fiction could be mailed to outlying
areas and frontier settlements, especially by river steamer."⁷ As
was appropriate for a paper in St. Louis, the rapidly growing
gateway to the West, the *Reveille* saw itself both as an agent of
culture in the West and as a source of information about the West
for the rest of the country. Its "Prospectus" declared the purpose
of "paying special attention to all matters connected with the
interests of the glorious West" and concluded by affirming that
"the march of empire, with us, is the march of intelligence, which
embraces in its train as well the arts that amuse as those which
refine; and while that march is onward, be it ours to beat the

5. *Daily Reveille*, May 14, 1844, 1.

6. *Weekly Reveille*, July 15, 1844, 1.

7. "Reveille in the West: Western Travelers in the St. Louis *Weekly Reveille*, 1844-1850," in
Travelers on the Western Frontier, ed. John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illi-
nois Press, 1970), 203.

'Reveille.'"⁸ While the *Reveille* probably never had anything like the subscription list of forty thousand that Porter claimed for the *Spirit* in 1856,⁹ it did have a national circulation, with agents in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Memphis, and Mobile.

Of the many men associated with the *Reveille*, five stand out as those most important to its history and especially to its status as a major source for the humor of the Old Southwest. These are its founders and first editors Charles Keemle, Matthew C. Field, and Joseph M. Field, and two of its major contributors of humor, Solomon Franklin Smith and John S. Robb. The history of the *Reveille* is very largely the history of these men, all of whom deserve to be better known in American literary history than they are at present. It is with the hope of making them better known, especially for their roles in the development of Old Southwest humor, that I offer the following sketches.

Of the founders of the *Reveille*, Keemle was the most experienced newspaperman and apparently the originator of the idea for the paper. Born in 1800 in Philadelphia, Keemle moved as a child to Norfolk, where he served for several years as an apprentice with the *Norfolk Herald*. In his later teens, Keemle headed west, "walking all the way from Baltimore to Pittsburgh" and then moving on to Indiana, where he spent a year editing the *Indiana Sentinel* in Vincennes. In 1817 Keemle again moved west, this time to St. Louis, where he spent several years working on the *Enquirer*.¹⁰

Keemle's life took a turn in 1820 when he temporarily left the newspaper business to become a clerk for the Missouri Fur Company, whose guiding force was the mountain man Joshua Pilcher. During the next four years, Keemle was something of a mountain

8. *Weekly Reveille*, July 22, 1844, 12.

9. Yates, *William T. Porter*, 30.

10. Charles E. Hanson, Jr., "Charles Keemle," in *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen (Glendale, Cal.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1971), 8:203.

man himself. In the spring of 1821, he was a member of a party that traded with the Crows on the south bank of the Yellowstone, and in 1822 he was trapping in Blackfoot country on the upper Missouri. In May 1823, Keemle earned a measure of heroism when several hundred Blackfeet attacked his party as they returned from a spring trapping expedition on Jefferson's Fork of the Missouri. After the Blackfeet had killed the party's leaders, Robert Jones and Michael Immel, Keemle assumed command and led the survivors across the Yellowstone to shelter in a Crow village. Later that year he traveled overland to the Crow country with two of the most famous mountain men, Thomas Fitzpatrick and Jedediah Smith. Keemle spent the winter of 1823-1824 with the Crows, returning to St. Louis in the summer of 1824. At this time he concluded his career as a mountain man.¹¹

During the next decade Keemle owned or produced a series of Democratic papers in St. Louis, among them the *Enquirer*, the *Beacon*, and the *Commercial Bulletin*. The idea for a specifically literary paper seems to have been his as early as 1837, for in that year he and Alphonso Wetmore brought out a literary weekly, *The Saturday News*.¹² The *News* failed but Keemle persisted in the idea of founding a literary journal, mentioning it several times over a period of years to the Field brothers, his eventual partners.¹³ On the *Reveille* itself, Keemle served as business editor and occasional correspondent. He drew on his experiences in the mountains for descriptive pieces and provided information about Mike Fink for Joseph M. Field's "The Death of Mike Fink."¹⁴ Undoubtedly Keemle's experience and interest in the West also influenced the paper's emphasis on accounts of western travel, exploration, and history.

In addition to his journalistic work, Keemle assisted in many other civic enterprises, among them the establishment of the theater at St. Louis. In 1835 he helped Noah "Ludlow raise subscrip-

11. *Ibid.*, 204-6.

12. *Ibid.*, 206-7.

13. Grenville Clark King, "'Phazma': A Biography of Matthew C. Field (1812-1844)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1975), 218.

14. Joseph M. Field, *The Drama in Pokerville* (1847; reprint, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Literature House/Gregg Press, 1969), 178.

tions of thirty thousand dollars to build a theater in St. Louis and he was a member of the first board of directors of the St. Louis Theater Company in 1837."¹⁵ Noah Ludlow was himself importantly related to the *Reveille* through several connections. He was the long-time partner of Sol Smith, one of the paper's prominent humorists, in the theater company of Ludlow and Smith, established in 1835 at Mobile and the dominant company in St. Louis from 1836 to 1851. As both Matthew and Joseph Field acted for this company, it is likely that Keemle first met his eventual partners through his efforts to aid Ludlow in building the St. Louis theater. The *Reveille*, which continued until 1850, seems to have been Keemle's last journalistic endeavor. He ran without success for sheriff in 1852, but soon after became recorder of deeds for St. Louis County, a position he held for many years. He died September 28, 1865.¹⁶

Matthew C. Field brought a background in the theater and in journalism to his editorial work and humorous writing for the *Reveille*. While perhaps not as important a figure in the humor of the Old Southwest as his brother Joseph, John S. Robb, or Sol Smith, "Mat" did contribute to the genre with his stories about frontier hoaxes and the frontier theater. Mat, who used the pseudonym "Phazma," was born in London, of Irish parents, probably in 1812. According to a sketch written by his brother Joseph, Matthew was named after his father, a publisher of Catholic books in Ireland who "had crossed the channel to avoid, in some measure, the persecutions which followed the ill fated struggles of his countrymen in 1798 and 1803." Exactly when the Field family emigrated to America is in doubt, but Joseph's sketch suggests that they did so "immediately after the late war [the War of 1812] between England and the United States."¹⁷ The Fields settled in New York City, where Matthew Field, Sr., published the first Roman Catholic almanac of America. Mat became a jeweler's

15. Hanson, "Charles Keemle," 208.

16. *Ibid.*, 208-9.

17. "Memoir of the Author," ms. box 1, Ludlow-Field-Maury Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. Used with permission of the Society.

apprentice in the city when he was about fifteen, and he followed the jewelry trade until his entry onto the stage in the mid-1830s. By this time, Mat's older brother Joe had become established as an actor and associated with the company of Sol Smith. Mat removed to New Orleans, probably late in 1834, and in the spring of 1835 followed his brother to Montgomery, Alabama, where Joe was an assistant manager of the company.¹⁸ In his autobiography, Sol Smith notes that Mat's debut was successful but that the last scene of the tragedy in which he was playing was "rendered somewhat ludicrously." Mat's role was Hemeya in *The Apostate*, with Mrs. A. Drake, whom Sol describes as "what we term a *heavy* actress," playing Florinda. At the close of the piece, Florinda falls and dies next to the already dead Hemeya. What follows in Smith's anecdote is itself a fine piece of frontier humor:

Mat. Field had got through *his* troubles, and lay dead and stiff, congratulating himself on the success he had met with on his first attempt at acting, when he suddenly perceived that Mrs. D. was preparing for "a fall" in the immediate vicinity of his own resting-place. I was watching Mrs. D.'s splendid death, and it must be confessed that poor Mat. did appear in considerable danger of being *fallen upon* by the poisoned *Florinda*. At first there were sundry twitchings of the arms and legs of the dead *Hemeya*; then, as the body of the devoted *Florinda* was seen actually descending, a sudden spring of her lover's corpse placed it out of danger, and there they both lay, "faithful to each other even in death." When Mat. found that he was not crushed, it seemed to occur to him that it was not altogether proper or picturesque to turn his back to the lady, so he very deliberately *turned over*, and, stretching forth his dead arms, encircled her with them in a loving embrace, the curtain falling on the picture.¹⁹

Mat Field continued his acting career as a regular in the company of Ludlow and Smith from the summer of 1835 to that of 1839.

18. King, "Phazma," 20-22.

19. *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years*, ed. Arthur Thomas Tees (1868; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 110.

During this period he played the literally dozens of roles required by repertory theater, everything from minor roles in farces to Shakespeare's Edgar and Iago. During the winter of 1838, Ludlow and Smith dispatched Mat to St. Louis to manage part of the company there while they played in Mobile. Only twenty-five and without managerial experience, Mat suffered through part of a dismally unsuccessful season before Smith came to take over management of the company, which was apparently severely limited in repertoire, talent, and wardrobe.²⁰ Mat continued to act with Ludlow and Smith until June 1839. In the judgment of William G. B. Carson, historian of the southwestern theater, Mat "had made a really promising start" as an actor, but he left the profession because of ill-health and the "opportunity to join an expedition to Santa Fe" which he hoped would prove beneficial.²¹

Mat's journey over the Santa Fe Trail to Taos and Santa Fe marked his entry into journalism. Early in the winter of 1839-1840, the *New Orleans Picayune* hired him as an assistant editor and published his accounts of the journey as "Sketches of the Mountains and the Prairies." Mat wrote of the American Indians, of the Mexican culture of Taos and Santa Fe, of the buffalo, antelope, and grizzly bear, and of frontier characters. His sketches of characters like Lazy Hasey, who was "really industrious" in reducing laziness "to a system," anticipate the stories of eccentric characters later published in the *Reveille*.²² In one sketch, several of Mat's comrades bedevil a young Missourian who has made himself "somewhat disagreeable among the men, by an assumption of more than ordinary daring" (p. 146). After declaring himself unafraid of "any six Camanches [*sic*] that dare come before me" (p. 148), the young man goes off, with one companion, in search of wild plums. Just as he becomes entangled among the bushes, he hears "half a dozen

20. William G. B. Carson, *The Theatre on the Frontier: The Early Years of the St. Louis Stage* (1932; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), 219-29.

21. *Ibid.*, 287.

22. Mat's sketches of the Santa Fe Trail are collected in *Matt Field on the Santa Fe Trail*, collected by Clyde and Mae Reed Porter, ed. John E. Sunder (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960). For "Lazy Hasey," see 116-19. Further quotations from this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.

terrific yells" and sees "several dark, naked figures . . . bounding directly toward" his companion and him. These are, of course, "sham Indians," several of the young man's white comrades daubed from head to foot with mud. They succeed in driving him in terror from the plum bushes, but "the best of the fun is to follow" (p. 148). The young man's companion, Charley, has been in league with the sham Indians, but he has not known that they have charged their pieces without ball and intend to fire. When they do, he believes them to be real Comanches, runs for camp in "undisguised terror," and rouses the rest of the group, who make for the woods with their rifles. Now the sham Indians fear they will be shot for real Indians, but all is resolved finally without bloodshed. Only the brave young man is left ignorant of the hoax: "to Jo the trick was never revealed, and during the remainder of our travel we were continually amused with poor Jo's recital of the perilous adventure; he assuring us upon his honor that he distinctly saw seventeen naked Indians, and showing us a wound upon his ear where a ball had whizzed past and scratched him" (p. 149).

Mat went west again in 1843 on the famous excursion to the Rocky Mountains headed by Scots nobleman Sir William Drummond Stewart. Sir William's large party consisted of some "thirty-five or forty" gentlemen of leisure and scientists, and another thirty hunters, muleteers, and camp workers.²³ After leaving St. Louis in May, the party moved along the Kansas and Little Blue rivers before picking up the Oregon Trail in south-central Nebraska. It followed the trail to Fort Laramie and then crossed the Rockies through the South Pass in Wyoming, concluding its westward progress upon the Green River near Fremont Lake. During the trip, Mat recorded his experiences in several journals, from which he later gleaned thirty-eight sketches for the *Picayune* and seven for the *Reveille*.²⁴ Once again Mat sketched the landscape,

23. Mat Field's sketches of the Stewart expedition are collected in *Prairie and Mountain Sketches*, collected by Clyde and Mae Reed Porter, ed. Kate L. Gregg and John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957). For the composition of Stewart's group, see McDermott's Introduction, especially xxiv-xxx.

24. *Ibid.*, xli. Future quotations from these sketches are from this edition; citations will be given parenthetically.

the American Indians, and the animals of the West, with special attention, of course, to that ever-interesting sport of buffalo hunting. But he frequently turned his attention, too, to the humor of the trip and to the vivid characters among the large party. One of these was the hunter Joe Pourier, whom Mat catches praying over his rosary at mass one Sunday after the party has failed to see buffalo for an extraordinarily long time: "Forgive us some sin, *O, mon Dieu*—let us see some fat cow this to-day, we have not no bacon more—and even old bull was better than no meat at all—thank heaven for all everything—Amen!" (p. 49).

Joe is the subject of another comic sketch in which he, Mat, and two other men set off very early in the morning to hunt buffalo. When Joe sees two diminutive spots, "that seemed to be leagues away, at the very kissing of sky and land," he believes them to be running buffalo, apparently driven by Indians. The proximity of Indians causes Mat and his other companions to think about returning to camp, but when they mention this to Joe, he answers by "'skinning his rifle'" and exclaiming, "Must have meat some zis day, or die, dead as like stone! Boys, come 'long. *Sacre jeengo!* ze red rascal drive off all cow! Come 'long, boys. By d—n, we ees four! Nuff for whole *nacion* rascal savage!" (pp. 98–99). The story moves to a fine comic anticlimax when the men turn again to the buffalo, only to see

the living things . . . rising in the air! Heads, horns and hump, side-ribs, marrow-bones, fleeces, tail pieces, tongue, hump ribs, sweet bread—all were soaring high "into thin air," and the two bulls of our imagination were "like the baseless fabric of a vision," galloping away toward the sun! They were *crows!* Just near enough to move in our line of sight with the horizon's verge, and flying low along the ground in the murky atmosphere, the birds had thus produced upon us this farcical illusion. (p. 99)

In one other piece, Mat develops that staple of frontier humor, the tall tale, here attributed to mountain man Moses "Black" Har-

ris and others of his kind. The subject is the wonders of the petrified forests:

[Black Harris] says, that *birds* are there, sitting on the branches, the most hard-hearted things of all the feathered tribe, being solidified into stone, for all time to come! Another mountaineer will fight any man who won't believe that he once sharpened his knife upon the tail of an eagle, that was turned into stone while in the very act of whetting its own bill upon another rock. The man who tells this hard story further declares, that he once carried a stone *sapling* of pine, five hundred miles on his shoulder, while travelling home on foot; but, being overtaken by winter, he dropped the tree, knocked off and carried along the birds, and arrived at *Independence*, with an important part of his personal apparel overflowing with rocks! (p. 194)

Mat continued to write for the *Picayune* until the spring of 1844, when he left to join his brother and Keemle in editing the *Reveille*. To the new paper he contributed poems, editorials, local color sketches, and some of his tales of "Prairie and Mountain Life." At least five of his contributions to the humor of the Old Southwest are included in the current volume, and several of the unsigned pieces may also be his. Mat's tenure with the *Reveille* was brief, however. By the fall of 1844, his always fragile health was failing, and he departed for the East and the prospect of a long sea voyage to improve his strength. Aboard ship on the way from Boston to Mobile, Mat died on November 15, 1844, and was buried at sea.²⁵ His brother Joseph planned both an edition of Mat's poems and a collection of the sketches from the Stewart expedition, but neither of these plans bore fruit.²⁶

Matthew Field will probably always be best remembered for his sketches of the Santa Fe Trail and the Rockies, with his humor a secondary contribution. His brother Joseph, on the other hand, is

25. For Joseph M. Field's obituary of his brother, see the *Weekly Reveille*, December 23, 1844, 1.

26. For Joseph M. Field's plan to collect Mat's sketches of the Stewart expedition, see McDermott, Introduction to *Prairie and Mountain Sketches*, xli-xlii.

primarily known, and rightly so, as a humorist, although he in fact had other very substantial careers as well—as an actor, a theater manager, and a playwright. Born in 1810, probably in England,²⁷ Joe began his acting career early, appearing at the Tremont Theatre in Boston in 1827. He debuted in New York in 1830, played in St. Louis the same year, and by 1833 was touring with the company of Sol Smith through the southwestern circuit, playing Cincinnati, St. Louis, Mobile, Montgomery, and smaller towns along the way.²⁸ Between 1835 and 1844, Joe played the St. Louis–Mobile–New Orleans circuit with the company of Ludlow and Smith, appearing in a wide variety of roles. He seems to have been most successful in comic parts, especially as Jeremy Diddler in *Raising the Wind*, Sir Benjamin Backbite in *The School for Scandal*, and Flutter in *The Belle's Stratagem*, but he did aspire to more heroic roles as well, those of Romeo, Othello, Lear, Iago, Richard III, Macbeth, and Hamlet being among his repertoire.²⁹ On November 6, 1837, he married the popular actress Eliza Riddle,³⁰ and they together appeared as “stars” for Ludlow and Smith.

During the season of 1842–1843, Field was active on the New York stage, appearing both at the Park and at William Mitchell's Olympic. The Park staged one of Field's own plays, *Such as It Is*, on September 4, 1842, but a run of only three nights “buried it deep in the sea of oblivion,” to quote New York stage historian George Odell. Another of Field's plays, *Nervo-Vitalics, or, What Next?*, produced at the Olympic on September 19, met with a similar fate.³¹

27. Lilian Whiting gives Dublin as Joseph M. Field's birthplace, and many sources have followed her account. Other sources give England as the place of Field's birth; see Alice Adel Beffa, “Joe Field, a Man of the Forties” (Master's thesis, Washington University, 1941), 53. What is clear from Whiting's account is that she was not aware of the family's removal to England, which Field's manuscript sketch of his brother Matthew suggests took place shortly after 1803. See Whiting, *Kate Field: A Record* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1899), 4–5.

28. Hennig Cohen and William B. Dillingham, eds., *Humor of the Old Southwest* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 96.

29. Francis Hodge, Introduction to *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, by Noah M. Ludlow (1880; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), xxv–xxvi.

30. Beffa, “Joe Field,” 54.

31. George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), 4:605, 652, 654.

Of the many plays Field wrote, only one, *Job and His Children*, has survived. It features a sentimental plot in which a stern parent disinherits a disobedient daughter, only to be reconciled to her later after a series of complications, confusions, and recognitions.³² *The Artful Dodger* seems to have been Field's "most popular" play, while *Family Ties*, written with John S. Robb, won a five-hundred-dollar prize given by Yankee actor Dan Marble in 1846.³³ *Family Ties* was not successful, but another play, *1943; or, New Orleans a Century Hence* apparently received some approval at New Orleans in 1843. A bill of advertisement for this play gives some indication of the nature of Field's wit. The scene is 1943, at which time Fancy shows to the Manager, played by Field himself, "the ladies in power; great political excitement among the dames and dummies; canvassing for the office of mayor; to the polls; *Judge Sally Jones* the candidate of the dames; men in petticoats; women in trousers; auction of old bachelors." Several of Field's other productions seem also to have been satires on matters of topical interest. *Tourists in America* (1835) may well have satirized English literary visitors to this country. *Victoria* (1838) was "a burlesque in which James Gordon Bennett, Sr. (played by Field) of the *New York Herald* is shown in a visit to England to interview young Queen Victoria on her future policy toward the United States." The popular pseudoscientific lectures of Dr. Dionysius Lardner were the target of Field's *Dr. Heavy Bevy*, which played to success in New Orleans in 1843.³⁴ The satiric eye is a consistent feature of Field's humorous stories of life on the frontier, and it seems already evident in even the little that we know of his lost plays.

Joseph Field also had a significant career as a theater manager. Sol Smith dispatched him to the "remarkably primitive" city of Wetumpka, Alabama, in 1835 to manage the players through a two-week season in a theater converted from a billiard room.³⁵

32. *Job and His Children* has been reprinted in Eugene R. Page, ed., *America's Lost Plays* (1940; reprint, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 14:237-59.

33. *Ibid.*, 14:239.

34. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, xxvii, 570-71.

35. Smith, *Theatrical Management*, 109.

This first managerial stint must have been successful, for he wrote Smith that the citizens of Wetumpka had given him a grand dinner:

What do you think—they have been giving me a *Dinner* a dashing affair I tell ye and the first ever given at Wetumpka—we had a delightful time. I was toasted and then I spoke and then I got quite enough of wine to play King Lear—and then I got along so so—and then the people looked at me like a dam'd queer lump of eyes and noses—and then they are going to publish the proceedings in the Wetumpka Times and then our [illegible] friends may take a hint and behave decently to us.³⁶

Many years later, after the *Reveille* ceased publication in 1850, Field returned to managing, this time in Mobile. The next year he began organizing an association to build in St. Louis the "finest theatre west of the Mississippi." Field succeeded, and the Varieties Theatre opened its doors in May 1852. He was less successful in attracting audiences, however, than in getting the theater built. The Varieties closed in November 1854, but not before Field had succeeded in, among other things, bringing Italian grand opera to St. Louis for the first time.³⁷ After the closing of the Varieties, Field returned to Mobile, where he continued as manager, except for a brief managerial stint in Boston in the fall of 1855, until his death on January 28, 1856.

To his work on the *Reveille*, Field brought experience and even some acclaim as a journalist. He had begun writing humorous topical poems under the name "Straws" for the *New Orleans Picayune* in 1839 and had traveled to Europe as a foreign correspondent for that paper in 1840.³⁸ He continued to write poems for the *Reveille* under the name "Straws" while also adopting a second pseudonym, "Everpoint," which generally appears over his humorous prose. Among Field's most important contributions

36. Joseph M. Field to Sol Smith, March 21, 1835, Sol Smith Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. Used with permission of the Society.

37. Beffa, "Joe Field," 88–92.

38. Cohen and Dillingham, *Humor of the Old Southwest*, 96.

to Southwest humor are two pieces on Mike Fink, the first of which, "The Death of Mike Fink," appeared in the *Reveille* in 1844. Field intended his story—based on information from Keemle, who had held a military command in the vicinity of Fort Henry, where Fink died—to clear away the "mythic haze" surrounding Fink's death. In Field's story, a gunsmith named Talbott kills Mike after defaming the latter for the accidental killing of his young friend Carpenter. Mike has shot Carpenter during one of the frolics for which he is famous, that of shooting a can of whisky off a man's head at forty yards. After young Carpenter's death, Talbott "was very loud and bitter in his denunciations of the 'murderer,' as he called Fink." When Fink visits Talbott to straighten the matter out, the gunsmith panics, firing both of his pistols into Mike's breast at short range. As Mike dies, his only words are, "I didn't mean to kill my boy!"³⁹

Field wrote a longer version of Mike Fink's adventures, "Mike Fink: 'The Last of the Boatmen,'" for the *Reveille* in 1847.⁴⁰ As Walter Blair and Franklin J. Meine have noted, this version has "the form of a melodramatic novel of the day—full of typical claptrap—wild coincidences, disguises, sentimental characters, and maudlin maunderings." Nevertheless Blair and Meine also find "some wonderful stuff" in it, particularly in Field's handling of the language of the boatmen.⁴¹ A case in point involves the dialogue between Mike and his old friend Jabe Knuckles when a woman whom they suppose to be an Indian paddles up to their keelboat in a canoe. Mike begins sardonically with an order to Jabe, just as the men are gathered about in groups to eat their noon meal:

"Jabe! go and convert that heathen . . . She's a year-nin' for the truths, about now, I reckon!"

39. The story originally appeared in the *Daily Reveille*, October 20, 1844, 2. See Field, *The Drama in Pokerville*, 177, 182–83.

40. This appeared in installments in the *Daily Reveille* in 1847 on June 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20, on pp. 1–2 of each issue.

41. Walter Blair and Franklin J. Meine, eds., *Half Horse, Half Alligator: The Growth of the Mike Fink Legend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 94.

Jabe made an offering of some of the fruits of civilization, not forgetting to include a can of its happiest results; but the squaw showed that she did not lack for provisions, of her own rude kind.

"The poor, benighted critter!" sighed Jabe, "she aint got any more taste in feedin' than in prayin'—parched corn aint Christianity, no how!"

"Lost, soul and stomach!" said Mike.

After Mike discovers that her destination is Yazoo, far to the south, Field concludes the scene deftly with the boatman's exclamation and judgment: "Just to think how these she varmints do ventur! . . . Too cussed ugly, too, for a cabin passage!"⁴²

One episode that rises to a mythic level involves Mike's refusal to yield to a steamboat on the Mississippi. Mike and his men are descending the river in their keelboat at a time when such boats are being rapidly replaced by the new steamboats. The steamboat heads upstream toward them at a narrow place in the river where the channel is close to the Missouri shore. When Mike sees that the steamboat is going to take the channel, he says only, "If she does, I'll sink her!" As the boats near one another, "Fink steadily held his course, swerving not an inch, either way; his keel was a very large one; he 'despised a steam boat any how,' to use his own words; the wicked spirit was roused within him, and without any question of courtesy or river regulation being involved in the matter, it simply suited his morose humor, at the moment, not to stir 'out of his tracks!'"⁴³ A terrible collision results, both boats sink, and several people drown, including Mike's old friend Jabe. Here Field has caught a central tension of the American nineteenth century, one not unlike that at the heart of the greatest classic of the river, *Huckleberry Finn*. On the one hand is Mike's simple, amoral "humor," his habit, formed in an easier, freer time, of doing what he pleases; on the other is the force of a progressive,

42. *Ibid.*, 109.

43. *Ibid.*, 126–27.

mechanical civilization, one that bears down on Mike just as it later does on the raft of Huck and Jim.⁴⁴

Also reminiscent of *Huckleberry Finn* is the long title story of Field's *The Drama in Pokerville* (1847), a collection of frontier humor made up largely of stories reprinted from the *Reveille* and *Spirit*. Perhaps remembering that dinner in Wetumpka, Field satirizes the pretensions of Pokerville's "aristocracy," represented here by the Slopes, who give a grand dinner for the traveling players of "The Great Small Affair Theatre." The Slope house may well lie behind Mark Twain's description of the house of those similar frontier "aristocrats," the Grangerfords:

"Both rooms" had been prepared; two extra busts of La Fayette (not a Shakspeare in all Pokerville) being added to the *sculpture*, three highly coloured "American naval victories," completing the walls, and a perfect arabesque of blue and yellow fly-paper netting finishing off the ceiling. Then, of course, on side-tables were vases of artificial flowers, infinitely to be preferred to the natural ones without. (p. 45)

The roast pig served by the Slopes is deemed to be so excellent that Mr. Flush, recently returned from London, declares it to be "the very pig which *Chawles* Lamb had celebrated" (p. 53). The evening climaxes after dinner as the leading lady of the Great Small Affair Company, Mrs. Oscar Dust herself, recites a "metrical *impromptu*" whose cadences are worthy of Emmeline Grangerford:

44. Both Bernard De Voto and Walter Blair have suggested the influence of Field's *The Drama in Pokerville* on Mark Twain. De Voto mentions specifically the apparent connections between Field's "A Resurrectionist and His Freight" and Twain's "The Invalid's Story," drafted for *A Tramp Abroad* but published only later in *Merry Tales*, and between Field's "Stopping to Wood" and the steamboat race in chapter 4 of *The Gilded Age*. He suggests, too, that the long title story of Field's volume "may have shown [Twain] something about the small-town gentry who are so continuous a subject of his satire, and about the ways of strolling players." See *Mark Twain's America* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), 252-54. Blair thinks a comic playbill of Field's "Great Small Affair Company" may have inspired the playbills Mark Twain's Duke of Bilgewater nails up when he, Huck, and the King go ashore in *Huckleberry Finn*. See *Mark Twain & Huck Finn* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 303-4.

Your *key-ind* approval to uphold my cause,
 To *gue-ard* the path you crown with your applause:
Ble-you are the *ske-eyes*, an Eden promise still,
 Nor serpent wiles shall tempt from Pokerville. (p. 59)

All of the high culture soon takes a rather low turn, however, as one of the actors goes into a drunken frenzy and several of the guests become ill from overeating of the possum that a local wag has persuaded the cooks to substitute for Charles Lamb's pig.

The other stories in *The Drama in Pokerville* provide a fair representation of the subjects of Old Southwest humor as they are defined by Cohen and Dillingham.⁴⁵ Of the twenty categories of subjects these authors list, Field's volume includes examples of at least twelve. There are stories of the hunt, electioneering, the frontier courtroom, the visitor in a humble home, and the country boy in the city. Rogues, drunks, and local eccentrics move across Field's pages, and the pranks, swindles, and sham medical treatments of a variety of con artists are included. Two of the finest stories sketch life aboard the riverboat. "Stopping to 'Wood'" describes the process of taking on wood at a riverside woodyard and the terrors of a steamboat race. The race Field describes ends when one boat drives another onto the bank after the latter has tried to cut across its bow while pulling away from a woodyard. The furious defeated pilot fires his rifle into the pilothouse of his opponent, while the boat drives out of control:

The wheel for a moment neglected, the thwarted monster has now "taken a sheer in the wild current," and, beyond the possibility of prevention, is driving on to the bank! A cry of terror rises aloft—the throng rush aft—the steam, every valve set free—makes the whole forest shiver, and, amid the fright, the tall chimneys, caught by the giant trees, are wrenched and torn out like tusks from a recoiling mastadon [*sic*]. (p. 176)

"A Resurrectionist and His Freight" combines a riverboat setting

45. *Humor of the Old Southwest*, xvii.

with a prank played upon an unsophisticated rustic. The prankster is an actor, the victim a "'hoosier,' from the innermost depths of Indiana . . . visiting New Orleans for the first time" (p. 197). The occasion for the hoax is the hoosier's fascination with "a very large and singularly-shaped pine box, which lay in the 'Social Hall' " of the steamer (p. 198). The property of a German musician, the box contains "a *big fiddle*," but when the hoosier asks the prankster about its contents, he is told the box contains "bodies" being taken down for dissection. His interest piqued, the hoosier makes further inquiries, learning that the contents are a "white woman and two children . . . one on each side of her—accounts for the shape of the box" (p. 199). His mark thoroughly persuaded, the prankster enlists the help of the other passengers, who make "wide circuits" whenever they approach the box and cover their faces with handkerchiefs. Eventually the captain, who is privy to the joke, brings the sell to a climax. Pulling out his handkerchief, he asks, "Gentlemen, isn't there something unpleasant about here?" (p. 199). To this the hoosier has his obvious answer, "Wall, you've got that BOX TOO NEAR THE STOVE, *that's all!*" (p. 200).

The stories in *The Drama in Pokerville* represent only a part of the frontier humor Field contributed to the *Reveille*. Most of the volume's stories appeared originally in the years 1844–1846, but Field left uncollected many stories of equal merit from those same years, perhaps out of concern for balance among the subjects in the book. He also continued to write sketches and tales for the *Reveille* until its end in 1850 but apparently made no effort to collect these, probably because he was more interested in returning to his career in the theater. Many of these uncollected stories appear in the current volume.

Although never an editor of the *Reveille*, Sol Smith was another of its most important contributors of humor. Born in 1801 in Norwich, New York, Solomon Franklin Smith spent most of his life as an actor and theater manager, most prominently in partnership with Noah Ludlow. Sol began managing in 1823 in Cincinnati, where he opened the Globe and Columbia Street theaters. When the season closed, he found himself in debt "eleven hundred and

fifty dollars,"⁴⁶ but still managed to go on the road with his players to West Virginia and to Pittsburgh. Smith managed a "strolling" company for much of the next twelve years, playing especially throughout the South. In 1835 he went into partnership with Ludlow to form Ludlow and Smith, a company which William G. B. Carson has called "one of the most important in the West, if not in the country." The company performed from 1835–1840 and 1843–1848 in Mobile, and from 1840–1853 in New Orleans, where it built the St. Charles Theatre in 1842. From 1836–1851, it "dominated the St. Louis stage, and in that city built the first real theatre west of the Mississippi."⁴⁷ Ludlow and Smith dissolved their partnership in 1853, after which time Smith settled in St. Louis, practicing law until his death in 1869.

As an actor Smith's strength was low comedy, Mawworm in Bickerstaffe's *The Hypocrite* being one of the roles for which he was best known. As he was called on frequently to play the parts of old men, he acquired the nickname "Old Sol," used almost universally in his contemporaries' writing about him. Smith's contribution to the humor of the Old Southwest lies in his comic chronicling of the fortunes and misfortunes of the actor and frontier theater manager. He published these anecdotal sketches in newspapers, especially the *Reveille* and the *Spirit*, and then collected them in a series of autobiographical volumes: *Sol. Smith's Theatrical Apprenticeship* (1845), devoted to the first seven years of his professional life; *The Theatrical Journey-Work and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol. Smith* (1854), covering the next seven years; and *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years* (1868), which brought together material from both the earlier volumes to provide a full account of Smith's career.⁴⁸

46. Smith, *Theatrical Management*, 29.

47. Carson, "Solomon Franklin Smith," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 17:347.

48. *Sol. Smith's Theatrical Apprenticeship* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1845); *The Theatrical Journey-Work and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol. Smith, Comedian, Attorney at Law, etc., etc.* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1854); *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868; reprint, with an introduction by Arthur Thomas Tees, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968). Quotations in the following section are from the Blom reprint; page numbers will be given parenthetically.

Sol Smith's volumes are especially delightful for their treatments of the vicissitudes of the strolling company, especially one low on funds. In Pittsburgh, Smith dodges the constables and his creditors by dropping through a trapdoor at the end of a performance. In a wild spot along the Allegheny, his company all believe they will be brutally murdered when "three stout, ugly-looking fellows," who seem "too anxious to accommodate" them, welcome the group to a cottage (p. 43). Their fears intensify as the sons go outside to dig a hole and the father reappears "with his hands and garments *covered with blood*, a ghastly smile on his ugly countenance, and *holding a bloody knife in his hand!*" (p. 44). Later they learn with relief that he has slain a young lamb for their dinner, for he has been determined that they should receive his best fare. On this particular stroll, the company moves on to a "town not yet a town," where an inspired madman greets them, "Oh, you are looking for the houses! Bless ye, they are not *built* yet; but we *shall* have some splendid buildings shortly. Here is Broadway; Wall Street runs down in this direction" (p. 45). That night the players perform in one room of the man's log cabin fitted up as a stage and with potatoes full of tallow as footlights. From there they move on to a town about which Sol says little, except that, "If one good or honest man resided there, I had not the pleasure of seeing him or hearing of him" (p. 46). The audience here climbs in through the window to avoid paying until Sol, in the middle of a song, seizes one of the interlopers by the hair, drags him "across the room in front of the audience," and "tumble[s] him down stairs" (p. 46). He then concludes his song. Later on the tour, Sol and his group must forego a planned concert when Sol is mistaken for a preacher. Finally, after a journey down the Ohio of over five hundred miles in the heat of summer, Sol arrives, with wife and child, at Cincinnati, "having been absent about two years and a half—without a dollar in my pocket" (p. 47).

Sol Smith is important to the humor of the Old Southwest not only as an author but also as a character in the fiction of others. A whole literature grew up devoted to celebrating the exploits of "Old Sol." Smith himself takes a wry glance at some of the stories

told about him when commenting on his dodging the constables, mentioned above. "There are many versions of the *trap* story extant among my brother actors," Smith begins. In one of these, he is supposed to have been playing the gravedigger in *Hamlet* and to have "popped down into the grave"; in another, he "was actually put into a coffin and buried, to avoid the constables, and arose from the tomb" through the assistance of a friend. "Both of these versions are very good," Sol admits, but, "as *Sir Benjamin* says, 'mine is the true one'" (p. 32). Many of the stories about Smith involve his tendency to be mistaken for a lawyer, doctor, or preacher. Sol tells one of the best of these on himself in "My First and Last Sermon" in his autobiography. On his way to Memphis, Sol stops at a little Tennessee town called Bolivar, where he is well-known to everyone and in a part of the state where his brother, also a theater manager, has been telling inquirers that Sol has "been converted, and had commenced preaching!" (p. 65). Sol soon finds himself persuaded to give what he thinks will be a one-man "entertainment" at the courthouse that evening. After ascending to the judge's seat, Sol is recollecting the words of his first song when a pious-looking gentleman speaks up, "Let us commence our worship by singing the one hundredth psalm, long metre!" (p. 67). Forced to it, Sol resolves to try his hand at preaching, opens his Bible "at hap-hazard," and selects his text, which applies very well to his situation, "We are perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Cor. 4:8). Sol is perplexed again in a story by John S. Robb, "A Spiritual Sister. Her Encounter with a Doubtful Smith." Here Sol, traveling on a Mississippi steamboat, is mistaken by a Mormon woman for a brother of Joseph Smith. At first flattered by the attention, Sol exits at the first landing after she asks him his thoughts about the "new system" adopted among the Mormons, presumably polygamy, and then rather forwardly says, "I was a thinkin' if you hadn't chosen a—he-he-he!—a sister, why,——."49

The *St. Louis Reveille* printed stories about Old Sol with some frequency, and the present collection includes several of these. In

49. Robb, *Streaks of Squatter Life, and Far-West Scenes*, ed. John Francis McDermott (1847; reprint, Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1962), 69.

“‘Old Sol.’ Once More,” “Thunder” sketches an appearance by Sol in a little town in Mississippi, where theatrical exhibitions were “pretty much as the letter A was to the school-boy—‘they had often hearn tell of ‘em, but had never seen the darn’d things before.’” When the curtain rises for the announced play, “The Manager in Distress,” a man appears upon the stage to explain to the audience that the performance will have to be deferred because of the disappearance of one of his prominent players, presumably Sol. Immediately a “rough, carrot-haired youth” pushes his way toward the stage, challenging the man in fine frontier vernacular to go on with the show or “give us a fight.” Just as the youth mounts the stage, his wig falls off, revealing him to be “Old Sol.” Sol is again the trickster in “Getting on the Free List,” in which a young printer’s devil comes to him to get a free press pass to the theater. Sol complies, telling the young “Sucker” that all he need do is to present himself at the stage entrance and say “Supe.” When the young man does this, he finds himself rushed up the stairs, given some “loose breeches and a sorter shirt-coat” to put on, armed with a sword, and hurried onto the stage in a crowd scene. One such experience of the stage is enough for the youth, who concludes his tale by declaring his intention of “goin’ up to Mr. Smith to git him to take my name off a that derved ‘free list.’” As bibliographic resources for the humor of the Old Southwest become more available, it is to be hoped that some scholar will undertake the delightful task of gathering the whole rich lore devoted to “Old Sol.”

The last figure to be sketched here, John S. Robb, was perhaps the most accomplished writer of the group of humorists associated with the *Reveille*. Biographical details about Robb are meager. It seems likely that he was born in Philadelphia in 1813 and trained, like his father, as a printer. One reference places him in Detroit in 1839, and later he “may have worked on the *Picayune* in New Orleans.” He edited the *Ledger* in St. Louis in 1842, worked for the *Missouri Republican* as a printer for a time, and was printing for the *Reveille* by 1845. He contributed humor to the *Reveille* as early as December 1844 and became an assistant editor of the paper in

April 1846. In addition to humor, Robb contributed feature stories to the paper and served as a roving correspondent. In 1848, for instance, he reported on the progress of artist Henry Lewis's panorama of the Mississippi as he accompanied Lewis in floating down the river from Minnesota. He apparently met Lewis at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and dispatched from there as well a series of lively impressions of the fort; of the Sioux, Winnebagoes, and Chippewas in the vicinity; and of the post commandant, Capt. Seth Eastman, and his wife. In 1849 Robb went west to cover the Gold Rush for the *Reveille*, but he elected ultimately to stay in California, where he later edited the *Journal* in Stockton and the *Sacramento Age*. He died in San Francisco in 1856.⁵⁰

Robb first became known as a writer of frontier humor when he published "Swallowing an Oyster Alive" in the *Reveille* on December 7, 1844. This piece was so widely reprinted that later sketches of Robb's frequently were identified as being "by the author of 'Swallowing Oysters Alive.'" The tale follows the familiar pattern of a hoax played upon a green countryman, in this case a real live Sucker from Illinois who comes to an oyster house in St. Louis. As the Sucker swallows his first oyster, a prankster cries out, "Swallowed alive, as I'm a Christian!" and follows this with, "You're a dead man! . . . The creature is alive, and will eat right through you."⁵¹ Terrified, the Sucker swallows half a bottle of pepper sauce, with the expected reaction, and then gives the following reply to the question whether he had killed the oyster: "Well, I did, hoss'—ugh, ugh o-o-o my inards. If that *ister* critter's dyin' agonies didn't stir a 'ruption in me equal to a small arthquake, then 'taint no use sayin' it—it squirmed like a serpent, when that killin' stuff touched it" (p. 85). Robb's skillful handling of dialect is evident again in another story devoted to a familiar

50. McDermott, "Introduction," in *Streaks*, vi-vii. For Robb's letters from Fort Snelling, see John Francis McDermott, ed., "A Journalist at Old Fort Snelling: Some Letters of 'Solitaire' Robb," *Minnesota History* 31 (1950): 209-21. For his letters from California, see McDermott, ed., "Gold Fever: The Letters of 'Solitaire,' Goldrush Correspondent of '49," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 5 (1948-1949): 115-26, 211-23, 316-31, and 6 (1949-1950): 34-43.

51. Porter, *The Big Bear of Arkansas*, 82-85.

situation in frontier humor, the political barbecue. This story, "The Standing Candidate," appeared in Robb's volume of humor, *Streaks of Squatter Life and Far-West Scenes* (1847). Old Sugar is the standing candidate of Nionga County, Missouri, having "founded his claim to the office upon the fact of his being the first 'squatter' in that county—his having killed the first *bar* there, ever killed by a white man, and, to place his right beyond cavil, he had 'stilled the first keg of whiskey!" (pp. 92–93). Sugar never actually runs for office. Instead, he appears at every political gathering with a keg of his own "*bran new whiskey*," whose advantages for political discourse he proclaims: "This mixtur' of mine will make a fellar talk as iley as goose-grease,—as sharp as lightnin', and as *per-suadin'* as a young gal at a quiltin' " (p. 94). Once he has persuaded someone to buy his keg, Sugar yields his claim to office, always, however, announcing himself "a candidate for the *next term*" (p. 93).

Streaks also contains some masterful examples of the tall tale, one of which, "A 'Cat' Story," makes brief use of the boxlike structure whose prevalence in Southwest humor Walter Blair noted long ago.⁵² The tale begins with a framing device, the narrator introducing us to Ben Snaggletree, who himself then becomes the narrator of the tall tale. Ben is an authentic backwoods screamer: "Ben was an old Mississippi' *roarer*—none of your half and half, but just as native to the element, as if he had been born in a *broad horn*. He said he had been *fotched* up on the river's brink, and 'knew a snappin' *turtle* from a *snag*, without larnin' " (p. 64). Ben tells of being thrown overboard from a Mississippi riverboat one night, "dark as the face of Cain" (p. 64), when the boat hits a snag. He swims to a landing place, only to find it a mud bar "about as firm as quicksand" (p. 65). Each attempt to free himself only forces him deeper into his muddy grave, until at last he must elevate his chin to keep out of his "mouth an over-supply of the temperance liquid" (p. 66). When something touches him "like a floating solid," he grabs on with a "grip of *iron*," finds

52. Blair's highly influential discussion of the boxlike structure of many Southwest humor tales is in *Native American Humor*, 91–101.

himself attached to a six-foot catfish, and holds on desperately until the cat pulls him from the mud bar "like a cork from a bottle" (p. 66). Ben concludes his tale in the mythmaking fashion of the best southwestern tall stories: "Off started the fish, like a comet, and after him I went, a *muddy spark* at the end of his tail. By a dexterous twist of his rudder, I succeeded in keeping him on the surface, and steered him to a solid landing, where I let him loose, and we shook ourselves, mutually pleased at parting company" (p. 66). This is too much, or "too many," as Huck would say, for Ben's audience; the first narrator intervenes, completing the frame or boxlike structure and thus underscoring the difference between ordinary experience and the mythic world of the tale.

Most of the stories that make up *Streaks of Squatter Life and Far-West Scenes* received their newspaper publication in 1845, but Robb also frequently contributed frontier humor to the *Reveille* throughout 1846 and 1847. Why Robb did not collect another volume of stories is unclear, but it seems safe to say that he simply turned increasingly to other tasks: 1848 found him doing more traveling as a correspondent for the *Reveille*, and by 1849 he had left for the gold fields. The present collection contains a generous selection of the best of Robb's uncollected tales, with at least eighteen that are identifiably his.

The *Reveille* attracted Southwest humor from a great number of correspondents beyond the men sketched here. Most of these lesser contributors used pseudonyms, and most remain unknown to us. A couple of the more significant ones deserve brief mention, both because they played important roles in the history of the *Reveille* and because their careers are of inherent interest. George L. Curry, "Laon," began working for the *Reveille* at its commencement and preceded Robb as assistant editor. He left in April 1846 to join the emigration to California, sending correspondence to the *Reveille* as he pushed westward on the overland trail. Many years later Curry became governor of the Oregon Territory. A more frequent writer of humor, "John Brown," was Richard S. Elliott, a newspaperman from the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area. Along with another Pennsylvanian, Elliott intro-

duced the symbol of the log cabin in Harrison's famous log cabin and hard cider campaign of 1840. He worked as an Indian sub-agent among the Potawatomies at Council Bluffs, Iowa, and in 1846 helped to form the Laclede Rangers, a hundred volunteers from St. Louis who joined Colonel Doniphan's expedition to Mexico. Between June 1846 and July 1847, Elliott sent more than seventy dispatches reporting on the progress of Doniphan's army as it moved toward Santa Fe. Although Elliott apparently fell ill in Santa Fe and could not follow the army into action in Mexico, he nevertheless deserves to be known as one of the earliest American war correspondents.⁵³

Most of the best Southwest humor published in the *Reveille* appeared during the years 1844–1848. After that time the contributions of J. M. Field, Robb, and Sol Smith became much fewer, and the paper turned to more traditional kinds of humor, printing, for example, a long series of observations on life by the knowing yet frequently nonsensical Mrs. Scruggins. The paper received a severe setback in the spring of 1849 when a fire, begun on a steamboat, spread to twenty-three other boats and then to the buildings along the St. Louis waterfront. The fire completely destroyed the *Reveille* office, and the paper ceased publication for a week. Moreover, it seems that the editors were not able to recoup from their insurance the full value of the loss. The *Reveille* did rally, continuing for more than a year, but on October 6, 1850, the *Daily* issued its last number. A "Valedictory," apparently written by J. M. Field, said only that "powerful inducements" had been "held out to Mr. Field to assume the managerial branch of his former profession, in the city of Mobile," and that "the wear and tear of newspaper responsibility" was no longer in "consonance with the feelings" of Colonel Keemle. Clearly, the energies that had sustained the paper were exhausted.⁵⁴

Any critical assessment of the *Reveille* humor should keep in mind M. Thomas Inge's wise caution against the formulation of

53. Joost, "Reveille in the West," 214–28.

54. "Valedictory," *Daily Reveille*, October 6, 1850, 1.

too rigid generalizations about the humor of the Old Southwest.⁵⁵ Inge approvingly cites Bernard De Voto's observation that frontier life was "extraordinarily complex" and that because "the humor of frontiersmen grew out of that life at every level . . . an attempt to find unity in it would be folly."⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it is possible to generalize loosely about some of the characteristics of the humor of the *Reveille* and of Southwest humor as a whole. First, the *Reveille's* humor concerns itself predominantly with masculine activities, from hunting to practical joking to riverboating to military life. Occasionally the subjects of Southwest humor are grotesque or macabre, and to our sensibilities they may at times seem cruel. Physical comedy and the comedy of situations play a large role in the humor of the *Reveille*, but certainly no less important is the fine comedy created by the vernacular language, frequently juxtaposed to the language of a more sophisticated speaker. Nearly every commentator on the humor of the Old Southwest has seen in it a nascent American realism, both in subject matter and in the use of vernacular language. Less emphasized in the scholarship on Southwest humor is its satiric quality. The *Reveille* contains a good number of satiric pieces, ranging in tone from J. M. Field's lightly witty depiction of the tyrannical habits of steamboat waiters to his devastatingly dark treatment of a lyncher's enjoyment of his sport. Finally, much has been written about the political dimensions of Southwest humor and about the politics of the humorists. Kenneth Lynn has argued that the typical Southwest humorist was a conservative Whig who used the persona of the "self-controlled gentleman" to write about marginalized characters whom he found threatening. The persona of the gentleman, and the frame structure used in many of the tales, allowed him to laugh at such figures while at the same time drawing a *cordon sanitaire* between them and himself.⁵⁷ While Lynn's

55. "Introduction," in *The Frontier Humorists: Critical Views*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975), 4.

56. *Mark Twain's America*, 241.

57. Lynn, *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor* (1959; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1972), 61-72 especially.

thesis may hold true for some of the humorists, perhaps especially those of the deep South, it does not apply to much of the *Reveille* humor. In most of the *Reveille* humor, one simply does not find the sharp sense of class distinction between author/narrator and his subjects that Lynn takes as normative for Southwest humor.

The selections in this volume are grouped roughly by subject matter, the eight categories themselves based loosely on Cohen and Dillingham's helpful listing of the typical subjects of frontier humor.⁵⁸ The categories are meant to reflect the preoccupations of the humorists of the *Reveille*. As the paper is especially rich in stories about practical jokes, saws, and swindles, the volume opens with a section given to hoaxes and predicaments. Several of these tales illustrate the wisdom of frontier confidence artist Simon Suggs's famous motto, "It is good to be shifty in a new country."⁵⁹ These tales are followed by a group given to life aboard the steamboats and on the landings. It would be well to mention here, too, that these categories are by no means neatly mutually exclusive. "Captain Sopot" and "Passenger Ashore," though grouped in the "River" section, present swindles and could certainly be placed with as much justice in section 1. Similarly, J. M. Field's "Kicking a Yankee" and "A Lyncher's Own Story" are set upon steamboats, but I have placed them in the "Characters" and "Satire" categories respectively because they also share concerns with other tales in those groups. In short, the sections represent loose groupings of tales rather than clearly distinguishable types.

Section 3 includes examples of some of the most uniquely southwestern material in the collection. Here are tales of those half-animal, half-human figures known as ring-tailed roarers. Jake Miller of "Squire Funk's Awful Mistake" is representative of the type: he "was born on a raft, suckled by a squaw, raised on *bar* meat, and . . . made a livin' by threat'nin' everything human with death that cum in his way." The ring-tailed roarer frequently expressed himself in the tall tale, and section 3 includes several of

58. *Humor of the Old Southwest*, xvii.

59. Johnson Jones Hooper, "Simon Plays the 'Snatch' Game," in *Humor of the Old Southwest*, 207.

these, among them one about the greatest roarer of all, Mike Fink. Section 4 turns to a subject that is something of a specialty for the *Reveille* writers, the frontier theater, while the next section contains sketches of eccentric characters, including two of stereotypically shrewd but here also quite violent Yankees. "A Sucker in Search of the Planters' House" conforms to the familiar pattern of bumpkin-in-the-city tales, while "'Solitaire' and a Peter Funk" reverses this pattern by showing the countryman outwitting a set of New York swindlers.

Army life became the subject of a series of tales in the *Reveille* during 1846 as men from all over the South and West formed for service in the Mexican War. Several of these are presented in section 6, along with Solitaire Robb's fine sketch of an old Indian fighter's resourcefulness in getting whisky during a dry time. Western institutions are the subject of satire in section 7. The first two stories of that group, "A Duel in Fairview" and "Valor and Its Better Part," expose the absurdities of the Bloody Code of dueling, while the last two, "A Lyncher's Own Story" and "Popular Entertainments," focus on the frontier violence of lynching and the grotesque fascination with even legal public hangings. Sandwiched between these pairs of stories are one on frontier political discussion, "The Pumpkin Dance," and another on the bogus science of human magnetism. The volume concludes with a set of eight dialect letters by Solitaire Robb, who, through the persona of Bill Sapper, aims to tell his "cusin" about all "the secrets, fun, frolick, and fix-ups" of his settlement.

The humor of the *Reveille*, then, is quite representative of Southwest humor as a whole in its focus on typically masculine activities. In some other ways, the *Reveille* is perhaps less typical, as in its handling of the grotesque and macabre. There is less grotesque or cruel material in the *Reveille*, for instance, than in such writers as George Washington Harris or Henry Clay Lewis. Nevertheless, grotesque and macabre elements are evident not only in the tales devoted to hanging mentioned above, but also in such pieces as "That Last Julep," in which a group of wags are converted to temperance after learning that the juleps they have

been drinking in honor of a departed friend and fellow toper have been made with the ice used to pack his dead body as it awaits burial. Cruelty is also evident in "Bob White's Adventure at Vicksburg," in which a group of men in a bar torture Bob White into repeatedly displaying his strange talent for drawing music from his throat. This tale masterfully moves along the delicate line separating the humorous from the gratuitously cruel. It begins by introducing Bob White, a "strapping Buckeye," as a boorish, egotistical man who is excessively proud of himself in general and of his curious "ventriloquial power" in particular. When a group of roughs in a Vicksburg bar discover Bob's talent, they force him to sing again and again, despite his protestations, by sticking him to the depth of "an eighth or a quarter of an inch" with their dirks. After protesting that there was little he could do to help Bob because of the number of his tormentors, the narrator of the tale registers our own often-ambiguous response to cruelty when it is directed at those whom we dislike: "Bob was in agonies of mental and bodily suffering, yet there was something so ludicrous and comic in this otherwise distressing scene, that, for the life of me, I could not retain my gravity." Some readers of this kind of tale, or of "That Last Julep," will no doubt find them to be in bad taste; others will find in them the honest recognition of the darker and more anarchic impulses of human personality.

Physical comedy marks not only "Bob White's Adventure at Vicksburg" but many of the other stories as well. In "Squire Funk's Awful Mistake," Jake Miller and his fellow roarers avenge themselves on the hypocritical, "soul-shrivelled" old squire by filling him up with soda and dropping a raccoon down his pants. The young man in "Thereby Hangs a Tail" gets the tail of his wedding suit caught in the door of an oyster house at closing time on the night before his marriage. Such physical extravagance, however is more than matched by the extravagance of the vernacular language at its best. It is this extravagance, in Thoreau's sense of being "*without bounds*,"⁶⁰ that we laugh at in Jake Miller's warn

60. *Walden*, in *Walden and Other Writings*, ed. William Howarth (New York: The Modern Library, 1981), 289.

ing to Squire Funk that "he'd jest kill and eat him if he ever caught him on his lot," or in Major Murdock's tribute to whisky: "Well, jest *one* more," says the Major; "I declar I think it war some sech licker that tempted Adam, instid of an apple, as the Scriptur' says. It is all-sufficiently inticin' to tempt a coon out of a holler log ef the dogs wur arter him" ("The Nimble Shilling"). Such language ceases to be merely functional and becomes a form of play, indulged in by the writer, and by those readers who delight in frontier humor, for its own sake.

Satire is one feature of the *Reveille's* humor that deserves special comment. The writing of Joseph M. Field is especially noteworthy for its satiric eye. "Fast on a Bar" wittily exposes the pretensions of Western travelers who think they know the ways of the great rivers; "Tom Harris's Wink" focuses on the absurdity of the great man from a very small town; and "A Fifth Act Resurrection" reflects ironically on the illusions of young actors who feel themselves marked out for greatness. While all of these are light satire, one piece in the collection reveals the darker side of Field's mind. This is "A Lyncher's Own Story," a tale of a mob's lynching an abolitionist who has attempted to lure a slave away from an aristocratic Southern colonel, who narrates the tale. The scene is the social hall of a steamboat, where a group of men are gathered around the stove exchanging their outrage at the abolitionist activities of "Yankee scoundrels." The tale is a true frame story, for Field in his own voice establishes the scene and even announces that it "is not intended, here, to argue, or even comment upon the vexatious question of slavery, but simply to sketch a few features and incidents of southwestern character and adventure." Field himself was certainly not in sympathy with the abolitionists, and the tale makes no comment on slavery, as he promises. But it does comment upon the violence that occasionally erupted in southwestern character and the mob spirit of lynching, which the *Reveille* also denounced in editorials.

The dark satire of the tale is managed mostly through its structure. Field begins by emphasizing the "vindictive phrenzy" and "savage enjoyment" of the men as they share brags and stories of

reprisals taken against abolitionists. They thus stand in stark contrast to the inside narrator, the Colonel, who prides himself on being dispassionate, a bearing he retains throughout his relation of the tale. But the ending of the tale suggests that the Colonel and his frenzied listeners are really brothers after all. The tale climaxes with the hanging of the abolitionist in a particularly novel fashion, one devised by the Colonel and one which he clearly, for all his dispassion, enjoys. After his story's conclusion, he joins too in the general chorus of acclamation. First an especially savage judge exclaims, "Well, that *was* an idea!" This judgment is seconded all round and ultimately confirmed by the Colonel's own final chilling line, "Yes, gentlemen . . . I think, myself, that it *was* a *sweet* idea!"

"A Lyncher's Own Story," then, stands as a significant exception to Kenneth Lynn's thesis about the political dynamics of Southwest humor. Field's Colonel is virtually a parody of the "self-controlled gentleman" whom Lynn identifies as the typical narrator of the Southwest tale. Two points here are crucial: first, that the self-control of Field's Colonel is revealed to be a cheap veneer hiding a savagery that he shares with the folk; and second, that Field chooses to distance himself from both the folk and the Colonel. He neither likes the folk nor admires the Colonel, and the tale moves toward a black condemnation of what Mark Twain called the "damned human race" itself.

John Robb's "Settlement Fun" letters also provide an exception to Lynn's thesis about the political dimensions of Southwest humor. In these letters, there is no cultured, aristocratic voice to stand in contrast to the frontier vernacular of the low characters. Instead, the letters are written in dialect by Bill Sapper to his "cusin." Moreover, Sapper very specifically seeks to locate himself in a kind of middle social position. He judges he is "one of the aireestocracy" but "by *virty* of my sitation, as a western marchint and tradur." And when he begins to brag about how he is "some," he immediately adds: "Howsever I needn't be blowin' up my hasty elevation in this never-stop-growin' republick; it air enough to know that I'm a leetle above tolerable, in the order of human

beins." The widder Dent, who is proud of her descent from the first families of Virginia, favors Sapper, "'cause she says she knows the old man, and he's one of the '*furst families*,' too." But when she specifically advises him not to go hunting and to stick to his store "and save the *pewter*," Sapper acknowledges her friendliness but goes hunting like a backwoodsman: "you know it's necessary to my dog Bob's health, to git exercise; so I had to take him out fur a huntin' spell." Sapper does not want to be anything because his "old man" was; he wants to be regarded as a "leetle above tolerable" in the ever-growing, fluid West. It is useful here to introduce a distinction between the "*border harpy*" and the settler or squatter that Robb makes at length in the Introduction to *Streaks of Squatter Life and Far-West Scenes*. "The future historian of the wilds," Robb writes,

should be careful to distinguish between the actual settler and the *border harpy*. The acts of this latter class have often thrilled the refined mind with horror, and brought condemnation upon the pioneer, while a wide distinction exists between the two characters. The *harpy* is generally some worthless and criminal character, who, having to flee from more populous districts, seeks refuge at the outskirts of civilization, and there preys alike upon the red man and unsuspecting settler. . . . In general, however, the western *squatter* is a free and jovial character, inclined to mirth rather than evil, and when he encounters his fellow man at a barbecue, election, log-rolling, or frolic, he is more disposed to join in a feeling of hilarity on the occasion, than to participate in wrong or outrage. (p. ix)

It is the life of the settler, standing between the aristocracy, on the one hand, and the border harpy, on the other, that Robb's "Settlement Fun" letters depict. If the political dynamics of the Robb letters fail to conform to Lynn's thesis about the politics of Southwest humor, it may be because Robb identifies himself more with the fluid West than with the South, with its older and deeper class distinctions. In any case, the result is a fine comic panorama of life in the settlement, with everyone from the aristocratic "widder

Dent" to the good-for-nothing bottom dweller, Levi Harris, playing his or her part.

Among those who come in for comic treatment in Robb's "Settlement Fun" letters is Deacon White, the subject of Bill Sapper's last epistle and the last story of this volume. After inveighing for many years against such deceiving shows as the circus, the pious Deacon attends what he believes to be a "managgeree" in order to see the elephant. As the show, obviously a circus, unfolds and no elephant appears, the Deacon becomes increasingly distressed and also increasingly the object of ridicule by those in the stands who accuse him of hypocrisy. He calls out repeatedly to "see the elephant," but to no avail. Finally, however, he does see the big animal, only in a different sense. The phrase "seeing the elephant" was a popular one in the Old Southwest, used by Longstreet, for instance, in *Georgia Scenes* to describe a "country yokel's reaction to city sights,"⁶¹ and later coming to stand for disappointment in general. Many characters in Southwest humor "see the elephant": those who are hoaxed, swindled, or "picked up," to borrow John Robb's phrase, those who find reality other than what it has appeared to be. But it is my hope that the big animal does not inhabit the pages of this volume, and that no reader of these pages from the *Reveille* will "see the elephant."

61. On the history of the phrase, see John Q. Anderson, *With the Bark On* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 298. For Longstreet's use of the phrase, see *Georgia Scenes* (1840; reprint, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Literature House/Gregg Press, 1969), 10.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The selections in the present volume all received their initial publication in the *Daily Reveille* between 1844 and 1850. In making my selections, I have been guided primarily by the desire to make available to students of American humor much of the rich comic material buried in the *Reveille's* pages. What this means specifically is that I have chosen here not to reprint pieces that Joseph M. Field or John S. Robb themselves collected. Field's collection, *The Drama in Pokerville*, was republished by Literature House/Gregg Press in 1969; Robb's *Streaks of Squatter Life and Far-West Scenes*, by Scholars' Facsimiles in 1962. Thus both volumes are at least somewhat available at present. Moreover, both will, I hope, soon receive the kind of careful scholarly editing they deserve and be issued in authoritative texts. What I have sought to do for Field and Robb, then, is to produce a scholarly edition of material that will supplement *The Drama in Pokerville* and *Streaks of Squatter Life and Far-West Scenes*. The works of Sol Smith present a slightly different problem, for there are no *Reveille* sketches by Smith that he did not collect in his series of autobiographical volumes, the most complete of which, *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years*, was reissued by Benjamin Blom in 1968. In handling Smith's work, then, I have departed from the policy followed for Field and Robb. Sol Smith's work is vital to the humor of the *Reveille*, and since it has also been my purpose to produce a history of that humor, I have reprinted a selection of Smith's sketches. The stories printed in this volume represent approximately one-fourth of the frontier humor in the *Reveille*. For an annotated bibliography of all the frontier humor in the paper, see my "A Bibliography of Frontier Humor in the St. Louis *Daily Reveille*, 1844-1846," *Studies in American Humor* 3 (1984-1985): 267-89; and "A Bibliography of Frontier Humor in the St. Louis *Daily Reveille*, 1847-1850," *Studies in American Humor* 4 (1985-1986): 262-76.

As no manuscripts of any of the stories have been discovered, copy-text is in each case the first available printing, that of the *Daily Reveille*. A microfilm copy of the *Daily* has served as copy-

text for all selections. These texts have all been read against originals of the *Weekly Reveille*, owned by the Missouri Historical Society, and all variants between the *Daily* and *Weekly* versions have been recorded in the Textual Apparatus (Appendix 2). As Matthew Field, Joseph M. Field, John S. Robb, and some of the minor writers were closely involved with the editing and production of the *Reveille*, it is reasonable to assume that variants between the *Daily* texts and their *Weekly* reprintings may sometimes represent authorial revisions. In point of fact, such revisions are few and quite frequently minor, but they have been incorporated into the copy-text when judged to be authorial. All such emendations are recorded in the Textual Apparatus (Appendix 2). William T. Porter reprinted many of the *Reveille* stories in the *Spirit of the Times*, but these reprintings are without textual authority, for there is no reason to believe that they were in any way authorially supervised. Once again, the texts of Sol Smith's works present a special problem, as these were revised for publication in 1854 for *The Theatrical Journey-Work and Anecdotal Recollections*, and again in 1868 for *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years*. In revising the tales to place them in his larger autobiographical narratives, Smith sometimes makes minor substantive changes. The later versions also reveal considerable house-styling of accidentals. Since my purpose, however, has been to present the texts as they appeared in the *Reveille*, I have followed the same procedure in editing the three Smith stories that I have used elsewhere. The copy-texts are those from the *Daily Reveille*, with emendations from the *Weekly* when these correct obvious errors or represent authorial revisions. I have remarked in the annotations on substantive variants between my texts of Smith's stories and his later revisions for the 1854 and 1868 autobiographies. To record all of the accidental variants between the *Reveille* texts of Smith's stories and the 1854 and 1868 versions, however, would be to list hundreds of differences in house-styling. This I have chosen not to do.

Apart from emending the texts to incorporate authorial revision, I have made a minimum of changes. I have preserved eccen-

tricies of spelling but corrected obvious typographical errors and, in some cases, adjusted the available quotation marks or added quotation marks to improve clarity. All such changes are silent in the text but noted in Appendix 2 as emendations to the copy-text. The *Reveille* did use a variety of type sizes and styles in the titles for the stories; these I have adjusted here to one consistent form. Otherwise I have preserved the oddities of nineteenth-century typography, such as the frequent use of capitals and the heavy sprinkling of italics. The authors of pseudonymous stories are identified in brackets following their pseudonyms. The authors of anonymous stories are similarly identified in brackets when known. When an author has signed pseudonymously only at the end of a tale, the pseudonym appears in brackets with the title as well.

Following each story is the date of its appearance in the *Daily Reveille*. Sources for the annotations are in many cases listed within the annotations themselves; however, I have not listed such general reference works as the *DAB*, *DNB*, and so forth. Appendix 1 is a glossary of dialect words and other unfamiliar expressions. In compiling the glossary, I have found the following volumes most helpful: John Russell Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms*, 3d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1860); Ramon F. Adams, *Western Words: A Dictionary of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968); Sir William A. Craigie and James R. Hulbert, *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938–1944), 4 vols.; and Mitford Mathews, ed., *A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 2 vols.

1
HOAXES
AND
PREDICAMENTS

The Second Advent.

[Matthew C. Field]

"A time, and a time, and a half a time—
Lo, a great time!"¹

Not a great while since, there came, on one of our "bully boats," from New Orleans "up," a crowd of all sorts, and "all sorts of a crowd" it proved to be;—settees at a premium, and *standees* commanding attention; seats at the first table a romantic delusion, and second ditto a matter merely problematical. We will not say that there was any great degree of suffering from *ennui*, notwithstanding, for there were some "good ones" on board and plenty of *ice*; ducks in the river no one could hit; a lovely moon and ample boiler deck; to say nothing of an occasional "saw," and a select library of De Kock novels!² One day, the strangely exciting intelligence was spread around, that a "live Millerite" had just turned up! A real live Millerite! And such, indeed, the stranger proved to be: a small sized, middle aged, transparent-looking gentleman, with a wandering eye, his hair combed back from a fine *slope* of forehead, a white cravat, and a black frock almost as transparent as his complexion. He was by no means backward in proclaiming his opinions, and a handbill was, in consequence, immediately put up at the bar, "Wanted, a Mormon;" but though one was discovered below, among the deck passengers, he was too ill with an ague to confront the *fire worshipper*. Such an opportunity, on board a steamboat, was not to be lost, however, and, at request,

1. This story has been attributed to Matthew C. Field by Grenville Clark King; see "Phazma": A Biography of Matthew C. Field (1812-1844)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1975), 241. The epigraph refers to Revelation 12:14: "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (King James version). The passage, which itself has been adapted from Daniel 7:25, refers to the duration of the Roman persecution, an important calculation in the reckoning of the end of the world by the Millerites, or Second Adventists, who subscribed to the reading of Biblical prophecy advanced by New York farmer William Miller (1782-1849). Miller predicted the physical Second Coming of Christ in 1843; when the Day of Judgment did not appear that year, he revised the prediction for October 22, 1844.

2. Charles Paul de Kock (1794-1871), French novelist of lower-middle-class Parisian life. Among his works were *Georgette* (1820), *Le Barbier de Paris* (1826), and *La Famille Gogo* (1844).

the woe-commissioned one consented to explain his calculations, and establish the proximity of brimstone, immediately after tea. Tea despatched, and all on tip-toe, the bell was rung, chairs were placed for the ladies, &c., when the Millerite appeared from his state-room (one of the berths which a kind young gentleman had surrendered to him in reverence of his calling,) bearing his *chart* and a wand *a la Lardner*!³

The chart was unusually large and awe-inspiring; when tacked up it covered two state-rooms. On one hand glared the figure of the Prophet's Vision, large as life, with its breast of gold and belly of brass, &c., &c.; then came the ram and the goat, the beast, the dragon, and the scarlet lady, with the array of units, tens, hundreds and thousands, fringing the edges mysteriously, as usual. After a rather self-satisfied and familiar request that heaven would open the eyes of the benighted ones around him to a proper fear of the judgment which *might* arrive before morning, the learned lecturer began his explanations. He subtracted the bear from the dragon, added the goat to the beast, multiplied the horns by the legs; which, with the figure's "ten toes," Nebuchadnezzar, Napoleon Buonaparte, and the Clay Convention, gave the year 1844 as clear as mud!⁴

Smoking a cigar—gazing from the boiler deck upon the glorious stars—perhaps pondering upon that mad mass, the human brain—the moments were passed till bedtime, when the less fortunate *at length* lay down—for a pillow, enjoying the gentle inclination afforded by the back of a capsized chair—and so they slept.

3. Dr. Dionysius Lardner (1793–1859) was professor of science at University College, London. He toured the United States and Cuba from 1840 to 1845 with a program combining lectures on scientific subjects with "dissolving views." For an account of his St. Louis engagement with Ludlow and Smith and a description of a typical Lardner program, see William G. B. Carson, *Managers in Distress: The St. Louis Stage, 1840–1844* (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1949), 223–26.

4. William Miller based his calculations of the date of the Second Coming and the destruction of the world by fire largely on King Nebuchadnezzar's dream from Daniel, on Daniel's own visions, and on Revelation. For a synopsis of Miller's calculations, based on prominent numbers used by Daniel in his vision of the end, see Clara Endicott Sears, *Days of Delusion: A Strange Bit of History* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924), 263–64. For a picture of a Millerite chart showing the many symbols of Daniel and John's visions, see *ibid.*, 108.

In the midst of their varied dreams of election bets, Joe Smith,⁵ Elder Knapp,⁶ and pitchforks, all were aroused suddenly by a most singular and startling noise. Fifty heads were popped up from the floor of the now but dimly lighted cabin, state-room doors were opened, there was a protrusion of profiles, and a general enquiry—

“What the devil is that?”

Among the very first, the door of the Millerite was flung open, and he appeared actually in his *ascension robe*, a long white gown reaching to his feet; his face wore a very wild expression, but whether with hope of the “advent” or fear of an explosion, we will not undertake to say. After much guessing, and wondering what the matter was, and a general admission that it was “a strange noise,” the heads began to disappear, when the sound was heard again—as sudden and as startling as before! It was something like an escape of steam, yet steam it certainly was not—a sort of cry—but abrupt—short—a sort of explosion of voice, as if the effort, suddenly checked, had burst the breather’s wind-pipe! In the midst of the natural surprise and conjecture, came a low chant of voices; the forward doors, opening upon the boiler deck, were thrown wide; and a singular spectacle presented itself. A brilliant light streamed in upon the dim cabin, and a number of strange, tall figures, “all in white,” approached along the vista, gliding, as it were, spectre-like, over the mattress-covered floor! Every one was aroused and gazing in mute astonishment; the chant continued, and the figures came on. In their midst walked two, much

5. While living in New York State, Joseph Smith (1805–1844) received from an angel in 1827 a book written in hieroglyphics and later translated as *The Book of Mormon*, the founding scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. After leading his followers to Ohio and Missouri, Smith founded Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1840. In 1843 he had a further revelation authorizing polygamy, which caused a violent conflict between Smith’s followers and non-Mormons that culminated in Smith’s being killed by a mob while he was jailed in Carthage, Illinois.

6. Elder Knapp was apparently a Millerite preacher. He is referred to in a letter of Charles M. Endicott written from Salem, Massachusetts, in 1843 and quoted in Sears, *Days of Delusion*, 112–14. The letter suggests he was a powerful, if crude, agitator, for he made the “very brimstone flavor” of Satan “apparent to the olfactory nerves of many, and they involuntarily shuddered when they looked over their shoulders, lest they should encounter him with his pitchfork, ready to toss them into endless torments.”

taller than the rest, apparently supporting a body of some kind on their shoulders, but what it was no one could tell, for it was also enveloped in a long *white* drapery. On they came, solemnly and slowly, forming at length a semi-circle round the Millerite's door, who regarded them with an eye of intense astonishment. One of the figures now thrust his arm under the cloth which covered the strange object just mentioned, and gave a turn or two, as if winding up an instrument, when instantly came once more that frightful cry, making the Millerite start back into his room. The chant now swelled more loudly, and its burthen became distinguishable:

"Come forth, oh thou elected,
Millennium is nigh;
Let sinners here rejected,
Say now it's all my eye!"

The figure continued his *winding-up* motion, and the strange cries and screams became absolutely ear-splitting; the Millerite endeavored to escape, through the opposite door of his state-room, on to the "guard," when a heavy object fell thundering at his feet, and in the very act of retreating into the air, a *well grown pig* darted between his legs, carried him a few yards triumphantly, and finally disappeared headlong down the stairs leading to the lower deck, bearing off with him a considerable spread of the *ascension robe* which he had stuck his forelegs through!

Of course every body was up and out, but, on their return, the strange pageant had disappeared! The Millerite left the boat next morning; and, singular to say, notwithstanding every possible enquiry, nothing was ascertained as to who the wags were;—they had evidently resolved not to "*say a word about the pig!*"

'Squire Squegle's Twelve.

By Dr. Quid, of Bates.

The "back woods" is the soil for some things, and "some things might as well be done as others," says the veritable *Patch*⁷—and so say most of us, always provided that each thing be done at its proper time, for there is a (proper) time for *all* things. Now, there is a time for *supping on a ghost*. Here's a sketch in proof.

'Squire Squegle, of Bates, had been paternally blest(?) with an even dozen of the gender feminine—Amazons quite—all gracing the old 'Squire's cabin fireside, still blooming and blushing like red stucco on a dutch barn-gable. Oh! the Hebes! the sylphs! As a matter of course, this chime of *belles* was well calculated to "draw crowded houses"—very; and many were the little innocent sentimentalities of those gatherings, to wit: a plump kiss, imprinted with a perfect *galvanic* thrill; a general "roley-boly" over the floor, and sundry undefinable *negotia*—all of which would pass off with a *sans ceremonie* peculiar to the "b'hoys" of the frontier. In a word, the Misses Squegle had nerve for a great many things: they could fell trees, yoke cattle, plant, plough, shuck, grind—could "fetch down" the deer, grill them, barter off the peltries for fineries and a "passel" of the "ballface"—could clatter off a jig to rival Crow himself—could knock down an offender, strip him of his janes; kick him out of doors; give him to the world with a pair of sable eyes—could ride in a mule race, build cabins, flay coons, scalp wolves—and, in fine, they could perform all sorts of *nice accomplishments*—aye, such were the lovely Misses S., and the super-annuated 'Squire's boast was that

"No hoss could scar' his gals, no more thin he could scar' thunder, by the Lebiathint!"

7. Sam Patch (1807–1829) was a daredevil who became nationally famous for diving into rivers from great heights. He was killed diving into the Genesee River. Danforth Marble (1810–1849), prominent Yankee actor, made his reputation playing Sam Patch in a play of the same name written for him. According to theater manager Noah Ludlow, Marble played Patch and other characters throughout the South and West, "generally drawing full houses." See *Dramatic Life as I Found It* (1880; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), 684.

But three or four *discarded* hosses contrived to "larn the 'Squire a sarcomstance or two." They went to work in this wise:

They caught a wild gobler, and picked him to total nudity; then, fitting a piece of beeswax on his head, they put a huge pair of horns on him, and, while the twelve were circled around the fire, rigged out in their finery, patiently awaiting the coming of the expected company, the door was softly opened, and in walked his turkeyship, to *pat* an acquaintance with the "gals."

The fire gone out—a dim light—*tap, tap, tap, tap, tap*, was heard across the puncheon floor! Then, "*plut! plut! plut! plut!—tap, plut! tap, plut!*" All eyes were turned—behold! *Jam satis*. A rush! Alas, the feminine gender! Oh, "the wreck of" fineries, "and the crush" of stools! Sweet chime of *belles*:

"*Murdar!* help! Oh, dad! the devil! Oh, dad! St. Nich'las! *murdar!* he's cotch me! help! Oh, dad! I'm gone! run! shoot! *murdar!*" and such-like chiming was kept up for near ten minutes; and "*plut! plut! plut!*" was a "still *small* voice" among the rest. Dad (the 'Squire) came running from another cabin, where he had "turned in" an hour before. With rifle in hand, the 'Squire threw open the door—the gobler gave a tremendous "*plut!*" which the twelve mistook for *put*, and put they did!—rushing against the door; bang it went into the 'Squire's face—down went the 'Squire—over him rushed the daughters, and old dad was "alone in his—*gory!*"

The alarm spread—the Invincibles were soon on the advance, headed by one Tom Teet, who had Miss Coonine Squegle by the hand; all were armed with axes, clubs, firebrands, etc. The four bold contrivers were in the rear. They came to a general stand, whispering in consultation.

"Come arter me—I'll have him, ef he's the *Belzerybull*—that I will—*follow* arter Tom, and stand like *bars*," says Tom.

At last, near the door, while the breathless company stood, missiles upraised, Tom, stretching his neck, caught a glimpse of the ghost, who was snugly ensconced by the fire. On seeing Tom's red cap peer past the facing of the door, the gobler gave another loud "*plut!*"—Oh, the sight! The whole company—the twelve and

the four authors of the affair excepted—broke for the west, and goodness knows whether they have yet stopped or not.

One of the authors, Joe Tad, taking Miss Foxana's hand, cried:

"Gin me this ar prize, and, by the rollin' arth, I'll captar 'im!"

"I'll do that ar thing—I will, sartin, Joe," said Miss Foxana.

Joe bolted into the cabin and seized the *ghost*. "*Couk, couk, couk, couk,*" went the crittur.

"A gobler, by grief!" roared the crowd; and perhaps a hurrah did'nt follow!

Faces, noses &c., were dressed; all was soon quiet, but no one could guess the author of the mischief.

The next evening was set apart for the feast, and the whole neighborhood came to *sup on the ghost*.

Daily Reveille, March 25, 1847, 2.

June Bugs.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

You hev offen heerd of "June bugs," but I reckon you don't know much about them. What we call June bugs ar *hoss thieves*, and it 'ud a did you good to heerd old Parson Smith tell how his *hoss, Bishop*, sarved that thievin' rascal, Pete Decker, a few nights since, up above the forks. Nuthin' would dash the old varmint, and, afore all the folks, he asked the parson to go up and feed and fodder at his cabin.

"Jest as sure as you go up," ses one, "you'll hev Bishop stolen from you."

"That's what the old varmint is invitin' on you fur," ses anuther.

"Ah, well, children," ansered the old man, "it's among jest sech sinnin', law-breakin' sons of evil I'm commanded to go, fur tha most need the laws and the testimony; so I must go. As fur *Bishop*, I've taken an amazin' site of trouble to train him up in the way he should go, and I predicate these rogues can't git him to depart frum it. I'll gin 'em a trial, howsever"—and, sure enuff, off sot the old parson, with that consarned old rascal, Sam., walkin' along-

side on him, talkin' as nice as the katekism. A slite rain sot in afore tha reached the forks, and both on 'em got a leetle wet.

"Is your son Pete to home now?" asked the parson.

"No," ses Sam., rite suddint; "arter gittin' hissself and daddy a bad name by his tricks, the sarpint went off to Arkinsaw. I did my best by him anyhow."

He sed truth then, 'cause he'd larned him all he knowed about stealin', and that war the best he knew.

"Is thur much desire fur the truth among you?" asked the minister.

"Well," ses old Sam., "we're jest starvin' fur it, fur we aint heerd the *truth* spoken among us fur some time."

The old villin war right thar, fur none in the fork diggins ever spoke truth willinly. Tha got to Sam.'s cabin at last, and a spread of bar skins wur laid on the clay floor fur the parson. Arter tyin' Bishop in a log shed, adjinin' the cabin, and feedin' him, the parson entered the cabin to git suthin' for hissself. Old Sam. wanted him to take a taste of whisky, to keep off the cold; and hevin' insisted on it bein a fust rate preventative, the old parson tuck about a gill in a small gourd, and *washed his feet with it!* Thar aint no doubt that Sam., the old villin, hed put stupefyin' medicin' in the licker; but it hed no effect on the parson's heels, and he war so consarned about Bishop that nither head nor heels 'ud git asleep. Old Sam. and his wife laid down in anuther corner, and pertended to be sleepin' powerful strong; but tha wur actin' 'possum to no purpose, 'cause the parson seed 'em git up on thur elbows and take a site at him, to see ef he moved. Afore long the parson heerd Bishop winnow, and then he sot to pawin', and in a second more he squealed like a *panter*, which he follered up by kickin' like lightnin'.

Sech anuther yellin' of murder, scratchin', kickin' and squealin' jined in now, that you'd thort Satan war payin' old Decker a visit.

"Murder!—consarn the hoss!—murder!"—yelled a fellar in the shed.

"Ye-e-e-e-e——*e! bang!*" went Bishop, in anser.

"What in the yearth's the marter?" inquired old Sam., mountin' to his feet. "Parson! Parson Smith!"

Out run old Decker, and thar he found his son Pete, up in a corner of the shed, and Bishop stretchin' hisself the full length of his halter, and kickin' at him like mad! The old fellar tried to coax the hoss, but Bishop tarned round and flung his heels at him, as spiteful as a catamount. In old Sam. went, now, to the parson:

"Come out, parson!" shouted Sam., "or your consarned hoss'll kill my Pete."

"Murder!—murder!—murder!" shouted Pete.

"Ye-e-e-e—e! bang!"—went the hoss, kickin' like thunder.

"Don't you heer your *devil* of a hoss?" yelled old Sam.

"No," ses the parson, "but I heer my *Bishop*; and I reckon the *bugs* must be troublin' on him."

"He's kickin' like mad at my Pete," ses Sam.

"What, away in Arkinsaw?" asked Parson Smith.

"Oh, Arkin h—ll!" hollored Pete's daddy—"jest cum and save the fellar, will you?"

"Can't travel so fur jest now, Sam., you old villin," ses the preacher.

"Parson," hollers Sam., "save the young fellar, and I'll do anythin' for you."

"You'll never try to steal a parson's hoss," ses the preacher, "nor let Pete do it ither?"

"Never, on this yearth," ses Sam.

"And you'll both git down with me and pray fur forgiveness?"

"Sartain!" ses Sam. The parson went right out, and brought the young villin in. He war a pictur! "I'll declar'," said the old minister, tellin' on it, "ef the boy's har didn't look alive—he war wusser skeert than a trapped fox."

Down tha got, and, arter a lectur' and the parson prayin' for 'em a spell, he put his hand on Pete's head and asked him how he felt.

"Well," ses the varmint, "I feel owdaciously d—n *mean*!"

Tha both swore never to tech his hoss agin, and I speculate tha'll keep thur promis'.

The Man Who Was Looked At.

"There is no speculation in those eyes
That thou dost glare withal."⁸

We were told, lately, the unhappy story of a well known gentleman—"round about west somewhere"—who was alike remarkable for his appetite and his modesty. That modesty is a misfortune, we are well aware; but a good appetite we have always, especially in our own case, regarded as a blessing: in fact we are very seldom "pushed" for want of one, and our sensibility on that point has, probably, led us the more readily to sympathize with an individual whose other weakness, the modesty aforesaid, we must conscientiously condemn. The gentleman, though engaged in business, was too modest to advertise, preferring, infinitely, to catch purchasers by the button, while waiting for the gong to sound, and gently insinuate that there was but one stock in town worth looking at, that his modesty absolutely forbade him to demand any thing above cost, and that, if the truth must be told, his neighbors were very little better than shavers. It is hardly necessary to say, that this modest system of trade tactics made many enemies, out of doors, for people will be envious and unjust; while at the hotel, the unusual but natural consumption at a meal, of a week's viands, by one "day boarder"—natural inasmuch as that his stomach *would stand it*—rendered him just as little a favorite with the landlord, for landlords will have limited ideas on these subjects.

Now, how did the malice of these people manifest itself? They could not stick pins in the unsuspecting one's bed, for he slept in his store; they could not sell him cigars charged with powder, for he always brought his own; the landlord could not succeed with his hints, for the table was too good, and the modesty of his guest too obtuse, to permit them to be taken. At length one of more ingenious wickedness than the rest, hit on a plan; it was at once

8. Cf. "Thou hast no speculation in those eyes / Which thou dost glare with" (*Macbeth*, 3.4.95-96).

adopted, widely organized, and immediately put in effect upon the secure victim.

The crowd was assembled as usual, in the large hall, awaiting dinner; bitters were called for, and Tyler discussed, while our modest friend, as busily as ever, bustled about from button to button, looked hungrily at the door, took a "wine bitters" with a stranger whom he had just succeeded in convincing of his modesty, and, with the first rumble of the gong, precipitated himself into his well-known seat at the table.

Green turtle is a delicacy!—our friend modestly evinced that he so esteemed it; Mackinaw trout is inferior to no salmon swimming—our friend's admiration was unequivocal; but his satisfaction only fully displayed itself over a magnificent plate of veal with kidney, in the midst of which, however, he was rather unpleasantly interrupted by the simultaneous dropping of an under-jaw, a knife, and a fork, immediately opposite to him; and raising his eyes, he found a countenance expressing the most intense amazement fixed full upon his own! This was certainly not exactly *Chesterfieldian*,⁹ and no wonder that a modest man should feel somewhat disconcerted at it; however, the kidney fat was consolingly delicious,—the dinner was resumed, the plate relieved, and the waiter, having received particular instructions with regard to "a little more kidney," again deposited a smoking plate before the man of appetite. A reinforcement of green peas, asparagus, and *smashed* potatoes, with a delicate slice of ham, for a relish, and once more was that delighted man lost in his delicious occupation, when the same unaccountable dropping of knives and forks—on his right—on his left, struck his ear, and, turning on either hand, he encountered faces of the same profound, staring astonishment. This was really annoying—and none the less for that the starers evinced no intentional impertinence; the relaxation of muscle was clearly the effect of a wonderment quite irresistible! Still it *was* annoying—the modest man felt

9. Debonair or urbane; the word derives from the title of Philip Dormer Stanhope (1694-1773), 4th earl of Chesterfield, whose *Letters* to his son gave instruction in good breeding.

that it was—he tried to look unconcernedly, used his napkin—cried “hem” and took a swallow of water; still, those blank, amazed, abstracted features followed him; he crumbled his bread—resumed his knife—raised his fork;—the morsel evidently had lost its relish, those haunting eyes pursued each gesture, till, in an absolute fever of discomfiture, he rose and left the room to seek the landlord, muttering much about “hogs,” and a withdrawal of “patronage.”

The next day his third call for venison was interrupted in the same strange manner, but even more astoundingly: before, beside, along, upward, downward, a blank stare, a mute cessation! It was contagious, it spread from eye to eye, from jaw to jaw, from knife to knife, and from fork to fork. He was a gorgon, a sphinx—wherever he turned he met but the gaze of successive petrifications!

“Good gracious, sir!” said he to the landlord, “I’m a modest man! you know it; it’s unbearable;—I hav’nt eaten a mouthful for two days; it’s shameful!”

“What do they do to you?” inquired the landlord.

“Do! they—they do nothing! they—they—don’t ’tend to their own dinners—they—”

“Well, but,” said the landlord, “that’s their business; I do mine by providing for them, they can let my provisions alone if they like.”

“Yes, certainly—certainly—but—d—m it, if they won’t eat their dinners, they need’nt eat me. I tell you, it’s atrocious! It’s—”

“But what is their offence,” again demanded the imperturbable accomplice.

“Offence, sir!” resumed the almost choking speaker, “I tell you I can’t eat, they take away my stomach, they—they—”

“They what?”

“What! what! why, they sir, *look at me!* all of ’em, sir, as if I had two heads, sir! every mouthful;—as if they’d never seen a Christian chew food before, sir—I’m starving now, sir! If it occurs again, sir, I leave your house, sir!”

Very well satisfied at having worked up the modest man to such

an extreme of desperate determination, the landlord expressed his regret, and hoped that they had now sufficiently acquainted themselves with his physiognomy to render it a subject of less interest on the morrow. To-morrow came, and dinner came, and the crowd came, and the sufferer came, and his third plate came, and a *crash* came; for, even as he uttered the call, down fell every knife and fork, up went every eyebrow, down went every chin, a general hush, an unbroken horror, a vista of dismay; the sweat broke forth on the brow of the marked one, he felt for his hat, (carefully deposited in the back of his chair,) tumbled over, in the effort to reach it, rushed out of the hall, confronted the landlord a moment in an inexpressible torture of agony, rage and despair, shrieked out "*Looking again, Sir!*" and vanished.

That evening a strange figure was seen wandering about town, his hat battered down over his eyes, his coat buttoned over his throat to strangulation, suddenly appearing at corners, as suddenly darting back whenever an eye was directed towards him, turning fiercely, ever and anon, upon pertinacious boys, who insisted upon following his steps, occasionally diving into obscure groceries, savagely swallowing mixed drinks, staggering up against sleeping watchmen, demanding what the d—l they were *looking at?* And, finally, in the depths of a remote eating-cellar, devouring a pan of pork and beans, the curtains closely drawn, and unobserved as he thought; still, in spite of all precautions, attracted by his phrenzied mystery of manner, through a crack in the next box, the ebony caterer was *looking at him!*

Daily Reveille, May 26, 1844, 2.

A Crawfish Story.

[Matthew C. Field]

"Look out for your pockets!"—*Constable's Cry*.

That ancient youth, Izaak Walton, never dreamed that fingers would be used as fish-hooks.¹⁰ We are not sure that our story don't involve quite a new and interesting principle in the art of angling. Of that, gentle reader of the *Reveille*, you shall be the judge.

The flood has left the American bottom, opposite our city, swarming alive with crawfish. One of our jocose steam boat men, a merry, happy-hearted, mischievous wag as ever lived, ripe for any sort of drollery, as ready, at any moment, for a kind or charitable action, happened over there the other day, and the fancy seized him to fill one of the large pockets of his coat with these "fish out of water." Returning to the city, he at once commenced a series of practical jokes upon his acquaintances.—He met a friend on Front street, by whose side he walked about three minutes, when the man suddenly commenced jumping, stamping and hallooing in the street, in a style that astonished the neighborhood for ten blocks round.

"What's the matter? what's the matter with him?" enquired the people, running to the spot with their eyes and mouths at full stretch.

"O-o-oh, Lord! O, Lord!" roared the sufferer, grasping his stomach, and making a frightful contortion of visage.

"My poor friend, what *is* the matter?" said the consummate rogue of a steam boat man, in most distressed accents.

"I don't know," gasped the innocent victim; "O-o-oh, O! something has seized me—here—*here*—O-o! I *don't* know!"

"He's got the *cholera*—never saw a plainer case in my life!" whispered a bystander, to the crowd, hurrying away immediately, with his thumb and fore-finger tightly grasped upon his nostrils. Before night rumor ran that the cholera had broken out suddenly,

10. This story is attributed to Matthew C. Field in King, "Phazma," 293.

with dreadful virulence, thirteen persons having dropped and died in convulsions on the landing; all supposed to be owing to the flood.

The man continuing in great distress, some of the crowd forced him into a store and pulled his waistband open, when a live crawfish, kicking and snapping furiously, was turned out of one of the pockets!

Not ten minutes after this, our hero stood in a well known coffee-room, with another friend, whom he had invited to "join him." The mixtures were prepared, and glasses "touched," when, for a single half instant, a dexterous and delicate manoeuvre on the part of our crawfish friend caused the victim's eye to glance aside, and the thing was done. The glass nearly touched his lips, when his eyes opened in intense horror upon a most appalling, indescribable, limbo-looking, black and frightful, sub-marine, sub-*terrene* monster, floundering and splashing, with intoxicated madness, in the "*ardent!*" The man gazed, as with the sight of twenty eyes, for ten seconds. He dropped the glass on the floor, turned pale as a winding-sheet, rubbed his eyes, that seemed to grow misty, grasped his friend's hand, and shook it without speaking; shook his head mournfully several times, and then suddenly darted like a shot out of the place. Last Sunday he signed the temperance pledge in church, and there is little doubt but he is now a brand snatched from the burning!

Tickled half to death with the mischief, though "keeping a face on" that seemed chiseled out of Missouri marble, the wag next sat down close to another acquaintance, who was perusing a newspaper. Taking up one himself, and pretending to read, he soon contrived to slip a crawfish into his friend's vest pocket, just above his watch. Then, taking out his own watch as if to set it, he said with inevitable innocence of manner:

"Jim, what time have you?"

Jim, without yet removing his eyes from the paper, deliberately thrust his fingers into his pocket for the watch, when, with one sudden bound, and an abrupt and tremendous oath, he sprang from his chair into the middle of the apartment.

Whack! with a furious snap of the fingers, went the fish to the floor, the *impish* looking thing hopping and squirming about in the sand.

"How, in the name of all human nature, did that fresh water devil, that abominable, overgrown black shrimp, get into my pocket?" exclaimed this victim, with one eye on the crawfish and the other squinting suspiciously at his pocket, as if doubtful whether there were not some more of the brood behind.

It was too much. Our hero "just naturally" dropped his marble mask, and broke into shrieks and roars and screams, and roars and screams and shrieks of laughter. Every body present, as well as the last astonished victim, now jumped at once at a conception of the joke, and the noisy merriment became general. As soon as, through absolute exhaustion, a slight pause took place, the *jokee* observed mildly and with admirable gravity:

"Well, gentlemen, *I crawfish!* What will you all take?"

So delighted was every body with the fun, that another experiment was unanimously insisted upon. Now, it did happen that in the neighborhood resided a well known and affectionately esteemed juvenile, who, from some interesting peculiarities and associations in travestie, was sometimes called, by familiars, *Grandfather Whitehead*.¹¹

"The gravity and stillness of his youth
The world had noted."

Our boatman determined to make the *Grandfather crawfish*, or "break a shaft" in the attempt. The doomed man was sent for. Under pretence of desiring some important private communication, about a business affair, the expert messenger, as cool a wag as ever turned a "throttle valve," walked his victim about the streets some ten minutes, until he got him, apparently *par accident*, full and securely in among the conspirators, all looking so dolefully grave and serious, that Mr. Whitehead declares he was at once impressed with the conviction that somebody either had

11. An innocent, childlike old man who is the title character of the play by Mark Lemon, *Grandfather Whitehead* (1842).

been or was just going to be buried! whereas, it was only somebody just going to be *sold*. However, without speaking of this, the Grandfather was drawn into easy and natural conversation, when in walked our hero of the *claws*, with one arm in a sling, and the other hand bandaged up bigger than a boxing glove!

"Why, Cub, what's the matter?" said Grandfather Whitehead, "has the gout struck up through your thumbs?"

"O, don't ask me," said Cub, in a half peevish, half good natured manner; "infernial erysipelas, my boy; can't even help myself to a chew of tobacco!"

"Let me give you a chew of mine, Cub."

"No, *no!* no *Sir!* I never chew but one kind. But, here, you venerable juvenile, you can put your hand in my pocket and give me a chew of my own, if you like. You'll find it down at the bottom, there. D—n the erysipelas!"

The remorseless villain had fifty full-grown, live and hungry, desperate and furious, jumping, thumping, fighting, biting, kicking, and snapping crawfish in the bottom of his vast receptacle of portables!

"Certainly, my dear boy," said the innocent *padre*, and down went his right hand into Cub's left-hand coat pocket.

It will not be disputed that the Grandfather had the usual number of *digits*, nor can it be questioned that a quintuple number of crawfish instantaneously attached themselves thereto!

There was a frightful and most indescribable cry! Out flew the hand, with all its gripping *attaches*, like an exploding grenade, and twenty-five live black things went flying in all directions around the room. Such an extraordinary caper as Mr. Whitehead cut, we are satisfied, was never equalled by Klischnig,¹² the contortionist, Gabriel Ravel,¹³ Hervio Nano,¹⁴ or Herr Kline.¹⁵ Then ensued a scene *unseen* before outside of limbo. Every man was on his feet

12. George Odell mentions a dancer Klischnig who appeared in such roles as "Gig-Gig, or, the Frog, the Tiger and the Sapajou." See *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), 4:416.

13. Gabriel Ravel (b. 1810) was one of a family of French gymnasts, ropedancers, and pantomimists who were widely popular in America.

in an instant. No; some, we verily believe, stood on their heads! There rose a roar—another—again—louder—shriller—wilder—they jumped, they yelled, they rolled on the floor, they screamed, *they bestowed their hats*, “they sawed their legs off,” they formed a ring, they danced a dance to astonish Yahoos or Mandans. The “head devil” jumped into the middle, with such a pigeon-wing as will never be seen again, shouting:

Hi, O, de boatman row,
Crawfish catch old daddy so!
Hi! hi! hi! *whoop!*

The “Tontine” man jumped on his counter and screamed to them, as they revered the neighborhood of the Gazette office and “Hat,” not to go on so!

“Gentlemen,” said Grandfather Whitehead, “allow me the pleasure of ‘something’ with everybody. *I crawfish.*”

Cautionary.—Look out for your own pockets!—and keep your fingers out of other peoples’!

Daily Reveille, August 4, 1844, 2.

Puss-Eyeism vs. Mormonism.

[By Mums-The-Word]

Messieurs Editors of the Reveille.

You have never heard me tell of a practical joke I once saw played off upon an itinerant Mormon preacher.

Well, it was while I was travelling through Illinois, last Winter, that I stopped at a village one Sunday evening, and put up at a

14. Hervio Nano was the stage name of Harvey Leach (1804–1847), who performed remarkable feats of strength and agility and played such figures as the Gnome Fly, Sapa-jou, a baboon, and an orangutan. Leach was deformed from birth, with a body of normal size except for legs the size of a two-year-old child’s. From Joseph N. Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage from 1750 to 1860* (1866; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), 2:318–19.

15. Herr Cline, equilibrist, performed on the *corde elastique* in many American cities. Though London born, he preferred to be known as Seiltanzer Herr Cline.

tavern with the intention of staying all night. Here I met an old acquaintance, who among other things informed me, that a Mormon preacher would hold forth in the school-room that night, and if I chose to go I might expect to see some fun.

"You must know," said he, "that we of this place have no great love for the Mormons, and least of all for this preacher, who is not generally believed to be much better than he should be. A number of us young fellows have, accordingly, laid our heads together to play a trick upon him. The plan is this:—twenty of us have each provided ourselves with a thundering big tom-cat; each cat is to be shod round with walnut shells, and provided with a mask having phosphorus eyes, and long teeth smeared with the same stuff. Said cats will be provided, too, with a coat of quills, something like the porcupine, and a pair of wings like the devil. Thus equipped we will carry them under our cloaks, and keep them there, taking care to hold their mouths shut until a given signal, when every man drops his cat—and then, '*clar de kitchen!*' "

When we arrived at the school-house, we found the Reverend gentleman sitting at a table, which was to serve him as a pulpit, looking the very picture of a Saint—especially about his nose, which seemed to burn with zeal for the good cause. His Saintship presently rose, and proceeded to inform the unbelieving portion of his audience, of the certainty that they would every one of them be everlastingly damned, if they did not immediately embrace Mormonism, and become, like him, a *Saint!* The congregation were very attentive, some of them serious, and all curious. The preacher was becoming very eloquent, his bottle nose seemed to be on fire, and every pimple on his face glowed with enthusiasm, when the signal was given, and down came the cats, like a hail storm! The bottle nose turned pale, and its owner paused, while the audience stared at the winged beasts and thought their hour was come. Somebody threw a hat at the candle and knocked it out; and then it was that the long teeth of the new comers shone, and their saucer-eyes glared like burning coals;—nor were they quite so still as decently-behaved Christians should be, but commenced an immediate warfare, and set up a yelling, the like of which was

never heard in a church before, and clattered about making as much noise as a troop of horses. The house was too hot to hold the audience, and a general rush was made, helter skelter, for the door, tumbling and rolling over each other, over the benches, and screeching and shouting like Bedlamites, until they had rolled themselves out, thanking Providence for their deliverance, and scampering home as if the devil was at their heels!

As for the preacher, he was neither seen nor heard of afterwards. Some boldly asserted that they saw the imps fly away with him bodily; a few, however, shrewdly suspected that the Reverend gentleman had interpreted the matter as a "*revelation*," warning him to return as soon as possible to Nauvoo!¹⁶

MUMS-THE-WORD.

Daily Reveille, June 26, 1845, 2.

Dropping the Subject.

By John Brown. [Richard S. Elliott]

I have already alluded to the "Fourth of July in Fairview;"¹⁷ and I may here say, once for all, that however obscure that unpretending village may be considered, it nevertheless has witnessed scenes and incidents of its own; and its unwritten annals merit an abler pen than mine, as I cannot pretend to do justice to all the distinguished characters who have illustrated its living history.

Among these was Dr. Jenkins. The Doctor was an odd character in his "walk and conversation"—I mean his moral, and not his locomotive "walk," although the latter was odd enough too;—and he was, besides, one of the richest men in the village, or, indeed, in the county; for he was reputed so knowing in his profession, that every body had *faith* in his prescriptions, and great cures

16. Nauvoo, Illinois, founded by Joseph Smith as a Mormon settlement.

17. "Fourth of July in Fairview," *Daily Reveille*, August 19, 1845, 1-2.

were effected by them, even when his pills contained little else than wheat flour and cherry bark.

Few were the failings of the doctor, but among them was overweening fondness for the *fair sex*. This, however, is "neither here nor there," as the saying is; for it has nothing to do with the present story; and I only allude to it now, to suggest the inference, that some of the ladies may have reciprocated by an equal fondness for him; of which, in fact, it was said there were living evidences, that scandal could point its finger at, if it chose to do so.

Together with other distinctions in his profession, the doctor was accounted the greatest *anatomist* in that section of the State; and he had an out lot just north of the village, on which he had erected a strange looking building, with an iron-bound door, and sky-lights—the whole a most mysterious edifice. What this building was for, every boy knew well enough; but they all looked grave when they spoke of it, and told long stories of the time "when black Tom was hung for killing his master's wife's aunt Polly, and stealing all her money;" for the truth was, reader, that Tom had been *DISSECTED* in that very building, and his skeleton was kept in a fixture of the doctor's shop for many a day thereafter. I've seen its naked bones, and fleshless jaws, and empty, eyeless sockets, many a time myself—and though it stood, or hung, in an old clock case, yet the whole village *felt* that it must be there, and some looked fearfully and shuddered, as they passed by the door. Ah! it takes a stout heart, after all, to look unmoved on the frame work of us mortal men, denuded of the flesh, and nerve, and muscle, which make up our fair proportions! The ghastly grin of black Tom's jaws, in the old clock case, is fadeless on my memory.

About the time of which I write, it happened that a poor fellow—one Jim Davis—who had no relatives in the town, fell into the mill-dam one evening, when setting a net for fish, and was drowned. The next day the dam was drawn, the body recovered, and a decent burial given to it; and most of the good people of Fairview were fast becoming oblivious of his fate. But not so with the worthy Doctor. *He* had two students, and the body of the

drowned man, if it could be procured, would be a perfect wind-fall in aid of their studies. "Ah," thought the Doctor, "little do the uninitiated know of the necessities of science!"

Dr. Jenkins had a house—the best in the village; and he had wine in the cellar—good old wine—and brandy of approved excellence. He had his dining room well furnished, too—lots of china ware in the side-board, and of glass ware on it. Few equals had that dining room in Fairview.

Couldn't Dr. Jenkins invite a few young men to spend an evening with him—that evening, in particular, on which Jim Davis had been buried? Didn't he do it? Didn't they come? Didn't they eat oysters? Didn't they drink wine and brandy? To be sure they did; and the raw winds of a night in October whistled vainly outside; for the Doctor made his friends happy—and they were brave, too, not excepting the two students of anatomy, who were present at the entertainment, and who scrupled not, at the appointed time, to introduce a conversation on professional topics.

"Let us drink again, gentlemen," said the Doctor, pushing around the brandy bottle.

"Bob," said one student to the other, aside, "I wonder if *Old Pills* wouldn't like to have Jim Davis' carcass?"

"Yes," replied the associate hopeful youth—"and I'd be glad to have it too—capital subject to take lessons on."

"Not quite so *capital* a subject as if the fellow had been *hung*," rejoined the first speaker, while Bob was convulsed by the execrable pun of his associate—"but he'll *do* for all, and I'd like to joint him—dem'd if I wouldn't!"

"I say," said Bob, "let's speak to *Old Pills* about it."

"Agreed," was the reply; and Dr. Jenkins was called apart. Some of the company seeing the trio in conversation, on what seemed to be a subject of importance, naturally desired to know what the subject was, and were just sufficiently *exhilarated* to inquire.

"A wild freak of these young gentlemen," replied the doctor, (who was irreverently called "*Old Pills*," by the students, when his back was turned.)

"What kind of a freak, doctor?"

"Oh, they want to take a lesson in dissection, and, in fact, nothing improves a student so rapidly as experience of that kind. It is, I may say, essential."

By this time, the attention of the whole company was arrested, and Charley Patterson, about the *highest* among them, said he "could tell the young fellows dev'lish well where they could find something to try their knives on."

"Where?" inquired the doctor, with a face of becoming gravity and innocence.

"That fellow who was buried to-day; he's got no friends. We'll take him up—d——d if we don't, this very night!" replied Charley.

"*Im-possible!*" said the doctor, while the two students began to put on looks of seriousness, appropriate to the solemn occasion.

"I say it is *not* impossible!" replied Charley. "We'll do it!—fill up, boys; let's drink success to the resurrection of Jim Davis!"

The doctor himself poured out the brandy—"resurrection of Jim Davis" was echoed round the table—and the glasses were duly emptied.

"You see," pursued Mr. Patterson, "I'm a perfect TOM-TIT; I understand these things—I do. We'll dig him up, and take him to the doctor's little anatomy chapel—you needn't deny it doctor—we all know what that building's for; it's a *temple of science*. Here's success to science!" he continued, filling up again and emptying his glass—an operation which was very promptly repeated by the others—while a twinkle of the crow's-foot at each eye, showed that Dr. Jenkins was delighted to find his scheme and his good cheer working so well.

"But," said the doctor, "the difficulties"—

"None in the world," said Charley.

"None whatever," chimed in the rest.

"We should like it of all things!" broke in the students.

"Well, gentlemen, if you really desire an adventure of this kind," said the doctor, "I do not know that I ought to object. My two students"—

"We all understand you, doctor, *perfectly*," interrupted Char-

ley—"PERFECTLY. You need'nt explain. 'A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse,' you know, doctor—eh?—and *we* see double—don't we? Ha! ha! ha!"

And the whole company chorussed this desperate joke; while one of the students quietly suggested to the doctor the propriety of "hooking" a bier for the occasion, from Enoch Slim, who embraced in his single person the characters of cabinet-maker and undertaker of the village.

"It is an excellent idea," said the doctor, "and fully justified by the wants of medical science."

Accordingly, the scheme was discussed with great freedom—the necessity of the step fully admitted—its propriety justified—and arrangements made to carry it into execution. The doctor was to proceed with his instruments and a trusty servant to the small building in the outlot, and there prepare a fire, lights, and so on; while the rest of the party were to exhume the body, and transport it to him there on Enoch Slim's bier. These arrangements were in part carried into effect; for the doctor repaired to his lonely edifice, and the others took their way to the graveyard.

"There's the timber," said Charley Patterson, as the spade touched the coffin-lid, "but don't speak, now, any of you, or he'll turn over on his face, and go down!"

"I'd speak of that!" said one of the students, incredulously.

"Take care with your spade," said the other, "and don't break the lid—we must put the coffin back again."

When the coffin was raised, the body was carefully taken out, in its winding sheet, and laid on the bier; after which the coffin was lowered to its place, and the grave filled up.

"First resurrection ever *I* witnessed," said Charley, soliloquizingly, as four of the company lifted the bier to their shoulders—"but I have no objection to walk at his head—though it's a sort of posthumous compliment, a supplementary honor, that poor Jim never expected of *me*."

As it was a good long walk from the graveyard to the doctor's "temple of science"—they being located at different sides of the village—and as the whole town was doubtless sound asleep, the

party decided to take their way through the dark alley which ran past the doctor's garden, and which would thus afford them an opportunity to taste his liquors again. Their absorbent faculties having been stimulated by exercise and the night air, they stopped when opposite the doctor's dwelling, and setting down the bier and its burthen, (which were confidingly left in the alley,) they slipped through the postern gate of the garden, to seek the well furnished side-board in the dining-room.

Now, there were rakes and wags in Fairview as well as any place else; and it happened that Bill Turner, (an apt representative of both these classes) had been out on a nocturnal perambulation, and had seen the students "hooking" the bier from Mr. Slim's carriage house—upon which he had conceived a suspicion that led him to keep an eye upon them, until he saw the whole party shape their course to the graveyard. He also watched them as they returned—though at a respectful distance—and saw them leave the bier in the alley, while they sought the "refreshments" of the sideboard.

In about half an hour the *resurrectioners* emerged from the gate, and took up their bier to proceed on their way—their "winding way" it proved to be, as they lurched from one side of the alley to the other.

"Don't you feel conscientious, boys?" inquired Mr. Patterson, from the rear of the *dead man's* head, in a voice which seemed to come from among oysters, swamped in brandy.

"No—who's afraid?" rejoined one of the students.

"It's hard on one's muscles, though, that ain't used to it," said Bob.

"He's as heavy as a sack of salt," remarked another of the carriers.

"For *my* part," said the fellow at the northeast corner, who seemed to be considerably *fatigued*—"I'm dev'lish tired of the job—but we'll go through with it now."

"Yes, d—d if we don't!" was the encouraging observation of Mr. Patterson.

"WELL, GENTLEMEN," said a sepulchral voice under the winding

sheet, as the body began to rise to a sitting posture—"IF YOU PUT ME DOWN, I'LL WALK!!!"

Quick as thought, *the subject was dropped*; the carriers scattered impulsively, and much were the good people of Fairview astonished, when Enoch Slim's bier was found in the alley next morning, the legs about a foot deep in the mud, and Jim Davis's body in a stable, across the alley from Dr. Jenkins' garden gate; while Bill Turner declared, that, altogether, it *was* the most mysterious circumstance he ever heard of, "in all his life *time*."

Daily Reveille, October 5, 1845, 1-2.

Speculation in Whiskers; Or, Shaving in a Broker's Office.

By Sol. Smith.

There lived in Milledgeville,¹⁸ in 1832, a dandified individual whom we will call JENKS. This individual had a tolerably favorable opinion of his personal appearance. His fingers were hooped with rings, and his shirt bosom was decked with a magnificent breast pin; coat, hat, vest and boots were made exactly to fit; he wore kid gloves of remarkable whiteness; his hair was oiled and dressed in the latest and best style; and, to complete his killing appearance, he sported an enormous pair of REAL WHISKERS! Of these whiskers, Jenks was as proud as a young cat is of her tail when she first discovers she has one.

I was sitting one day in a broker's office, when Jenks came in to inquire the price of exchange on New York. He was invited to sit down, and a cigar was offered him. Conversation turning on the subject of buying and selling stocks, a remark was made by a

18. Both the 1854 and 1868 versions of the story read "Macon" for "Milledgeville." These versions are in *The Theatrical Journey-Work and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol. Smith, Comedian, Attorney at Law, etc., etc.* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1854) and *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1868; reprint, Benjamin Blom, 1968). These volumes will henceforth be designated as TJW and TM.

gentleman present, that he thought no person should sell out stock in such-and-such a bank at that time, as it *must* get better in a few days.

"I will sell *any* thing I've got, if I can make any thing on it," remarked¹⁹ Jenks.

"Oh, no," replied one, "not *anything*; you wouldn't sell your WHISKERS!"

A loud laugh followed this chance remark. Jenks immediately answered: "I would—but who would *want* them? Any person making the purchase would lose money by the operation, I'm thinking."

"Well," I observed, "I would be willing to take the speculation, if the price could be made reasonable."

"Oh, I'll sell 'em cheap," answered Jenks, winking at the gentlemen present.

"What do you call cheap?" I inquired.

"I'll sell 'em for fifty dollars," Jenks answered, puffing forth a cloud of smoke across the counter, and repeating the wink.

"Well, that *is* cheap; and you'll sell your whiskers for fifty dollars?"

"I will."

"Both of them?"

"Both of them."

"I'll *take them!* When can I have them?"

"Any time you choose to call for them."

"Very well—they're mine. I think I shall double my money on them, at least."

I took a bill of sale, as follows:

"Received of Sol. Smith *FIFTY DOLLARS* in full for my crop of whiskers, to be worn and taken care of by me, and delivered to him when called for.

J. JENKS."

The sum of fifty dollars was paid, and Jenks left the broker's office in high glee, flourishing five Central Bank X's, and telling

19. TJW and TM read "replied" for "remarked."

all his acquaintances of the great bargain he had made in the sale of his whiskers.

The broker and his friends laughed at me for being taken in so nicely. "Never mind," said I, "let those laugh that win; I'll make a profit out of those whiskers, depend on it."

For a month²⁰ after this, whenever I met Jenks, he asked me when I intended to call for my whiskers?

"I'll let you know when I want them," was always my answer. "Take good care of them—oil them occasionally; I shall call for them one of these days."

A splendid ball was to be given to the members of the Legislature.²¹ I ascertained that Jenks was to be one of the managers—he being a great ladies' man, (on account of his whiskers, I suppose,) and it occurred to me that before the ball took place, I might as well call for my whiskers.

One morning I met Jenks in a barber's shop. He was adonizing before a large mirror, and combing up my whiskers at a devil of a rate.

"Ah! there you are, old fellow," said he, speaking to my reflection in the glass. "Come for your whiskers, I suppose?"

"Oh, no hurry," I replied, as I sat down for a shave.

"Always ready, you know," he answered, giving a final tie to his cravat.

"Come to think of it," I said, musingly, as the barber began to put the lather on my face, "Perhaps now would be as good a time as another; you *may* sit down and let the barber try his hand at the whiskers."

"You couldn't wait until to-morrow, could you?" he asked, hesitatingly. "There's a *ball* to-night, you know—"

"To be sure there is, and I think you ought to go with a clean face; at all events I don't see any reason why you should expect to wear *my* whiskers to that ball; so sit down."

He rather sulkily obeyed, and in a few moments his cheeks were in a perfect foam of lather. The barber flourished his razor,

20. TJW and TM read "a week" for "a month."

21. In TJW and TM, this sentence concludes with "given."

and was about to commence operations, when I suddenly *changed my mind!*

"Stop, Mr. Barber," I said; "you needn't shave off those whiskers just yet." So he quietly²² put up his razor, while Jenks started up from the chair in something very much resembling a passion.

"This is trifling!" he exclaimed. "You have claimed your whiskers—take them."

"I believe a man has a right to do as he pleases with his own property," I remarked, and left Jenks washing his face.

At dinner that day the conversation turned upon the whisker affair. It seems the whole town had got wind of it, and Jenks could not walk the streets without the remark being continually made by the boys—"There goes the man with old Sol's whiskers!" And they had grown to an immense size, for he dared not trim them. In short I became convinced Jenks was waiting very impatiently for me to assert my rights in the property. It happened that several of the party were sitting opposite me at dinner who were present when the singular bargain was made, and they all urged me to *take the whiskers* that very day, and thus compel Jenks to go to the ball whiskerless, or stay at home. I agreed with them it *was* about time to *reap my crop*, and promised that if they would all meet me at the broker's shop where the purchase had been made, I would make a call on Jenks that evening, after he had dressed for the ball. All promised to be present at the proposed *shaving operation* in the broker's office, and I sent for Jenks and the barber. On the appearance of Jenks it was evident he was much vexed at the sudden call upon him, and his vexation was certainly not lessened when he saw the broker's office was filled to overflowing by spectators anxious to behold the barberous proceeding.

"Come, be in a hurry," he said, as he took a seat, and leaned his head against the counter for support, "I can't stay here long; several ladies are waiting for me to escort them to the ball."

"True, very true—you are one of the managers—I recollect. Mr. Barber, don't detain the gentleman—go to work at once."

22. TM reads "quickly" for "quietly."

The lathering was soon over, and with about three strokes of the razor, *one side of his face was deprived of its ornament.*

"Come, come," said Jenks, "push ahead—there is no time to be lost—let the gentleman have his whiskers—he is impatient."

"Not at all," I replied coolly, "I'm in no sort of a hurry, myself—and now I think of it, as *your* time must be precious at this particular time, several ladies being in waiting for you to escort them to the ball, I believe *I'll not take the other whisker to-night.*"

A loud laugh from the by-standers and a glance in the mirror, caused Jenks to open his eyes to the ludicrous appearance he cut with his single whisker, and he began to insist upon my taking *the whole of my property!* But all wouldn't do. I had a right to take it when I chose—*I was not obliged to take all at once;* and I chose to take but *half* at that particular period—indeed I intimated to him very plainly that I was not going to be a very hard creditor; and that if he "behaved himself," perhaps I should *never* call for the balance of what he owed me!

When Jenks became convinced I was determined not to take the remaining whisker, he began, amidst the loudly expressed mirth of the crowd, to propose terms of compromise—first offering me ten dollars, then twenty, thirty, forty—fifty! to take off the remaining whisker. I said firmly, "My dear sir, there is no use talking; I insist on your wearing that whisker for me for a month or two."

"What will you take for the whiskers?" he at length asked. "Won't you sell them back to me?"

"Ah," replied I, "now you begin to talk as a business man should. Yes, I bought them on speculation—I'll sell them if I can obtain a good price."

"What is your price?"

"One hundred dollars—*must* double my money."

"Nothing less?"

"Not a farthing less—and I'm not anxious to sell even at *that* price."

"Well, I'll take them," he groaned, "there's your money; and here, barber, shave off this d--d infernal whisker in less than no time—I shall be late at the ball."

The barber accomplished his work, and poor Jenks was whisperless! Jenks went to the ball, but before the night was over, *he wished he hadn't*——****23

Daily Reveille, June 22, 1847, 1-2.

"That Last Julep!"

A Short Temperance Story!

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

Not many years since, in one of our Mississippi river cities, the landlord of a noted hotel, in spite of the good fare served upon his table, took an aversion to his food, and, confining himself to the *fluid* exclusively, drank himself clearly out of existence. He was a jolly specimen of a publican, and had endeared himself, in his latter days, to a couple of prodigal young boarders, by frequently inviting them to share in what he called "a comfortable carouse." These little re-unions, as we before stated, were brought to a close by the principal suddenly dropping out of the set, and being no longer able to "stand up" to his share of the liquor. The deceased's wife being absent from the city, his friends comfortably packed him in *ice* for preservation until her return. The feelings of the hopeful young convivialists were sadly shocked at the idea of sojourning in the same house with the inanimate body of their regretted companion. It was all well enough when he was able to stand the liquor, and drink his share of it, but the thought of his being packed away in such cold quarters made them shiver with a strange apprehension which even brandy failed to dissipate. They had, nightly, to pass the room where the body lay to reach their own, and every time they were forced to do so the feeling of horror grew stronger, until at length the sad example of the deceased landlord began to have its effect in winning them to temperance. At length the wife arrived, and the publican was consigned to his long home, but we regret to

23. TJW and TM omit this last paragraph.

add that with his departure the desire for another "comfortable carouse" began to manifest itself.

"Only one more, Bill," said the eldest, "just by way of a *wake* for the old fellow—he deserves as much from us to his memory—and then it shall be an understood thing that we *quit!*"

The last little party was agreed upon, a few good fellows were invited, and on the night succeeding the burial they assembled in a room but a few doors from the former apartment of their dead host.

"What say you to *juleps*, boys?" inquired Bill.

"Considering the state of the weather, we *will* go *juleps*," said a guest—"juleps all round!"

"Hurrah for *cooling drinks!*" echoed the whole party.

Sam., a negro servant, was summoned, and a positive order issued forthwith for all the concomitants necessary to make a good julep. The brandy came, then the rum, then the mint—fresh from the earth—then the sugar—

"Now, Sam., the *ice*," was the next call, and off started their attentive waiter. He soon returned with a towel full of the material, broken up fine, and in proper order, and straight the revel begun. The juleps were delicious, and with sleeves rolled up, shirt collars open, and straws in hand, they went into them with a perfect gusto. Song, toast and sentiment carried them gloriously into the "few short hours," by which time they were all getting rather *comfortable*.

"Here is hoping our old host has, before this, experienced a '*comfortable*' change from his '*ice box*,'" roared one of the prodigals.

"A little *more* ice, Sam.!" shouted another; "we want enough to make a parting drink." Sam. vanished.

"Boys, what do you say to holding a little *pow-wow* around the old fellow's last tub? Come, we will wake his old '*cold quarters*' with what he used to call a '*comfortable carouse*,' just to lay his *spirit*, and keep it from searching about after nocturnal drinks."

This proposition met with a shout of approval, and, glasses in hand, they proceeded in procession to the ice box chamber, into which they burst, singing—

"Oh, aint you coming *b-a-c-k*, Stephen?"

What was their affright and horror, on fairly entering the chamber, to see a dark figure, with hammer in hand, seated inside of the recent receptacle of the deceased. A light perched upon one end of the box cast a glimmer upon the ice inside, which was reflected in numerous pale streaks upon the dark figure and the wall beyond. Of course the first impulse was to retreat, but a familiar voice arrested their footsteps:

"What de debil is de matter, gemmen?" inquired Sam., from the tub.

There was a pause, and then the inquiry—

"What the d—l are you doing there, you black rascal?"

"Poundin' you some ice for dat lass julep!"

"What? Ah! Oh—o—o—o-ugh!"

"Misses tole me, gemmen, to use dis up fust, kase de article is scace dis season!"

A shower of pint tumblers, ice, mixed juleps and all, saluted the darky on this announcement. He kicked over the light, and with heaving stomachs the revellers hunted for the dark cause of their nausea to *use* him up; but in the struggle he escaped, and the uncertain movements of the party brought them into several collisions before they found out they were pounding the wrong customer.

It is almost unnecessary to add that this last "comfortable carouse," made a few sons of temperance. Bill, ever since, insists upon taking "warm drinks," to avoid even the possibility of there being in his fluids a particle of *second-handed ice!*

Daily Reveille, November 26, 1847, 2.

An Incident Before Marriage.

"*Thereby hangs a tail!*"²⁴

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

Walker's celebrated exchange, in Louisville, is the favorite resort of the citizens of that burg—and its gentlemanly proprietor enjoys a

24. The phrase "Thereby hangs a tale" occurs several times in Shakespeare; see, e.g., *As You Like It*, 2.7.28.

popularity there, which would almost elect him Governor of the State, if he would but consent to run for the office. Strangers, of course go to Walker's, and he takes them in, but sometimes he puts them out—a case of the latter kind was related to us the other day, which deserves to be chronicled.

A young gentleman arrived in L., about two weeks since, on a matrimonial visit, and, of course he donned his best suit to visit his *doxy*. He made his call, arranged all the preliminaries, passed a delightful afternoon and evening, sipped a honeyed kiss from the lips of his fair inamorata at parting, and started down to his lodgings at the Galt house. The wedding was set for the next day, and the happy young dog tripped along, so buoyed up by anticipation, that you would have guessed, to have seen him, that he had, mercury-like, wings to his heels. On his way down he observed that the light was still burning in "Walker's," and the large placard at the door, of "*fresh oysters in the shell*," was too tempting an invitation, at that interesting period, to be stoically passed by, so he thought he would just step in and taste a dozen, by way of invigorating his dreams. He entered, a dozen was called for, served, tasted, and washed down with a glass of the proprietor's choice madeira. The general good feeling of the young stranger was measurably heightened! He turned to leave, and, as he was the last customer, the barkeeper followed him to the door, to lock it after him. At that moment a jolly crowd came around the corner, singing: "Picayune Butler's come to town."²⁵

The barkeeper knowing the crowd was making for W's, and it being already after midnight, he desired to shut them out, so he politely hurried the young stranger through the door, slammed it to, locked it, put the bar across, and retreated with his lamp up stairs. Presently there was a tremendous rapping at the front door, but the barkeeper, satisfied that it was the noisy company he had barred out, rolled himself up in the quilts, and turned over to take his "winks."

25. "Picayune Butler" was an African-American song; for a full score of it, see Carl Sandburg, *New American Songbag* (New York: Broadcast Music, 1950), 37.

"Jim, will you open this door, you *d--n* fool!" shouted one of the crowd, with stentorian lungs.

"I aint no *such* fool," grumbled Jim, as he pulled the covering tighter around him.

"*Will* you open this *d-o-o-r*?" was yelled again.

"*I wont*—that's flat," growled Jim to himself, in answer, and off he dropped into the land of dreams. He slept as it might be supposed a soldier would, who was listening to the storming of Chapultepec.²⁶

An amusing scene was transpiring all this time on the outside. The young stranger, in hastily passing through the portal, brushed up one of the tails of his new coat, and the barkeeper in shutting one half the door securely fastened the coat tail in the opening. Supposing, of course, that he would observe it, and instantly release him, he stood still, quietly, for a moment, and the noisy party surrounded him.

"Stand aside, stranger, and let us in," said the foremost of the party.

"I would like to do so, gentlemen," was the reply, "if I could, but upon my word, just at present, I am unable to comply."

"Well, we'll help you," said another, and seizing him by the arm, he slung him, minus the coat tail, out upon the pavement.

Here was a very fine opening for a small fight—but one of the party perceiving the difficulty at a glance, interfered with a thousand apologies for his impetuous friend, stated that the torn garment should be paid for, &c., and offered to lend him his own coat until the morning. This destruction of the wedding garment was very unfortunate, and the young stranger lost temper at the idea of his being so awkwardly fastened to the door by the barkeeper, but what was his further horror, to find that a package of money, amounting to \$500, intended to bear the expenses of himself and bride to her future home, was in the coat-tail pocket, and like it, fast in the door. He did not exactly know whether it was prudent to let

26. Chapultepec is a rocky eminence close to Mexico City; the castle there was stormed by American troops under Generals Gideon Pillow and John Anthony Quitman on September 13, 1847.

the present crowd into a knowledge of the fact, that such an amount was in the pocket, but to get the door open, he told them that his *marriage certificate* was in the wedged-up coat-tail. On this announcement, all vowed they would rescue the precious document, or tear the tails of their combined under garments in the effort, and accordingly they assailed the barred portal in a mass. They were preparing to follow up their fruitless efforts of assault with feet and fists, by substituting an awning post for a battering ram, when a watchman interfered, inquired the cause of trouble, and volunteered to visit the rear of Mr. Walker's premises, and have the rear of the gentleman's wedding coat released—this arrangement was generally agreed to, and watchy started. In the mean time, the outsiders held a small caucus of condolence with the *groom*, during which, several animated resolves were passed, that they would victimize the barkeeper, *when they got in*, by keeping him up until daylight! The banging of the door behind them, and the shock of the bar closing in the iron hasp aroused their attention, but it was too *late!*

The barkeeper, on learning the trouble, had quietly descended, opened the door, pushed out the coat-tail, and fastening the entrance, beat a retreat again. The outsiders stormed, but it was no use; they, therefore, concluded to pick up the trophy, bear it along to some open establishment, and hold a jollification over its rescue. The owner recovered his package of money, and wished to retreat, but they were in no mood to part with him—they wished to heal all differences before they separated, drink the health of the lady named in the recaptured document, and fill out an order for a new wedding suit. The stranger was forced to yield, and we need not add, that he got home very late the next morning.

The day had grown old before the victim was able to visit his bride, and of course she pouted a little, but on his promise to assign sufficient cause at the wedding, the arrangement was allowed to proceed. As he promised, so did he faithfully rehearse the above facts, and pledge his forgiving young wife that he would hereafter try and keep his *tail* out of such night scrapes!

2

**THE
RIVER**

Captain Sopht.

By Rudder.

In the Spring of the year, 1832, as the Steamer *Junius* was puffing and paddling upon the Mississippi on her way to Louisville, her Captain became suddenly ill with the cholera; and, though the disease manifested itself only under its mildest form, the attack was sufficiently serious to entirely disable him for some time to come. Upon arriving at Louisville, the owners of the *Junius* were duly notified to procure themselves another commander. It was at a busy season of the year, when river men were generally all in employment, and despite the most vigilant search, high and low, they could find no experienced person to supply the vacancy. In the absence of some more suited person, therefore, a young man of steady habits—the book-keeper of one of the principle commission stores of the city—was pitched upon, a proposition made him, and the bargain finally closed. On that same evening, the whole company walked down to the steamer, and our new captain was duly installed.

River men, of ten or fifteen years' standing, invariably look upon green ones, who are making their debut on the river, with a good deal of contempt, more especially if the new avocation appears to sit upon them awkwardly. As the new commander passed along the boiler on his way to the cabin, he manifested some degree of trepidation—casting his eyes furtively about him, as if engaged in reflections on the dangers of steamboat explosions. A little group that were gathered in the engine room, consisting of the mate, pilots and engineers, had watched him as he approached the boat with considerable curiosity; but when he displayed this nervousness, allowing his *greenness* to leak out, a significant wink was exchanged from one to the other, and our new captain forfeited the respect of his officers, without even having the satisfaction of committing a positive blunder.

The day of departure had arrived—the last package had been carried on board—the bell had tolled for the third time, and the new captain, who stood forward of the pilot-house, surrounded with inquisitive passengers, was reduced to the last extremity of perplexity. For the last quarter of an hour he had been giving

incomprehensible orders, which invariably required a three or four minutes' patient explanation. The difficulties of his new avocation, moreover, were beginning to render him very impatient and querulous—a fact not at all calculated to advance his progress. Seeing everything about him idle, and every body looking towards him for a signal of departure, the captain advanced and hailed his mate.

"I say, Mr. Mate!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered a gruff voice from below.

"Are you all ready there?"

"Ay, ay, sir, all ready."

"Well, then, you might pull that plank on the steamboat—she's going to start!"

A broad grin spread itself over the mate's countenance as he received the order. The stage plank on board, the captain turned to the pilot:

"Well, Mr. Pilot, the planks are all in; what are you waiting for now?" "Waiting for orders, sir," answered he who stood at the wheel, as cool as a spring day in Norway.

"If that's all, sir, you can let her go!" "Why, what do you mean, Captain," said the pilot, assuming a very disappointed expression of countenance, "aint she *untied* yet?" Thereupon the Captain crossed his arms upon his chest, and smiled (somewhat exultingly) as he replied: "Yes, Mr. Pilot, she *is* untied; I got a man to do it not two minutes ago. I mean you may go—make the *steam boat* start—leave Louisville and go to St. Louis, sir. I hope *I am clear, now.*"

Amid the ringing of bells, the shouts of the mate, the roaring of the steam as it was being *let off*, and the heavy clank of the engine the steamer *Junius* backed out from the Louisville port, and, much to the satisfaction of her new captain, was soon speeding down the stream at a rate which showed that the change of commanders had not, at least, affected her powers of running. Louisville was soon lost in the distance; the canal was gone through, the boat all the time speeding merrily onward, and, in three days, (a remarkable run at that time) she was breasting the dark and swift-rolling

tide of the Mississippi. Everything connected with the captain's duties had, thus far, gone off to admiration, when, on the night after they had entered the Mississippi, about half an hour after the captain had *turned in*, the watchman hurried to his room, and informed him that owing to some disarrangement in the engine the boat could no longer make headway against the current, but was beginning to drift down at a rapid rate. An announcement of this character was enough to turn the captain, mentally, upside down. At a bound, he was out of his bed; in one minute he was completely dressed, and the next found him in the pilot house, wound up in a quintessence of excitement.

"Why, Mr. Pilot, what's the matter with the d—d boat, won't she stop?" The pilot was invisible in the darkness; his answers were sufficiently short and snappish, however, to indicate a sour expression of countenance.

"It seems that she *don't* stop, captain; I feel her moving yet."

"Well, but sir," cried the captain, running nearer the pilot house, "but sir, when *will* she stop?"

"Against the trees, on the banks sir, if there is no intervening snag to stop us sooner;" answered the voice of the pilot, in a kind of reckless quiet.

"Jam herself against the banks! run into snags! why, thunders! sir, she must be stopped, or we'll all be drowned!"

"If you wish to stop her, captain, you'd better have an anchor thrown out pretty soon."

Upon this hint, the captain, whom an internal vision of explosion and sinking, with a thousand attending horrors, was rendering nearly distracted, precipitately left the pilot house, and hurried forward on the hurricane deck.

"Mr. Mate! I *say*, Mr. Mate! do you hear me?"

"Ay, ay, talk on, sir," answered a collected and gruff voice from below.

"Well, sir, you'll please to pitch one of the anchors overboard. Do it quick, sir; the boat's running afoul of snags!"

"Very good, captain. Shall I bend a hawser on it, sir?"

"Bend a what?"

"A hawser."

"No, d—n it; don't be fooling away your time—pitch it over as quick as you can!"

"Ay, ay, sir. Boys, catch hold of Little Nance, and heave her over."

The anchor was dragged to the boat's side and a heavy splash informed the captain that his order had been obeyed. For a few moments he stood still, to see the effect of his plan, but the motion of the boat indicated that it was perfectly useless. Rendered much more anxious now than before, he hurried back to the pilot.

"I say, pilot, the anchor's overboard, and she's not stopped yet!"

"We have *another* anchor, captain," answered the pilot quietly. "You'd better make use of that also." Here was another hope.

"Mr. Mate, I say, mate!" shrieked the captain in a phrenzy, "take hold of that other anchor and throw it over. This boat must be stopped!"

"Shall I bend a hawser on *that*, sir?"

"D—nation! NO!" roared the captain, "we've got no time to fool away."

"Good again, sir," answered the mate, who to judge from his tone of voice, must have been choking with a fit of laughter.

A heavier anchor was dragged over the deck; a heavier plunge was heard, but still the boat floated down. The captain was losing his senses fast.

"Pilot; what the *deuce* is the reason the boat won't stop *now*?"

The pilot seemed to labor under the same difficulty of speech as the mate; it was only after several futile attempts that he answered.

"I wouldn't wonder, captain, if Jim had forgotten to attach a rope to those anchors."

"Good God! do you think so? Mate, I say Mr. Mate, *didn't you tie a string to those anchors?*"

"Why, no, captain, you told me not to."

"Well, by thunders," bawled the captain, "I thought you were inclined to be rather soft, on this boat, but *you're the damndest fool that I've come across yet!*"

At this juncture, the boat received a violent shock, which al-

most carried the captain from his feet; three or four hands, at the command of the mate, jumped ashore and made her fast to a large tree, and before the captain had quite recovered his senses, mate, pilots, clerks and engineers, were grouped in the social hall, every one enjoying the matter with the soberest face possible.

Daily Reveille, April 20, 1849, 1-2.

"Passenger Ashore."

Clang-a-lang! went the "last bell" of a steam boat bound up the river; the boiler deck was crowded, the gang-way platform disappearing, plank by plank, and every thing betokened a *sure enough* departure, when an amiable friend of ours who stood upon the "guard" of the boat, a little removed from the incautious crowd, who gave no thought to the boilers, observed an elderly man, apparently in great distress, walking up and down, casting uneasy glances up Olive street, at the foot of which the boat lay, and, ever and anon, clapping himself down upon a lot of "baggage" composed of brass nobbed trunks, elegant valises, hat boxes, &c., &c.

"He'll be too late—I know he will—the careless young rascal! he knew he had only ten minutes to go upon, too. Always the way—it would make a saint swear!"

Thus muttered the stranger, when our friend, who is remarkable for his ready sympathy, ventured to ask the cause of the elderly gentleman's distress?

"Cause, sir! my boy, Jim—old enough to know better, too,—he'll be left, sir; I know he will; and here is all our baggage on board, down to his carpet bag. Serves me right—should have left him with the trunks and gone myself."

The signs of being "just off" continued, the old gentleman's uneasiness increased every minute, and our friend didn't wonder at it, for it appeared that "Jim," in addition to his delay, had his father's pocket book and funds with him, which the elder had forgotten to change before coming on board.

"And, moreover," continued the anxious gentleman, "I have a few indispensable articles to purchase, and not a cent of change in my pocket.—D——n!"

The old fellow flopped down on his baggage, instantly started up again, and with his eyes fixed on the Olive street descent, began walking faster than ever.

Our friend, who was deeply interested, tried to soothe the stranger, observed that the boat would probably not go for some little time, and, as for the trifles which the gentleman wished to procure, (pulling out some loose gold and silver,) he begged that he would help himself, run ashore for their purchase, while *he* would guard the baggage until the return of "Jim." The stranger, in the most unaffected manner, accepted the offer, shook our friend's hand, helped himself to a couple of half eagles out of it, pointed out one valise which he wished to be particularly looked after, ran down stairs, made his way ashore along the sole remaining plank, and wiping his brow, as in great moisture and excitement, darted up Olive street.

A short time elapsed when the bell, which had been silent awhile, gave forth two or three sharp, decisive strokes; there was a sudden escape of steam,—as suddenly checked,—the pilot's *ting-a-ling* was heard, and a revolution of the wheel, proclaimed that things were at a crisis, indeed! The guardian of the trunks called out lustily to the Captain that there was a "passenger ashore," but the Captain's only reply was, "too late now." The boat continued backing out, and the two unlucky passengers behind, without a "stitch to put on." It was too bad! but the Captain was inexorable, and our friend's feelings became intensely excited; his straining gaze was fixed on Olive street, when he suddenly became conscious of a movement behind him, and, turning, he beheld a man walking off with the very valise which had been so particularly recommended to his care. He darted forwards, jerked the property from under the person's arm, and requested him to "Let *that* alone, if he *pleased!*" The man faced about in speechless astonishment, and so did our friend, for what should he behold but another stranger, fitting a key into the lock of the largest and

handsomest trunk of the pile! He rushed back, with the valise in his hand, followed by its claimant, the latter a cockney traveller, while the person at the trunk proved to be a Frenchman.

"What are you doing at that *trunk*, sir?" demanded our indignant acquaintance.

The Frenchman, who seemed to be the very personification of politeness and *ague*, said, mildly:

"Monsieur, if tis all ze same, I have some little affair wis my tronk——"

He was interrupted by the cockney, who, seeming to recover his speech suddenly, exclaimed—

"Well, I'm blowed if this ain't a good un," and caught hold of the valise once more.

"But I tell you"—cried our friend struggling, "you're wrong!—this baggage is under my charge—you are mistaken."

"Eh bien, Monsieur," calmly observed the Frenchman, the trunk now open, "If tis not my tronk, maybe tis not my *fevare agg!*—may be tis not my little *peell!*"—at the same time he opened a pill box, and swallowed half a dozen of its abominations.

In the meantime, the cockney was speaking most disrespectfully, not only of his own "eyes" but of the eyes of all the "Yankees" in existence. Our friend grew nearly distracted when, to cap the climax, up came a couple of waiters, who, under the direction of a *third* stranger, began to move off another trunk towards the cabin! By this time a crowd had collected—the captain among the rest; our friend loudly explained the whole circumstance, when a strange smile, which, passing from face to face, gradually changed to a broad grin, and suddenly broke out into a roar, induced the perplexed one to examine his own "position," which was as disagreeable as, after a moment's thought, it appeared to be hard to "define." It was evident that the crowd were against him, when, amid the laughing he heard a tremendous "whoop!" winding up with—

"Roped in by Jingo!"

A sudden light broke in upon him, a sudden loss occurred to him as suddenly, and a sudden retreat being all that remained, he

suddenly withdrew to his state room to admire the graphic descriptions of the mysterious Seatsfield!¹

Daily Reveille, August 9, 1844, 2.

“Fast on a Bar.”

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

Every body is “acquainted with the West,” now-a-days, and the high-heeled, moustached “collector” of New York and Philadelphia, with the moustached, high-heeled tourist from *Cockaigne*, no longer express surprise that “roasted larks” do not “fly down their throats!” They have learned to drink Mississippi water; to understand “river talk;” to recognize a “good location;” snags, boilers and bowie knives, have lost their terrors, while “sticking on a bar” is almost a matter of amusement—when it’s all *over!*

“Yes, gentlemen, off this evening, positively, the water’s falling above, and I’m *bound* to go!”

This is the *hourly* reply for something less than a week, which the gathering passengers receive on the lighter class of Ohio river boats, during the fall, or low water season; the channel is daily lessening, the “draught” is daily deepening, till, at length, the steam hive swarming alive to thrice its capacity, at trebled prices, the “Cap’n” rings the “*last bell*,” actually, and “starts,” say for Saint Louis, “the Mouth,” or, in other words, *as far as he can get*, and that generally means “Flint Island,” of shoal celebrity. Onward they go, beautifully! The New Orleans merchant, the planter of the “Coast”—as the banks of the Mississippi are termed, with the thousand

1. Charles Sealsfield (1793–1864), known as Seatsfield, Sealsfield, or, in German, Siegfeld, was thought variously to be an Austrian, an American, a German, or a native of Liverpool. Actually Karl Postl, a Moravian-born monk who escaped from his monastery, the mysterious “Sealsfield” did live some years in the United States, traveled in Mexico, and spent most of the latter part of his life in Switzerland. He published a series of works, mostly in German, several of them consisting of sketches of the places he had lived or visited. Field’s tourist may well be reading *Life in the New World; or Sketches of American Society*, trans. from the German by G. C. Hebbe and J. Mackay (New York, 1844).

and one varieties of the "Buckeye," "Hoosier," "Pewk" and "Sucker" tribes, each bound on his separate and peculiar errand. The "sleeping arrangements" are "curious," the "table fixins" "a caution," the bar "first rate," and the struggle for a participation in their respective blessings is "a sin to Moses!"

One day, and no "stick!" Matters begin to assume a shape, and the prospect is "mighty fair for a trip;" the gentlemen have "got the hang" of the ladies,—that is, they have ascertained their precise number and calculated how many chairs it is necessary to leave vacant at meals, thus avoiding the mortification of having to *get up again*; the blacklegs are recognized by a sort of mesmeric sympathy, or repulsion, as the case may be; the "Judges" and "Colonels" discuss politics on the boiler deck, and the junior generation the varied mixtures of the "Bar;" things look "mighty fair for a trip!" and, with the word, there comes a bang! a universal shudder of the timbers, a ringing of the engineers' bells, a rush out to the "guards" or "boiler deck," and a "let-off" of steam that would seem to rend the iron throat of the monster! She has "only struck a log;" a few "licks back" sets her free again; all return to their busy idling, and the "mighty fair chance" is as good as ever. Thumps and bumps succeed each other rapidly during the next day, merely exciting the remark, "Oh, it's only a log!" the partial delays are uncomplained of, a six hours "lay-up," during the night, "on account of fog," is unenquired about, when, during dinner, the forward end of the table gracefully elevates itself, the sitters oscillate for a moment in their chairs, there comes the same ringing of bells and "let-off" of steam, and the boat is "fast on a bar!" Now comes the fierce struggle of "backing off." Under "a full head of steam," the engine works as if demon-driven; the 'scape pipe roars with fury; the momentary "let off," to prevent bursting, is a sudden abrupt shriek of iron agony, whilst every joint of the racked craft shivers as if the destruction of her frame must follow! This first effort in vain, the nervous are further alarmed by the plunging into the water of some dozen "deck hands," who instead of disappearing under the surface, however, immediately begin wading about, *knee deep*, hunting for the channel, and stick-

ing their hands under the bottom of the boat to see "how far she's on." Another tremendous effort follows;—another and another;—at length night falls, and, perhaps, again the time that the morning fog brings its further detention, by the aid of enormous spars and the windlass, the boat, as upon crutches, is lifted across into deep water.²

Onward once more, and hope is strong again. Another day and night of rubbing, bumping, "backing" and fog; but one more "bad place" remains,— "Flint Island bar"— "Only one!—well, then, we'll be all right!" exclaim the greenhorns; the experienced, however, calculate the probable chances of a "rise out of the Wabash," the exact draught of the boat, and remember the depth of water on the last bar rubbed against. Thus it goes until the critical spot is neared; sweep round the "bend" and, startling intimation, a dozen boats are beheld "stuck fast," and, in exceedingly *pictur- esque* groups, choking up the river.

One stroke of the bell; "Starboard lead."

The boiler deck is thronged, the wheels revolve with caution—"three feet large" lessens into "two feet scant," the stranded boats are neared, each one presenting its swarm of imprisoned victims waiting for—in fact, *wishing* for the moment when another swarm shall be involved in their dilemma.

"The pilot is *sure* of the channel?" hesitatingly enquire some anxious voices! To be sure he's *sure* of it; he is at this moment *scanning it*—and two *full sized* boats, also, which lie directly *across it!* Yet he goes on "a screwin' of her up," as the Yankee said. He "stops her," "goes ahead,"—"starboard lead," "larboard lead,"—he is drawing but twenty inches and *may* get over the "edge of the bar;"—the excitement becomes intense among the myriad watch-

2. Steamboats that became "fast on a bar" were sometimes freed by a process called "sparring," so named because it involved using the boat's spars almost as a pair of crutches to lift the boat over the bar. Ramon Adams has described the process: "When the boat struck, the ends of the spars were lowered to the river bed. Then, with a block and tackle operated by a small donkey engine, the front end of the boat was raised a foot or more off the bottom. The paddles were then put at full speed, and with luck the vessel was jumped over the bar." See *Western Words: A Dictionary of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 295.

ers—twenty yards more—she *touches*—“Rush her over!” the engine works like mad, but—she *sticks!* the weight of the current swings her quarter round, and *bang she goes*, her bow fixed, and her stern riveted into the wheel house of her obstructor!

“Oh!” “That makes it bad!” “Too d—d bad!” A thousand groans are heard on board, while a general laugh from the myriad *neighbors* is the welcome to a *week’s* acquaintance! Now comes a rush of visitors! Friends, who had parted a thousand miles away, here unite again! The *other “bars,”* too, are exhausted, and the newly arrived is a godsend in the way of “ice” and “liquors!” Mad spirits, reckless laughter, an hundred schemes of frolic and depredation upon the adjacent shores are concocted, and, in the general whirl, we shall leave the crowd;—too glad to escape the “weary, stale, flat and unprofitable”³ term which must elapse before the smallest possible boat, charging the highest possible price, takes the “tallest” possible number to the sweetest possible place—Cairo—for further *transport!*

Daily Reveille, September 7, 1845, 2.

Of the Deference Due to Steamboat Waiters.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

I wish, in quiet wise, to give unto type, as the result of much observation, the grave reflections consequent thereon; and my manner shall be as unadorned as my matter is sweet and gracious. I wish to speak of the *gentlemen attending table* on our smaller class of steam boats;—those which, running to the ports of free States, feel the necessity of employing white persons instead of slaves; inasmuch as that an entire submission on the part of the passengers to the former, is preferable to abolition rows with regard to the latter.

My remarks are intended for the use of travellers, especially those of them who, yet balking at “muddy water,” are unprepared

3. *Hamlet*, 1.2.133.

to find other things of a corresponding *clearness*. These inexperienced ones, I would duly advise, that the term "waiter," appertaining more particularly to a class of cleanly individuals about hotels—persons who brush their hair and wear white jackets—hath no personal application other than an offensive one in the minds of our clean shirt contemnners of the steam boats! It is much safer, therefore, to call them all "stewards!" until a further extension of knowledge, under their patronage, permits one to venture upon the sponsorial "William," or "Richard." These I have known, upon the growth of a mutual confidence, to be contracted even into the downright, familiar Bill and Dick!

Arrived at the landing with your baggage, and eager to get it on board, should you call the attention of the *gentleman attending* to it, and he, in consequence, should address himself to every other article in preference, you will receive it as a rebuke, *initiatory* and mildly take your position as its guard, until, all else removed, a quarrel with a "deck hand" adjusted, some few steps of a "nigger break down" indulged in on the plank, and a friendly spice of *badinage* with a fanciful Irish drayman, got through with, you are addressed with a "Which is your trunk?" If in lifting, then, one corner of it is dropped on your toe, or another corner stuck in your eye, you will receive it as another cautionary movement, and resolve to be as little troublesome on board as possible.

Fairly started, and, in your exploded ideas of courtesy, concluding that the best way for a large crowd to get along in a small boat is to give and take, to think of others as well as yourself; it will edify your mind, as well as wholesomely exercise your patience, to find that the convenience of the *gentlemen attending*, requires a full exception in their case; a slop tub, or a pile of greasy plates secures a control of the "guard;" the transposition of trunks and mattresses establishes a first claim upon the "boiler deck," while the round of table operations, from "setting" to "dusting," and "dusting" to "setting," secures possession of the cabin.

Impressed with the necessity of these observances, the *non-chalance* with which they are *observed*, and the importance attaching to their peculiar ministry, the passenger will probably seek his

state room for the quiet consideration of circumstances; he will *possibly* have approached something like a Christian composition of spirit, when the door is banged open, skinning his shins, and one of the gentlemen attendants, turning up the mattress, pulls a pair of odorous trowsers from under the pillow! *Should* this induce an "Oh!" or "D—n!" the stare, mutter, and slam of the door, as it is closed again, is a sufficient recall to the necessity of that Christian deference already partly resolved upon, and in a spirit of growing humility, the passenger will mutely resolve to say nothing about "sheets and pillow cases."

Notwithstanding his good resolutions, however, he will, probably, in his ignorance, have ventured an indignant look, or it may be even a downright "remark," remembering which, if in the morning he is startingly awakened by an awful clash upon the tympanum, and, springing up as high as the upper berth will permit, he finds an alarm bell pealing within an inch of his ear, he will naturally conclude that it is time to get up, and that his friend of the preceding evening is desirous that he should not miss the "beauties of the morning." He will betake himself to the "wash-room," patiently await his turn at the basin, evince neither surprise nor mortification at receiving no reply to his inquiry for "soap" and, finally, take a chance at the towel after a cavalier attendant has availed himself of the sole remaining *dry place*.

With common prudence, the passenger will, by this time, have come to the deferential conclusion, that "steam boat regulations" are immutable, and steam boat waiters immaculate; that passengers are from the peculiar forms of society, singularly ignorant of both, and that, like the *other* cattle, below, they must necessarily be taught "the way they should go," by a twisting of their tails. In this wholesome mood of mind, should a broom be thrust into his belly, followed by the presence of a gentleman "come to make up," boots or no boots, slippers or no slippers, he will instantly vacate his state room, patiently occupy a rail while a dispute is carried on with the steward, on the "guard," as to who should "do the knives;" and finally, re-occupy his apartment to find his books and papers pitched into one corner of his berth; his boots stuffed

into his hat box, and his comb, tooth and hair brushes rolled up together in his night shirt!

The passenger hath, undoubtedly, fructified under these mel-
lowing influences, but his crowning experiences, "if he's lucky," he
will gain at table. He will derive much from his fellow travellers, for
many of these, also, it behooves him to have unusual *deference* for,
but his especial instructors will still be the "waiters,"—for instance:
his exclusive attachment to tea being declared, he is usually called
upon to swallow coffee, or give "trouble;" and as this is, now, his
last mortal conception, he either invites a fit of indigestion or fills
himself a glass of water. At dinner his request for "a little of the fat"
is construed into a desire for the whole "flap;" his appetite is fur-
ther increased by watching a shirt sleeve wipe up a plate of butter;
while a sudden zeal to anticipate him in serving a neighbor precipi-
tates a dish of gravy into his bosom. This latter trial, in one case
which came under my notice, drew forth positive temper, and
undid all, for the *neophyte* actually jumped up, and with a pro-
vokingly well directed blow under the ear, knocked the instructor
through both doors of a state room on to the "guard."

Such an unhappy instance of forgetfulness is, of course, to be
regretted, and my object in enumerating occasions is to prepare
people properly for the deferential endurance of them. We are a
great people! and the west is a great country! Yet would it be
nothing without steam boats; and I think I have made it equally
clear, that steam boats would be nothing without *waiters!* They
enjoy my profound consideration, and for my own part, it is a
question with me, whether, in future, I shall ship myself as
"freight" or—*change places with them.*

Daily Reveille, August 31, 1845, 2.

A Fight in the Hold.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

Tom. Williams was mate on board of the western steamer Tiger,
and when he first took the station, he was one of those good

humored, muscular specimens of humanity, of whom we are often led to say, "it is a good thing he is blessed with a kind disposition," for, were it otherwise, his powerful fists would soon run him into difficulty. *His* good humor, however, was the cause of all his trouble, as we shall clearly show. The deck hands on western steamers appear so used to being drove, that they soon lose respect for one who attempts to coax them—they are disposed to set him down as a coward, and a fellow easily imposed upon, and they forthwith commence practising on him. They would look at Tom., wink their eye at each other, and when he would good-humoredly say, "come, take hold, boys," at the same time seize whatever was to be moved himself, they would let him put out all his strength upon it, and only hold on to keep up appearances. At length Tom. began to understand the game they were playing, and one day he commenced a new course of discipline—used his boot freely upon the hands, and kept his own big fins away from the work. This new mode began to awaken signs of hostility among them, and, ere long, a sturdy Irishman announced it as his "intintion" to give the bully Hoosier mate, as he called him, an ever-to-be-remembered thrashing one of these days. Some rumor of this kind reached Tom.'s ears, but he only quietly remarked to his informant that Pat would get his hands full when he attempted it.

"Lay hold of that spar!" shouted the mate to big Mike, the deck hand, a few days after he had heard of his threat.

"Take yer time," says Mike, "an I'll get hould uv it directly."

"Hurry, now," says Tom., "or I'll *help* you along."

"That's jist what I'm waitin' for," says Mike, "come and *help* take hould uv it—sure yer big and ugly enough to move it yerself," and then he winked at the other hands, who enjoyed a grin at the mate's expense. Tom. moved in wrath towards Mike and helped him with his foot.

"Och, be jabers, if that's yer game," says Mike, "two uv us can play at that same"—and he forthwith returned Tom. a staggerer. Fun commenced, and the pair finished up with what is called in the west "a pretty good *chunk* of a fight," in which big Mike got his full share of the beating. The matter ended here until they arrived

in New Orleans, where Tom. was called up before the Recorder, with a "forthwith," on a charge of assault and battery upon the plaintiff, Mike, a deck hand on the Tiger. The only plea he offered was, that he whipped him fair, and was agreed to pay a reasonable compensation for the exercise. The court fined him \$20. Tom. shook his head at the amount, declared it an over-charge, but consoled himself by saying he would sometime have the opportunity of getting even, and both parties forthwith returned on board. Mike was all that day chuckling at his success in getting the mate fined, and would, every now and then, wink at some of the boys, stick his tongue in his cheek, and remark, so the mate could hear, "Divil a cent less than *twinty!*"

On the second day the boat was nearly unloaded, and all the hands but Mike were dispersed on the levee, or engaged on the boat above, when the mate ordered Mike below to roll out a barrel, and as soon as he leaped down the forward, Tom. started aft to the stern hatchway, jumped down, and meeting Mike about half way, in the dark, gave him a *socdoliger* that sent his wits wool gathering—he thought a piece of timber had hit him.

"You thafe in the dark," says Mike, "only let me get hould uv yez!"

He did get hold of Tom., and at it they went in earnest—the mate himself says it was a mighty tight affair for a spell—but after awhile Mike began to sing out, and Tom. dropped him, run to the after hatch, climbed up, and coming forward called out in the hold:

"What the thunder do you mean with that noise below? Roll out that cask, and stop your skylarking."

Mike came forward to the light, looked up at Tom. with his face *highly colored*, and replied:

"Divil another barrel *I'll* rowl on boord a boat where the mate can be in the hould and on deck at the same time!"

He kept his word, and immediately quit. Tom. often remarks that his fight with Mike in the hold was a contest of *feeling*, and decided without the necessity of a single *witness!*

"Picked Up!"

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

It is a common saying in this region, when an individual makes a sad mistake either about his own powers in any matter, or those of an antagonist, that he finds himself "picked up;" as, for instance, when a politician expects to continue in office and finds himself turned out,—a lover builds his hopes on a maiden, and some more fortunate swain cuts him out,—a passenger embarks on a boat with the promise of going *immediately*, and don't get off for two days—or when some choleric little man undertakes to whip another, and gets thrashed himself. A case "*analysses*" to these, as a certain Congressman used to say, occurred on board one of our steamers, in which an old boatman, the mate, was sadly "picked up;" and as he confesses the fact, to ease his conscience more fully, we will give his confession publicity.

A bustling, farmer-looking customer stepped on board the boat he belonged to, a few minutes before she pushed out, and holding out a \$10 bill on the bank of Missouri, begged him to change it. The mate, thinking it a good bill to stow away, held it out to the clerk near him, and asked if it was good. "Oh, *yes*," says the clerk, "*beautiful money*," and passed on up to the cabin, leaving the mate with his bill. "Good as wheat, stranger," says the mate, "I'll cash it!" and forthwith pays him over Indiana small bills in change. In a few minutes off went the boat, and as she wended her way down stream, the clerk and mate came again in contact.

"Well, Ike," says the clerk, "who burned you with that counterfeit X on the Bank of Missouri?"

"*Counterfeit!*" exclaimed Ike, "what do you mean?"

"I mean," says the clerk, "that the Missouri bill you showed me at starting is rather a bad lot of money. Where did you get it?"

"Why, cuss your picture," says the mate, "I gave good money in change for that bill, on the strength of your recommendation!"

"Good Lord!" burst in the clerk, "ha-ha-ha! ho-ho-ho! was you

so confounded *green*? Why, it's an old Missouri counterfeit, of the worst kind;" and here half a dozen more joined in, laughing at Ike's loss.

His first impulse was to *tear* the spurious bill, but, on second thoughts, he carefully *folded* it up, and let off his wrath by stirring the deck hands, individually and collectively. The boat had nearly reached Smithland,⁴ when an old-fashioned, quiet looking deck passenger came to the mate and asked, as a particular favor, that he would look over any bank bills the clerk might give him in change, when he paid his passage, as he was not acquainted with western money, and was afraid he might get some spurious or depreciated paper passed upon him.

"What kind of money have you got?" inquired Ike.

"A 'twenty' on a Philadelphia bank," answered the passenger.

"Maybe I can change it for you," says Ike, eagerly.

"I only wish you could," earnestly chimed in the stranger.

"How will that do?" inquired Ike, handing out his spurious \$10 Missouri Bank bill, and a \$10 gold piece on top of it.

"I have no objections," says the stranger, "if the Missouri bill will pay fare."

"Try it," says Ike; and the bills were passed, each pocketing the exchange with a nervous kind of alacrity. As they sped along, every now and then the mate would steal a furtive glance at the deck passenger, which would be followed on his part by an anxious look in return. "D——n that fellow," muttered the mate, "I wish he would get ashore;" and at a woodyard he tried to leave him, but the stranger hopped on board and sneaked away back on the deck, where the uneasy conscience of the mate would carry him, every now and then, to see if the passenger's countenance betrayed suspicion. At length they reached Smithland, and the cause of the mate's disquiet stepped on shore and left the boat. After assuring himself that he had not returned, Ike indulged in a chuckle at his success, and while they were steaming up stream he entered the clerk's office, with a broad grin on his countenance,

4. Probably Smithland, Kentucky, an Ohio river town just upstream from Paducah.

threw his \$20 bill on the desk, and asked him to furnish small bills in exchange for the “flimsy.”

“What tickles you so, Ike?” inquired the clerk.

Ike leaned back, and, indulging in a guffaw, related how he had “picked up” a greener one than himself by an exchange. The clerk looked at the bill, examined one of Presbury’s Detectors,⁵ and there found his *twenty* fully described as a well known *counterfeit!* It was the clerk’s turn now, and his roar at Ike’s second mishap drew the attention of others, who joined in the laugh at the mate’s expense. Ike gave his hat a twist, stuck it tight on his head, and went below without saying a word, but the way he made things move around decks during that trip, was *hasty*—and his own movements strongly betrayed a disposition to *pick up* some deck passenger and throw him overboard!

Daily Reveille, July 8, 1846, 2.

Tom Harris’ Wink.

By “Everpoint.” [Joseph M. Field]

Those who remember the farce of *Turning the Tables*, may find in our present hero, Tom Harris, no small resemblance to that cunning dog—that deuce of a fellow—that country great man, Jack Humphries, the cock of the walk, and king of his company at Coventry.⁶

5. Doubtless one of the many publications identifying bad bank notes and counterfeit currency. According to Arthur Nussbaum, such publications were found in all parts of the country in the early decades of the nineteenth century. One such “Counterfeit Detector and Bank Note List” of 1839 “enumerated 54 banks which had failed; 20 fictitious banks, the ‘notes’ of which were in circulation; 43 banks whose notes were unsalable; 254 banks whose notes had been counterfeited or altered; and 1,395 types of altered or counterfeited bank notes supposed to be in circulation in denominations from \$1 to \$500.” See *A History of the Dollar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 69.

6. In *Turning the Tables*, a one-act farce by John Poole (1786?–1872), Jack Humphries, a self-proclaimed wit, is enlisted to assist Miss Sally Knibbs and her lover, Edgar de Courcy, in duping Jeremiah Bumps, a suitor whom Sally’s father has arranged for her to marry. In the course of the play, the tables are turned pretty thoroughly on Jack, whom Bumps quite accurately describes at one point: “Ha! ha! ha! I see the very man! Ignorance, impudence and conceit; the wit, the droll, the *Magnus Apollo* of a provincial town!”

Tom Harris was the great man of a very small town in the interior of Kentucky. Nothing could be done without him, and furthermore nothing *should* be done without him, and, to crown his importance, it so happened that he was generally allowed his own way. He had a wink with him—*such* a wink! and a way of saying “all right—I’m about,” and his manner was altogether so knowing, and his accomplishments were so varied, that “Tom Harris” was the watchword in every possible case, from a dose of calomel to a quarter race, from a wedding frolic to a chicken dispute.

Tired of triumph—or rather ambitious of a broader stage upon which to exhibit his cleverness, Tom Harris determined to travel; he’d “take a trip somewhar, any how!” and in effect, accompanied by an admiring disciple and follower, known as Billy Hush—from the circumstance of his invariably demanding attention for Tom Harris, by crying *Hush!* to the crowd whenever he saw that his favorite oracle was about to open his mouth—accompanied by Billy, he started up, a-foot, to Louisville. This was the first time Tom had ever been in a “large town,” and that he would at once be recognised as being “about,” he entertained no doubt of; in fact, as he peeped into windows and pronounced them “all right;”—walked half way into doors and winked at the clerks, as much as to say, “I’m in town, old feller;”—as he “slashed” through the markets, and “spread himself” through the streets—followed and imitated closely in all by the admiring Billy Hush, Tom, for the first time, as he said, could “feel himself!” Neither Tom nor his friend had ever seen a steam boat, but Tom was the regular news reader to the public, down at the “grocery,” in his town, and boiler explosions, collisions, snagging, burning, &c., &c., with the invariable “dreadful loss of life,” had inspired him equally with awe and curiosity. The steam boat landing, as the crowning part of the show, was left for the last. Finally, Tom, having winked and “slashed” himself along into the perfect intimacy of the “hull town and all the people,” made a surge out of “Walker’s,” followed by his tender, Billy, for the river. One boat, just arrived and shoving out her planks, “took” Tom, at once. There she was, that awful

creation of man's hands of which he had read and dreamed so often. Tom nerved himself to grapple with the occasion. Passengers came ashore, draymen and others were passing to and fro. Tom gave his *protege* a nod of encouragement, and they were in the act of stepping off the side-walk, when came a fierce blast of steam, and, heels over head, Tom, in no time, was round the corner and ensconced behind a sugar hogshead half way up the square. Now it wasn't that Billy Hush was less lively in his alarm, but he was constitutionally somewhat sluggish in his motions, and before accomplishing his second somerset, he perceived that the boat was not in pursuit of him, after all.

"Hallo, Tom!" bawled he, after his Mentor as soon as he had collected himself, "'taint blowed!"

"'Taint *what*?" said Tom, peeping cautiously round the sugar hogshead.

"'Taint blowed, I tell you, a bit!"

Tom, after awhile, and with due precaution satisfied himself that from some miraculous interposition or other, *that* boat, indeed, had not yet added itself to the list of "Dreadful Accidents!" His recent discomfiture, however, called upon him to do something; so first, with a reflective wink of one eye, and then with a magnanimous wink of the other, he turned gravely to his friend.

"There's danger about; *you* keep back, Billy!"

"What'r you goin' to do?" inquired Billy, with an air of no small anxiety.

"Board her by ——" exclaimed Tom, heroically.

Sure enough, down he marched, and after some little "backing" and "rounding to," and "going ahead" again, he contrived to sidle himself along the plank, and found himself among the firemen opposite the furnace door. Billy's eyes were fixed on him, and Tom proudly felt that they were; would that the "hull town whar he belonged" was gazing also.

"Well, you're stirrin' of her up right hot!" said Tom, at once knowingly and patronizingly, to the firemen. "All right, old fellers." To use his own phrase, he "slashed around" for awhile, examined the capstan, peeped under the boiler-bed, &c., &c., and

at length daringly made his way back in the engine room, where the powerful machinery was hard at it, working off steam. Tom gave the engineer one of his very cutest winks.

"Don't stop for me, old feller; I'm *about*—but—*you're* all right! Slashin' about here, too, consid'ble, aint you!"

Tom was in the midst of a knowing inspection of the latest improvements in engine building, winking his approval generally, when a sudden discharge from a gage cock in the neighborhood of his ear, knocked him out of his head once more, and with one dive over the side of the boat he reached the land. Scrambling up the landing, without even a glance behind, he was hailed by Billy, who, in amaze, asked what was the matter *now*?

"Blown to —, and only man saved!" roared Tom, as he a second time dashed round the corner and took refuge behind a sugar hogshead *two* squares up.

"Well, but she *aint* blowed—this time *nuther!*" urged Billy, as again he induced his friend to return and trust his eyesight. Tom gazed, but the thing was incomprehensible! There she was, her engine "slashin' away," and people moving all over her with the greatest unconcern imaginable. Tom was dead beat, but he gathered himself, by a bold dash to recover his pre-eminence.

"You *see* she aint blowed," reiterated Billy.

"Well, *she will!*" said Tom, with an eye and air that forbade any further doubt on the subject. It wouldn't do, however; his glory had departed from him; he saw that Billy Hush was already taking airs upon himself, and, returned home, he even found that vulgar-minded person was seeking to undermine him with the community. Billy succeeded, too. Tom Harris was clearly *exploded*. The loss of popularity, position, &c., afflicted Tom sorely, but he kept a "stiff upper lip," as the saying is, insisted that if the boat hadn't blown up she *would* do so, and he was rewarded for his constancy of soul. One day arrived in the village, a young man who, on his trip up from New Orleans, had been *blown up*, actually. Tom picked up his ears at the news—it was down at the grocery, and the whole crowd was gathered.

"Blowed up, you say?" demanded Tom, at the same time pass-

ing a look all round, that clearly expressed: "Now see whether Tom Harris aint still Tom Harris, will you!"

"Yes," replied the young man, "all her boilers, the steamer——"

"Oh, *I* know her," interrupted Tom in the full view of his victory. "*I* know her—had two long red things sticking up front, like jackass ears, hadn't she?"

"You mean the ——"

"Great big round things at the side, floppin' about, *so*, eh?"

"The Pad——"

"A thundering heavy thing slashin' up and down in the middle, eh? with a little boat follerin' after, behind, eh?"

"Why yes ——"

"*Told you she would by——!*" shouted Tom, in triumph, his face a wink all over. "*Told you she would; and now Billy Hush can shut up, I reckon!*" and sure enough Billy was let down to his original level on the instant. All were rapt in admiration at Tom's prescience with regard to boilers, and whether it was the same boat or not could but be a matter of small importance, inasmuch as that Tom had said she *wou'd* blow up, and *she* did.

Daily Reveille, February 15, 1848, 1-2.

A Free Country.

"Thy *spirit*, Independence, let me share."

An odd scene, or rather a series of scenes, took place, not long since, on board of one of our Mississippi boats. A son of Erin, intoxicated by the draughts of freedom, or something even more exhilarating, was disturbing the lower deck by the most outrageous cries and extravagancies—in fact the poor wretch was in the full delirium of *mania a potu*, and his one, intense, absorbing thought, was the phrenzied triumph of being in a free country.

"A free country! I'm in a free country!" and off he ran, forward, clearing the shaft at a jump, upsetting an engineer, and nearly knocking a deck-hand overboard, until the mate and a stick of

wood brought him down, just forward of the boilers. Half a dozen of the hands immediately pinned him where he lay, from under the mass of whom he still bawled out his satisfaction at being in a free country.

Apparently pacified, he was soon released, when off he went, again, along the other side of the engine, and again clearing the shaft, he sprang into one of the topmost "bunks" of the deck passengers, at the stern. Here his ecstasies became, if possible, more violent than ever.

"Hurrah for the free country! Oh, Dan O'Connell? 'll be a president yet! hurrah, whoop!"

With this he began to discharge, at the heads of the crowd beneath him, sundry articles of kitchen furniture, which some poor emigrant had stowed away in the spot now occupied by the madman.

"Bad scran t' ye! ain't it a free country you're in! whoop—dance ye divils—hurrah for ould Uncle Sam!"

He was dislodged with much difficulty, when, again escaping, he made a dive into one end of the case, or *pit*, in which the flywheel revolves; there was barely room for him to get in, the wheel was whirling with the rapidity of lightning, and a general shudder pervaded the crowd. It was evident, however, that the poor wretch had not injured himself vitally, as he was rejoicing below in his freedom as loudly as ever. The engine was stopped, and, after incredible exertions, the fellow was dragged out, taken forward, and tied securely to the windlass—a most pitiable object! his clothes rent to tatters, and his skin begrimed with mud and filth—still his exultation continued, and, in spite of his wretched state, it was impossible to restrain a laugh.

"Isn't it free I am, ye blackguards! look at me here like a bird in the trees! Hurrah for the land of freedom—whoop!"

His exclamations were suddenly checked by successive buckets of water, but only for a moment, all was in vain! his strength and

7. Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), Irish nationalist statesman, founder of the Catholic Association in 1823, and later member of Parliament. O'Connell was known as "the Liberator" for his efforts to secure the rights of Catholics.

his lungs seemed to be inexhaustible; the boat was just hauling into her port, and the poor creature was absolutely, after being secured by a rope, soused overboard, and drawn along by the side of the vessel, but he swam like a fish, sang out like a river-god, nothing for a moment damping his satisfaction at the *freedom* of his condition.

The last we saw of him was on our return to the boat, after a short run on shore; he was going up the street in custody of two constables, as ardent in his enthusiasm as ever, shouting "Hurrah for the free country!"

Daily Reveille, May 29, 1844, 2.

The "Three Sixes."

A Pilot's Dream.

By Phazma. [Matthew C. Field]

Strange and wild are the stories known and passing current among the rough navigators of the western waters. Many a common ear is regaled with rich material for novel and romance, and many an original natural drama lies slumbering untold, save now and then when a tedious hour between watches on the boiler deck may happen to let loose the tongue of the story-teller. The following most strange and remarkable relation is eminently calculated to make the eyes start and the hair stand; and though partaking in a huge extreme of the extravagant, yet that is just "such stuff as dreams are made of,"⁸ and there are few of us that have not known even stranger stories in sleep, though they pass away and are forgotten forever in our waking moments.

Discarding further preliminary our pilot shall now tell his own story. No matter where or when it was, but a conversation once turning up on dreams, during a night watch, an old pilot very gravely fell into a reminiscence as follows:

8. Cf. *The Tempest*, 4.1.156-57.

"It was a chill, drizzly night, I remember, and the fog was so thick that about two o'clock in the morning we had to lay to. I was tired, but somehow not inclined to go to bed, and the second mate and I sat down in the social hall, where a dice-box and dice were on the table. We threw for mere nonsense a little while, and then threw for porter, which we drank, accompanying it with cheese, smoked beef and bread that the steward had left for us. Well, we tossed the dice, I believe, for about half an hour longer, when both of us grew heavy and went to bed.

"I can't tell what time it was in the night—I only know that it was the only dream I ever had that I could remember. I hope no other man will ever have such a dream. I thought I was suddenly dead—I don't know how—but my body was put into a pine box, and I was carried ashore and left in a little tavern, with orders for the people to bury me the next morning. I heard the steam boat leaving the shore, and soon all about the tavern crawled up a ladder and went to sleep overhead. Then, I was unconscious for a time, and the next thing that I seemed to become aware of was the presence (it's a dream, you know, and there can be no irreverence in a man's sleeping thoughts) of two beings bending over me, each tugging to draw me away in opposite directions. At once I knew that these were opposing agents who sought the disposition of my future fate. One was a diabolical-looking rascal, and the effect of his appearance seemed to send red hot lead thrilling and scorching through my veins. The other was the opposite of this, though a most singular personage indeed. You would hardly expect to see such an angel except in a dream. He was buttoned up tight in a drab coat with pearl buttons, a right handsome affair, and he had a broad-brimmed hat of the same color on his head. I wanted him to get me, but the other fellow dug his nails into my flesh, and pulled away as strong as his opponent. At length I thought the black-looking fellow with fiery eyes, pulled out a dice-box, and in action defied the other to settle the contest by a throw!

"This was agreed to, and they left off pulling me, while the fiendish looking chap went to work rattling the dice, which he

continued for some moments, looking steadily at the gentleman in drab. Still gazing with a scorching glance upon my friend opposite, the dark fellow turned down the dice-box right upon my chest, and deliberately raising it, there I saw three sixes! He still kept his eye fastened on my friend in drab and threw again. A fiery agony ran through me, as I waited to see the dice-box raised, that seemed to lie upon my chest as heavy as an iron weight. The box was raised, and *again* three sixes appeared!—I seemed to feel myself already sinking—sinking—I knew not where. Again the box was turned down, and it seemed as though I was plunging into the crater of Etna as the dice appeared, and once more I beheld *three sixes!*

“Again, for a short time, I was torpid and unconscious, but I soon seemed to know what was going on, and my friend in drab was rattling the dice. He threw the coffin lid across and threw on that, so that the heavy pain seemed to remove from my chest. I watched his first throw languidly and hopelessly, until the box was raised, and a sickly sort of pain tingled through me as I saw that the three sixes were thrown! I can tell you nothing about what I felt at that moment. I knew that it was only possible to *tie* the game, but to *beat* no chance remained. The second throw took place, and *again* three sixes appeared!

“I believe I felt more horror then than during all before. Hissing flames seemed to be spitting and darting at me. Burning pincers seemed to be champing impatient to seize me. Forks of flame were encircling my limbs to drag me down. Howling and shrieking seemed to be beneath me, and the concentrated agony of a hundred lives and of a hundred years seemed to pierce my heart like a red dart of steel from the regions of everlasting torment!

“One spot less than eighteen, and my doom was sealed. Eighteen would only reprieve me with a tie. With a gaze of fire I watched the dice-box as it now lay idle on the coffin lid. Slowly the figure in drab adjusted the tie of his cravat, drew his hat rather on one side and down over his left eye, and fixing a sort of half squint upon his black adversary and a half wink upon me, he quietly and deliberately rattled the dice. It may have been but a minute, but it

seemed to me a large slice of eternity, while he held that box slowly wagging it to and fro. At length he softly turned it down, and allowing it to remain for a few seconds, coolly lit a cigar and took several puffs. With perdition on one side, and never ending bliss on the other it is needless for me to say that those few seconds were an age. Suddenly he threw the box from him, and what—”

“And what was there?” eagerly interrupted a listener.

“Two sixes and a SEVEN!”

Daily Reveille, October 9, 1845, 2.

Bob White's Adventure at Vicksburg.

By Jo. Bird.

Early in the summer of 182— I embarked at Louisville with one or two friends, on what was then considered a “crack” steamer, for New Orleans. Assisted considerably by the current, and a little by steam, we reached Vicksburg in due season. Before this, however, a certain individual attracted our notice, whom it is necessary to describe, as he was destined to be the *hero* of the trip. Lest he may still be alive and take umbrage at the liberty, we must not give his true name—that of Bob White will suffice. Bob was a strapping “Buckeye,” well nigh six feet three in altitude, and proportionally developed in his muscular system. To look upon this man, so highly favored by nature, one would declare him a full match for five ordinary persons. But as fat men are generally good-natured, so strong ones are often cowardly. Pope may have thought of this when he said, “The mind, not the body, is the measure of a man.”⁹

We go on with Mr. White. What he lacked in courage he made

9. The line seems a general paraphrase of Pope on body and mind rather than a specific quotation. In *An Essay on Man*, Pope reflects at length on the relation of body and mind in the “Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus’d” (2.13) that is the human person. Generally he argues that the body is no more dispensable than the mind, yet still it is “The God within the mind” that must divide the “light and darkness in our chaos join’d” (2.203–4).

up amply in impertinence. Bob was no favorite with us, for few ignorant men could talk louder, longer, or more dogmatically. He told many tales to impatient hearers; and as he alone knew the "funny parts," he alone laughed. He believed firmly in dreams; but as to the earth's turning over and over, why Bob swore that was "a d—d lie; he was too old a bird to be caught with chaff." Oh, no! not he.

Our disagreeable fellow-passenger was unique in one respect. He possessed a strange sort of ventriloquial power, or rather a power of *drawing music*, apparently, "ab imo pectore." In consequence of this faculty Bob received the *sobriquet* of the "Jew's-harp Man." But the notes which he elicited from the depths of his throat resembled rather the sounds produced by the vibrations of a horse hair stretched across a broken window pane, in a windy day, or those of a large humble bee, as he at one time dashes by the ear with the swiftness of a rifle ball, and then again in a more distant sweep makes gentle music with his busy wings. It was thus that Bob would, at one instant, startle the company with a shrill and almost fearful note, and, at another, soothe the ear into a luxurious quiescence, by a mild and prolonged sort of buzzing—in its effects not unlike a distant water fall. Poor Bob! good-natured and timid fool! Little didst thou dream, in thy jovial steam boat "exhibitions," that a poor reward thy strange talent was so soon to meet with! We have long since forgiven thy faults in pitying thy fate!

Vicksburg, at *that* time, contained so many abandoned and desperate characters, that upon arriving there, at nightfall, the Captain advised the passengers to remain quietly on board, and not to go ashore, except by day, lest they should be insulted, assaulted, or robbed. To this all at first assented; but the curiosity to see, and the temptation to walk, were too strong to be resisted by several, confined, as they had been, for many days. Some three or four ventured to violate the Captain's reasonable injunctions—among the rest Bob White, the musical "Buckeye." Upon entering the town our ears were soon saluted with horrid oaths and frightful imprecations, uttered by bands of drunken revellers. How-

ever, we walked on, and soon found ourselves near the entrance of a well patronized grog shop. Curiosity induced us to enter. The room was crowded, and two or three barkeepers were busy in their calling. Such a collection of revolting faces has seldom been seen. If physiognomists and phrenologists are sometimes at fault when they encounter characters nicely balanced between good and evil, they could not have been slow to conclude that these men were reckless wretches, utterly depraved. A large, bull-necked, shaggy-browed brute, with the handles of a pistol and bowie knife projecting from his breast, approaching our untravelled musical genius, with precise formality asked if he "would not join him in a horn of the essence of life?" The Buckeye declined, which evidently displeased him of the pistols, who swore, with a terrible oath, that such a slight had never been offered a gentleman of Vicksburg since the foundation of the city. A slight trepidation at this juncture seized upon Bob, which the ruffian plainly observed, as he smiled confidently, as much as to say he knew his man, and had no fear of him.

"Your conduct is altogether unpardonable," said the desperado; "but, in mercy, you will be forgiven, if you will favor the company with a song." This was altogether an accidental request, but it brought to Bob's recollection his curious species of "whistling," as he termed it. That association of ideas brought upon Bob "all his wo."

"I can't *sing*," replied Mr. White, "but I rather guess I can *whistle* a little curious."

"Well, that'll do; so go ahead."

Now, although Bob was a little frightened at the aspect of affairs, yet he was evidently pleased with the chance thus thrown in his way of *performing* before a fresh and large audience. Why should not Mr. White be fond of admiration?—*who* is not?

"Go ahead, then! Whistle away."

Bob smiled, half timidly, half complaisantly, cleared his throat, set his arms akimbo, and threw his head back, after his old fashion, till his face was nearly horizontal. Away went Bob—now like the distant vibration of a silken cord—now like a humming bird,

as it poises itself in mid air to suck the sweets of a pendant flower. His imitations did not stop here: presently a gentle, melancholy murmur would be heard, like a steady breeze threading its way among the close boughs of lofty pine tops; then again Bob would partially close his lips, and enlarge the cavity of his mouth, whereby he produced a hollow, deep, guttural sound, not greatly unlike the roaring of Niagara at a distance.

"Bravo! bravo! By all that's righteous, *we'll have that again,*" exclaimed a dozen voices before silent; for every eye had been fixed on Bob, and a pin might have been heard to fall to the ground.

"I'm raily 'bleeged to you, gentlemen, for your good erpinion, but I can't go it agin, nohow. It's monstrous hard work, and no mistake."

"By —, you *shall whistle again,*" said bull-neck, and he drew out a sharp-edged tool, about eighteen inches in length, heavy and thick. Bob hesitated, and looked wild with fear. The next moment he felt a terrible whack across the shoulders with the side of the small scythe. The pain made the poor fellow writhe again. I pitied the suffering and humbled Buckeye, and, thinking it time to interfere, I looked around for our companions. They had long since become tired of Bob's *concert*, and left for the boat. Except remonstrate, what could I do, alone and unarmed? This I tried; the effort was worse than vain. It was plain that Bob's safety depended on his *whistling*, and mine on my silence. The whistler had *performed* long and laboriously; he panted deeply, and the sweat rolled in torrents from his face. For all this he received no thanks, but, instead, he found himself the jest of the vulgar crowd.

"Go it, d—n you, or I'll cut your throat." Away went Bob, as his veins swelled like tense cords about his neck, and his face grew redder and redder, till the blood was ready to leap from every pore. But "necessity has no law;" so away went Bob!—now the humble bee—now the wind moaning sadly through the keyhole—now the melancholy murmur of the pine forest—now the deep guttural—now the undefined roar of the far-off falls! Bob is exhausted—gone—ready to swoon away. I implore their compas-

sion; they reply by curses and threats. Bob begs—"Do, pray, gentlemen, jess let me off this time; I'll *whistle* to-mor"—"Go on, you d——d rascal." Bob could not, but he *should*; and, by way of "spurring" him, as they called it, they gauged their dirks and bowie knives with their thumbs, so that they might stick him to the depth of an eighth or a quarter of an inch. *This they did again and again.*

Bob was in agonies of mental and bodily suffering, yet there was something so ludicrous and comic in this otherwise distressing scene, that, for the life of me, I could not retain my gravity. The mirth of the low crew was boisterous in the extreme. Some contented themselves with expressing their surprise at Bob's "impoliteness;" some cursed him; some threatened, and not a few scarified his hide with the points of their knives.

To save dear life, away went Bob again; but his imitations were not so perfect this time as before; he was exhausted; his notes were often *curtailed* by an involuntary clapping of his hands upon his nether parts, as he felt the sharp points of the knives touch the skin—the riotous mirth of his heartless tormentors drowned the rest. Human nature could stand no more, and Bob White was once more at liberty. The next day Bob kept his berth, and many days elapsed before his protruded eyeballs completely regained their sockets, and whiteness returned to their blood-shot surfaces. The last question, and, I believe, the only one, Bob asked between Vicksburg and New Orleans was, what it would cost him to take ship at the latter place, and return home by New York!

Daily Reveille, December 20, 1846, 1.

Who's At the Wheel?

By Sol. Smith.

Western men will remember the *Vandalia*, which was for many years a popular and profitable freight and passenger boat on the

Mississippi, and which only ceased running in 1842 or '43.¹⁰ She was an "eight-day boat," and, before the introduction of the Meteors, Scotts, Whites, and the Missouri,¹¹ was set down as a "fast-running" vessel, being rated at our Insurance offices A. No. 1.

The incidents I am about to relate occurred in the summer of '40.

The river was low, and it was not thought advisable to "run nights"—at any rate until we got below Memphis.

There was considerable sickness among the deck passengers, and *as I was the only physician on board*, my time was much occupied in weighing out grains and scruples¹² of calomel, jalap and ipecacuanha from the medicine chest. This I got along with very well, having a faithful assistant in the clerk, Thompson, who went the rounds with me, and took particular care that my prescriptions were attended to.

One evening a steward came to my state room and said Capt. D——¹³ desired to speak with me.

"What!" I exclaimed, more than half asleep—for truth to say I was snatching an afternoon's nap, to make up for the loss of rest caused by my professional attendance on the lower deck—"is the Captain taken sick?—well, bring me the medicine chest—how was he taken?—fever? Tell Thompson to give him the usual dose of ipecac to clear out his stomach, and I'll be with him before it operates."

"You are mistaken, Doctor"—(they all called me so during this voyage)—"the Captain is not sick; he wants to see you on particular business."

"Oh, that's a different matter—ask the Captain to come to my state room."

Away went the steward, and soon after, the Captain made his

10. The title of this story is given as "Doctoring and Piloting" in *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968). This volume will be cited hereafter as TM.

11. The boats are listed in TM and in *The Theatrical Journey-Work and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol. Smith, Comedian, Attorney at Law, etc., etc.* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1854) as "Scotts, Whites, Missouri, Shotwells and Eclipses." The latter book will be cited hereafter as TJW.

12. TM reads "grains, drachms, and scruples."

13. TM refers to "Captain Small" here and throughout.

appearance. After the usual inquiries from me of "how do we get on?" and "how far have we run to-day?" and an apology from him for disturbing me, the worthy Captain opened the business of the evening.

"I fear our first pilot's in a bad way—nothing will stay on his stomach," remarked Capt. D—, taking a chair, and stretching out his legs in the easy way that Captains of steam boats will—"can't you do anything for him?" he asked.

"I fear not," was my answer; "I have tried every thing in the medicine chest!—there is no hope whatever of his being able to take his post at the wheel during *this* voyage; soon as we arrive at New Orleans he had better go to Stone's hospital—a months care in that excellent institution will probably restore him."

"This is d—lish¹⁴ unlucky," grumbled the Captain; "I wanted to 'run nights' after to-night, and the second pilot cannot stand double watches—what's to be done?"

I quietly told him I didn't know *what* was to be done, and supposed the *business* was over; but Capt. D— lingered, gave two or three "h-hems," spat violently through the state room door and over the guards, changed his position several times, and at length continued the conversation.

"Mr. Sol., I understand that during your life you've turned your hand to 'most everything."

"Well, I have"—

"I have heard of your merchandising, your preaching, your acting, and your *doctoring*—did you ever try your hand at PILOTING?"

"Piloting? Never—unless occasionally lending a hand at steering a flat boat may be considered piloting."

The Captain looked somewhat disappointed when he received my answer, and rose to depart.

"What is it you want?" I asked.

Looking up in my face, he said, "I want a pilot; we can't run nights with *one*—Jim being down with the fever, and there being no hope of getting him up, I thought if you"—

14. TJW and TM have "very" for "d—lish."

"Am I to understand you that failing to get Jim on his legs, you wish *me* to stand watch as pilot?"

"Why, if you *would*—Thompson says you *can* if you will."

"But what would the insurance companies say in case of accident?" I inquired.

"That's the point," answered the Captain—"I wanted you to take Jim's place at the wheel, and *assume his character* at the same time! If you will do this, we shall save at least 48 hours between this and Orleans."

I pondered a moment, and then asked when he wished me to assume my new duties?

"At 6, P.M., to-morrow,"¹⁵ he answered.

"Enough said—, I'LL DO IT! Consider me engaged, and be so good as to send Thompson to me."

The Captain departed, rejoiced at my ready acquiescence, and that same evening a report went through the boat that Jim was much better, and would be able to resume his post at the wheel very shortly. Thompson came to me, and I arranged with him to give our patients a farewell dose all round, and pronounce them cured.

Next evening, I visited the pilot's state room, and just before 6 o'clock the tall figure of Jim was seen (or was *supposed* to be seen) enveloped in his great coat, a large hat pulled over his eyes, and a bandanna tied around his neck, coat collar and all, stalking up to the wheel-house. A supposed sore throat, the effects of salivation, was a sufficient reason for the pilot's taciturnity during the remainder of the voyage.

In my character of doctor, I had had some difficult duties to perform; as an actor and manager, my path had not always been strewn with roses; as a preacher, I had perspired "a few;" and as a lawyer, some *hard cases* had come under my superintendence; but this PILOTING was by far the most difficult job I had ever undertaken! It was observable that while passing over "bad places," *Capt. D— was always in the pilot house*, which was somewhat

15. TJW and TM add "At the commencement of the dog watch" to the beginning of the sentence.

strange, as Jim was known to be one of the most careful and competent pilots on the Mississippi; but this was accounted for in the fact that the Captain was young at the business, and *wanted to learn the river*.

We arrived without accident at New Orleans—and I do assure you I felt much relieved, *myself*—though, as a faithful physician, I felt it to be my duty to recommend that poor Jim, *being much worse, from his constant attention to his duties at the wheel*, should be sent to Dr. Stone's hospital for a month. I am happy to say that Jim recovered, and was ready to resume his post in the wheel house on the very next trip of the *Vandalia*. He never meets me without calling out, "Sol., WHO'S AT THE WHEEL?"

Daily Reveille, May 15, 1846, 1-2.

3

RING-
TAILED
ROARERS
AND
TALL
TALES

Squire Funk's Awful Mistake.

By Wing.

Well, gentlemen, the way old Funk did jest unconsciously let himself into the durndest screamin' queer fix that ever an old sky-blue squire did, was the right way, I tell ye.

Old Squire Funk, in the fust place, was jest ontentionilly sent to make every man, woman and child sick of him, and that's a fact! He knew more about things, and told about 'em oftener, and took longer to do it in, and made it amount to littler when he'd got through, than the hull bilin' of lawyers, widers, pedlers, and pisoners of the county; and, as if this wasn't enough, he was jest a livin' saint, and how the deuce they got on without him up in heaven, was a wonder!

Well, there was another mighty queer character in town, gentlemen, and that was Jake Miller, who was born on a raft, suckled by a squaw, raised on *bar* meat, and who made a livin' by threat'nin' everything human with death that cum in his way. Jake, in spite of this, had a right good-lookin' wife, though, and somehow Squire Funk had scraped up a mighty friendly acquaintance with her. Jake used to be off a flatboatin', or a horse stealin', or somethin' or other, and that gev Squire a chance;—he was ruther *skace*, though, when Jake was about. Well, these two jest nat'rally hated each other, right off hand, of course. Squire used to moralize, and talk about Jake's loose courses, and Jake used to up and cuss him to his face for all the soul-shrivelled old hypocrites that ever bred mischief. He kinder suspected him, too, about his wife, and he gev him fair notice that he'd jest kill and eat him if he ever caught him on his lot. Mind, I don't say that Mrs. Jake meant anything wrong, but old Squire Funk, you see, knew all her folk, and had got her to jine church; and it was a comfort to her to have some one to talk to while Jake was off a raisin' h-ll; and on this petic'lar night I'm a tellin' you on, she'd gone and writ a hull blue sheet full of sorrer and aflection to the Squire, givin' Jake goss, and puttin' on the soft soap to old Funk about a feet, I tell ye!

"I've bought out the hull grocery," sings out Jake Miller, standin' in Cap'n Tod's store with a hull raft of fellers—"I've bought out the hull grocery, cigars, peanuts, and old rye into the bargain. Go

ahead, boys, and here's my prayer's, without sugar, for old Squire Funk, scald his picter!"

Well now, it happened, just like fun, that the old feller, with Mrs. Jake's letter in his pocket, was pass'n the door at this very minute; all on em see him, and *prehaps* they did'nt have him right in the middle on 'em, in no time!

"Take a *sneeze*, squire," says Jake, "I've bought the grocery, and this is yourn, by thunder!" and he fills him up a quart of sody water, (Funk bragged that he never dranked nothin' else,) and made him cut his throat with it all down at a swaller. Squire was mighty skeart, but he see they were all *fine* enough to skin him, so he wiped his eyes, grinned, and went in for humorin' on 'em.

"Take a draw, squire!" and off he went, smokin' a cigar out of each corner of his mouth, and *sneezin'* every other minnit, so as not to injure his stomach, till the hull crowd had laff'd themselves about dead. They wouldn't give him nothin' but soda, tryin to *bust* him; while they fired up themselves on the baldface, runnin' all kinds of saws, till at last the old feller feels one on 'em a droppin' a pack of cards in his pocket, so as to swear 'em agin him. He thought he'd best still take it in joke, so, as Jake was closest to him, what does he do but jest takes out the cards and passes 'em snug into Jake's pocket, where they laid unsuspected; but, Lord a *Massy*; he next put his hand back in his *own* pocket, and found he'd mixed up Mrs. Jake's letter among the cards, and *got rid of both together!*

"Another *sneeze*, you succumventin' old sinner," sings out Jake, tho' Squire was so full of gas, already, that he couldn't keep his shirt down; "*—another sneeze*, and then you've got to run me a *foot-race!*"

Lord a Massey! you ought'r heard the laffin' then! Down went another quart of sody, and what twixt the letter and a tight waist-band, old Funk kept up the awfullest sighin' you ever did see.

"Gentlemen," said he, tryin' to laugh—a stich in the side at that,—*"I aint got no objections to a foot race with Mr. Miller, but 'fore we start, I jest propose that we shake hands and forget old grudges."*

"Good as wheat," says Jake, "huggin's if you *say* so." Now this was the chance the old feller wanted, to get that cussed letter back out of Jake's pocket. He held out his paw, Jake cum *bar* over him, but jest as Squire was gettin' his hand in, he got sech a *bustin'* hug that *everything went!*—all *aft* was a wreck, I tell ye! whooh! Squire Funk collapsed with a awful groan, while the fellers jest rolled over, too, in ramstatics! There lay old Funk a breathin' his last, and dyin', besides, to know how on airth he was to get the letter out of Jake's pocket! There he lay, explosion behind, a bowie knife before;—certain death staring him in the face, both sides!

At last Jake got through laffin', and swore, bust or no bust, he'd have that foot race! Old Funk was orfully *tore*, and swelled wus'n afore, and he plead his case, but the only answer he got was more sody. Still he coaxed Jake, and hung around him, and tried to get his fingers in his pocket, the wust kind.

"Mr. Miller," said Squire, slidin' his hand over Jake's shoulder, "Jokes is jokes, allers, 'mong friends—'taint as how I aint enjoyin' of this, fully—fully, Mr. Miller,—Jake Higgins don't put them *lucifers* in my trowsers—if *you* please! As I meant to observe, Mr. Miller,"—Well the old feller was a tremblin' all this time, and lookin' wild, and at the same time a tryin' to cum it behind Jake's back—Jake a shakin' all over with laugh. Squire was very busy a blowin' his nose, and screwin' himself up to make a dive for the letter, when—*s-cr-atch*—in went a live coon *under his coat tail*, and it climbed twixt his legs fust thing, in course, kase it's the natur of the critter to *hang on!* All creation! how old Funk snatched his hand back! and jest then, out of the back store, jumped Tod's cussed raw headed bull terrier; some one said, "Shake him, Snap!" and in he went, teeth fust, *after the coon!* Oh, hair and nails! you never see any thing shoot as Squire Funk did! There it was, terrier and trowsers! Coon and Squire! till the varmint had worked itself clean up into his bosom, he, the durned gassy old locomotive! *explodin'* all the while, and, at last, pitching heels and head over a log into a pig puddle!

Well, *prehaps* there wa'n't a crowd round the Squire, and *prehaps* he wa'n't a picter to beat nater! He had suffered a few, and no

mistake! No one could tell which eend he was nastiest! Jake Miller jest laff'd till he cried, and then he cried till he laff'd, and then, right out of his own heart, for no human could bear spite after this, he helped to strip and pump on old rag-tail, gave him a drink of peach, and, to *conclude*, offered him his *own coat to go hum in!*

"*What!*" said Squire Funk, comin' to, and jumpin' right up on eend, "you'll lend me *your coat*, Mr. Miller?"

"Well, I *will*, old hoss!" said Jake, "only let's see if there mightn't be *somehin' missin'*, afterwards." Down went his hands into the pockets—and down went Squire, also, right on his knees again,—and lucky he did, too, for Jake thought it was *weakness*, so pulled off his blanket coat, without examinin', and next minnet the old Squire was wrapped up in it, and makin' tracks like a whitehead!

The extra sody and the exercise, gentlemen, acted rather powerful, but Squire Funk was a better man for it, for I tell ye—*he never answered Mrs. Jake's letter!*

Daily Reveille, August 29, 1845, 2.

Lige Shattuck's Reminiscences of Mike Fink.

A New England passenger on one of our steamers was inquiring very anxiously for an introduction to an *old* Mississippi boatman, one who knew something about Mike Fink. The clerk informed him that an introduction was unnecessary; if he would go up and talk to the pilot he might learn from him the whole history of the old boatman. Up went the Yankee, and after circuiting round Lige two or three times, he spoke:

"How d'ye dew, pilot—they say yeou are an old friend of Mike Fink's."

"Knew him like a brother," said Lige.

"Well, now dew tell me something about him, some anecdote," requested the New Englander.

"I don't know as I recollect any real bright one just now—I do recollect his taking a prescription once."

"What was that?" eagerly inquired the stranger.

"Why, he eat a whole buffalo robe," answered Lige, with the greatest gravity imaginable.

"Well, dew tell! What in patience did he masticate that for?" further inquired the stranger.

Lige turned round to the other pilot, and, winking his eye, observed: "He's sold, aint he, Jim?"

"Yeou aint told me what he chawed the buffalo robe for," continued the New Englander.

"Why, the fact is," says Lige, "the doctors told him he had lost the coating of his stomach, and as he drank nuthin' but New England rum, he thought he'd dress his insides up in suthin' that 'ud stand the cussed pizen stuff, so he tried buffalo with the *har* on, and it helped him mightily."

The anxious inquirer was satisfied.

Daily Reveille, February 27, 1848, 2.

Judge Magraw's Yarn About a Mocking Bird and a Jackass.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

Judge Magraw, and the sad end he came to, will be remembered by many! When, sometime back, he was in the habit of visiting St. Louis, his favorite house was the "Planters," and his favorite seat, especially in the evenings, was *either* of the two front benches.

Judge Magraw was the body of fun and the soul of sentiment; so, of course, he always had a hard set about him, and the way they used to stay out, at night, sitting with their legs cocked up, was a caution to careful people.

On the Judge's last visit to St. Louis, he sat up, as usual, one night, telling stories and *things*, till nearly the whole crowd died, laughing! Each one, as he was killed, took himself off to be buried, till, finally, there were but three survivors! These, to save their

lives, insisted upon taking themselves off, also, when the Judge, desperately, rushed up stairs to his room in the third story, opened the window to its widest gape, gave one look up at the heavens, another down at the brick pavement, and then, without a prayer, threw himself—on the bed,—for it was a warm night, and the Judge wanted plenty of air to assist his snoring. Well, the Judge's last story was a capital one, and, peace to his spirit, we're going to—spoil it, we fear.

"You see, R——, a clever young fellow, was giving his reminiscences of Spain, from which country he had just returned, and he told, among the rest, a bird story, that was a *leetle* too feathery to swallow. It was about the Duke of Modena having taught a whole aviary to whistle an overture, or something of the kind, and then, by way of closing the performance, advancing and firing a pistol, when the songsters would suddenly drop to the ground, turn over on their backs, and appear to expire, as if each one had received an especial bullet."

"Why," said I, "R——, that's nothing to what I've known an Alabama mocking-bird to do! He used to mock everything earthly, until he made the whole neighborhood so ashamed of itself, that it was afraid to own its name to travelers. You see, this mocker sat up in a China tree, in front of the house, which was separated from the road by a lawn, and, the first thing, he began at the birds about, making them all quit, in mortification. The cats were his next victims, and I wish I may be shot if there was a 'Tom' to open his lips for three miles round. Dogs, hogs and cattle generally followed, and even Deacon Good, that used to give out the *hymes*, had to clear out to next county. Well, finally there was nothing left but a jackass belonging to an old neighbor, and called *Johemus*, and he came to see what he could do for the credit of the country. Up he came to the fence under the china tree, and first he takes a good long breath, and then out he rips, and a better bray, *prehaps*, hadn't been heard often, but 'twasn't a circumstance—out came the bird with a bray worth two of it, and off went old Jo., wild and cavortin', and hardly knowing whether he had a right to consider himself a jack, or not! After a while, however, he recovered his

confidence somewhat, and up he comes again to the fence, and first he nerves himself, and next he takes his wind, and finally out he comes again, perfectly awful; but 'twouldn't do, for, just as easy, old birdee opens on him, and, Lord! heels, head, mane and tail, away he went, with a roll and a 'ruction, bringing up, finally, against the road fence at the bottom of the lawn! Perhaps you don't believe it? Well, this was mighty bad, but, after turning it over in his mind a good while, old Jo. thought it was a leetle too d—d unjackassical to be beat by a bird, and so up he comes, nerving himself again, but mighty skeery, I tell you! 'Go your death, old feller,' said the bird to itself, and go it the jack did, till all creation stood on end—jack into the bargain, but pride couldn't avail him. Out came birdee, louder, and longer, and thicker, and squarer, and all without the first flutter, and Johenus looked up once, with a sort of 'I bequeathe you my shoes' expression, and just laid down and died—*perhaps you don't believe it!*

"'Yes, I do,' said R.——, 'I believe it to be a lie, and an infernal insult into the bargain, and I'll come mocking bird over you, by thunder!'"——

But how Judge Magraw *didn't* get whipped, we must reserve for another occasion, not liking to talk about fighting on Sunday.

Daily Reveille, June 27, 1847, 2.

A Buffalo Tale.

From the Papers of the Late John Brown.
[Richard S. Elliott]

Great is the story-teller among the Arabs, and ever has been, since the days of the renowned Caliph Haroun Al Raschid,¹ and that unrivalled bedfellow with the awkward name.²

Great, too, is the story-teller among the "Celestials." The Chi-

1. Haroun-al-Raschid (763-809), caliph of Baghdad, figures in many of the *Arabian Nights*.

2. Scheherazade.

nese have tales as well as we outside barbarians; and a Chinese *novel*, if translated and published in our country, would afford amusement equal to the Arabian Nights. Their works of fiction are extravagant and grotesque in many of their descriptions; yet, withal, furnishing correct pictures of Chinese *thought*, and something like a delineation of Chinese *habits*.

And great is the story-teller among the North American Indians. (By the way, the Indians and Chinese not only look alike, and shave their heads nearly alike, but resemble each other closely in some of their habits of social life.) The wigwam is often a scene of intense interest, as some "brave" holds forth concerning his exploits, or some wag attempts to amuse his audience, or some old medicine man explains the mysteries of things, which neither he nor his hearers can comprehend.

But where the story-teller figures to most advantage—where he is most useful—is at the camp-fire of civilized men, or at their distant stations away in the wilderness. Books you have none—Cave Johnson sends no mail—you have no resource but your companions.

Out on a campaign, you bivouack with the welkin for your canopy, and roast your buffalo steaks before the fire, spitted on a "sharp stick." Then you light your pipes—some sitting—some reclining—some at full length, on blankets, or robes. How welcome is the extravagant tale of wild adventure, or the humorous relation of some ludicrous scene! At such times I regretted that I was not a story-teller!

I had a friend in the Indian country who was a rare narrator, but suspected of embellishment. He never failed in a story. He was a genius. No matter what the incident, he could relate it so as to be intensely interesting, or irresistably amusing. He had one buffalo tale, as tough as any, that he used to tell with a *naivete* and earnestness, that made us forget its improbable features.

"One morning, when I was in the Blackfoot country," he would say, "I went out, accompanied by an old Spanish hunter, (we call the Mexicans all Spaniards, you know) to get a few buffalo steaks; and, seeing an old bull asleep under a bank, I took a fancy to have

a ride, without saddle or bridle. So I crept up, and sprung on his back" —

"The dev" — we would exclaim.

"And off he went, full tilt, towards a small bottom prairie, the Spaniard running after as fast as he could."

"And you on his back?" we would ask.

"Yes sir—fact—and I kept beating him with my gun-stick, on the side of the head, until his course became circular, and he made several tours of the little prairie. I could easily have killed him with my knife, but I wanted to show the Spaniard, who had run to the middle of the prairie, some feats of *horsemanship*, as he kept walking round like the ring-master of a circus. At length we came within about two hundred yards of the Spaniard.

"'Shall I shoot?' he bawled out.

"'No,' said I, 'wait a little.'

"So we kept on, tail up, at a high run, until I brought him within about one hundred yards of my companion.

"'Now,' said I, 'let him have it!'

"'In what part?'

"'Behind the foreshoulder!'

"'Well,' said he, raising his rifle, '*hold up your leg!*'"

Then, after our astonishment had been sufficiently expressed, he would assure us that the Spaniard brought the bull down pursuant to order; and he had an old pair of elk-skin breeches, nipped on the nether edge of one leg by a bullet, which he used to assure us were the identical breeches he wore on that occasion.

"And you see, sir," he would add, "I didn't hold my leg quite high enough!"

Daily Reveille, March 31, 1846, 2.

A Great Blow Out in Michigan.

By John Brown. [Richard S. Elliott]

Among the droll story-tellers who used to amuse me in the Indian country, was one Samuel Higgins—or *Sam. Higgins*, as we called

him—who, in various capacities, had long been leading a kind of itinerant life, in the near and far west. For many years he had been in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan, and afterwards passed across the Territory of Iowa to the Missouri country. At the time I knew him, he held a small appointment under the “Department,” in a branch of the “*Civilization of Indians*” service, and was stationed on the Missouri river, not a thousand miles from Fort Leavenworth. His pay was moderate, but it afforded him a comfortable subsistence, and the philosopher’s stone of the wilderness—contentment—which can turn every thing to gold.

Often have I sat by the hour listening to Sam’s tales, away off there among the redskins. They were of all kinds, “from grave to gay, from lively to severe,” yet always good at the time, though, like the tints of a fading sunset, I am afraid they cannot well be transferred to canvass.

Sometimes, however, I would be tempted to question the probability of some narrations, that looked very much like things overdone, and would gently hint my doubts; but Sam. was never taken aback. He would proceed to explain and establish so satisfactorily, that doubt only proved to be a harbinger of conviction, sent to clear the way and make it more entire. “No, indeed, Colonel,” he would say, (he was very particular about my title—a sensible man, Sam. was,) “no, indeed, I never go beyond the truth;” and the tougher the story the more earnestly he would insist that it was all “true as gospel.”

It happened one day that the wind was blowing a stiff gale on the river, which we could see at a distance from the spot where we then were; and the water being low, the loose sand was blown up from the bars, and was seen like a dense fog along the course of the stream for several miles. We had been looking at it from the door of my cabin, and as we resumed our seats and pipes at the fire, I remarked that I “would not like to be on the river at such a time.”

“Why so?” inquired Sam.

“Why, don’t you see the sand? Who could live in all that sand?”

“Yes,” said he, re-lighting his pipe, “I see it.” And after giving a

puff or two, "but I've seen worse than that, Colonel, in my time," he added, gravely.

"Where?"

"In the lake country—on Lake Michigan. You ought to see the sand on the beach *there*. It's the greatest place for sand ever *I* saw."

"I suppose it is blown considerably, at times," I rejoined, "but the Missouri sand is bad enough for me."

"Well, sir," said he, "on Lake Michigan the sand is clear, pure sand, not dry mud like this Missouri sand, and it blows sometimes so that you can't see ten feet from you!"

"You don't say!"

"Yes, and I've seen it blow into people's houses along the lake, after the women had set the table for dinner, so that we had to 'dump' it out of the plates before eating!"

"Sam," said I, "that approaches the wonderful."

"It's true, though, Colonel; and I've seen it drift round tall pine trees along the shore of the lake, like snow, *till it would cover them up clear to the top!*"

"Sam! Sam! by thunder that's *too* tough—I can't go it."

"Upon my word, Colonel, it's as true as you're there, and I'm here."

"Well, but Sam," said I, "how does it happen no one ever heard of those buried forests? I have heard of the *downs* as they are called, on the coasts of England and France, formed by accumulations of sand blown *up* from the beach; but I never heard of those buried trees in Michigan, before."

"Why you see," said he, "*the wind changes likely as not next day, and blows the sand away again!*"

I expressed myself satisfied by this solution of the mystery, and we smoked some minutes in silence, when Sam continued.

"I would hardly have believed such a story myself, Colonel," said he, "if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes; and I came very near getting into an ugly scrape there, once. I was out hunting, and went to sleep in the evening on a sand bank, among what I supposed to be some pine shrubs, but which were really the branches of the buried trees. I sleep very soundly. During the

night, the wind rose, and blew the sand all away, so that I awoke in the morning, in the top of a tall pine tree!"

"Well, Sam, admitting for the sake of the story, that this is all true, what was your first thought, when you got awake?"

"Why, I thought Baron Munchausen's story of his horse hanging to the steeple, after the snow melted, might be true after all; but he must have had a stronger bridle-rein, than they make of patent leather!"³

"Yes," said I, "as tough as some of your stories, Sam. But how did you get down?"

"Why, I walked down."

"Walked down!"

"Why, yes. You see I was out hunting, and had tied my little wallet of provisions to my leg, to keep the wolves from stealing it; so that there was no danger of starving; and seeing that the wind was about to rise, *I just waited till the sand drifted up again!*"

Daily Reveille, May 14, 1845, 2.

"Panther Evans."

By Laon. [George L. Curry]

"May be you never heered how old Evans got the Panther stuck on to his name? Ever since that *stampede* on the banks of the Pela Hatchee,⁴ he has been called 'Panther Evans,' and known by no other name.

"Wall, you must know, first and foremost, that Panther Evans is

3. On a journey from Rome to Russia, Baron Munchausen stops for the night in Poland in an area covered with snow and where no village is in sight. He ties his horse to what appears to be "a pointed stump of a tree" above the snow and then falls asleep, waking only at full daylight. Astonished, he finds himself "in the midst of a village, lying in a churchyard," his horse far above him, "hanging by his bridle to the weather-cock" of a church steeple. Once the Baron understands what has happened, he shoots the horse's bridle in two with his pistol, brings down the horse, and proceeds on his way. From *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (Garden City, N.Y.: Deluxe Editions Club, n.d.), 24-25.

4. Pelahatchie, or Pelahatchee, Creek is in Rankin County, Mississippi, in the central part of the state east of Jackson.

some, and no mistake—drinks more whisky, blows it off louder, and is considerable queerer than any other arrangement about Pela Hatchee diggins'. He sets over his drink, without saying a word, till he begins to see varmints; he then always gits up, moves to the door of the 'doggerly,' looks out and around knowingly, and then blows after this fashion:

"'Whew! wh-e-w! moccasin tracks! Ingens about, boys!'

"After this histing of the safety valve, he goes back agin just as quietly as he came out, and takes a 'big drink,' which generally does his bizziness.

"But I spose you want to know how he won the panther doin's; hold on a shake, then, till I dampen down, and I'll give it to you.

"Wall, you see old Evans went out one day turkey huntin' on the Pela Hatchee—he don't know any other place than that stamping ground. At the time I'm talking about he was some younger than he is now by a good deal. He went out a turkey huntin' as I told you—got into a good spot for game—was stooping down and using his 'turkey call,' when, all of a sudden, a big panther, without the least notice of such an intent, came down upon his head, tearing off sundry scalp-locks of hair, and disposed to do other mischief. Evans jumped up awful quick, I tell yer, skeered to death, and wolfish, too—had his back up immediately, though, and was full of fight. He looked at the panther, and the panther looked at him, and they both looked at one another, and there they might have stood to this day, if the panther hadn't concluded it was best to keep shady, and commenced taking the back track. Evans had got down on his hands and knees in his efforts to reach his rifle, which had fallen to the ground, when the panther growled and showed its teeth, but still keep backing out. It is not known how long Evans remained on all fours, but towards evening one of his neighbors, who chanced to be passing that way, found him in the position I have told you, grinning like a hyenna, growling like a panther, and shaking his head awfully.

"Now, stranger, don't think this was the way Panther Evans got his name, for it warn't. He went home that night, and in sleep he was fighting any number of panthers till midnight, about which

time *something took place*. There was an opening in his cabin, which he used to call a door, and it was shut when the blanket was dropped down on the inner side. In day time or night this constituted the only security to Evans's castle. It was about midnight, as I were telling you, when Panther Evans was roused from his dreams of fighting desperately with wild varmints, by a fierce growling in his cabin. He got up at once, and made out the intruder to be the biggest kind of a panther. He sot himself at once for a fight; the panther growled, and he growled—helping it out considerably by an oath or two, and at it they went, in the darkness of the little cabin, the varmint fighting for food, and Evans because he was savage at the idea of such a cussed intrusion—so savage, indeed, that he forgot his Arkansaw toothpick, and went into it fisticuff fashion—giving the panther a decided advantage, seeing as how it was armed, for such insects always carry their teeth and paws with them, ready for use. Wall, the panther drew the first blood, but Evans *cotched* him as he did it, and made his teeth meet in the brute's throat, right on the wind-pipe. So it went, the panther shaking Evans, and he shaking the panther, and putting in big licks, at the same time, with his fists and feet. Wall, so it was, till the panther left off shaking, and became as quiet and harmless as a lamb. May be you won't believe it, but when Evans dropped the critter it was stone dead. Its throat had been actually *chawed out*.

"Panther Evans was seen next morning sitting on the carcass, in front of his cabin, letting off steam in his usual fashion—'Whew! wh-e-w! moccasin tracks! Ingens about, boys! wake snakes! W-h-e-w!'"

Daily Reveille, July 21, 1846, 1.

"Fighting the Tiger."

By Thunder.

Having a little leisure time at my command, during the summer of 1843, I concluded to follow the general current of travel which had

"set" towards the Hot Springs, in Arkansas, and visit that point in order that I might "get a sight" of this wonderful freak of nature's great laboratory. To this end I made the requisite arrangements, and in due time was formally introduced to a scene combining more of the grand, beautiful and sublime, than had ever before been my lot to witness.

And now we will turn to the immediate object in writing this sketch, which is to embody a "yarn" that came to my ears during this visit, as well as to give tangibility and shape to an incident in the hunter's life, the recital of which had well nigh made

"The knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end."⁵

Every one who has visited the point in question will recognize the many log-shanties which are sprinkled along the valley—silent and tenantless in winter, but redolent with life and *spirit* in summer.

One evening towards twilight (in company with several friends) we had gathered around the doors of one of the shantees just referred to, and listened with delighted ear and excited brain to the many marvellous stories which the *natives* were unravelling.

During the relation of one of their stories, we were started by a sepulchral voice behind us exclaiming, that the party was telling "a h-ll of a yarn!"—at which we turned, and beheld a creature so much like the celebrated sage of "Sleepy Hollow," that we could scarcely suppress the belief that he must have sat for Irving's bright portraiture of that redoutable personage. So very like, indeed, was he to the venerable "Rip," that we were more than once tempted to look around for the rusted remnant of his gun—the "uncannonized bones of his dog"—the scorched and weather-beaten "pouch" in which he was wont in days of yore to keep his elements of death. But we were not permitted long to remain in doubt; for, with a spring, he rose from the counter on which he had been reclining, and repeated his assertion that "That was a

5. *Hamlet*, 1.5.18-19.

h—ll of a lie!" The crowd greeted him with a "round of applause," which soon satisfied us that he was (to use a provincialism of that region) "a big toad in that puddle." The request was general that he should spin a yarn also—a request to which a ready assent was granted, *after* a proposition for a "general treat" had been swallowed. His story ran somewhat thus: "Did any one ever hear of my 'fighting the tiger' a year or two ago in Alabama? If any one hasn't heard that story, he'd better plaster his hair to his head, and sow his coat to his skin; for, cuss me if it isn't enough to frighten a man out of his senses.

"Well! Some time 'long in the month of July, Sal came to me one day, and says she to me—says she—Joe,—I want some bar-meat, and I guess that you had better cut right out and get me some. Now, you must recollect, fellers, that Sal was sorter sick about that time, and used to take the darndest crankiest kind of notions in her head that ever I heard of. But, however, I slung 'old Bellzy' over my shoulder, and sat out in full chase after the only bear that we had heard of in that neck of the woods during the summer. A long, and a hot, and a wearisome tramp I had; but luck was with me, and I finally brought 'old Bellzy' to a level on him, and just laid him out as slick as ever you saw a coon chouse a dog. Little time elapsed before he was regularly cleansed, while I made a break for home, as I was tired, hot and hungry. The tramp was a long one; the load none of the lightest, and I soon grew faint and sick under the heat of the sun. Casting about for a spot upon which to rest until the cool of evening, I soon found a quiet nook under the shadow of clusters of vines, to which I took an especial liking. Hanging my game to a branch of a neighboring tree, and resting my gun by its side, I retired to this inviting spot, and was quickly in a land where uneasiness is not felt. How long I slept it is impossible to say; but the nap generally, was a sweet and refreshing one, and might have lasted much longer, if I had not been disturbed by a slimy and compressing sensation about my throat, together with a feeling that something was passing over my face which was not every way pleasant to me. I was not thoroughly disturbed; yet I felt my situation becoming more and more un-

pleasant, and, in a dreaming listlessness, opened my eyes to see what was going on, when—marcy on me! I found an enormous snake (well known in that region as the 'Racer,') had wound himself about my neck, and was bobbing his nasty head back and forth upon my face, while his horrible tongue was playing like lightning upon my features! With a yell of horror, I sprang to my feet! Fortunately, my presence of mind did not leave me, and I bethought myself at once of my knife. Quietly drawing it from my belt, I managed to pass it between my throat and the snake, until I was sure that its point had reached beyond his widest fold; then, with a sudden movement, turned the back to my skin, the blade to my enemy, and, with a vigorous thrust of my wrist, he was lying powerless around my feet. Before I had time to recover from my alarm, I looked and, mercy again! I found a grander horror upon me! Drawn by the scent of blood, a tiger had found my game, during my sleep, and was rampant and raging over his prey. Never shall I forget the growl which he gave when he first saw me. There he was, rearing upon the game before him, his eyes like balls of fire, waiting only for me to move to spring upon and tear me limb from limb. My brain was on fire; I saw but one hope, and that was to recover the knife, which in my first surprise I had dropt. I made one effort to secure it, but my enemy kept too close a watch upon me, and darted upon me before I could reach it. As he came, with thundering roar and flaming eyes, I gave myself up for lost; blindly I closed my fist and made a pass as he reared upon me. Fortunately my arm passed directly into his throat, and as he ripped my clothes in threads with his iron claws, I kept shoving my fist on—on—on, until it was *through* and *through*, by thunder! Quick as lightning I seized his tail, ris up on my feet, gave a hearty jerk, and turned the tarnal beast clean *inside out!* Strangers, I thought I should a flummixed right on the spot; but I got over it, and feel none the worse for 'fighting the tiger.' Whoo'l drink?"

4

**FRONTIER
THEATER**

A Fifth Act Resurrection.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

"Some men are born to greatness," and some of these are perfectly aware of the brilliant career by "fate and metaphysical aid" marked out for them; yet, somehow or other, there is a screw loose somewhere, in their case, and said brilliant career never amounts to much of a shine. Young theatrical geniuses, generally, are of the class *born* to distinction; they feel it—are full of it; and this conviction having such entire possession of their minds no wonder that they take but small pains to "achieve" the desired position. As to having greatness "thrust upon them," this frequently occurs in the shape of a long part at a short notice—honors equally blushing and evanescent.¹

One of these born great ones was an actor by the name of Champlin,² who, some twelve or fifteen years ago, was known as "a character" among the smaller theatres. He was not ill-looking, but he was "a guy" in his manners; the butt of the company; his high aspirations had settled into the tangibility of "little business"—and "walking" parts, "first murderers," second rate scoundrels, &c., made up the limited though exceedingly varied round of his professional efforts. A theatre had been built in Portland, Maine; it was very successful, as a novelty, a popular star was playing *Juliet*, and Champlin as *Paris*, "the man of wax," had just kissed the dust, U.E.R.H., (*upper entrance right hand*.) under the rage of *Romeo*, when a young imp who was attached to the small but select orchestra, and whose delight it was to watch for opportunities of mischief behind the scenes, suddenly arranged, with a companion, to have some fun with Paris' body! Ascending to the paint room, they got a pot of size—prepared for the priming of a new scene, and an offensive compound from the intermixture of glue—and taking it into the "flies" immediately over the slaughtered "county," they commenced a most demoniacal species of torture.

1. The allusion in this paragraph is to *Twelfth Night* 2.5.156–58: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em."

2. Probably George O. Champlin, whom Noah Ludlow listed among his company in Tuscaloosa in 1825 and in Mobile for the season of 1825–1826. See *Dramatic Life as I Found It* (1880; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), 267, 272.

Drop came a globule of some strange liquid substance right on the body's right eye, which made it, like a sensible corse, open its left one, and then—above, among the clouds, dimly were seen the disturbers of its rest.

"Well—that's pretty!" muttered the dead man, between his teeth, *dodging* with his open eye, and feeling an almost irresistible desire to draw his hand up and wipe the closed one. "That's pretty, by ——"

A naughty word was suddenly checked by another *drop* which fell directly upon the grinning teeth, and appealed to the *taste*, notwithstanding a spasmodic and unavoidable spitting with which the body was seized.

"Oh—o—*can* I stand this!" groaned Paris, his one eye fatal as "death dealing cocatrice," and threatening murder when the curtain should fall.

"Took poison!" shouted Romeo, over the footlights.

"*Wa-a-augh!*" screamed Juliet, clutching at his throat, and tearing his stage dicky out.

"I'll *size* you, d—n you, when the play's over," said Paris, aloud, taking advantage of the applause which had followed Juliet's *screech*.

Drop!—Drop!—Dr-r-o-p!—the last being in fact a "connected series" of drops, and leaving the face of the infuriated victim almost bathed in the pestilent compound. Goaded to desperation, he drew up one leg, preparatory to a rush, but his *peculiar position* occurring to him, he straightened himself again, not, however, without having attracted the attention of the audience; who at once became interested in such unusual by-play!

"Oh, cursed friar!" exclaimed Juliet.

"Oh, you d—d scoundrels!" ground out from between his teeth Paris. *D-r-r-r-op!* was the only reply, and now up went a leg and an arm—as quickly straightened out again, and now, also, came a general laugh from the house.

"My God, what is that man at?" whispered the distracted Juliet, *aside*.

"Fathers have flinty hearts—(got a fit, I think!) Capulet, forbear!

Paris—(the d—d fellow is dodging his head.) Paris, loose your hold!—(curse me if he isn't wiping his face!)” The dying Romeo went on with his agonies amid the roar of the audience; the manager rushed behind the scenes to learn the cause of the disturbance; Juliet threw herself about the neck of her poisoned husband, and both fell, to bring the scene to a close as soon as possible; and at the same moment the dead body, completely *resurrected* by the contents of the *whole pot*, which the young tormentors had unintentionally let slip during a convulsion of laughter, sprang on his feet, wiping the size out of his blinded eye, and rushed off the stage to avenge himself. Up he dashed into the “flies,” but his persecutors were too active for him; and now dodging him behind scenery, now tempting him to break his shins over heaps of “properties,” they finally made a bolt up a dark stairway for the darker region over the proscenium and pit. Paris was after them, but he was not as well acquainted with the localities as they were; and pursuing them from beam to beam over the pit, the vault of which was simply painted *canvass*, he finally made a misstep and plumped through, up to his armpits, a desperate clutch alone saving him from going through altogether. The tragedy wound up with the unusual sight of a pair of black tights dangling over the heads of the audience through a very warm clouding, their own sable hue relieved by “the least taste in life” of *white* which protruded from an “envious rent” most unfortunately situated!

Poor Champlin, we fancy, died in earnest “about this time,” as we have heard nothing of him since.

Daily Reveille, September 15, 1847, 2.

The Flying Machine.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

A good “benefit bill” is a matter of no small consideration among the “rank and file” of the theatrical profession, and “unrivalled,”

indeed, are many of the ideas hit upon, under such circumstances. A few seasons ago our estimable friend, Stockwell,³ at present of the "resurrected" Federal street Theatre, Boston, and an artist of equal talent and industry, reached, in due course, the "benefit week" at New Orleans, and was employed, as usual, in various contrivances of "scenic effects," &c., by way of drawing a house first, and exciting their admiration afterwards.

Now, there was another gentleman in New Orleans at that time, who was, if possible, even more anxious to gain the attention of the public than the artist Sam. was—(every one calls the warm-hearted scene painter Sam.)—and this was a genius who had invented a "flying machine," and who only required "sufficient encouragement" to enable him to go right up! His invention, in the shape of an immense bird, had been visited by all the *savans*, including Dr. Lardner; the papers had "kept it before the people," in a jesting spirit, or otherwise; poor D—— himself was perfectly satisfied that he had but to explain the nature of his apparatus to enlighten the meanest apprehension; and, altogether, the idea of exhibiting *the bird* upon the stage, when first suggested by a friend of the beneficiary, was looked upon as a most brilliant one—it "couldn't fail," in fact! Now, Stockwell is a man of legitimate talent, and legitimate taste; one who despises a "gag" as much as he venerates *science*; and it was only when the proposed exhibition was clearly proved to be *entirely* scientific in its nature, that his consent was won, and the "flying" man waited upon.

Bills were put out, and *perhaps* the manager didn't take a preliminary *flight* in his announcement—making it just as clear as a "lucid ambiguity" could do it, that the inventor was to soar away from the stage, before the eyes of gods and men, and "disappear"—*somewhere!*

D—— was in a fever of excitement; he had reached the crisis of his fate; neglect, disappointment, all was to be atoned for; the

3. Samuel B. Stockwell (1813-1854), born in Boston, painted scenery for the theater at Charleston, Mobile, New Orleans, and St. Louis. In 1848 he completed a panorama of the Mississippi, which was later exhibited at St. Louis, New Orleans, and other cities. During his work on the canvas, the *Reveille* reported frequently on his progress.

world that had spurned him he was about to spurn. The *bird* was kept in the nest where it was hatched—a shed up in Lafayette, at least two miles from the theatre—and on the morning of the benefit it was, rather ostentatiously, (manager Sol. understands effect,) paraded through the most populous thoroughfares, not reaching the theatre till its formidable beak and imposing wings had set the lower or French part of the town equally in a *flutter* with the upper part. “The Flying Machine!”—“going to ascend at the theatre!”—“fly up to the gallery!” &c., &c. Curiosity became intense, and the packed and suffocating audience that assembled in the evening cast Lardner’s *prior* scientific occasions entirely into the shade. The *bird* had it, all to pieces!

The night was oppressively hot, and the first piece, with its new scenes, &c., went off rather swelteringly;—Sam., a miracle of activity, in his overalls, placing “set pieces,” flying “wings,” directing traps, &c. At length came “the interest;” the curtain rose, discovering an *immensity of space* embracing the full capacity of some forty feet by eighty. The “flies” were raised, and the seventh heaven of the “paint room,” over and at the back of the stage—that *empyrean* which is never gilded up except upon extraordinary occasions—was discernable in the distance. All was “clouding;” not an inch of *terra firma* was to be seen; for, of course, nobody looked at the *floor* of the stage, when their expectations were entirely *aerial*. *Soft music!* It swelled; it circled; it fluttered:—*something was coming*; and, sure enough, down it came—with its great glazed eyes, and outspread wings, and temporary legs—two short *three legged stools*, nailed to its belly—the whole attached to a two-inch hawser, and lowered carefully and perpendicularly into the middle of the stage! The *hush* with which all this was observed was of the “thrilling” character. And what was to be done next? was the mute inquiry. The bird, after sundry uncertain *waggles*, finally settled upon its *feet*. The hush became more intense; and now, a door opening under one of the rather dislocated looking pinions, the *aerial navigator*, D——, popped out, modestly dressed in black, and bearing in his hand a white wand, *a la mode* Lardner! A round of applause—a confused bow—and the atmospheric

Columbus began a series of eloquent "'hems," gradually warming into an inaudible exposition of the entire practicability of his scheme, and the *incalculable* character of its results. All this was profoundly impressive, the more so as the lecturer, with every sweep—or, may we say, *jerk*—of his wand, displayed, under the arm-pit, an unequivocal separation of interests between sleeve and coat; yet, nevertheless, when a hoarse voice in the gallery called out—"Oh,——— make haste and go up!" the unanimous desire seemed to be in favor of a *demonstration*. D——, becoming more energetic as he grew more inaudible, gave a jerk that extended the white streak all round his shoulder; made a bow indicative of equal promptness and spirit; and, getting into his *bird*, immediately began turning a crank, which turned a wheel, which turned six others, which multiplied the force applied, finally lifting the wings—one after the other, however—with a dismal *creak*—the orchestra resuming its "soft music," and the night hands without pulling away at the hawser—and so commenced the *ascension!*

"*Ph-e-w-w!* Ha, ha, ha!" "Cut your string!" "Oh, thunder!"—roar, whistle, scream, yell—such a whirlwind was never known within the walls of a theatre! The *flight*, however, continued, first one wing and then the other;—three spasmodic jerks up, and one heavy *flop* down, till the majestic bird approached the "fly's" overhead, and, sure enough, in the language of the bills, the intrepid D—— "*disappeared!*"

The victimized inventor, as of old, had flown too near the sun—or "Sol," as you will. Prone to earth, he fell, with all his hopes. There was something of cruelty, but more of kindness, in the matter, for he took to affairs terrestrial from that time. Stockwell was much hurt at the result of the *scientific* display—nor was he the only one affected, as few left the theatre that night without *tears in their eyes*.

Stage Directions.

By Phazma. [Matthew C. Field]

We are going to offer a few hints that will prove useful generally to the "sucking Hamlets" of the age.

To be a first rate tragedian is a high and honorable ambition, and the very few qualifications, natural and acquired, necessary for the formation of one, is a consideration that brings many daring aspirants upon the stage. These young men will find our chapter of instructions highly useful, provided they are not already past our teaching. We know that one strong point of character distinguishing dramatic tyros is a solemn conviction of self excellence, and a supreme disdain of all other things than are suggested by their own heaving and laboring gift of genius. So, our stage directions shall be framed accordingly.

Your first step must be to learn to step, and it is good to practice with a sheet or blanket thrown around the shoulders, as you will obtain thus a sort of Roman inspiration, and acquire a dignity of walk such as is communicated by the toga.

Next learn an attitude for "Off with his head!" or "Villain, set down the corse!" Good attitudes studied for these points will serve also for a great many others.

Go out into the woods and practice your voice for roaring, much depends upon this. Get a slender, straight stick, (if you are a tailor the yard stick will be just the thing,) and learn to poke it at a tree, and as you poke study how far you can stride your feet apart without falling. Or, another way to practice for this accomplishment, is to poke the yard stick through a knot hole in the fence, from whence it is called *fencing*.

When you get your first situation in a theatre you will soon discover how the envy of the older actors will invent all sorts of ways to crush you. In Richard the Third you will be cast for Tyrrell instead of Richard, and in Hamlet you will get Guildenstern instead of your great and favorite part of the youthful Dane. In return for such treatment you must hate the managers and despise the

actors who can so slight and injure your great genius, and, so insulted, don't receive a word of instruction from any of them.

When by any accident you are let into a part affording you any scope at all, make the most of it. Show the audience how your powers have been hidden in performing worthless characters. Remember your fencing, and fling 'em an attitude: think of your forest studies, where you practiced roaring like a hyena to the trees, and tip 'em a few of your "wood notes wild." Conclude your speech with a yawn like a lion stretching himself, and at the same time strike along the footlights into one corner of the stage, with one arm above your head (both would be better, if you can do it well,) and shake your fingers with nervous action at the gallery. This never fails to bring down applause, and people will begin to find out your extraordinary merit. Be sure to get the shake well rehearsed; for actors that can't make their fingers tremble at any moment are called "no great shakes."

A proper self-respect will of course teach you that your gifts are superior to those of any reigning public favorite of the time; but you may still pick up a useful notion now and then from your predecessors, so keep a sharp eye on such of the shining lights as you may have opportunity of observing, and imitate carefully any choice bits of mannerism that you may find particularly attractive.

Study Booth's symphonious and exquisitely refined nasal enunciation.⁴ Appropriate, if possible, Forrest's heroic, demi-colloquial and one-quarter barbaric style.⁵ Learn to do the interesting blink and gasp of young Kean.⁶ Get perfect in the pedantic education of

4. Junius Brutus Booth (1796–1852), father of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth, was a British actor who emigrated to the United States in 1821. He played throughout the country, achieving a reputation as a great tragedian.

5. Edwin Forrest (1806–1872), Philadelphia-born tragedian, was well known for his Shakespearean roles. He was perhaps the first American-born actor of the first rank. Forrest's bitter rivalry with William Charles Macready led to the Astor Place riot in New York, May 10, 1849. A mob of Forrest's followers, who saw the rivalry between the two actors in nationalistic terms, caused a riot in the Astor Place Opera House, where Macready was playing in *Macbeth*. Twenty-two people were killed in the struggle, with thirty-six others wounded.

6. Probably Charles John Kean (1811?–1868), second son of Edmund Kean (1787–1833); the younger Kean was successful as Richard III in New York in 1830 and revisited America in 1839 and 1846. He excelled as Hamlet.

McCready,⁷ and try if you can't imitate the Hiberno-Celtic twang that slips with such oily smoothness from his tongue. But you must n't suppose that there is any thing else about these actors worthy of attention.

Never give yourself any particular trouble about studying a part that don't happen to please you, by reason of its insignificance, but walk on to the stage with dignified contempt in your manner; and should the scene grow into confusion, and the prompter be heard stamping and swearing at the wing, and should certain sounds of pumping soda water come from the audience, stand bolt upright, fold your arms, and *look* at the pit, "O yes, but let them only give me a chance to play Hamlet."

Be sure to let the world know of the hardship and injustice of your position, and, as you can't display your genius on the stage, do it in the street. Let your coat be ragged, wear an outre cap with a tassel, have a dancing pump on one foot and a stage buskin on the other, carry a switch or a play book in your hand, and walk through the streets reading, in deep abstraction, particularly should you happen to get a letter out of the post office.

These rules nicely observed, form an excellent code for the study of young tragedians.

Daily Reveille, November 15, 1845, 1-2.

Behind the Scenes.

By Phazma. [Matthew C. Field]

We will suppose a night when Hamlet and some pantomimic afterpiece are the entertainments of the evening, and the gentle reader will please walk in with us and take a seat upon a sofa in the corner. For the sake of brevity, we will say that the play has progressed to the third act, and, as a distinguished personage,

7. William Charles Macready (1793-1873) was a Shakespearean actor famous for playing Richard III and King Lear. He managed Covent Garden Theatre from 1837 to 1839 and Drury Lane from 1841 to 1843.

(say a successful dramatist, or a particular patron of the drama) our "gentle reader" is a "lion" of the evening, enjoying any corner of the house he may condescend to visit.

There sits old Polonius in close converse with a gentleman in tights, who is enacting the part of Horatio, and Horatio is exclaiming "in good set terms" against the strange policy of the managers in engaging another gentleman to play Hamlet, while said Horatio was on hand, and "up" in the part.

Before the large glass, practising an attitude for that interesting situation where she sings—

"He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone."⁸

stands "the fair Ophelia;" when in comes the first grave digger, with a boy behind him carrying a bundle of waistcoats; and the grave digger takes a position, bolt upright behind Ophelia, to have the advantage of the glass in putting them on.

Just at this moment a boy appears at the door, with a slip of paper in his hand, and, without the slightest ceremony, bawls out at the top of his voice, "King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern, to commence the act!" At the sound potential of this summons for King, Queen and suite, a simultaneous movement takes place among the characters called, who at once vacate the green-room for their various positions at the "wings."

This bustle awakens the ghost, who has been fast asleep in another corner, and he commences growling about the fashion of Ophelia's dress, declaring that a more outrageous impropriety was never committed within the whole round of his experience.

"Why, bless my heart, where did the young lady ever hear that Ophelia wore an apron with pockets in it!" exclaims the indignant ghost.

8. 4.5.29-32.

"I am not aware," speaks up young Laertes, with a very bold manner and a very jealous countenance, "why the lady's dress should concern you, sir."

"No concern at all, sir," replies the grumbling ghost, "only I do not like the fashion of her garments. I know you will say they are Persian, but no matter, let them be changed!"

At this moment a large baboon, belonging to the afterpiece, walks in and facetiously embraces Laertes by flinging a long tail round his neck. This creates an explosion of laughter which is interrupted by the "call boy" at the door, with a request from the stage manager for less noise.

Presently in walks Osric, the dandy of the Danish court, glittering in silk and stage jewelry, the steel hilt of his sword sparkling like chrysal in the light, plumes of snow nodding above his satin cap, and his gloves and slippers rivalling each other in spotless whiteness.

"Welcome, my own true love," exclaims a beautifully besooted young lady, whose face has been darkened with burnt cork for the purpose of representing an ebony damsel in the afterpiece. "O, welcome, welcome, my adored Augustus!" and she advances, demonstrating an intention to embrace upon the spot the charming Osric, when he darts out of the room like a shot, to save his satins.

The next point of observation is the "1st Player," who bounces into the green-room in a towering passion, swearing that Hamlet was imperfect, had given him the wrong cue, cut him out of his speeches, showed him up to the audience, and knocked him up in his part completely.

Hearing the gentleman rave, you imagine he is an abused and highly injured John Kemble;⁹ but half an hour afterwards you are astonished to hear Hamlet complaining of the person who was sent on for the 1st player, declaring that he had but two lines to speak in the scene and he didn't know a word of either of them!

Now you hear a great outbreak of applause in front, and,

9. John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) was an eminent actor who played many Shakespearean roles. He was among the founders of the declamatory school of acting.

reader, you may walk down with us to the wing and see what is going on. There lies Hamlet at the feet of Ophelia, rattling a fan upon the stage and staring at the King. But while you are contemplating the scene, your attention is distracted by a facetious youth of a sub-prompter, who is chatting away with remarkable loquacity to the stage carpenter.

You see, Hackett was starring; and Rip Van Winkle¹⁰ was the piece to get up, at the same time preparing for *Merry Wives of Windsor* the next night. Well—the carpenters were knocking the rocks and hills about, trying to build up a decent representation of the Catskill Mountains. I had to superintend the planting and culture of a yew tree which was destined to *bear arms* in the evening, and *carry* old Rip's gun aloft. Then the scene painter was away, and I had to manage a method of washing out "Royal George" and daubing up "Gen. Washington," for the sign of the village hotel. I had to drill a whole troupe of spirits carrying kegs, and such a "spirit crew" you never knew assembled round a keg of spirits! The worst bother I had, though, was to get up the court scene in the second act, for the judge was sick, and the sheriff was in jail.

In the middle of all this there was "the *Merry Wives*" to be attended to, and *horns* were to be provided for the fat knight. At the same time the leader was kicking up a discord in the green-room, trying to teach the "fairies" music. The property-man couldn't borrow a buck basket for Falstaff, and didn't know how to make a nose for Bardolph, and—

"Silence, there!" growls Hamlet, *soto voce*, from the stage.

"Begin, murderer—leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come—the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge!"¹¹

Skip the rest, reader, and let us take a peep at the stage just as the curtain falls upon the last act.

10. James Henry Hackett (1800–1871), American actor, was very popular for his Yankee and Kentucky characters and also for his Falstaff. He played *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in St. Louis both in 1841 and 1844. See William G. B. Carson, *Managers in Distress: The St. Louis Stage, 1840–1844* (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1949), 176–79, 264–66.

11. 3.2.262–64.

The first thing you notice is the dead king, who has got to play Harlequin in the afterpiece, picking himself up and rushing off to his dressing room with remarkable expedition. The poisoned Queen has to go on for a fancy dance between the pieces, and she, too, moves off in a hurry. Meanwhile the Danish dandy and the baboon are seen assisting Hamlet to rise, while the "counterfeit presentment" of a young female African is flying round the stage, practicing attitudes *a la* Elssler.¹²

Rather a faint picture, perhaps, but it requires a graphic pencil to sketch, with an enlivening touch, Scenes Behind The Scenes.

Daily Reveille, April 4, 1846, 1-2.

"Old Sol." Once More.

[By Thunder]

Of late, it seems to have become quite the rage to "do justice" to "Old Sol.," and I am glad to see this manifestation of respect for one who has smoothed so many gloomy brows, and straightened so many wrinkled hearts. Indeed, I know no man who more effectually "goes about doing good," than the laughter-loving comedian, and I esteem it not less a privilege than a blessing for us to share their light-heartedness, and partake of their enthusiastic indifference for the petty cares which are continually bubbling up from the bottom of the world's great cauldron—society. Under this state of feeling, I come to cast my pebble upon the "pile" which a "generous and discerning public" are anxious to "go" on "Old Sol.," and to add one mite to the host of "first rate notices" which of late have been given him.

In one of the inland towns of Mississippi, some time in the year 1825, (then a village but now a city,) it was announced by general

12. Fanny Elssler (1810-1884), Austrian ballerina, made her American debut in May 1840 after successes in Paris, Vienna, and London. For the next twenty-six months, she made a triumphant tour of the United States, giving ballet a popularity previously unknown in this country.

proclamation that the "management," Messrs. Smith, (Sol. and his brother)¹³ would offer to the citizens of that place the rare enjoyment of a theatrical exhibition, for three nights during the week succeeding the time of publication. The play announced for the occasion was the "Manager in Distress."¹⁴ Exhibitions of this kind, then, were to the citizens of P— pretty much as the letter A was to the school-boy—"they had often heard tell of 'em, but had never seen the darn'd things before;" and, as a matter of course, the announcement gave rise to no small degree of eager curiosity on the part of those good people. Great was the speculation, and many were the promises in which these good folks indulged—restless was the eagerness, and extensive were the preparations which the fair dames manifested lest they should not be ready for the opening of the scene. Before night had well "set in" the *citizens* began to flock by crowds to the theatre, and long before the curtain was to have risen the room was jammed from "pit to ceiling." But at last the tingling of the bell was heard, and with the rising of the curtain a general drawing of gloves and a raising of canes took place, as if the audience were determined to give "old Sol." a regular heart-warmer. The curtain rose, and with it a gentle murmur; as the stage became more exposed, the form of a man was visible, and at *that* the excitement increased with ten-fold force. The curtain rose higher—higher—higher, and the eagerness to get a glimpse at the features of "Sol." was perfectly excruciating—shouts and yells and thumping of canes were heard

13. Lemuel Smith (1805–1832) was, for a time, a partner in theatrical management with Sol.

14. For a version of "A Scene before the Curtain, or the Manager in Trouble," written by Sol Smith, see *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years*, ed. Arthur Thomas Tees (1868; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), xv–xx. In that version, printed by Tees from one of Smith's manuscripts, the manager comes onstage to apologize for a supposed double failing of Smith's: he has promised to write a short piece for presentation before the main performance but has failed to do so, and he is not present to play Mawworm in the announced play, *The Hypocrite*. After some comic dialogue with several spectators, a letter of apology from Smith arrives and is read. Some further interplay with the audience takes place before the letter is revealed to be a forgery and the whole dilemma to be a hoax. The manager concludes by announcing that *The Hypocrite* will be played and by asking that the audience receive what they have seen as the advertised "Scene before the Curtain."

in every direction. Now! the curtain is over his head, and the *entire* man is seen. On the instant there was the silence of death in the house—then, a sudden yell and hissing of maddened disappointment. The man—was not “*Sol.*” With difficulty the manager made himself heard, and addressed himself to the audience a little after this style:

“Ladies *and* Gentlemen:—It is with feelings of deepest regret that I have to announce to you the sudden disappearance of a person ‘cast’ for a prominent part in this evening’s performance, and to add that, without his assistance, the representation must necessarily be deferred until some other evening.”

Just at this moment a rough, carrot-haired youth, his pants reaching just to his knees, and the cuffs of his coat midway down his arms, was seen to raise himself in a distant part of the room, and to elbow his way rather roughly through the crowd, and down the aisle, exclaiming, in a voice of thunder, that he had walked “all the way down from Copiah county jest to see that show, and he’d be durn’d if *he’d* be fooled out of his dollar in *that* are kind of a way! So see here, mister, you’ve got to go on with your show or to give us a fight, and I’ll be durned if I don’t lick you sooner than Buck Harris’ yaller dog would lick a coon!” On he went—elbowing, scrouging and shoving his way to the stage, and, just as he mounted it, off came his hat and wig, when out popp’d the veritable phiz of “old Sol.,” and *then* came a shout which many old women swear to this day was

THUNDER!

Daily Reveille, October 2, 1845, 2.

Getting on the “Free List.”

Last summer, while Messrs. Ludlow & Smith were entertaining our denizens with their theatricals, a youth from *Suckerdom* arrived in town, and engaged himself at a printing establishment to learn the art and mysteries of printing. While thus engaged the

desire grew strong upon him to see some of the "doins" at the theatre, for he had never been inside of one, and had but a lean idea of what such a place really was. On expressing his wishes to some of his brother "cubs," he was told that there was nothing in the world easier to do than to get in the theatre. "Why don't you go to Sol. Smith," says one, "and get him to put your name on the free list—you *belong to the press*, don't you?"

There was no denying the fact; he did belong to the press, and was himself that spirit—that fallen individual, who brings *light* out of *darkness*—the "*printer's devil*." Accordingly, one bright morning, he waited upon "Old Sol.," and made his desire known. Sol.'s eyes twinkled; (he loves a joke, and plays one up to the handle, as the saying is,) as with a serio-comic expression of face he said—for he recognized the youth, whom he had seen pursuing his daily avocation, with all the "honors" *daubed* upon him—"I know that you are a *member of the press*, and an important one, too, and I suppose I'll have to grant your request, therefore you can come tonight, apply at the lower door, on Olive street, and say *Supe*, and you will be admitted without any difficulty."

The rollers never flew faster over the face of a form than they did the balance of that day, in the hands of the "Sucker" youth. At the appointed time he presented himself before the keeper of the stage entrance to the theatre, and the magical word *Supe* gave him immediate admission. He stumbled up the dark stairway until he finally reached the stage, where he was greatly astonished at the admirable confusion that seemed to prevail there; every thing appeared to be mixed up so, that it was impossible for him to get a distinct idea of what it was all about. As he was standing with staring eyes and open mouth, a man came up to him saying, "Hello, green one, what do you want here?"

"*Supe*," resolutely answered the youth.

"Well, then, go up stairs there and get ready, and don't stand here like a fool," was the reply. Our hero, mounting the stairs indicated, began the spiral ascent and thought he would never reach the top. The feat was accomplished, however, and he found himself among a motley group, mostly boys, who were bestowing

all their attention upon the decoration of their persons. We must now let the youth tell his own story as he told it to his companions: "They gin me some truck to put on, loose breeches and a sorter shirt-coat—nurther fitted me very well, but I got into 'em; and then a smart chap with a sword at his side, gin me a long stick, with one eend painted and looking like a lance. All this time I heered an orful noise goin' on below, trumpets playin', drums beatin'; jist then a bell rung two or three times, and I thought the house was a comin' down, there was sich a stampin' and clatter. The chap with the sword told us to go down—and down we went, Ingen file, to the bottom of them stars, the derndest, longest stars I ever did see. I then heerd a terrible spoutin' goin' on somewhere round *thar*, and before I could make it out, the chap with the sword, drawin' it out, said, 'rush on,' and away they went, carryin' me with 'em, till we fotched up in a whole blaze of light, and a house full of people. I felt mighty skeery, I tell ye, when I seed all them folks *thar*, but a big fellow, with his face painted, and sun'thing queer on his head, said some big words, and back we went agin. Wall, so we kept a goin', for ever so long, till I got orfully tired and wanted to gin in, when the chap with the sword told us that we might go up and take off our fixens, and then go in front. What he meant by goin' in front I don't know, nor didn't care, for I wanted to skeet off. I rigged myself up agin in my own toggery, and when I come to feel in my pocket for a couple of dimes I left there, I swow if they wern't gone. I tell you what, boys, I've got enough of the Theatre, and I'm a goin' up to Mr. Smith to git him to take my name off a that derved 'free list.'"

Daily Reveille, December 28, 1845, 2.

Manager for a Minute.

By Sol. Smith.

In the city of Augusta, (Ga.) I leased the theatre for one year, and occupied it one month, losing in that month \$1,000.¹⁵ The rent, (one thousand dollars) was secured by a mortgage on a lot in Macon, which was eventually sold to pay the same. Two years afterwards that lot was worth eleven thousand dollars! So my months management in Augusta was anything but profitable. But all this has nothing to do with the anecdote I sat down to write.¹⁶

Charles W. Hunt was a member of my company at the time, (1834).¹⁷ He was then a promising young actor, aspiring to establish himself as a low comedian; but young as he was, and *modest*, I think the reader will agree with me, when he reads what follows, that he exhibited a degree of *coolness under difficulties*, worthy of an experienced veteran.

On the very first night of the season, this Hunt got into a difficulty with a Mr. Sullivan, a fiery, trodden-down young tragedian. A fight ensued, which ended in the breaking of poor Hunt's arm. A fight behind the scenes being a most unusual occurrence, in any well-regulated theatre, is always visited upon the party who is in the wrong, by the utmost rigor of the "rules and regulations;" either an immediate discharge, or a heavy penalty in the way of stoppage of salary, must be submitted to by the offender. Hunt stood in this predicament. He had brought the misfortune upon himself, and in an apologetic letter the next morning, he acknowledged his fault to the fullest extent; but inasmuch as he was suffering for his indiscretion, and would be prevented, at least for several weeks, from appearing on the boards, my mind

15. The title reads "A Manager for a Minute" in *Theatrical Management* (hereafter cited as TM).

16. This first paragraph is integrated into the narrative before the story itself begins in both TM and *The Theatrical Journey-Work and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol. Smith, Comedian, Attorney at Law, etc., etc.* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1854). The latter book is hereafter cited as TJW.

17. "(1834)" is deleted in both TJW and TM.

was made up at once to treat him with great leniency!—in fact, I determined to say nothing at all about the affair, and permit him to rejoin the company whenever his arm should be healed.

The season closed—so did the broken bone of Hunt's arm. The treasury was opened for the payment of the salaries for the final week in Augusta. As was my custom at that time, I attended personally to this ceremony. Piles of silver and bank notes were laid out before me on a table in the director's room—the receipt book was ready, and the clerk was directed to admit the performers, "*one by one*," to receive their salaries. The door was opened, and the first individual that appeared, was the broken-armed comedian, Hunt!

"Ah, is that you Mr. Hunt? Good-morning"—thus I greeted him; "glad to see you out; arm quite well?" I asked.

"Thank you, yes,"—he replied, taking a chair which I pointed to. "I have suffered greatly for my folly," he continued—"only catch me getting into a fight again, that's all!"

"That's the right feeling, Mr. Hunt"—I remarked—"such scenes are disreputable in every way. Let this be a lesson to you."

"It shall, most assuredly," promised the repentant comedian. The conversation here ceased, and I began to count over a "ten" pile, in hopes my visitor would take his leave and permit the payment of salaries to proceed, as I was in haste, intending to leave the city, for Milledgeville the same afternoon. Finding the comedian did not exhibit the least sign of departure, after a few common place observations respecting the fine weather for travelling, I ventured courteously to suggest that I should be happy to see him *some other time*, it being "salary day," and a busy one for me—the people waiting—

"Ye-es," replied Hunt—"salary day—that's just the reason I came in at this very time. My salary has been lying in the treasury during the whole season of four weeks; and as we leave this afternoon, why I thought"—

"*Your* salary, Mr. Hunt!"—I exclaimed, with some surprise—"I was not aware there was any thing due *you*. If my memory serves me, every thing was settled at the close of the season in Macon."

"Decidedly," admitted Hunt; "everything was paid up—fair and square; but it is *this* season's salary I speak of, and which I have called to receive."

"My dear sir," I remonstrated—"you don't imagine, I hope, that you are entitled to salary during the time you have rendered no service? Your hurt was not received in the performance of your professional duties—on the contrary you received it whilst engaged in a most unpardonable breach of the rules and regulations, which not only subjects you to a heavy fine, but renders you liable to an instant discharge, as you know and have admitted; and now"—

"That is all true," interrupted Mr. Hunt, "but"

"Hear me through," I continued; "and now, instead of coming to ask leave to rejoin the company at Milledgeville, and perhaps *ask a loan* of a small sum, which very likely would not be refused, under the circumstances, it appears you intend to set up a claim for salary during your confinement. Am I right in supposing such to be your intention?"

"Most indubitably you are," was my friend Hunt's reply—"that is," he continued—"so far as my claiming *something* in the way of salary, you *are* right. I do think you ought to allow me at least a *portion* of the amount which would now be my due, had not this untoward accident happened. Gentlemen of the army receive *half-pay* when they are wounded or retire from service. What say you? Let us compromise this matter—give me *half* salary for the four weeks, and we'll have no more words about it."

The coolness of this proposition almost upset my temper. The rules and regulations which he had agreed to and signed, stipulated that "no salary should be received during sickness, or when no services were rendered;"¹⁸ and although I had always been in the habit of making some allowance in cases where performers received an injury while in the exercise of their duties in the theatre, I could not see the least reason why the treasury should be taxed in a case like this, when there had been a decided breach of

18. TJW and TM substitute "tendered" for "rendered."

the rules, and where the fault was acknowledged to be on the side of the party now claiming salary.

"I cannot admit this claim," I said firmly. "I intended to reinstate you in your situation at the next town, considering that your sufferings had atoned for your fault; moreover I now profess myself ready to *loan* you some money, if you stand in need of it, to enable you to settle up your bills here and travel to our next town.¹⁹ This is all I can or will do."

"Then I consider you act unjustly," replied Hunt surlily, rising and taking his hat. "Here have I been suffering for a month, confined to my room, earning nothing, subjected to expenses of boarding, washing and surgical attendance, and now to be fobbed off without my salary for four weeks—really it is too"—

"Fobbed off?" I rejoined—"fobbed, sir? Is it not enough that I should be deprived of your services during the whole of the season,—must I now be accused of acting unjustly because I do not entertain your absurd claim, and *pay* you for your improper conduct?"

The discussion was waxing warm, and there appeared to be no chance of coming to an understanding; the company were all waiting in the next room for their salaries. I became impatient and at length proposed that we should call in two or three members of the company as arbitrators; but to this Hunt objected, saying that he thought he was capable of attending to his own affairs, and that he would not give up his own judgement for that of any person living!

"Well, then," I replied—"to *your* judgment and sense of justice I will submit the matter. Here, take this seat. You shall be the manager—I the actor. You shall be judge in your own case."

Mr. Hunt very readily took possession of the vacated chair, graciously remarking that my proposition convinced him that I was indeed the upright and just man he had always taken me to be. I felt quite confident that he would view the matter in a proper light, when he came to see it in all its proper bearings.

19. TJW and TM read "Milledgeville" for "our next town."

Taking my position²⁰ front of the table—

"Mr. manager," I began, "the season being ended, I have come to request that the outrage I committed on the first night, and which has laid me up for a month, may not be in the way of my restoration to the company, inasmuch as I have suffered greatly from the serious hurt I received on that unfortunate occasion."

"Yes, yes," replied *manager* Hunt, with a dignified wave of the hand, "that is all understood; join us at Milledgeville, and let us have no more such scenes—they are disgraceful in the extreme. What more?"

"Well, sir," continued I, still in the character of the suppliant invalid, "perhaps as I have been so great a sufferer you may not think it unreasonable that I should ask some pecuniary accommodation?"

"It is but reasonable," replied the manager *pro tem.*, promptly; "that matter has been thought of. Have you no other request to make?" he enquired, turning round in the chair and taking up a pen.

"Yes," I replied, hesitatingly, "I have been thinking—though really I am almost ashamed to mention it—that possibly you might allow me *half pay* during my confinement; in short, as it is a delicate matter, I leave it entirely to your own sense of justice to decide whether I shall receive *any thing* from the treasury or not."

"Ahem! yes, I understand." My *locum tenens*, with a cursory glance over a copy of the rules and regulations which happened to lay before him, riveted his eye for a moment at the particular section which had been violated, uttered two or three emphatic "hems," and then proceeded slowly to pronounce judgement in the case:

"Young man, you have done very wrong—very wrong indeed—but on the other hand, you have suffered very much—I am fully sensible *how* much, therefore we will let that pass. The offence has carried its own punishment with it. I have already told you that you are restored to your situation. In regard to your

20. TJW and TM read "Hunt's late position" for "my position."

application for a consideration, in a pecuniary point of view,²¹ I scarcely know what to say. You speak of *half* pay. This, I am disposed to believe, would scarcely reach your merits—certainly not your *necessities*. Your rapid improvement in your profession has not been unnoticed by the management; your conduct, with the single exception of the case under consideration, has been most exemplary; *your salary is not large*—and in this connection I may say *a small addition* to your weekly income has been thought of, but the season has been so unpropitious that this is not the proper time to carry out my intentions concerning you—therefore, taking every point into consideration, and acting upon the principle of returning good for evil, which, as a good Christian, I feel impelled to do—THERE!" (with great composure selecting six of the ten-dollar piles before him, and magnanimously pushing them, one by one, across the table,) "there, my boy, is the WHOLE OF YOUR SALARY, TO DATE—sign the receipt."

* * * * *

The judgement was of course affirmed, when I resumed the managerial chair, Hunt pocketed his sixty dollars, and retired perfectly satisfied with his brief term of management, and I proceeded with the payment of salaries to the ladies and gentlemen²² who had been kept waiting by the enactment of this singular scene. Hunt afterwards justified his proceeding, by saying he acted on the golden rule—"DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THEY SHOULD DO UNTO YOU."²³

Daily Reveille, May 18, 1849, 1-2.

21. TJW and TM substitute the simpler "pecuniary assistance" for "a consideration, in a pecuniary point of view."

22. TM reads "other members of the company" for "ladies and gentlemen."

23. TM's last line has been changed to "DO UNTO YOURSELF AS YOU WOULD OTHERS SHOULD DO UNTO YOU."

Getting Rid of Brandon.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

Actors are supposed to get rid of their money with peculiar facility; yet, occasionally, there occurs an instance to the contrary, and one of these we shall spend half an hour's shocking bad weather in the relation of.

It was during the great Mississippi smash²⁴—during that financial earthquake which sent all the banks, operators, and speculators, as if by a general land-slide, plump into the sweeping current of ruin—that Maedar,²⁵ of musical celebrity, with his accomplished wife, the Clara Fisher²⁶ of other days, stopped at Vicksburg, on their way up the river from the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans, to play an engagement with Messrs. Scott and Thorn,²⁷ (James Thorn, since dead,) who then had a company at the hill-side city. Everybody was “flat broke;” exchange on the east was terribly tight; yet *Brandon money*²⁸ was never so plenty—everybody was flush with it—and crowded houses every night sent Maedar home perfectly delighted with the liberality and sense of appreciation evinced by the Vicksburg public!

24. The mid-1830s was a period of “flush times” in Mississippi characterized by easy credit, population growth, and land speculation. The “smash” came in 1837, largely as a result of the Specie Circular of 1836 and the Distribution Act of 1836, which caused a “drastic drain on the currency” of Mississippi’s principal banks. See Richard Aubrey McLemore, ed., *A History of Mississippi* (Hattiesburg: University & College Press of Mississippi, 1973), 1:292–93.

25. James Gaspard Maeder (1809–1876), musician, composer, and theatrical manager, was born in Dublin but came to the United States in 1833. Among his musical works were “The Swiss Quadrilles” (1830), “The Song of Home” (1852), and “The Unwilling Bride” (1858).

26. Clara Fisher (1811–1898), actress and singer, began her career as a child star in London, where she was born, and later became one of America’s most accomplished actresses. She married James Gaspard Maeder in 1834.

27. James R. Scott (d. 1849) and James Thorne (d. 1843) operated theaters in Natchez and Vicksburg during the seasons of 1838–1839 and 1839–1840, after which support “failed completely.” They were forced to close both by April 1840. See James H. Dormon, Jr., *Theater in the Ante Bellum South, 1815–1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 215.

28. Mississippi money was commonly referred to as Brandon money, probably after Gerard Chittocque Brandon (1788–1850), governor of Mississippi 1825–1826 and 1826–1832.

"I never saw the like!" says M., with his mellow, musical, Dublin accent. "In three nights we made a fortune!"

The managers "settled up" promptly—a thousand dollars—more or less. Maedar saw his trunks strapped with satisfaction; shook hands all round with Irish heartiness; took his way to the steamer, and beheld placarded over the clerk's office—

"NO MISSISSIPPI MONEY RECEIVED."

"H—ll's bells!" exclaims the musician, as if called suddenly to ring a chime of them; "I with my pockets full, and only then to learn that there was a discount of sixty per cent. on every rag of it!"

The boat was not to leave for a few hours, and while our old friend paced the guard, sending Vicksburg, by sections, "to the devil," he was suddenly visited by a particularly luminous idea. Without saying a word as to his intentions, he marched up into the city, cast his eyes into every window on the principal street, finally entering a very showy looking jeweller's establishment.

"Have ye any silver spoons?" says Jemmy, (we call him Jemmy, for short, you know,) looking as innocent, sure, as if he wasn't designing a villany, at all at all! "Have ye any silver spoons?" says he.

The counter was covered with lots of them; a magnificent shine on every one, and a magnificent price asked, too, but price wasn't just then an object.

"Have ye any more of them?"

"That's our entire stock, at present," was the reply.

"Well, I'll take 'em all," says Jemmy; "have ye any *forks*?"

There was another shiny display in the fork way; subsequently, there was an array of *fish knives*; anon, a *ladle* was added to the heap; and, finally, a splendid *salver* formed the base of a silver pyramid, which made the eyes of the purchaser dance again.

"By the lor' that's one way of getting silver for their Brandon, anyhow!" thought he, as he saw the negro leave the store with his precious burthen.

He had not got rid of all his paper, though, by any means, and

over the way he saw another jeweller's shop, entering which his glance settled at once upon a case of brilliant gold watches!

"What's the price of these?" demanded the inventor of our new exchange system. An extravagant price was demanded, but M.'s only remark was, that, perhaps, they would come less if he (M.) would take *two of them!*—the innocent air of him while he said this might have merited a kiss from his mother, the vilyan!

The bargain was struck, the last rag of the Brandon disposed of, and, laden with gold and silver, down went our friend, once more, to the steamer.

"What, in the name of Providence, are you going to do with all this, James?" said the wife of his bosom, as said James began to unpack his treasure.

"Dublin against Vicksburg, any way!" exclaimed he, "To the devil with them and their Brandon; there's the tin for the engagement, anyhow!"

Alas, tin, or pewter, a roar of laughter from better judges announced to M. that he had been purchasing anything but *silver!* An examination of the watches proved them to be as *washy* in their character as the rest, and, defying bowie knives ashore, again went the deceived one to get *back* his Brandon!

"Well, what I was to do with the stuff, now," says he, "devil fly away with me if I could tell, at all! Little better than dirt, in Vicksburg, and abroad they wouldn't take it, anyway! Bedad, another idea struck me!—there was a big lottery bill sticking up—to draw next week—and in I went and *bought all the tickets*—my hat wouldn't hold them!"

There is generally a laugh when Maedar comes to this part of his story; but what was the roar which saluted him, on board, when he announced that he had *bought up a lottery!* He couldn't stand it; but there was no getting his Brandon back this time—rag for rag, at any rate. He walked once more, moodily, ashore, and, meeting a friend whom he had first met in New Orleans, he entered his house to taste a glass of mollifying something or other, and afterwards to feel himself entirely beguiled by the magic odors of a cigar—such as he had never stuck in his mouth before!

"Only tell me where I can get a box of them!" exclaimed he.

His friend had the only box in town, and valued each cigar as a blood drop.

"Would money buy them of ye?" cried Maedar.

"Hardly," replied his friend.

"Would a highly probable chance of a fortune do it?" again demanded M.

"Well, perhaps," was the laughing response.

"Then, by —, I'll sell you *my lottery!*" and, sure enough, the bargain was concluded.

"And, by the Lord," adds Maedar, "though I got but that box for the engagement, I never stick cigar in my mouth without thinking of it with pleasure—lend me a light, will ye?"

Daily Reveille, October 8, 1847, 2.

5

**ECCENTRIC
CHARACTERS**

“Loafer Jim.”

The worthy mentioned above has, for time immemorial, been a drinking philosopher. Dynasties have changed, new constitutions have been adopted, magistrates have risen to eminence and passed away—even the ordinances have been revised—but here is Jim, unchanged, uncontaminated by the march of improvement—a living landmark of the loaferism of the seventeenth century. What some sensitive minds of this *degenerate* age would shrink from, Jim glories in. Men now pride themselves on keeping sober; Jim is the very opposite in his lofty aspirations—he delights in getting drunk. Temperance societies he considers a modern innovation of most pernicious tendency, because they bring things down to a *sober* reality, destroy the delights of imagination and loaferism, and have a tendency to make man a working animal. “Man was made to drink,” reasons Jim; “he is of the fluid-imbibing species, and, commencing with babby’s milk, he gradually rises to the *elevation* of corn juice—as his powers increase, so increases his desire for steam, and then the only danger to apprehend is that he should get too *great a head* on.”

“Why don’t you quit drinking, Jim?” inquired a member of the moral reform society, who was lecturing him the other morning through the bars of the calaboose. “Why don’t you quit, and become a *useful* member of society?”

“‘Cause it’s agin’ natur’,” answers Jim; “natur’ created me a *ornamental* animal, a philosopher of fluidity, a teacher in her hydrostatic *high* school, and I’m in the top class, up head; all the other fellars have gone down tail because they didn’t know how to drink. They wasn’t philosophers, old fellar—they dranked their liquor all in a heap, and got through quick; now I takes mine moderate, and when it’s strong and hard to carry I doesn’t, like the green ones, struggle along and wear my precious self out, but I lays down alongside of it and waits till it gits easier. That’s the way to last. Liquor is, in that perticular view, a preservative, ‘cause why?—don’t they put peaches in liquor when they want to keep ‘em? Don’t they preserve every juicy vegetable with liquor, and ain’t I a juicy vegetable of the male sex? In course I am, and liquor’s good for me. Now, these fellars that mixes up their liquor ain’t educated. I never mix—I begins corn and I sticks to corn;

there's a beautiful consistency about havin' a drink and stickin' to it; it betrays the difference between your philosopher of age and experience and your fellar what don't know a treat when he gits it for nuthin'."

"But you get locked up here for indulging in such philosophy," remarked his adviser.

"That aint nuthin'," says Jim; "I'm used to it—it's a part of my teachin'. A fellar as doesn't know how to loaf, meanly hides hisself in some place so the official fellars can't git him. I doesn't do so. I scorns to be so mean, 'cause its cheatin' a fellar what watches at night out of his livin', and that isn't a becomin' act for a white man to do. I lays down on the pavement and has myself took up reg'lar and respectable—they then fines me accordin' to law, and of course I doesn't pay it. I carries my system out to the workhouse, and wins my way agin to liberty by crackin' rock. That's the way to do it, old sober! Let every fellar foller his own bisness, I say—loafin' is mine, and I likes it."

Thus reasoned Jim with the reformer, and when his name was called he acknowledged the *corn*, and went out "reg'lar."

Daily Reveille, October 9, 1846, 2.

The Ambitious Man.

[By B.]

Mr. Snipes was a dealer in an infinity of small and large notions, too immense for us to attempt to catalogue, and of the most incongruous character. As your eye ran along the shelves and around his store, you were perplexed to discover and name any particular article applicable to any particular purpose—it seemed a chaotic mass of rubbish, awaiting only the lapse of time to resolve itself into its former elements. The state and appearance of his stock in trade forcibly reminded you of the analogy in sound between the words *broken* and *broker*, which latter term Mr. Snipes was wont to use as designating his calling. He seemed, indeed, to

be carrying on a *smashing* trade of a very *crack* character; and little he cared, I wot, how you and I laughed at him and his, so that he could, to use the emphatic language of his female coadjutor, "make both ends meet;" and really it seemed that Mr. Snipes managed to accomplish the aforesaid apothegm, for he dressed smartly, kept his own quadruped, and when, on Sundays, he borrowed his neighbor's "drag," and attached his own horse thereto, he looked quite aristocratic and tonnish as he rolled along the dusty road to some of the suburban retreats, where drowthy citizens are wont to foregather, and drown remembrance of their toils in "steep-down gulps of liquid fire."

A merry-hearted man was Mr. Snipes, naturally; but, artificially, he was cowed into a non-entity by the aptitude of Mrs. Snipes to guide the helm of government; and, in fact, Mrs. S. was as veritable an autocrat—as perfect a female Nicholas, as ever was fashioned out of our common clay. Snipes felt that he was henpecked—disliked it, too—sometimes "kicked against the pricks," but they were too sharp for him; and, from each rebellious effort, he retired dismayed and discomforted.

The foregoing preliminaries may be taken as an outline of the character, business, and calling of the little man whom we have selected,

"To point a moral and adorn a tale."¹

By-the-by, I had forgotten to mention, as an appendage, that Mr. Snipes was privileged to place at the end of his name the letters M.B.F.C.; and nothing more highly tickled his vanity than the superscription on his letters—"Mr. Jeremiah Snipes, M.B.F.C."—and sometimes the "Mister" would be dropped, and the more correct "Esquire" introduced; which initials, being rendered into words, make the curious reader acquainted with the fact, that Mr. Snipes was a "Member of the Bully Fire Company." Ay, and the most victorious General, at the head of his conquering army, was

1. Samuel Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes": "He left the name, at which the world grew pale, / To point a moral, or adorn a tale" (221–22).

never one-half so elated as was our M.B.F.C., when, attired in the uniform of his company, on annual parade days, he

“Witched sweet ladies’ smiles”²

throughout the entire route.

Oh! too happy Snipes! Why would fickle and envious fortune, after building you up, insist on pulling you down again? Why, oh! why did fatal ambition ever take possession of your not too well-filled head, and thus accomplish your undoing? But, in putting these questions, we are straying from the business of our tale. Let’s to ‘t.

About the middle of July, when the earth, burnt and cracked by the sun’s rays, drinks up the evening dew, and ejects, in return, a steam vapor, to boil and swelter us through the night—on such a night as this it was, that Mr. Snipes lay tossing on his mattress, when his ear, as well as that of the “dull ear of night,”³ was startled by the loud clamor of the city fire-bells, whose throats, from the shrill treble to the deep-toned bass, kept up incessant music for a long half hour, mingling with the rattle of engines and hose carriages, to the eminent discomforture of all drowsy citizens. The glare, reflected on steeple and on dome, made lurid at times by volumes of smoke, betokened the fire to be central, and not far from the residence of our hero.

Snipes scrambled on his —— and the other *mentionable* parts of his clothing, and was soon hurrying through the streets to the scene of action. Here arrived, all bustle and perspiration, he essayed a daring feat—one such as should make his fame, or mar his beauty. The burning building was known to be a family grocery, and comprised within it all the various edibles, characteristic of such an establishment. Snipes, in his anxiety to distinguish himself, mounted to the second story; and, in accordance with the custom usual on such occasions, was busily engaged in hurling

2. Cf. Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part III*, 3.2.150: “And witch sweet ladies with my words and looks.”

3. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.prol.10–11: “Steed threatens steed, in high and boastful neighs / Piercing the night’s dull ear.”

through the window all the most perishable articles of furniture, which clattered down into the street, breaking the heads of some, and cutting the faces of others, until—oh! dreadful period to such heroism!—the burning rafters, over which he was confidently treading, gave way with a loud crash, precipitating our poor wight into the basement, amid a shower of burning embers. A thrill of horror ran through the crowd of lookers-on, and many a mournful jeremiad was sung over his untimely end.

The exertions of his brother firemen were redoubled to quell the flames around the burning pyre of poor Snipes. Slam! slam! went the engine; and the water, gushing and hissing as it fell on the red-hot coals, was poured from a half dozen pipes in a continued stream. "Down upon her, boys!" was the cheery cry of the captains; and down upon her they were, with a right good will. Slam! slam! so quick in succession, that you feel the hearts of giants are in the arms of those fine fellows. And see how their energy begins to tell—the flames flicker and waver. "Give it her, my lads!" "Now she feels it!" Slam! slam! slam! and the last flame is quenched.

Now for the exhumation of poor Snipes. A hundred ready hands were on the instant, busy in removing the smoking ruins—and short work they made of it.

What meant that long shout of laughter, amid the dismal horror of the scene! Ha! ha! ha! Bravo, Snipes! Hurra for Snipes! Snipes forever!

Can it be that, amid the devastation, our little friend remained unharmed? "Yes, sir—*ee*. Come up, Snipes, and show yourself."

Fortunately for the connubial felicity of Mrs. S., the life of her husband had been spared to her, by the interposition of a hog-head of molasses, into which our hero had been plumped, feet foremost, on falling through the ceiling of the upper story. His weight—for he was a thick, punchy, man—accelerated his passage through the flame and smoke, saving him a singeing, but carrying him over ears into the sea of sweets. Self preservation, in the noble and ignoble alike innate, prompted him to maintain a stooping position, and there he remained, plunged chin-deep in molasses. The "helmet on his brow" (a portion of his company's

uniform) had been, with himself, completely immersed; and on it the molasses blistered and bubbled, until it was calcined into a huge ball of candy.

Snipes was pulled out, amid the congratulations and laughter of his friends and the crowd—the excessive ludicrousness of his appearance (dropping, as he was, with sweets) completely overpowering the previous anxiety and sympathy for his fate. The little boys danced and jumped round him, and as the young urchins patted him on the back, or clung round his boots, they licked their fingers and called him their “sweet friend.”

The joke went round town, and stuck to him lastingly; so that poor Snipes could never step out of doors, but some one would make anxious inquiry relating to the molasses market; and little boys, whose anxious mothers scarcely knew they were out of their shells, would poke their heads round the door-posts, and cry—“how are you off for candy?” and then scamper laughingly away. This state of things could neither be cured nor endured. As a dernier resort, Snipes cleared out; and the last I heard of him was, that he had joined one of the volunteer companies on the Rio Grande, where, it is to be hoped, amid the stirring scenes of a camp life, he may escape persecution for his misfortune, and ultimately achieve a brighter halo of glory, than he e’er dreamt of at the burning of the grocery store.

B.

Daily Reveille, September 3, 1846, 2.

Kicking a Yankee.

[Joseph M. Field]

A very handsome friend of ours, who a few weeks ago was *poked* out of a comfortable office up the river, has betaken himself to Bangor, for a time, to recover from the wound inflicted upon his feelings by our “unprincipled and immolating administration.”⁴

4. Field’s authorship was identified by William T. Porter when he collected the story in *A Quarter Race in Kentucky* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1847).

Change of air must have had an instant effect upon his spirits, for, from Galena, he writes us an amusing letter, which, among other things, tells of a desperate quarrel that took place on board of the boat between a real live dandy tourist, and a real live yankee settler. The latter trod on the toes of the former; whereupon the former, threatened to "Kick out of the cabin" the latter;

"You'll kick me out of this cabing?"

"Yes, sir, I'll kick you out of this cabin!"

"You'll kick *me*, Mr. Hitchcock out of this cabing?"

"Yes, sir, I'll kick *you*, Mr. Hitchcock!"

"Well, I guess," said the yankee, very coolly, after being perfectly satisfied that it was himself who stood in such imminent peril of assault—"I guess, since you talk of kicking, you've never heard me tell about old Bradly and my mare, there, to hum?"

"No, sir, nor do I wish——"

"Wal, guess it won't set you back much, any how, as kicking's generally best to be considered on. You see old Bradly, is one of these sanctimonious, long faced hypocrites, who put on a religious suit every Sabbath day morning, and with a good deal of screwing manage to keep it on till after sermon in the afternoon; and as I was a Universalist, he allers picked me out as a subject for religious conversation—and the darned hypocrite would talk about heaven, hell and the devil—the crucifixion and prayer, without ever winking. Wal, he had an old roan mare that would jump over any fourteen rail fence in Illinois, and open any door in my barn that hadn't a padlock on it. Tu or three times I found her in my stable, and I told Bradly about it, and he was 'very sorry'—'an unruly animal'—'would watch her,' and a hull lot of such things, all said in a very serious manner, with a face twice as long as old Deacon Farrar's, on Sacrament day. I knew all the time he was lying, and so I watched him and his old roan tu; and for three nights regular, old roan came to my stable about bed time, and just at daylight Bradly would come, bridle her, and ride off. I then just took my old mare down to a blacksmith's shop, and had some shoes made with "corks" about four inches long, and had 'em nailed on to her hind feet. Your heels, mister, ain't nuthing to 'em.

I took her home, give her about ten feet halter, and tied her right in the centre of the stable, fed her well with oats about nine o'clock, and after taking a good smoke, went to bed, knowing that my old mare was a truth telling animal, and that she'd give a good report of herself in the morning. I hadn't got fairly to sleep before the old 'oman hunched me and wanted to know what on airth was the matter out at the stable. Says I, go tu sleep, Peggy, it is nothing but 'Kate'—she is kicking off flies, I guess! Purty soon she hunched me agin, and says she, 'Mr. Hitchcock, du git up and see what in the world is the matter with Kate, for she is kicking most powerfully.' 'Lay still, Peggy—Kate will take care of herself, I guess.' Wal, the next mornin', about daylight, Bradley, with bridle in hand, cum to the stable, and, as true as the book of Genesis, when he saw the old roan's sides, starn and head, he cursed and swore worse than you did, Mister, when I came down on your toes. Arter breakfast that mornin', Joe Davis cum to my house, and says he, 'Bradley's old roan is nearly dead—she's cut all to pieces and can scarcely move.' 'I want to know!' (says I) 'how on airth did it happen?' Now Joe Davis was a member of the same church with Bradley, and whilst we were talkin' up cum that everlastin' hypocrite, and says he; 'Mr. Hitchcock, my old roan is ruined!' 'Du tell,' says I. 'She is cut all to pieces,' says he; 'do you know whether she was in your stable, Mr. Hitchcock, last night?' Wal, Mister, with this I let out: 'Do I *know* it?—(the Yankee here, in illustration, made a sudden advance upon the dandy, who made way for him, unconsciously, as it were)—Do I know it, you no-souled, shad-bellied, squash-headed, old night-owl you!—you hay-hookin', corn-cribbin', fodder-fudgin', cent-shavin', whitlin'-of-nuthin' you!—Kate kicks like a mere dumb beast, but I've reduced the thing to a *science*!' The Yankee had not ceased to advance, or the dandy, in his astonishment, to retreat; and now, the motion of the latter being accelerated by an apparent demonstration on the part of the former to "suit the action to the word," he found himself in the "social hall," tumbling backwards over a pile of baggage, and tearing the knees of his pants as he scrambled up, a perfect scream of laughter stunning him from all sides. The

defeat was total;—a few moments afterwards he was seen dragging his own trunk ashore, while Mr. *Hitchcock* finished his story on the boiler-deck.

Daily Reveille, July 19, 1845, 2.

“Kicking a Yankee.”

Under this caption we some time since gave a story, illustrating the impossibility of *kicking* a Yankee. The Veteran Noah⁵ says: That there is no case on record of a Yankee having been kicked, nor, until the history of the last year of the world’s duration is written, will such a feat be recorded.

We remember (says the “Veteran”) a sharp fellow, named Doolittle, a Connecticut “exotic,” who was transplanted from Harvard University to one of the Southern States, for the purpose of assuming the editorial control of a violent party paper, where no one had ever labored with advantage for the party, simply because an infinite quantity of pistols, and a multiplicity of bowie knives, prevented the strenuous advocacy of certain principles, and fettered the freedom of speech in elegant style of efficiency. Doolittle was highly educated—was impetuous—brave; yet, with the characteristic cunning of his tribe, careful of his own interests. He took hold of the paper with the determination to make it serviceable “to the cause,” and serviceable he did make it. The opposing candidate was a bad fellow—a duellist, dram-drinker, a lover of “poker,” and a decided votary of Venus. Doolittle did what no other editor dared to do—he said so. The day on which his article appeared, the candidate entered the editorial chamber.

“You are Doolittle—the editor of this paper?”—holding a copy of the sheet in his hand.

“I am.”

5. Probably Noah M. Ludlow, partner with Sol Smith in Ludlow and Smith and the father-in-law of Matthew Field.

"You have libelled and insulted me, and"—drawing a large knife—"I have come for your ears."

"I beg your pardon," said Doolittle,— "I am a stranger to your customs, and perhaps have taken a licence which in this part of the country is inexcusable. Such is, I think, the fact. Suppose we compromise the matter."

"Very well," said the bluff Southerner; "I'll kick you, and you shall make a full retraction."

"You'll what?" said Doolittle, quietly.

"Kick you."

"You insist upon that little privilege?"

"I am unalterably fixed in my determination."

"So am I," said Doolittle, firing a horse pistol as big as a blunderbuss, and shattering the Southerner's right leg—"not to be kicked."

He held his situation six months—was stabbed twice, shot three times, belabored with a bludgeon once, thrown into a pond once, but never kicked. During his six month's experience, he killed two of his adversaries. An absolute fact.

Daily Reveille, November 7, 1845, 2.

Queer Characters.

"Now, by two-headed Janus! nature hath formed some strange fellows, in her time."

[Shakspeare.⁶

Every town has its "characters," and it strikes us that St. Louis has as much to be thankful for in that respect, as, perhaps, even larger places. We have our "knowing characters"—"fashionable characters"—"fighting characters"—"low characters"—"literary characters," but most especially are we rich in "queer characters!"

6. Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, 1.1.50-51: "by two-headed Janus, / Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time."

We could illustrate each class by the portraiture of an exemplar, and the respective celebrities are entitled to that attention, but, for the present, we shall pass them all, except the last,—queer characters being objects of paramount importance all over the world.

The queerest character about town, at present, is a well-known and wealthy "foreign" character; and, whereas, even queer characters will differ in taste, as 'tis George Munday's fancy to go *without* a hat,⁷ 'tis the fancy of our present and elderly hero to have his *tied to his head!* This carefully secured hat is a curiosity in its way,—an ancient curiosity,—a *straw* curiosity, and the fashion of fastening it is no less curious,—the torn strip of a handkerchief being passed over the crown, down through opposite holes in the leaf, around each jaw, and the ends tied under the chin. A venerable "tile."—Inseparable from its owner's head, as the scalp that it covers! Alike hat, umbrella, and *night-cap!* The *corpus* of our "character" is scarcely less queerly covered than his *caput*; a garb equally old, quaint, and summary; while his pedal extremities are cased in a pair of slippers, again *fastened* round his instep and ankle! Every body is familiar with the figure of this oddity, and *nearly* every body is familiar with his pranks, yet no one fails to turn and look after the one, and we dare swear that many will laugh at our repetition of the other.

It is not long since this queer character formally notified the tenants of a block of buildings, owned by himself, and a portion of which he occupied, to move out in three days, as it was his intention to *burn it down!* This notification was sufficiently queer, in itself, but, so did not think its author, for, before its expiration, having occasion to complain of a change of weather during the night, and for fear of "troubling the servants," he, very thoughtfully, took the laths from the bottom of his bedstead—broke them into a more convenient size—placed them, faggot fashion, in the

7. For George Munday, see John S. Robb's sketch, "George Munday, The Hatless Prophet," in *Streaks of Squatter Life, and Far-West Scenes* (1847; reprint, Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1962), 139-41. Robb's sketch includes a description of Munday, "bare-headed—with unshorn beard, and adorned with a simple wooden cross," as he prophesied against alcohol and the authorities in Philadelphia from the entablature above the doorway of the old State House.

middle of the floor, and then, piling up chairs, tables, &c., after the manner of Sardanapalus,⁸ in the preparation of his funeral pyre, he set fire to the whole;—unlike that royal sybarite, however, instead of getting a top, he “squatted down” before it to *warm his feet!*

The “man *with the hat*” agrees with the “man without a hat” in one thing, at least—he has a mortal hatred for lawyers! He walked quietly, a short time ago, into one of our court rooms, and employed himself very busily in thrusting his bonneted head into the desks of the lawyers, and destroying, thoroughly, their various papers; which having fully succeeded in, he arose, marched forward to the bar, and, as “gentleman chucks” would say, “in the politest possible manner,” requested the Judge to “*stop his d—d court!*” But an *aquatic* freak which we heard of the other day, fully establishes our queer character as the *queerest* character alive, or “we’ll quit.”

He walked into one of our bathing establishments, and, after a moment’s grave contemplation of his straw bonnet in the pier glass, requested a “bath.” He was shown to a room, the cocks were turned, the towels adjusted and the door was closed. After some time, the attendants were surprised by a stream of water which came rushing along the passage-way till the whole was flooded;—it came from the apartment occupied by the queer character. They ran to the door and knocked;—the only answer was made by the two cocks, “hot” and “cold,” which rumbled away without intermission. The inmate was called by name,—no reply. The water still poured from beneath the door, which was kicked, shaken, and at length burst open, to display the queer character seated in the bath tub, up to his neck, *with all his clothes on*; the cocks in full play, the water rushing over the sides, and the *straw bonnet* contentedly crowning the whole! The satisfaction of the bather appeared to be extreme; a placid smile shone under his bonnet, and it was with the utmost reluctance that he abandoned

8. Sardanapalus was a legendary king of Assyria known for his luxurious living. When his capital was flooded during a siege by the Medians, he is said to have made a pyre of his treasures and perished in the flames along with his concubines.

his luxurious berth, insisting that he had "only just begun to enjoy it!" Finally, in the centre of the room, to the infinite refreshment of the furniture, he shook himself, water-dog fashion, and then walked out to demand the "dem'd total."

"Twenty-five cents," said the keeper, anxious to get rid of his customer.

"What!" exclaimed the character; "Twenty-five cents for *that*? It's only twenty-five cents for a *full bath!*"

The proprietor probably thought that the bath had been *full* enough, in all conscience, but he contented himself with repeating his demand.

"Twenty-five cents! I'll not pay twenty-five cents for *that*, I'll be *dam'd* if I do!"

The bath keeper ventured to enquire in what "*that*" was wanting?

"Wanting! I didn't use *towels and soap!*" and the queer character, indignantly leaving the establishment, proceeded leisurely through the sun to one of our most frequented bar-rooms. Presenting himself at the bar—"any quantity" of room being immediately made for the strange figure—he demanded a *cocktail*. The mixture was handed to him, which, after duly tasting and smacking his lips, he proceeded to pour, first into one slipper, (at the heel,) and then into the other!

"Ah," said he, with great satisfaction, "that's nice!—another, if you please, and not so much sugar."

A second was handed to him, which he drank with even greater *gusto*, and then depositing two dimes, without question—the very picture of satisfaction, both within and without—he proceeded upon his morning's promenade. Whether our queer character met with any further adventures upon this occasion, we know not; but if any queer character can beat those which we have already related, we'll treat our heels to a cocktail, instanter.

A Sucker in Search of the Planters' House.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

"Match pictures" are always agreeable to the eye of taste, why should not match sketches be equally so. "A Sucker in a warm Bath," recently published in the *Reveille*,⁹ called forth, the other evening, the relation of a Sucker's adventures in search of the *Planters' House*, and thus we give them.

This Sucker was a very important Sucker—in his own neighborhood, and, in the course of important events, he found himself suddenly called upon to visit St. Louis, a place that he had a mysterious sort of an idea was "some," but that was all. He set out, accompanied by an equally verdant companion, and in due course found himself in the "Mound City," making very consequential inquiries after "the *fust* hotel!" Now, the "*fust* hotel" in Higgsville was "some," and our Sucker thought he had a very adequate idea of "sech bildin's;" but one on 'em occupying "a hull squar" was entirely too extensive a conception! When, therefore, the "Planters" was pointed out to him, he gravely marched by the principal entrance, thinking that *that* was the Court House, sure, and bringing up at the druggist's shop in the basement, on the corner of Pine street, he very importantly asked his friend to enter, went up to the soda counter, and "reckoned they'd take a little whisky."

"We don't sell liquor, sir," said the druggist.

"Temperance house!" remarked the Sucker, aside, and rather patronizingly to his companion.

"Wa'll, ahem, Squire, we'll take a room, I reckon?"

"Oh, you're in search of the Planters' House—entrance just above, gentlemen."

The sucker scraped himself out rather confusedly, and the next

9. Joseph M. Field contributed "A 'Sucker' in a Warm Bath" to the *Reveille*, May 3, 1846. It appears in *The Drama in Pokerville* (1847; reprint, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Literature House/Gregg Press, 1969), 100-102.

visit he paid was to our friend, Dr. Morgan, where a couch being in one corner of the office, he thought he was right, of course. He probably would have had his boots off, had not the Doctor entered at the moment to repeat to him that the entrance was "just above." By this time the sucker's confidence in his intuitive knowledge of things was rather staggered. He went into the middle of the street for a more accurate observation, and thrice convinced that those high steps and "almity big door," where the folks (*lawyers*, of course,) were standing, belonged *only* to the *Court House!* he forthwith marched with his friend to the other basement corner, (Chestnut street,) and bolting into the stage office, he demanded a "room for two," forthwith.

"Certainly, sir; in what direction?" was the response.

"Why, in a *lyin' down* direction, I reckon!" exclaimed the tired traveller, beginning to "rile" considerably.

"*Lying down!*" repeated the office keeper; "you can have *seats*, sir, wherever you are going."

"Seats, thunder! We've just rid the hull way from Higgsville, by smash, and we want a bed; and ef you hev'n't got a room, jest say so. Call this yer a *fust hotel!*" and the indignant sucker took three strides, accompanied by as many jerks of his elbows—premonitory symptoms of a "*rar up*," generally.

The stage agent by this time had "the hang" of the matter, and he very politely told the mistaken Sucker that the Planters' House entrance was "just *below*."

"'Jest *above*' and 'jest *below*,' and the Court House right in the middle!" cried the poor fellow, the importance taken clean out of him. "I tell you what, *stranger*, ef you've got a Planters' House in this yer district, I'd jest thank you to *pint it out!*"

The stage agent did so, but it was only after divers suspicious stares at him that the Sucker seemed to be satisfied that he was not again to be victimized. Up he went, with his innocent friend, and looking cautiously round, his eye rested upon the ranges of pigeonholes, numbered according to the respective rooms, and one half of them containing notes or cards for the boarders.

"*Postoffice*, by thunder!" cried he, completely "sawed," as he

fancied, and the mere accident of meeting in the lobby a more experienced friend from his "section," kept him from rushing out of the house. Matters were explained, names registered, and a double-bedded room was reached at last by the excited travellers. The beds were all right—the furniture "fust rate"—but there was an unaccountable green string and tassel hanging against the wall which kept Sucker the first from taking his nap. Determined to "get the hang" of this, also, he gave it a gentle pull or two, when suddenly a tap was given at the door and a very genteel visitor walked in upon him. The Sucker made him a polite bow, "told him how-dy," and asked him to "take a cheer."

"Did you ring, sir?" said the visitor, deprecatingly.

"Ring!—no—I—I 'aint ringed nuthin," was the reply, but the Sucker's heart misgave him; there was certainly some mysterious connection between that *green string* and the interrogatory just put to him, and turning into bed again, he pondered the matter over sleeplessly, until he was startled out of his senses and into his boots by the dinner gong.

It was a very full table, but the Sucker and his friend got seats. Clash-dash, hurry-scurry—the misery of thin soup, and the mystery of eating "by *catalogue*," when our acquaintance seeing a gentleman helping his neighbor to wine, thought that the rules of the *Temperance House* might as well be broken in his own case, also, and, accordingly, seizing the bottle, he divided it between himself and companion.

"Waiter! another bottle," said the amused sufferer opposite.

"What number, sir?" said the *garçon*.

"No. 60"—and a second bottle of *tinto* replaced the first; but this time "No. 60" was careful not to let it go out of his reach, a *selfishness* which the Sucker, once more warming up into importance, evidently couldn't stand.

"Waiter!" cried he, very peremptorily.

"Sir!" said the waiter, just as promptly.

"Another bottle of that yer!"

"What number, sir?"

"Number *sixty!* by thunder."

We "jest nat'rally" beg to stop here—our fourth page of copy (extreme limit) being reached. But we rather "predicate" that if that second bottle came, it *wasn't* charged to "No. 60;" and we "reckon," moreover, that if ever *that* Sucker comes to St. Louis again, however he may admire a *just hotel*, he will direct his search any where rather than to the "Planters'."

Daily Reveille, June 28, 1846, 1-2.

"Solitaire" and a Peter Funk.

[John S. Robb]

Our associate, *Solitaire*, on his recent trip east, fell into the hands of the "Peter Funks," in New York, who undertook to out-Indian him in a small trade for a *ticker*.¹⁰ He describes the interview as deeply interesting, and in its more striking features possessing lessons worthy the study of diplomats. The innocent youth had "hearn on them fellers," but never before had an introduction—passing along Broadway with a careless air, dressed in an odd little western coat, his head tipped off with a "chip" to correspond, the very verdancy of his outward man pointed him out as an easy quarry, and they pounced on him—

"Going! going! going!—an el-e-gant *gold* watch, going for a trifle, actually below cost"—commenced Peter, looking with keen eyes upon each passer.

Solitaire stopped to look. Three or four of the rascally gang commenced examining the watch and eyeing the pauser, who in his turn "sawneyed" up to the door way and commenced reading a large bill, on which was *written* a list of the articles for sale—these rascals never go to the expense of *printing*, because it would bring out some name liable for their swindles.

"Walk in, sir," says the Peter selling; "walk in. Here, now, sir, is

10. Although unsigned, the story is identified on the page of its appearance in the *Reveille* as being the work of John S. Robb. A Peter Funk is a person employed to bid up the prices of articles at auctions.

a bargain; a fine *gold* watch going for \$18—four-jewelled lever—engine turned—patent escapement—Tobias' make—warranted—and selling for cost of making cases. Look at it, sir, and don't go home without a watch when you can get one for such a trifle—you can sell it at home for \$100. and make sufficient to pay the full cost of your trip. Shall I say \$20 for you, sir? The gentleman bids \$20 for this elegant gold lever—engine turned—full-jewelled—patent escapement! going! going—”

“Does it *go*, sir?” inquired our innocent friend.

“*Go!*” says Peter, “to-be-sure it goes—nothing ever went out of this auction room that didn't *go*—you didn't mean it as an insult, sir, I know, but that is rather an indelicate question. *You* say \$22, sir; thank you, I know you meant nothing by what you said.”

No bid had yet been made by “*Solitaire*,” but the Peter Funk had bid twice for him. At this period of proceedings another of the gang bid \$23, and the auctioneer immediately bid up \$25 for his customer. Here the young gentleman innocently examined the watch, put it to his ear, and found fault with it because it didn't *tick*. Another of brass was instantly substituted, which had an amazing loud tick, and the pleased expression of his countenance at the sound put the gang at ease—they run it up to \$40 on him, without his being troubled to bid once, and then invited him back to a little room to settle the bill. He declined, and they insisted, gathering around him at the same time and pushing the door shut.

“I ain't got no money, gentlemen,” said our friend.

“Oh, come, you can't fool us,” says Peter, “no person comes here without money, and we ain't going to keep our auction house open at an enormous expense, to let you fellows bid off goods and not take 'em afterwards.”

“But, indeed, I ain't got no money,” said the trapped youth.

“Well, we will search and see,” says Peter, and as he was about to thrust his hand into the victim's pocket, he asked him to wait a moment, and drawing from his pocket a six barreled revolver, and from his breast a small cheese knife, in a half-blubbering tone, he told them to “mole thar way to his innards, but he wur inclined to

speculate they'd only find the remnants and rough ends of his last chaw of Missouri tobacco."

Not one of them made a demonstration to search, after seeing the implements, but they all agreed that the gentleman was *joking* with them; his *ornaments* showed that he liked fun, and they knew he intended to take the purchase. Now the good gold watch was handed out, and an offer was made to take Solitaire's draft for the amount, and send him the lever as soon as said draft was cashed. In order to compromise the matter, he drew as follows:

\$60	NEW YORK, June 18th, '47.
John Beggs, * fur and skin dealer, St. Louis, will pay, at sight, to the order of John Smith, auctioneer, sixty dollars, (\$60.)	

JOHN SELL.

Both parties appeared satisfied with their bargain, and when the St. Louis *fur dealer* cashes the draft, no doubt our verdant associate will get his purchase. How *could* he be so green?

*The St. Louis *dog-killer!*

Daily Reveille, July 21, 1847, 2.

Full of Life.

By Carondelet.

Some winters ago a party of rough country fellows were sitting around a bright, blazing fire in a village tavern, situated in the upper part of this State. We, being attracted by their loud voices, heard them calling on one of the number to relate some incident connected with his own history, and drew up into their circle just as he began.

"Well," said he, "Jim and me was old playmates, but hadn't met fur some time, when I went down to St. Louis to sell my crap and get the old 'oman some groceries, and who shud drap in the

tavern 'bout a minite arter me but Jim Scroggins; we shuck hands, talked awhile, and then went up to our room, (fur the landlord put us together when he saw we knowed each other,) and told 'em to send us up some lickier.

" 'Jim' sez I, when we got up to our roosting-place, 'I hear you'r ben jined, old hoss; here's luck to you.'

" 'Jined to what?' sez he, pretendin' not to know what I meant; fur he'd been to school, and studed some perfession, as he called it, and tho't he talked onkommon well.

" 'Jined to Suze Sloper,' sez I, 'and *here's thumpin' luck* to you both, for Suze is a clever gal, and well made, too,' sez I, tryin' to soft-soap him; 'she's got a rite smart chance of hips, and I reckon her timbers aint a goin' to break down with her.'

"I seed Jim bite his lips and look sorter mad, but he didn't bile over yet, and sez he:

" 'She is a sweet cretur, Mr. Wiggins—all annymashun, and full of life.'

" '*Wh-e-e-w!*' sez I, whislin' rite out—'you don't tell that, do you. Full of life! why, you orter be ashamed of yourself, Jim Scroggins.'

" 'What do you mean, sir?' sez he.

" 'Mean?' sez I—'I don't mean nuthin' but what I say. You orter be ashamed to tell it, fur her sake, when you aint been marred but one month!'

" 'Damnashun, sir!' sez he; 'I can't stand that, no how,' and with that he gethers up a piece of furnichur and hove it rite at me. I dodged it, and made at him, and we went into it strong.

"Well, we fit round the room, upsettin' cheer and wash fixins, and keepin' up a divil of a racket; but we didn't wake no one, till at last down we cum on the floor, Jim on top, and shuck the whole house. This raised a fellar sleepin' under us, and he hollered fire! I think it was fire, sure enuf, with Jim pluggin' away rite in my face, and the back part uf my head takin' revenge out uf the floor.

"But it warn't no go; I rolled him, and by that time the whole crowd had gathered and cum a rushin' up. Some hollered part 'em; but *one fellar, that I reckon Jim tho't was a fool*, sed, 'Let 'em have

it out—fair play!’ and at it I went, givin’ him what he’d jest give me; but he was so mulish obstinate that he wouldn’t say enuf—so, ater I got tired of beatin’ him, and appealed to the crowd, the same fellar that wouldn’t let ’em part us *hollered fur him*, and they pulled me off. *Maybe* Jim didn’t give *him* fits aterwards.”

“Well, Bill,” asked one of his listeners, after the laugh had in a degree subsided, “did you ever find out what he meant by ‘full of life?’ ”

“Oh, yes,” answered the hero, “I furgot; he told me next day, when we made it up—he meant *peert*—nothin’ else!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” went round the crowd, and we went off to bed.

Daily Reveille, July 28, 1847, 1-2.

The Lethean!

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

An enthusiastic friend of ours, who has, for some years past, been a close observer of the modern progress of science, no sooner observed the numerous and respectable testimonials in regard to the lethean preparation, than he instantly resolved to try its efficacy in *propria personae*. The only mar he had to his beauty were a pair of decayed front teeth, and rather than undergo the pain of extraction, he had suffered them to hold undisputed place in what was otherwise a very handsome opening in his countenance. Having once made up his mind, he forthwith set about carrying out his resolution, and for this purpose came to our city, where he had noticed advertisements of operations being performed while under the influence of the genuine *lethean*!

Having repaired to one of our dental operators—a quiet and skilful professor of the science—he made known his intention, pointed out the defective incisors, and was politely requested to take a seat in the operator’s chair. He obeyed! Thus far everything had progressed satisfactorily. The professor appeared confident, and prepared his instruments for the little job with all the care and preci-

sion usually distinguishing the man conscious of his ability and skill. Directly opposite our friend was a glass case containing some highly finished specimens of the dental art, some of them full sets, and others, portions of the jaw, finished in block form; besides numerous specimens of single teeth. On this case he fixed his eye, when he commenced inhaling the preparation. *Suck!* began the patient, which was followed by a slight wriggle. *Suck!* again, followed by a contortion, and a wild stare. Another *suck*, and a still more violent movement. At this stage of the proceedings our friend says his imagination became very lively, and he fancied that the teeth in the case were taking a kind of quiet, sober, steady *grin* at him. Another *suck*, and he fancied the full sets opening their lip-less grinders into a genuine broad laugh, while the single teeth commenced an impish kind of dance. A strong inhalation now set his blood on fire, and he fixed his teeth upon the valve with a clench like death; and, snorting and struggling like a frightened steed bound by the harness, he reached for the head of the Professor, who was struggling to take the valve out of his mouth. The dentist was exerting his utmost to hold him, but every succeeding *suck* made it apparent to his mind that it was impossible to do so safely much longer; so, dropping at once both patient and *lethean*, he sloped through the parlor door; and, as he cleared the threshold, his beautiful case, with all its elegant sets of teeth, was hurled into fragments against the wall over the entrance by which he had made his exit.

The operation had now become decidedly interesting. Our friend, full of *lethe* and looseness, began to make the furniture, instruments, cases and spittoons, fly in all manner of directions, and at any object which struck his lively fancy. He stuck teeth probes into the door, threw a spittoon at a looking glass, and run round the room hunting for something to attack. While he was having this "good time" all alone, he fancied that time was at an end, himself the "last man," and the dentist the *d—!*

The latter (the dentist, we mean) hearing his patient pause a moment, opened a pair of folding doors to look at him.

"Open them wide," shouts *Lethe*; "I don't care how *hot* it is, I'll go in peaceably!"

The dentist knew better than to open it yet, and his prudence saved him, for the next moment a spittoon was dashed to fragments against the door. The effects of the ether began to disappear after this last effort, and in a state of complete bewilderment he surveyed his hands and his person, which were all besmeared with blood. In tossing about the glass fixtures of the room he had severely wounded both of his hands, and was in perfect astonishment at the wreck around him. The dentist took a second look at his *customer*, and finding him docile he entered, and coolly set to work picking up the fragments. After setting things to rights he quietly remarked to his patient:

"That mixture may be *lethe* to some constitutions, my friend, but there is such a preponderance of *electricity* in your composition that if you ever sleep I consider it a miracle!"

"You think it no go, then, with me?" inquired the patient.

"Yes, sir," says the dentist, "it is all *go* with you when you take it; but if I should ever administer it to you again, I would take the precaution to knock you in the head when it began to work on you."

That last remark was a settler, and our friend tying up his fingers, bid adieu to all his delightful ideas of escape from pain through the *Lethæan*.

Daily Reveille, May 21, 1847, 2.

6

ARMY

LIFE

Tennessee Tactics.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

Brazos Island!¹ Redfish, shellfish, and, once more, Brazos Island! Many yarns have been spun about this classic sand bar, and countless others remain to be spun; and, in view of the still eager demand which is expressed with regard to such fabrics, we again put our "Jenny" in motion.

Among the heroic, but rather unaccustomed regiments which were landed at this point, thence to be transported up the *Rio Grande*, the "Tennessee Boys," afterwards celebrated for their gallantry at Monterey,² were among the most conspicuous—conspicuous for tall men, short uniforms, practised captains, and a sea-sick, inside-out appearance generally.

Of course we brag on our St. Louis Legion, as having been the dandy, and "nothing shorter," during their stay there, offering, as a proof of our correctness, the fact that the only table on the Island was within the Legion encampment; and furthermore, that no less a convenience for not being an essential, it "gave an air" to the tent of our friend W——, of Main street. The Tennessee regiment had landed during the morning, after a rough passage, and rougher fare, and Lieut. W——, with his captain—they messed together—were just sitting down to a smoking repast—a roast, a stew, and what not—when who should halt right in front of the canvass opening, but a six-feet six Tennessee captain, with his very short first lieutenant. As W. says, "one was about as long as a run to a fire, and the other was about as high as the plugg." The former *whisked* about a very short-tailed uniform coat; and the latter, in accordance with the views of that *providence* which invari-

1. Brazos Island, in the Gulf of Mexico and near the mouth of the Rio Grande, served throughout the Mexican War as a major supply base for the army of Gen. Zachary Taylor in northern Mexico.

2. An American army directed by General Taylor and Gen. William Jenkins Worth defeated Mexican forces under Gen. Pedro de Ampudia at Monterrey in a battle from September 20 to September 25, 1846. The First Tennessee Volunteers formed part of the two-thousand-man 1st Volunteer Division, which was heavily involved in the action. See George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 474.

ably cuts out volunteer apparel, *swept* along—skirts to the heels—his air of command commensurate with his tail.

“Cap’n!” said Skirts, with a brusquerie worthy one of the “old guard,” “look yer!”

His superior stopped, gazed, as requested, upon the table with its viands, mixed pickles, and condiments generally, and taking his quid out of his mouth, unconsciously exclaimed:

“Roast doin’s, I’ll swar! and haint stuck a tooth in anything but a durned old swine’s hind eend for a week!”

An invitation to walk in and sit down, was, of course, extended to the strangers; and of course, with the proper acknowledgments, it was accepted. Platters were cleaned, and cups were emptied; “accidents by flood and field”—as well those in the grim future as those already encountered—were related and commented upon, until the mental rather than the physical proportions of the company began to exhibit themselves, Skirts, as might be expected under such circumstances, overshadowing, if not completely extinguishing, his superior officer.

“War, gentlemen,” said Skirts, “is a science, and I reckon you can’t make it anything shorter! when you meet the inimy in deadly *kombat*, ‘taint the *stuff* you got *in* you, but the tactics does it, and the officer that don’t ‘tend ter this ‘ll come out, little end first, I predicate!”

Notwithstanding this opinion, Skirts added to the “stuff he had in him” by taking another canful; immediately afterwards pulling at a pair of untrained moustaches, and thence sliding his right hand over his left shoulder, where glowed a brazen epaulette of the largest size.

“Why, you carry more gold on your shoulder than your captain does!” said W., drawing out the swelling hero.

“Oh,” replied that worthy, “military *eatiquet* may arrange about shoulders, but I reckon you’ve a right to choose your own fixins! I bought a pair of colonel’s *appleetts*, in case I might want ‘em ‘fore the year’s out, and if I put one on ‘em on now, I reckon nobody need be jealous!”

The long captain here, good-naturedly—or, perhaps, a little

sleepily—assured the hosts that Lieutenant Skirts was a “mighty smart officer, and bound to rise!”

“For my part,” said W., “I never could see why any distinction should be made in shoulders, at all!”

Skirts looked gravely for a moment, as if that certainly was a new point, and one worthy of attention, and then, with deliberate accent, settled the question.

“You see the cap’n wears his *appleette* on the right-hand shoulder. Well, that’s all proper, because, while commanding, he is the right-hand man, of course; and the leftenant wears his’n on the *left* hand shoulder, because in marching he’s always on the *left*-hand of his company!”

This was perfectly satisfactory to all present, and Skirts, who, by this time, was quite tall enough to take command of his commander, *suggested* to that officer that it would be proper to put the men through their drill, regularly—commencing with the next morning. The captain fully agreed, and, after inviting his entertainer to be present at the interesting spectacle, withdrew with his accomplished subordinate.

The first drill “came off” next morning, sure enough, and the long captain had been learning the order of exercise with great assiduity, yet, nevertheless, he was much troubled with regard to many of them. He was there to drill, however, and at it he went. He ordered them to “form,” and then he showed them “how to do it;” and then he “marched” for them, and “counter-marched;” and divided them into sections, by counting them, two by two, as they passed, and then *cutting them off* with his enormous sword. The flash and descent of the formidable weapon could hardly fail of severing the line—somewhat to the peril of noses—and thus his sections were correctly measured; but what became of them afterwards was their own business. After considerable of a show, and somewhat of a fatiguing one to the captain, as may be imagined, the men were once more got together in line, and “*arms at ease*,” under the circumstances, was a command which no tactician with bowels could possibly have objected to.

“Arms at ease!” said the captain. This command was as little

understood as the others, and the indefatigable head of the company proceeded to illustrate. He knew that when tired of carrying his rifle, his greatest relief was to pass it across the back of his neck, over his shoulders, and then to throw an arm over each end, which preserved the balance, braced the muscles, and, indeed, afforded *ease* altogether; this then was, naturally what was meant by "arms at ease!"

"Arms at ease, I tell you, and follow me!"

Eighty muskets went over eighty heads; twice that number of arms dangled on either side; while oaths and shouts without number arose from the whole company. Eyes were bayoneted, and heads were *buted*, the spectators roared, and the captain reared, until, finally, *Leftenant Skirts*, with that promptitude which characterizes genius, danced out to the front of the company, and with the air of Napoleon at *Rivoli*, or *Arcola*,³ recovered the field by bawling out—

Stand wide, the hull dam lot on ye!

The country was saved, Tennessee tactics established, and, however queerly they may have appeared at Brazos Island, we take pride in reminding the reader that they proved most efficient at Monterey.

Daily Reveille, August 20, 1847, 2.

A Night Attack.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

Who does not shudder at the very mention of "a night attack?" What dreadful scenes it conjures up of sanguinary carnage, of dread and indiscriminate havoc, and of inhuman murder! How often has the sleeping soldier been aroused from his dream of a far distant home, and the contemplation of sweet, familiar faces, to look upon the half-hidden forms of deadly foes, who, from dark-

3. Napoleon defeated the Austrians at Arcola on November 15-17, 1796, and at Rivoli on January 14, 1797.

ness and obscurity, were pouring upon him a death shower; and before the half-slumbering senses had regained a consciousness of the difference between the dream and the reality, his spirit has received its message of parting, and, like some sweet bird, has soared away above earthly perils to float in safety, and bathe its pinions in the light of heaven. What dreadful thoughts fill us as we hear again of the midnight robber and assassin, who, stealing upon the unconscious sleeper, by one blow cuts his thread of life, and, merely to obtain the dross of earth the sleeper owns, he robs him of that which all earth cannot restore! We might continue to enumerate cases of murderous deeds done "i' the dark," until the "fell" of our reader's hair would rise "like quills upon the fretful porcupine;" but we prefer to illustrate our subject by the relation of a circumstance which befel one whose arm has done his country good service in the battle field, and who, when once attacked at midnight, displayed a portion of that unyielding courage which has distinguished him in his country's battles:

Capt. S. was a great joker—a practical joker—and would go to almost any extent to have a laugh against his comrades. He had smoked them in their quarters—he had climbed upon the roof when they were engaged in a social game of whist inside, and lowered a torpedo down upon the fire; and, in short, every species of mischief that could create excitement had been resorted to by him for the purpose, as he said, of keeping the military blood up to ardor heat. His comrades had tried his own tricks upon him, but without effect—instead of checking his mischief, it only urged him to greater efforts; indeed, he seemed to enjoy those visited upon himself as highly as the devilment he practised upon others. The Captain, by choice, slept upon a *hay* mattress, and, as every man has his hobby, it was his to lecture his comrades upon the healthy difference between hay and any other kind of stuffing for a bed. This fact suggested a trick to a comrade, and straight he proceeded to put it in execution.

A jackass, which lived about the Council Bluff Barracks, was the chosen instrument. This animal was one of those old, nondescript kind which had no particular owner; was kept under no restraint,

but appeared to be a movable portion of the establishment, let run at large to exercise the vigilance of the sentries; and many a raw recruit had fired at random on hearing old Jack approach, and when he retreated congratulated himself on frightening an Indian. The soldiers at length dubbed old Jack the "Grand Rounds," and by this name he was generally known. Lieut. M. had Jack captured and placed under duress for nearly two days without anything to eat; this made him so hungry he could have masticated a side of sole leather; then, enticing Capt. S. into a whist party in the Major's quarters, he turned Jack into the Captain's apartment. But a brief period had elapsed before old "Grand Rounds" smelled the hay mattress, and if it had been the stuffing of a velvet-covered ottoman, it would have been all the same. He pulled the clothes off, put his fore foot upon the bed, with his teeth tore a hole large enough to get his nose in, and leisurely proceeded to make up for his long fast by stuffing his own hide with the contents of the mattress.

While old "Grand Rounds" was thus feeding away, congratulating himself, no doubt, on his luck at getting such stabling, the original proprietor, Capt. S., was enjoying the hospitality of the Major. The company, on that particular occasion, was so joyous and entertaining, and the wine had such a peculiarly rich flavor, that the Captain lingered until midnight. When on his way to his own quarters he asked *the sentry* upon the parade ground what *both of them* were standing there about? "It is only *me* alone, Captain," said the soldier. "Well, then," said Captain S., "if that is so, this is the strangest parade ground for op (hic) optical delusions I have ever travelled over."

He at length gained his door, and while feeling for the knob it opened, fell inwards, and the proprietor embraced his easy chair, which set near the entrance. He recovered directly, and commenced the operation of undressing, during which he staggered against old "Grand Rounds," and taking him for his negro boy "Bill," he told him to take hold of his boots—and *strike a light!* Having seated himself, he pulled and pulled at his boots, but they wouldn't come, for the very good reason that imagination only was tugging at the heel. "Never mind a light," says he, "the

illumination (hic) tion within is sufficient—ha, ha, ha, (hic) what a glorious fellow the Major is—and what wine—(here he rolled into bed, and then finished the sentence by saying)—he keeps.”

Old “Grand Rounds,” the jackass, was munching away, and the Captain rolled over the opening he had made in the mattress—he pushed the owner of the quarters up with his nose, and grabbed another mouthful. The Captain, thinking it was Bill tucking in the cover, said nothing at first, but when punched again, he told him “that would do; he could go now.” But when old Jack had munched that up he nosed the Captain again, who returned his thrust with a slap over the nose. Jack appeared to ponder upon this indignity for a moment, and then turning round he lifted the owner of the mattress from his reclining posture by a sudden movement of his heels, which spread him on the floor like a crab, and then turning the other end round again, he continued his comfortable employment upon the remaining contents of the mattress.

“Why, you infernal *nigger*,” says the Captain, “attack your master at midnight with a bludgeon? Hello, sentry!” he shouted, and, at the same time, seizing his pistols which lay on the table alongside, he commenced blazing away at what he supposed was “Bill.” There was a commotion immediately outside—the sentry gave the alarm—the officers issued from the quarters—the drummer, half dressed, run upon parade, ready to beat the call to arms, and all gathered round Captain S.’s quarters—a file of men fronted the door with fixed bayonets—it was opened, and out rushed old “Grand Rounds,” kicking up his heels with delight at getting such a feast, and escaping without a scratch. When lights were brought, the Captain looked round for the dead body of “Bill”—he turned up the bed clothes, when, noticing a grin on the face of his comrades, he let them drop, burst into a roar at the comicality which invested the scene, and at once *saw* through the mystery of his thrilling *night attack!* We will bet a Mexican cigar that if any one would meet Captain S. now in Monterey, in broad daylight, and ask who goes there? he would answer, “Grand Rounds!”

Whipping a Circus.

By Everpoint. [Joseph M. Field]

During the first furor of volunteering for Mexico, when every country tavern was a headquarters, and every barrel-top was a peak from which was ready to "soar" the American eagle at the slightest notice, the equestrian company of the Mabies' entered a certain small county town in Suckerdom, to keep their appointment of "one night only." This little place was not a bad little place, in itself, but it happened to lay in a "mighty bad section," and the hard cases in the neighborhood were in the habit of *irrupting* occasionally; walking down upon it in barbarian style, and playing the deuce with its internal policy, manners, men—and women into the bargain. The worthy townspeople were kept in terror of their lives, and, though they had in turn elected to the Sheriffalty—or done their part towards it—every one who had dared to say what he *would* do for them, they still had the luck of seeing that functionary rather palavering with their enemies, than enforcing the laws in their favor. The circus was *arriv'*, a volunteer company was forming, the whole country was in commotion, and soon there were whispers of "somethin' squally coming;" in short, the equestrians learned, that the "circus was bound to be whipped!" "Big Bill," from somewhere about, it seems, was "in town"—was in the habit of whipping things in general, and had expressed his desire to include, on this occasion, the circus. Town authorities, county authorities, were in consternation; the equestrians found that they would have to protect themselves, and, in a few words, they expressed confidence in their ability to do so.

"Only let Big *Bill* attempt to pass himself on me," said the short, chunky, bull-terrier-looking clown, "and I'll make *small change* of him, any how!"

The workmen got under weigh, industriously; the riders lounged about, carelessly; "Big Bill" and his "crowd" swelled and swore, looking terrible things at the canvass pavilion which was going up, and some few ventured to suggest to themselves—

"suppose the circus *shouldn't* get licked, after all!" The authorities, including the Sheriff, *privately* assured the manager, however, that the majesty of the law would be respected; that they would oppose violence, &c., all of which meant, as usual, that they would keep out of harm's way until the fight was over, and then take a drink with the conqueror.

Night came—tent was lighted—crowds were gathered on corners—Big Bill was "about," but things didn't look so fighty as expected, for the circus men, calm and cool, had gone to their performance with a sort of bowie knife-and-pistol suspicion attaching to them, and the understrappers exhibited a sort of grinning suavity, by no means inviting a too intimate acquaintance. Audience gathered, clown joked, spangles glistened, dogs danced, only two or three threatening indications being noticed, and whispers began to circulate, that "Big Bill was bluffed off this time," &c., when a tremendous rush of a score of fellows, was made upon the performers' dressing tent; spectators tumbled backforwards from the benches, escaping under the canvass; lights came down with a run; the pavilion belaying pins, freed from the ground, left the vast pavilion flapping, and it seemed a whipped circus, certainly. "Big Bill" was getting up a company for Mexico, and at the head of his war dogs he was now laying about him. Suddenly the hero felt a "*one, two*" about his nose, which set a shower of stars shooting, and then a "*one, two, three,*" clinched by an awful "*one,*" which laid him on the field. At least a score on a side were engaged; the circus men marked, dancing and glancing, like sprites, in their finery. Big Bill couldn't raise his head without that vivid "*one, two*" sending him down again; science and agility had it all their own way, and in an incredibly short time, the leader of the attack alone remained captive to make out his Bulletin.

"If I could only open my eyes," said the fallen chief, "I'd like to see that consarned fire-fly that's bin stinging my face so!"

The clown, in his speckled war-coat, made six of his profoundest bows, threw three of his liveliest head-springs, kicked twice over his huge victim's head, and wound up by seizing him under

the arm, and walking him, double quick time, into an adjoining "grocery," amid roars and shouts of laughter.

"Big Bill" was "small change" to the whole country from that moment, it was clear enough; the authorities were *remarkably* busy; they had "taken their measures," and "order *had* triumphed," as they had promised; in short, such a law-abiding place, perhaps, existed no where *else* on the American continent at that moment.

"Are *you* the one that handed over them licks to me?" enquired Bill of the clown, ruefully, "opening his eye" with a tumbler full of whisky, at the same time.

"Science must prevail, sir," responded the mime; "as a son of art I rejoice to know that I have neither addressed your sight in vain, nor appealed fruitlessly to your feelings! Sir, you are a gentleman and a scholar—*booh!*"

The sucker here started, as if he had been shot, from the deadly levelled *leg*, which, brought down from his tormentor's shoulder, musket fashion, was now aimed straight at his nose.

"Well," said Bill, glaring hazily out of his half closed eyes, and slowly shaking his huge head sideways, like a dying buffalo, "I've had hard licks, and straight licks, and crooked licks, and windin' licks, but if I ever felt such licks as *them* afore I'll 'gree to quit; and I tell you what, stranger, just say Mexico, and if I don't '*list you for Captain*, you can do that over again!"

Big Bill subsequently stormed Cerro Gordo,⁴ but "allows" it was "no circumstance" to *Whipping a Circus!*

Daily Reveille, December 1, 1848, 1.

4. American troops under Gen. Winfield Scott defeated a Mexican army led by Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna at Cerro Gordo on April 18, 1847.

The Barrel Movement.

A Sketch of Camp Life on the Rio Grande.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

When the St. Louis Legion was encamped on the island, at the mouth of the Brazos Santiago,⁵ the boys began, for the first time, to feel the inconvenience of "Uncle Sam's" fodder arrangements—not that they expected to find "chicken fixins" every morning; but they at least felt confident the *beans* would be nourishing. About eleven o'clock, a.m., every day, the little round vegetables were put in the camp-kettles, and in an hour, or probably an hour and a half, were served out. To those skilled in the matter of dried beans, we need not explain how little effect one hour's boiling would have upon them. The different messes cracked away, however, chewed the hard pebbles up, and left off their meals in a very unsatisfied manner. A few days had scarcely elapsed, when a general grumble was set in circulation against the commissary department, Uncle Sam, and his *beans*, in particular. One tall volunteer swore, in the mess, that he would cross to the main land and provision himself, if he had to eat a live *Ranchero*, before he would starve on such fare; his comrades chimed in with his rebellious resolve, and all of them asked leave of the Captain to take a short excursion for a few hours, in search of game. Leave was granted, and off the party started. In the course of a few hours, one came strolling into camp with a bundle under his arm, and as he passed the sentry on the way to their tent, he was accosted with—

"Jo, what luck had you?"

"Oh," says Jo, "I only killed a '*gutter snipe!*' "

"Well," says the sentry, "that is the largest snipe, judging from the bundle, I have ever seen. Let me look at his *bill.*"

Jo uncovered it, and there was the snout of as fine a young *pig* as ever poked his nose into a swill tub. Both winked at each other,

5. The Brazos Santiago is a strait separating Brazos Island from nearby Padre Island.

exchanged quiet grins, and then the *snipe* was carefully covered and carried to quarters.

In a few moments along came another of the mess, who reported that he had *only* secured a haunch of "*slow deer*," i.e., a young *calf*; and, to wind up the captured game of the party, three more appeared, carrying a quarter of a "*short-horned elk*," which some envious members of other messes declared looked as if it might have been the "*slow deer's*" mammy! The spoils were put together and covered over, after which the mess went into council of war upon how to get something to wash down the *game*, and make the whole affair a comfortable one.

"Do you think you can execute a '*barrel movement*,' boys?" said an Orderly belonging to the mess.

"What is it like?" was the general inquiry.

"Simply this," says the Sergeant; "the Commissary General is landing stores down at the beach, among which is some first rate *brandy* for the officers, and if we could only make one of his half-barrels keep step in a hollow square, we might easily execute the new march of a '*barrel movement*.'"

All the mess expressed themselves ready for duty instanter, and, having added a few more rank and file to the enterprise, off they started on a commendably earnest march, to practice the new drill. The hollow square was admirably formed and re-formed half a dozen times before they reached the beach, and advancing in line towards the Commissary's stores, with a rapid evolution they formed around a liquor cask, and commenced their march back across the island. The drill was now full of interest—it was new—and one of the Lieutenants, attracted by the strange manoeuvring, approached them just as they were performing a hollow square *countermarch*. He observed one of the men carrying two muskets, and thought it queer, but a glance at the centre of the squad explained the secret. A strong volunteer was keeping the barrel rolling in the inside—they were representing a square retreating with stores, and it was really beautiful, the skill with which they did it! Now the barrel-roller would get tired, and the squad would countermarch while another took his place; again a

discovery would threaten, and they would close up to receive charge of cavalry, and thus, moving with caution and steadiness, they reached a small sand hill in the rear of the camp. Now commenced some brilliant slow movements, all in one spot, which were followed by the squad forming line again, and moving into camp. At the spot where the square broke, a fresh hillock of sand *might* have been discovered, by those only, however, who knew the former levelness of the spot.

The Lieutenant, who had critically watched the manoeuvring of the men, congratulated the Orderly on the perfection of their drill. The subordinate looked him in the eye, and knew, by the slight curl in the muscles of his face, that he "smoked" the new tactics; so, touching his cap politely, he asked the officer if, when they cooked their *game*, he would accept a slice?

"If the cook in your mess seasons it carefully, and it's not *overdone*, I wouldn't mind tasting it," says the Lieutenant.

The Orderly winked, and they separated. It was refreshing to an old campaigner just to see how "gutter snipe," "short-horned elk," and "slow deer" were disposed of that evening in the mess which executed the above described strange drill; and ever after that night it became a bye-word, when a volunteer was seen moving in a zigzag fashion, that he was practising the Legion's new march, called "*the barrel movement*."

Daily Reveille, September 6, 1846, 2.

The Nimble Shilling!

A Sketch of Early History.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

It is a matter of congratulation that, with the progress of refinement in the west, the common use of alcoholic drinks as a beverage is fast getting out of fashion, and many of our oldest and most respected citizens who, in the primitive days, were engaged

in the traffic, have seen its evils, and set their faces against it. We know that some of the captious old toppers, who still adhere to the ardent, sneeringly say their neighbors did not quit until they had made their fortunes—but what of that? it is evident they are sincere in their opposition to spirituous liquors when they themselves cease the *use*, as well as the sale, of the article. In gathering material for a future history of the west, we are often struck with the fact of how steadily that evil agent, *whisky*, has advanced with civilization; how many tragedies marked its baneful march, and how many humorous anecdotes it has given birth to. Our purpose at present is to chronicle one of the latter; but, as the family of the old Illinois whisky dealer have discarded the article, and have, in the course of time and progress, risen to wealth and dignity, we will of course omit names.

During the last war,⁶ when the "Rangers" were on duty through western Illinois, *whisky* was a deplorably scarce article, and the money to purchase it, when found, was equally hard to obtain. Among the old Rangers the "corn juice" was considered as necessary to subsistence as "corn dodgers;" but, having received no pay for a long period, their small stock of funds had entirely run out. In the meantime an old dealer had succeeded in raising two barrels of the comfortable liquid, and erected a small shanty near the camp, where his shingle, in chalked capitals, declared that

'WHISKY IS ARRIV AT SIX SENSE A SUC.'

Major Murdock, one of the old veterans, had for two days, in a wofully parched state, been searching his "kiverin'" for a stray *bit* that he knew was somewhere about him, but all his efforts to chase it up appeared unavailing—there were so many patches on his hunting shirt that it was impossible to find the one which he had made a pocket to contain the precious coin, and at last he had given it up. He tried to get trusted for two drinks until he could find it, but the owner of the shanty knew better than to trust any of that crowd.

"Try agin, Major," said a dry crony, who knew the circum-

6. The Black Hawk War of 1832.

stance; "try agin; never give up in a good cause—a shillin' in silver *now* is wuth gold anuther time."

The Major did try agin, and at last, down in the seam at the tail, the Major discovered the little joker, and *perhaps* he hailed the discovery with a yell of satisfaction.

"Now, Bill," says he, "we'll give that old fellar's barrel a *rip* for two inwigoraters, and no dispute."

They accordingly adjourned to the shanty, and called for the "medicine." The owner looked at the Major doubtfully, but when he displayed the *bit* hesitation vanished—he instantly drew the "sucks," handed them over, and took the change. The first taste brightened the Major as keen as an Indian. He observed while drinking that the dealer placed the money on a little shelf behind him and just above his head; it was within reaching distance, too, from his stand beside the temporary counter;—upon this discovery he at once acted.

"Well, raily," says he, "that stuff is suthin' like; thar's a body to it that tickles a fellar's vitality at the extreme pints. Bill," added he, "I could fight Ingins at half wages ef they'd ony feed me from sech cow's milk as is in that barrel. I *do* think we'll go anuther."

Bill signified assent, but looked at the Major with some surprise and inquiry in his countenance, as to where he would find another *bit*; but the old Ranger soon opened his eyes wider. The dealer had no sooner stooped to draw from the barrel than the Major picked the shilling off the shelf, and paid it over again for the drinks.

"I know'd you hed money, Major," said the dealer, "ef you could ony consent to shell it out; but you're gittin' consarned close-fisted in your old days."

The Major laughed at the remark as he replied:

"Well, you're a cunnin' sarpint, Jo, and bound to make suthin' out of us fellars. I declar that licker is so tremengus that it's sot me cravin' in my innards!"

"Don't give it up yit, Major," chimed in the dealer; "thar's more whar that come from, and jest of the same brewin'. I know you hev ben sufferin' fur a taste these few days past cause you didn't like

to 'open,' and I hated precious bad to refuse you; but whisky costs a powerful sight afore it gits here."

"Well, we will jest take *anuther* atom of a drink, and then lumber," says the willing Ranger. The shilling was picked off the shelf, and went through the same process again with equal satisfaction. After swallowing another round the Ranger smacked his lips, made a move towards the door, and turned back again.

"I thought you'd better think of it, Major," said the dealer; "sech stuff as this don't stay long in these diggins. You'll go anuther, I guess?"

"Well, jest *one* more," says the Major; "I declar I think it war some sech licker that tempted Adam, instid of an apple, as the Scriptur' says. It is all-sufficiently inticin' to tempt a coon out of a holler log ef the dogs wur arter him!"

In reaching for the shilling this time the Major was so eager, and a little excited withal, that he dropped it down right before the owner of the shanty.

"Hello!" says he; "that thar shelf must be gittin' crowded when they are droppin' off—or is this yours, Major?"

"It's yours now," answered the Ranger, "for these last drinks; and, Jo, *yur* is wishin' you may git *bit* so offen."

"Thanky, Major, thanky," said Jo; "I'll drink that myself"—and he did.

The Major and Bill retired with the honors, and, as they were passing through the door, Jo was feeling on the shelf for his shillings, but the hunting shirt coin was all that the search produced.

"*Bit*, by thunder!" exclaimed he, and, coming to the door, he shook his fist after the old Ranger, exclaiming: "I might hev know'd a pizen old Ingin killer like you hed no money; and, consarn you, you shant hev anuther suc out of this barrel ef your old melt and gizard was freezin' inside on you!"

7
A
SATIRIC
LOOK
AT
FRONTIER
INSTITUTIONS

Valor and Its "Better Part."

"If thou embowel me to-day, I'll give you leave to powder me and eat me to morrow."

*Shakspeare.*¹

Reader, if you have ever met with old W——, formerly of Louisville, you will better be enabled to appreciate the subjoined "inkling of adventure."

W—— was very corpulent, fond of the good things of this life, that is to say, his organ of alimentiveness was fully developed—and a jolly, good-natured fellow he was, too, who would rather run, any time, than fight. Well, he left Louisville for "the South," where he intended to reside. When near his destination, at some hotel, he had an altercation with a Frenchman, who, considering himself insulted, challenged him.

W—— went to a friend, in great trepidation, and told him that he could not fight; it was against his principles, and even were it otherwise, important reasons rendered the thing impossible. The friend expostulated with him, said it was imperatively necessary that he should *go out*—he had come to live in a "section" where such things were recognized; if he did not act up to the customs of the country, he would lose caste, and be, as it were, socially dead.

After much argument, W—— was finally prevailed upon to "accept;" the preliminaries were arranged, and the two *hostiles* were to meet the next morning, to render each other all the *satisfaction* which it is in the nature of powder and lead to afford.

W—— retired to his couch at an early hour in the evening, but, to him, it proved neither a couch of roses nor of rest. The fighting resolution he had formed was losing its virtue every moment, until he, finally, came to the conclusion that he would be a fool to remain and be shot; and just then, moreover, he recollected that the steamer Washington was to leave, at day-light, in the morning. He rose about day-break, settled his bill at the hotel, and ordered the porter to accompany him, with his baggage, down to the Washington.

1. Cf. *I Henry IV*, 5.4. 111-13: "If thou embowel me today, I'll give you leave to powder me and eat me too tomorrow."

He was walking along, quite pleased with the idea of his escape from the fire-eating Frenchman, when, behold, as he turned the corner of a street which led to the landing, he was astonished to see, in advance of him, his veritable enemy, with a servant behind him carrying a trunk! W—— followed him at a respectful distance, and, how great was his joy to see him go aboard of the Washington, which shortly after, puffing and snorting, departed on her destined trip. It is needless to remark, that our fat acquaintance, puffing and snorting, equal to the steamer which had just left, such was his haste to *save* his endangered honor, returned to his hotel, simply saying that he had changed his mind about leaving. He went straight to bed, and was snoring, loudly, when his friend arrived to prepare him for the meeting. Great was that friend's astonishment to find W—— sleeping so *sweetly*, and, after he was awakened, to see him act so coolly; his courage rose above *par*, at once, in that friend's estimation.

They, forthwith, repaired to the place of combat. Our corpulent acquaintance never seemed in a more jocose and happy humor, apparently disposed to leave the world laughing, if he left it at all, rather than the reverse. But his heart fluttered, and his manhood was on the point of forsaking him, when he saw, in the distance, as they approached the "ground," the figure of a man, walking back and forth, with hasty strides. "That bloody Frenchman," thought W——, "it may be that he has returned." His courage was reassured, however, on finding that it was only his antagonist's second, who seemed to be greatly chagrined at the non-appearance of his principal, and, who, at the expiration of the appointed hour, apologised therefor. W—— was not to be satisfied! he complained of the cowardly conduct of his opponent—he had lost his shot—he would post "the *fellow*"—he was *disappointed!* This proved a sad word for poor W——; the absentee's second, with the utmost *sang froid*, not only offered, but *insisted* upon taking the place of the principal. "Sir," said he, to the perfect horror of W——, "I will not be refused—you shall *not* leave the ground disappointed."

Sir Lucius never was in so "tight" a place as this! Honor cried "stand," but grim death, himself, said "go!" There was a terrible

weakness creeping up W.'s legs, a queer twitching seized upon his mouth, his throat worked spasmodically and his natural and *acquired* red failed him entirely. At length, with an effort, which covered his heroic brow with a rather suspicious dampness, he sputtered forth:

"Sir, you admit that your friend is a *coward*?"

"With shame, sir, I do!"

"Well, there's a *pair of us*, and you can settle it yourselves, by thunder!"

The last that was seen of W., he was tumbling himself over a fence, and the amused seconds adjourned to their "coffee" without the customary accompaniment of their "pistols."

Daily Reveille, March 13, 1845, 2.

A Duel in Fairview.

Being a Sequel to the Historical Society.

(From the Papers of the Late John Brown.)

[Richard S. Elliott]

"He means *me*—he's a knave, and I'll tell him so!"²

"Well, but suppose he *does* mean you, it's very foolish to put the shoe on just because it fits you. I wouldn't notice him."

"Yes, it'll do well enough to *talk* that way; but I won't stand it! He ought to be taught better. Editors are apt to take too much liberty, any how."

This conversation took place in the office of J. Ferguson Clark, Esq., shortly after the appearance of the *Sentinel and Standard*, containing the paragraph about "people living in glass houses,"

2. The title refers to two pieces on "The Historical Society of Fairview" gleaned "From the Papers of the Late John Brown," which the *Reveille* had run on April 14 and 15, 1846. In the first, Fairview, gaining a sense of its own significance, establishes a historical society, whose first meeting bristles with the self-importance of several local worthies. The second concludes the proceedings of the newly formed society, ending in a quarrel between the local editor and a lawyer.

&c. Charley Patterson, Clark's particular friend, was trying to pacify the insulted lawyer, who thought himself aggrieved by the paragraph in question, and meditated dire revenge.

About the same time Dr. Eliphalet Morgan having called on Mr. Forbus, found the editor in his sanctum, with a revolving pistol in each pocket of his pantaloons, and a huge hickory cane lying on the table before him.

"Why, Mr. Forbus, what's the matter?" inquired the dentist.

"Nothing, sir," said the editor, drily; "nothing, sir," (looking very sharply at the doctor) "unless Dr. Morgan considers himself *my friend*."

"Well—I *am* your friend."

"A friend in life, and—*death*?" inquired the editor, solemnly, with a sensible pause before the awful word death.

"Yes, if necessary; but I would like to know what you mean?"

"Did you notice this paragraph in my last paper?" inquired the editor, taking up a paper, and reading as follows: "'Some people live in glass houses, and ought not to throw stones. We know what we mean, and who we mean.' Did you see that, doctor?"

The surgeon-dentist replied that he had seen it; and after the circumstances were fully discussed, agreed with the editor, that if Clark took it to himself, Mr. Forbus ought to be prepared for any *consequences* that might ensue.

"Sir," said the unterrified Forbus, "I *am* prepared."

The next day the editor and Mr. Clark chanced to meet on the sidewalk, but passed with looks of defiance. "He *must* have meant that piece in his paper for *me*," thought Mr. Clark. "He is determined to rush to his own destruction," thought the editor, as he adjusted his heavy cane under his arm, and grasped a pistol in each pocket of his pantaloons.

"I *would* challenge him," soliloquized the editor, "but that would give him the choice of weapons—no, it won't do—I'll bide my time."

"Got a note for you, Mr. Forbus," said Charley Patterson, opening the door very unceremoniously; "a note from my friend Clark."

"Ha! a challenge!"

"It will speak for itself," was the laconic reply of Mr. Patterson, as he handed over the note of his principal.

"Very well; very well, sir; I shall take great pleasure in replying properly to Mr. Clark's note;—I shall send my reply by the hands of a *friend*."

Receiving this significant assurance, Mr. Patterson withdrew, to report to his principal, who was, in fact, trembling with anxiety, for fear the editor might *accept* the challenge. When Patterson made his report, Mr. Clark declared himself *delighted* with the prospect of chastising the editor.

"Did' nt think Forbus would be such a d—d fool as to accept," remarked Mr. Patterson.

"Nor I either; but I'm *glad* of it. He'll never speak of 'glass houses' again."

Rap—rap—rap! sounded a knock on the door, which, in answer to Mr. Clark's "come in," was immediately opened, and Dr. Eliphalet Morgan appeared.

"I have a note for you, Mr. Clark—a note from my friend, Mr. Forbus," said the intrepid Doctor. "Mr. Patterson, I shall be happy to see you at my room, at four o'clock, to arrange the preliminaries."

"Certainly, certainly," answered Clark and Patterson in the same breath, and the Doctor took his leave.

"Read it out," said Patterson, and Mr. Clark read as follows:

"*Sir*: Dr. Morgan carries this. I accept your challenge. I will fight you tomorrow morning, at the big walnut tree, on the south side of Gander creek, at daylight. Distance, *twenty paces*; weapons, uniform, and terms, to be as follows:

"1. *Fire-arms*.—Each party to have two six-barrel revolving pistols on his person—to carry a double-barreled shot gun, loaded with buck-shot—and a rifle, forty-five to the pound. In addition, each second to hold in reserve two horse pistols, loaded with an ounce ball and three buck-shot each, to be used *in case of necessity*.

"2. *Cutlery*—Each party to carry in a belt two bowie knives, and to have two short swords, one slung at each side; a stiletto dirk

under his coat, resting on the left breast, with a balance-handle carving knife in each boot. In addition, each second to hold in reserve a dragoon sabre, four feet in length from tip to tip, to be used *in case of necessity*.

"3. *Chivalric auxiliaries*.—Each party to have on the ground, behind him, a steel-pointed spear, or lance, eleven feet in length, and a mace or battle-axe, of the fashion of the Crusaders. (These weapons can be procured from the 'Crusaders' Lodge.) In addition, each second to hold in reserve a bow and quiver of arrows, to be used *in case of necessity*.

"4. *Uniform*.—Each party to appear in white pants, calico shirt, and black silk cap, fitting close to the head.

"5. *Mode of Combat*.—Rifles to be fired on word given by seconds—then both barrels of shot guns to be simultaneously discharged, followed immediately by volleys of the revolving pistols and a rush on each other with swords, bowie knives, dirks and carving knives. If none of these prove effectual, the horse pistols, sabres, and chivalric auxiliaries to be reverted to.

"6. *Duties of Seconds*.—To prepare weapons and provide coffee and other refreshments. Dr. Morgan to act as surgeon, indiscriminately, to both parties.

"I wish no reply to this but by *gun powder*. I shall be on the ground, at time and place appointed. If you are there I shall kill you, and then acknowledge that you were a *brave man*. I am,

JASON FORBUS."

We must pass over the agitation, consternation and preparation of Clark and his second. Suffice it to say, that on the next morning the parties met, pursuant to the programme of Mr. Forbus. The ground was measured—the weapons were all there in order—Forbus and Clark took their stands—the word was given, and the brave men *fired*. Bang! went the two rifles, followed immediately by the two double-barrelled shot guns—when both parties fell, discharging their revolvers, which were happily, in the confusion of the moment, pointed upwards.

When the smoke had cleared away, the seconds—Patterson himself having been shot through the coat tail, and Morgan

through the hat—hastily approached the respective principals, and found them stretched on the cold earth, each one mortally—*scared*.

Nothing was killed, except a dog belonging to Forbus, which had followed them to the field and received a rifle ball in the forehead!

"Now," said the editor to his second, "blood has been shed—I suppose I am satisfied."

"Doctor, don't you think my honor's vindicated?" inquired Mr. Clark, as he revived somewhat on finding himself still alive.

The seconds held a consultation, and unanimously agreed that each should acknowledge that the other was "a BRAVE MAN" and be reconciled; and thus was honorably adjusted the most exciting duel that ever took place in Fairview.

Daily Reveille, April 25, 1846, 1-2.

The Pumpkin Dance and Moonlight Race.

One of the Western Border Tales.

[Solon Robinson]

The following original sketch is from the pen of *Solon Robinson, Esq.*, of Indiana, well known as one of the best agricultural writers of the west, and a noted amusing correspondent of the "New York Spirit of the Times."³ Mr. R. honored us, yesterday, with a visit, and we shall not soon forget the pleasing countenance of our venerable farmer-looking friend of Indiana. Time never put a better countenance in the silvery frame of age. He tried his best to write the following sketch without giving it a political bias in favor

3. Solon Robinson (1803-1880), originally of Connecticut, became a leader in Indiana politics and journalism. Among his works were *The Will: A Tale of the Lake of the Red Cedars and Shabbona* (1841) and *Me-won-I-toc, A Tale of Frontier Life and Indian Character* (1867).

of General Taylor,⁴ and the reader can judge for himself how near he has succeeded.

In travelling through this queer world of ours, one not only meets with strange bed-fellows—[vide, the account of a certain Illinois Judge, making his first electioneering tour]⁵—but strange fellows meet us, who apparently never go to bed.

I met with a lot of these the other day—or rather night—in a certain town, in the southern part of Illinois, and as it can positively have no bearing upon the election now, perhaps you would like to have it to use for “*chinking*” in among the election returns.

I don’t know how it is, exactly, whether it is in consequence of the sovereigns of southern Illinois drinking so much whisky, that General Cass⁶ gets so many votes in that district, or whether so much whisky is drank there in consequence of so many Cass men being there. But certain it is, that if the General had to pay for all that has been drank in his name, he would need another “extra allowance”—not of the “critter;” his friends take that—but something extra to foot the bill.

I slept in a certain town, in that region, a short time ago, where the extras were indulged in most freely.

The “Grocery”—consisting of a whisky barrel, six tin cups, two green glass tumblers, a lot of pipes and tobacco—was in close proximity to the inn I was in, and there the qualities of a very recent extraction of the corn, and of the fitness of the candidates to receive the votes of the corned, was discussed in the manner usual in such times and places.

4. Gen. Zachary Taylor (1784–1850) was the successful Whig candidate for president in 1848.

5. Here Robinson is probably referring to “Going to Bed Before a Young Lady,” thought to be written by the “little giant” of Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas. In that story, the Illinois politician stops overnight in a backwoods cabin that is so cramped he must undress before one of the girls. The story appeared in the *Spirit of the Times* 14 (1845): 617 and was reprinted by Porter in *A Quarter Race in Kentucky* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1847). For speculation about its authorship, see Norris W. Yates, *William T. Porter and the Spirit of the Times* (1957; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977), 132.

6. Gen. Lewis Cass (1782–1866) won military distinction in the War of 1812. He later served as governor of the Michigan Territory, as secretary of war in Andrew Jackson’s cabinet, and as United States senator from Michigan. He ran as the Democratic nominee for president against Taylor in 1848.

From the run of the conversation, I was led to believe, that one who knew a thing or two, had lately been to St. Louis, where he had learned that Gen. Jackson was actually dead, and that it was not "a darned Whig lie;" and that Gen. Cass was a colt out of the same old war horse, and they were a going to run him any how, and he was jis' naterally bound to be the next President, any way it could be fix'd; and he wanted all that could, to stand up to the rack, fodder or no fodder.

But it also seemed that there were a few Mexican soldiers, who, although they believed that Gen. Jackson created the greater part of this world, also believed that old Zach Rough and Ready, was now the only living personification of human perfection, and they'd vote for him right straight, from the word go; and no Cass man in them diggings could out run, out drink, out fight, out bet, or out argue them on that pint, by a long shot.

All of which remedies were apparently tried, and found ineffectual, in the course of the evening.

Finally, it was proposed, about midnight, to dance it out. The two parties then selected their champions, the fiddler mounted the whisky barrel, a large pumpkin was placed in the middle of the floor, and at it they went, with coats off, like going to a hard day's work. Each one was to give the pumpkin a kick and a roll, and the other was to mount it, dance on and over it, without tumbling, or own himself and his Presidential candidate defeated; the lookers on, rolling in and keeping up a supply in the pumpkin market, as they became demolished by an occasional caving in of the article.

After about an hour's effort, it was a drawn battle: the two Generals having been floored about an equal number of times, in consequence of trying to make footing upon a very rolling foundation—a sort of pumpkin *proviso*.⁷

At this juncture, the corn was getting decidedly low; two of the tin cups had been flattened in the fall of Gen. Cass, and one of the green glass tumblers having come in between Old Zack and the

7. Probably a reference to the Wilmot Proviso of 1846, which would have banned slavery in any territory acquired from Mexico. The House passed the Proviso, but the Senate never concurred.

floor, at a time when the pumpkin went the wrong way, had made him imagine that Capt. Bragg⁸ had run short of grape, and was firing broken glass, a portion of which had made him think he had an enemy in the rear, being decidedly damaged in that region, and, withal, it was not yet settled which party should yield.

Hereupon Bill Smithers stumped Jim Jones to decide it by a horse race.

I had been dozing before this, but the proposition for a horse race by moonlight, in the small hours of the night, to settle the prospect of the two Presidential candidates, seemed so decidedly rich that I determined to witness the performance.

As the horses had had nothing to eat but a rail fence for the last fifteen hours, there was no danger, in consequence, of high feeding and hard running injuring them. Not having time to robe myself exactly for a day-light street walk, I donned a buffalo robe, slipped on my boots, and put out. This was a very good costume for me, but a confounded unfortunate one for Bill Smithers, who rode the great National Michigander.

I didn't care so much about the starting point as I did the coming out, and so I stationed myself at the corner of the house near where that event was supposed to be about to come off.

The greater part of the crowd had gone up to the top of the hill to see fair play in the start, leaving three or four of the most leg weary to watch which should come first round the corner.

A loud shout told the start. Down they came, so close together that the judges swore there was but one, which was a strong evidence that they didn't see double; and, as it turned out, I believe they really did not, for just as they neared the corner where I stood, both nags saw the buffalo, and Bill Smithers saw "the elephant;" for while Old Zack put it straight through at his best licks, Bill's horse wheeled and sheered close up to the side of the building, and suddenly disappeared, as tho' the yawning earth had oped her jaws as when by earthquake riven.

8. Braxton Bragg (1817-1876) had won distinction as an artillerist in the Mexican War, especially for his extraordinary work at Buena Vista. He was later a Confederate general and, during part of the Civil War, commander of the Army of Tennessee.

About that same time, I thought, as I had not been seen among the lookers on in Vienna,⁹ I might as well retire rather suddenly, and leave the mystery to be solved by the due course of events.

Accordingly, about five minutes afterwards, I was dreaming that there was a very animated discussion going on as to what had become of Bill Smithers and the General Cass nag, as it was indisputable that, in the record of that race, they were both to be set down as "no whar." In the meantime, Bill began to think he was somewhere, but where that where was he was well satisfied he couldn't tell. He thought he had seen the "big animal," and began to think he had rode under his belly; for every time he attempted to remount, he struck his head against something, and as the moon had gone out when he fell, he could not tell what it was that hindered his rising in the world.

How long he would have lain in that deep ocean of darkness buried, I know not, if it had not chanced that other eyes than mine had seen him. Woman—ever watchful woman—had seen the immortal Bill Smithers, astride the great Cass champion, in a run that was to settle the fate of that renowned hero, ride stern foremost down into the dark recess of the open cellar way of the "Travellers' Home."

There let him and his hero rest; and while we dreamed away the balance of the night, the "better half" of poor Bill raised a force, and, by hard digging, made out to raise him and his horse to daylight before I left the next morning.

But as Bill told me he honestly believed he had seen the devil, and that it was a warning to him not to ride another Cass race in the dark, and that he would most truly vote for Old Zack, I quieted my conscience by thinking that "ignorance is bliss," and this is one vote saved, and, therefore, left him a believing convert to a better faith, in which he will probably long continue, notwithstanding the publication of this veritable history. Newspapers, be it understood, are as a sealed book to that portion of our brothers of the great political family of this "highly enlightened land," for

9. A small town in the southernmost part of Illinois.

which our fathers fought and bled, and Bill Smithers rode the midnight race, and I wrote the history thereof.

Solon.

Daily Reveille, November 12, 1848, 1.

Khaustiff Correspondence.

Editors of the Reveille: The subjoined history of an interesting case, was furnished by my friend John Wiggins, who, a day or two ago departed this life, "deeply regretted" by a very small but select circle of literary admirers. He was a convert to the science of Human Magnetism, as taught and elucidated by the Messrs. Keely,¹⁰ and expressed a belief on his death-bed that mental electricity would supplant and supersede all the remedies of the Pharmacopoeia, and that the little silver coin would be the agent through which its influence would be exerted; that in place of having the almost countless chlorides and oxides and cyanurets, the materia medica would consist of but the *Dimide* and *Picayuneret* of silver; that every physician would carry a dispensary in his purse, would diffuse health with his change, correct the disorders of the circulation with his currency, and establish his reputation for skill on a metallic basis. My friend Wiggins requested me to act as his literary executor, and as gentleman usher to the numerous productions which he left unpublished.—Amongst

10. The nature of the magnetic or mesmeric performance given by Messrs. I. I. and George W. Keely is suggested by an article in the *Reveille* for January 7, 1849, in which the editors reprinted a complaint made by the city attorney against the Keelys. The complaint speaks of the Keelys' laying hands on certain persons and performing passes that cause them to "perform certain tricks, antics, actions and motions, for the amusement of the spectators." They "did, also, exhibit or show a magnetical piece of coin, so called, and did place it in the hands of various persons in the audience, directing them to look at said coin, and then and there declaring said persons to be mesmerized, or magnetized, and thereby then and there causing them to perform certain antics and tricks, such as dancing, following a coin, which one of said defendants holds, making speeches, imitating the act of swimming, pretending that they, the said defendants, induce certain persons to believe that they are Gen. Cass, or Gen. Taylor." The attitude of the editors of the *Reveille* toward the exhibition is difficult to pin down, however, for they clearly consider the complaint to be unsustainable. See "Mesmerism vs. Law," *Daily Reveille*, January 7, 1849, 2.

them and the most recent, is the entertaining history which follows.

Mr. Wiggins observed about twenty minutes—I think I am correct when I say twenty—before he breathed his last “I had fondly hoped my dear Khaustiff:”—he always addressed me by my surname—“that there were still a few more ells of thread upon my spool of existence”—he used very eccentric figures by the bye—“but I find it is reeling very fast. I am a martyr to science, Khaustiff, you know I am. Have you not seen me brave the inclemency of the weather, to secure a front seat at Keely’s lectures; have I not inhaled every form of aesthetic agent from ether to chloroform; and am I not now dying from the effects of fumigations with chlorine as suggested by the ingenious and ‘prophylactic’ E.D., who assured me when I last met him that he had given away more than five hundred cholera magnets, that he was unable to supply the demand, and that he was literally run off his legs. I respect that man, Khaustiff; he is so enthusiastic, so benevolent, and is exerting himself so much to be useful.” Here his voice choked and a silent tear trickled down his left cheek. He always, strange to say, wept with his left eye, a peculiarity he inherited from his mother.

After subduing his emotion he added, “tell my friends Straws and Solitaire, that I mentioned them in my last moments, and that when I am dead and gone, they must *revive* my memory after that good old style in which we have so often pledged each other, and be sure you hand to Straws my notes on ‘Human Magnetism among the natives’ and my ‘St. Louis Models’ and all my other literary papers as soon as you revise them. God bless you Khaustiff—”

—stiff he would have said,

But ere the word was out, his breath had fled.

Yours truly,
Peter Khaustiff, M.D.

Human Magnetism among the Natives, as observed by the late John Wiggins.

This is one of the most remarkable instances of the great influ-

ence of the *morale* over the *physique*, or of the *physique* over the *morale*, or of both. Whether of the former, over the latter, or of the latter over the former is left to the decision of metaphysicians who may read these notes. Mr. —— after closing his oyster house, and retiring for the night, left the young lady who attends in the front shop, to take the money from the drawer, which she is in the habit of doing before going to bed. More than an hour transpiring and the girl not arriving from below, he became uneasy, and hurriedly putting on his clothes, which by the way he did not wait to arrange with precision, being *sans culottes*, and wearing but his shirt, drawers, coat and nightcap, he descended, and found her to his utmost surprise and terror transfixed and motionless as a statue, and with face of ashy paleness. Her eyes were open and seemed to be fastened intently upon the palm of her right hand, which she held before her face. The kind-hearted piscatorial purveyor approached, shook her, shouted, stamped and swore, but to no purpose. She was immovable. It suddenly occurred to him that she was laboring under some nervous paroxysm, and in his dishabille he started, breeches in hand, for the nearest physician, with whom, he in a short time returned. The doctor was as much at a loss to divine the cause of this singular phenomenon as the distracted oyster vender. He was disposed, he said, to consider it a case of Cholera, from the rigidity of the limbs. He enquired if she had eaten oysters or cabbage. At this juncture, he happened to discover, in the palm upon which she had so fixedly gazed, a small silver coin with a small indentation in the middle. He immediately remarked that had the coin been gold, he would have pronounced it a well defined case of California fever, but under the circumstances he had no hesitation in regarding it as catalepsy, and like all discreet doctors when at *sea* in Therapeutics, he decided that it must be left to nature, or as he learnedly expressed it, to the *vis medicatrix naturae*.

The poor fishmonger, utterly discomfitted, and in dire despair, took his stand opposite the girl, and observing her closely for five minutes became as fixed and motionless as she. In this condition they were both found by our friend Keely, who, returning from his

room where he had been detained till a late hour, and seeing the shop open, entered for the purpose of taking a plate of oysters. At a glance he saw how matters stood, and with his characteristic expedition, performed a few counter passes, gave one of his quick and startling electrical "*boohs*" which might bring to life one who was not too decidedly defunct—and shaking the immovables very slightly, he restored them to locomotion.

Mr. Keely accounted very satisfactorily for the singular state in which he found the girl, but was unable to assign a sufficient cause for the condition of her employer; though he thought it might be referred to sympathy.

It seems that during his lecture on the evening in question, some person had either designedly or accidentally pocketed one of the coins which Mr. K. is in the habit of using to aid him in his magnetic experiments, and had, he presumed, paid it at the oyster house for refreshments. The girl while in the act of counting the proceeds of the day's sales, as she herself stated, was attracted by the peculiar indentation in the coin, and while closely examining it, was thrown into the magnetic state—in what degree we did not learn.

[This case will go far to establish the value of magnetized coins, as powerful agents upon the nervous system; and as money has from the very earliest coinage been deemed "good for sore eyes," is it not to be hoped that it will be found equally efficient in other diseases? We should like to hear from the "St. Louis Medico-Chirurgical Society" on this subject.] EDS.

Daily Reveille, January 14, 1849, 1.

A Lyncher's Own Story.

[Joseph M. Field]

"I never fight when angry, gentlemen."—[Jas. Bowie.]¹¹

"I go in for reprisals, gentlemen—by the eternal heavens, reprisals! Seize on abolition property in New Orleans, Natchez—wherever found. Seize on the Yankee scoundrels, themselves, and exchange them for our own kidnapped slaves—*nigger* for *nigger*, by thunder!"

This violent speech, delivered with savage energy by a thin, wiry looking man—one of a group collected around the stove in the "social hall" of a Mississippi steam boat—was received with a shout of applause by all assembled.

"Good, by gracious!" "That's the talk!" "You're a horse, Judge!" &c., &c., followed the explosion, like a rattle of small thunder, till an enormous figure, in a white hat and blanket coat—yet, withal, a good looking man—arose slowly, stretched himself, and brushed back the thick hair from his broad forehead, and then, in quiet yet evidently pleased accents, said, with a smile:

"Yes, Judge, that's the talk, I believe! *Gentlemen*, we'll take a little something."

There was a general demonstration as if to rise, when the bar-keeper, who made one of the crowd, and who appeared to be singularly impressed with the new doctrine of "reprisals," begged the "Colonel" would keep his seat, and the "drinks" should be brought.

"Sit down, Colonel," cried the energetic 'Judge,' emptying his mouth of a 'chew,' by way of preparation for 'one more drink,' and at the same time running his heels higher up the stove pipe—"sit down, this thing has got to be fixed between the North and the South, and a little talk about it won't be lost."

11. James Bowie (1796–1836) was born in Georgia and became widely known in 1827 after reputedly killing a man in a duel with a weapon made from a large file, the prototype of the Bowie knife. Bowie fought in the Texas revolution, became a colonel in 1835, and died at the Alamo.

All resumed their seats, the "drinks" were brought, and, by the spirit with which fresh cigars were lighted, it was evident that the subject had only got fairly under headway in the assembly. It was in the fall of 18—. During the preceding summer, a couple of slaves had been seduced and finally wrested from their masters by the Boston Abolitionists, and the numerous southerners, then at the north, filled with violent indignation, gave vent to the most furious threats and denunciations. It is not intended, here, to argue, or even comment upon the vexatious question of slavery, but simply to sketch a few features and incidents of southwestern character and adventure.

It was a cold and rainy night, the steamer plunged along amid dense shadows, in which the unpracticed eye could not even distinguish an outline; the main cabin was spread with mattresses, and the persons around the stove, the last up, deserting some half hour previously a couple of card tables, and falling upon an exciting topic, now promised to make a night of it.

"Yes, gentlemen," resumed the fiery Judge, "it may seem like a desperate doctrine, but what except desperation is left us; the crisis *must* come! My slave is my property, guaranteed to me by the constitution; if Massachusetts sanctions the seizure of our niggers, who shall cry shame on Louisiana, should she retort upon their ships!"

Another cheer of approval, further stimulated the speaker, who rushed into a vehement relation of several other Abolition outrages, which led to certain stories of southern vengeance upon Abolition agents; a sort of vindictive phrenzy spread among the company; fresh drinks were called in; "lynching" was a theme upon which all were eloquent, and well known cases of punishment under that summary code, were repeated, commented and gloated on with a savage enjoyment which promised a rough fate for the next tract distributor who might be caught by any of the party.

During this time the "Colonel," though evidently of kindred sentiments with the company, had preserved his equanimity; he smoked his cigar deliberately, listened to the different speakers

with an assenting smile, or, may be, a "just so, Doctor," or a "quite correct, gentlemen," but, finally, after the relation of a retaliating capture and execution under horribly exciting circumstances, he, in mild tones, and with an aspect that indicated any thing but ferocity, signified his intention to relate "a little circumstance," himself.

"I'm not a passionate man, gentlemen," said he, drawing up his legs slowly, and adjusting his vast bulk in the chair,— "I'm rather a calm man, and apt to bear putting upon, rather, but I go in for Lynch law, *some*, for all that. I had a little case of my own with one of these Abolition gentlemen, once, and I acted up to the law, fully—on my honor, I did, gentlemen. I am a family man, gentlemen, and a friend who comes to see me, or a stranger wishing to put up, if an honest looking white man, always finds my house a home while in it. I keep servants to wait on them, purposely, I do, gentlemen, and treachery under such circumstances is a mean thing—it's not a white man's act, gentlemen." An emphatic assent was expressed on all hands. "Well, I lost two boys, valuable servants, gentlemen, by entertaining wolves in sheep's clothing, and I determined that the next one who called, should be punished, *some*, and I didn't wait long, for, somehow, they had got the hang of my house, gentlemen, and took advantage of my temper. A very polite stranger, with his *wife* and a 'dear-born,' came along;—*he* had something, however, the matter with his eyes, *when I looked at him*, and so I put my own servant, Jake—a very good boy, gentlemen—a perfect *white man*, and whom I never said a cross word to, in my life—I put Jake to 'tend on them, and, sure enough, after I was in bed, back came the boy to say that the gentleman had offered to run him off! Well, I told Jake to go with him,—first leaving word which way he was to travel, and then I went to sleep. In the morning, Jake's wife—a decent wench, gentlemen—a perfect lady—came to tell me all about the arrangement, so taking my overseer with me, I started after them."

"I should *think* so!" "Wake snakes!" "Go ahead, Judge!" A dozen eager exclamations evinced the zest with which the climax of the story was expected. The narrator, however, proceeded with a *sang froid* that was inimitable.

"I hadn't gone but a few miles, when back comes Jake, meeting me. The fox, gentlemen, had smelt a trap and *put*, with his wife and wagon, leaving the boy to take care of himself. Of course, I didn't drop the matter, but followed up and soon got on the trail, I tracked him back a good many miles from the river, but missed him near a lake which was back of our plantations, and lost a good deal of time. Towards afternoon, returning by another road towards the river, between the *bayou* and Dr. Boll's new clearing, I heard voices and in a minute, drove right up to a crowd of neighbors, who had got my visitor, his wife, and his 'dearborn' right in the middle of them! The fact is, gentlemen, one or two of them had got notice that there were wolves about, and were on the look out for varmint, as my acquaintance drove in among them."

"Ha! ha! ha!" A general chuckle of delight was succeeded by a grin of anticipation.

"I found my friend, gentlemen, talking right and left, like a lawyer—making every thing straight and agreeable, when suddenly he caught sight of me, at the next moment of Jake; and, gentlemen, if ever man gave up the ghost before the breath was out of him, it was that fellow; his eyes glazed, a dark circle settled round them, while his lower lip, blue and quivering as the blood left it, after making an effort, as it were, to recall the relaxed jaw to its duty, finally fell with it; and there the man sat, staring at me—motionless, with the exception of his throat, which worked spasmodically in the effort to supply itself with moisture from the parched mouth. Gentlemen, he was the picture of a small rascal caught in a tall snap! I first blushed that he was a white man, and next that he was an American!"

"American h-ll!" interrupted one of the pilots of the boat, who, perched upon a pile of trunks, had hitherto said nothing—"he was a d—d *Yankee*, that's what he was!" This distinction was recognized with great applause, of course. The "Colonel" resumed:

"There was just about a tolerable court on the spot, gentlemen, and it was agreed to try the fellow right thar. There was evidence besides mine, for one man had followed him up along the plantations for twenty miles; but yet the woman kinder stood between

him and his due, and I thought I'd question her, too. She was young, gentlemen, with a simple look—had evidently neither the heart nor the wit of a woman about her, and at my first question—something put it into my head—'Are you *married* to this man?' she burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break. I had him taken away at once, and out it all came—with no thought of injuring her companion, though; it was the simple impulse to relieve a timid mind by confession. She was *not* his wife, gentlemen. She had taught school in Tennessee, where this man saw her, and first persuading her to aid him in the circulation of abolition tracts, finally seduced and carried her to New Orleans, where, growing more bold as he extended his acquaintance with the country, he had made another arrangement with the 'Society'—one of greater profit as of greater risk—namely, to 'run off' negroes from the plantations along the coast. Gentlemen, this is a mighty long story. Barkeeper—"

"Oh, no, no!" "go ahead, Colonel." "Drinks" at the moment were declined, but the shorter operation of taking a fresh "chew" was indulged in, by way of filling up the pause.

"I had another question to ask the woman. 'Do you love this man?' said I. The poor creature wept worse than ever, gentlemen; she said her only desire was to go to some friends in Illinois, where she hoped to be welcome and to get along more wisely. 'He abuses you, then,' said I. 'Oh,' said she, 'I would'nt mind that if I thought he would'nt *kill me!*' In short, as I hope to live a mild and considerate citizen, gentlemen, that livid, cowardly scoundrel, had, during my pursuit of him, after threatening his victim—now his burthen—till she was nearly lifeless, actually attempted to *drown her in the swamp!* I need'nt tell you, gentlemen, how unanimous the verdict was in this case; the woman, for whom we subsequently made up a subscription, was moved off towards the nearest house; the man—a mighty small figure any how—shrunk to half his natural size; discolored as if the last corrupting change had anticipated the grave; his arms bound behind his back,—and shivering on the ground, too spent to exhibit a spasm,—with the rein which he had lately held in his hand, buckled round his neck

for a halter—like a thing too abject, even to *hang*—awaited the selection of a crotch for him to swing from.”

It may be supposed that the picture, the horrid features of which were thus in detail described, had gradually excited the phlegmatic limner,—not at all! His sentences swelled, not from the mere impetuous gathering of ideas, but, as it seemed, from a good natured desire to make the story as interesting as possible to his hearers;—while it in no respect exhibited nervelessness, there was not a flash of *passion* during the whole relation. This was not the case with the hearers, though. The eyes of the “Judge” seemed bursting from his head in eager expectation, while the “chewing” operation on his part was a moment suspended; others were like him; a few again, by an eager but painful contraction of the brows, betrayed a softer nature,—at any rate, more sensitive nerves.

“Yes, gentlemen, there was a moment’s delay in choosing a limb; in the mean time, by way of hanging the culprit with a little life in him, some one had given him a mouthful of whisky, when, recovering his tongue, he began to beg; from begging, gentlemen, he got to screaming; blood actually trickled from his straining eyes, and it was getting *unpleasant*,—no dignity about it! an *idea* struck me; I just climbed up, hand over hand, a pretty stout sapling close by me; I’m a heavy man, gentlemen, and, as I mounted, over the young tree came with me—bent like a fishing rod——”

There was a breathless silence in the company; an enormous “roach,” peeping from a crack in the paneling, could hardly have crossed without being heard, while each eye was riveted horribly upon the speaker.

“The culprit, gentlemen, took the *idea* sooner than any of the others, and his shrieks and ravings were dreadful—really dreadful! Another climbed after me, and, with the added weight, down we both came, half hid amongst the light boughs of the top, and the loose end of the rein was made fast in a second. ‘*One instant, for God’s sake! I’ve got children!—for the sake of my soul!*’—a half-uttered scream, gentlemen, mingled with the rush of the boughs,

as *we* dropped to the ground, and the nigger thief, with a jerk that *snapped his neck*, flew into the air, describing a half-circle as spanned by his halter, and swinging back to us again from the other side!"

A long breath was drawn by the whole company. The "Judge" was the first to break the succeeding pause:

"Well, that *was* an idea! We'll drink on that, gentlemen, by thunder!"

All moved to the bar—some two or three silently, the others as to a mere change of *enjoyment*. "Colonel," cried the Judge, "name your liquor—that *was* an idea!"

"Yes!" exclaimed another, with no less enthusiasm, "a first rate idea!"

"A splendid idea!" "A glorious idea!" was the general chorus.

"Yes, gentlemen," complacently observed the giant, as he raised his glass—"I think, myself, that it *was* a *sweet* idea!"

J. M. F.¹²

Daily Reveille, July 6, 1845, 1-2.

Popular Entertainments.

There certainly is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the grave to the gay, from hanging a man to hawking his life; all of which we were profoundly impressed with last Friday, when, behind the sorriest specimen of all possible horse-flesh, in the densest cloud of all possible dust, and amid the motliest crowd of free and independent sight-seekers that ever thronged a highway, we, as faithful reporters of daily doings, our philosophical equanimity somewhat disturbed, perhaps, by a mouthful of "dust to dust" before our time, and, it may be, measurably stimulated by that feverish fear pervading humanity of being "too late," plied our ineffective whip and took our way with the rest, towards the gallows, opposite the Arsenal.

12. Joseph M. Field.

There were omnibuses, crammed within and laden without, the passengers clinging like flies, in seeming defiance of the law of gravitation. Grey-headed Germans, at the lower end of the city, were hurrying into ill-contrived conveyances their family circles, in all sorts of angles. There were lusty fellows, two at a time, endangering the backs of single horses, and, in several instances, we saw *three* on one; but these were, evidently, cases of parental indulgence, the extra weight being made up of children! We admired the gallantry of numerous swains, whose arms were at the service of their fair friends, as well as the matronly anxiety of various anxious and road-soiled mothers, the exuberant capers of whose "little broods," amongst the wheels and hoofs, were of the most lively and alarming character. Hurry skurry, helter skelter, black and white, from "covered tops" to bare heads, sufficiently proving the intrinsic *oneness* of human nature, and that the jappanned boot rather puts his foot in it when he talks of the unstockinged mob and vulgar curiosity.

Well, we jolted over rough spots, whirled over those Macadamized, hopped over stumps, miraculously escaped gulleys, climbed a narrow road—centre of the string—in a suffocating cloud, up a never-get-there-able hill, and, blind and choking, reached finally the gallows, which, doubtless from the expectation of a reprieve, was in a yet unfinished state, and which, any how, must have been erected in view of the immediate abolition of hanging, as, if ever tried again, it will infallibly break other necks than that of the criminal.

There were all sorts of dirty faces, ragged jackets, bad smells, old umbrellas, (thermometer at 100!) and, of course, the usual *scrouging*, pushing, joking, cursing and "crowning," by way of "wine bitters."

Finally, the gallows was got to stand without "wagging"—*much*; the escort of Dragoons arrived, and "backed" the people into a ring; the wagon, with the condemned, was drawn up beneath the gallows, and two frail steps of the ladder having been nailed up again, the matter began to grow interesting. Before the noise and confusion subsided, however, McDaniel, recognizing

one connected with our office, requested his approach; wished him to witness that the crowd should not be amused at any weakness on *his* part, however they might be edified by his fate; said that he died innocent of bloodshed; and, gazing around with somewhat of scorn, remarked, that the scene put him in mind of a late article in the *Reveille* with regard to public executions.¹³ The Marshal and the marshalled, with their Reverend attendants, mounted the scaffold, McDaniel straight as an arrow—"the favorite," by long odds—Brown holding on by the noose to steady himself. The spectators were addressed—not much *impressed*, though—by the speakers; in fact, for dying speeches, they were rather failures—and the crowd, thinking so, received them with commendable indifference. Then came the prayer; and the best point about this part, is generally conceded to have been the *tableau* formed by the *characters*—the kneeling and erect—in fact, it was very *striking*, and almost made up, with sundry precocious critics whose minds we clearly read in their faces, for the length of the prayer. Well, the Divines descended, the hands were tied, the knots were adjusted, and Brown, not being exactly satisfied with the Marshal's handiwork, bent his knees and stooped his head for the purpose of drawing it tighter, when the "rumor grew" that he was "giving way," and the prophetically gifted, as usual, said, they "knew so." The trap fell, and nothing broke—except the necks, and even *this* was disputed with evident discontent. Nothing had "given way"—except Brown, as we have explained. McDaniel, with all his desperation, had allowed himself to be hanged, neither killing himself nor any body else! The whole thing was only so-so; not even an upset or a cave in, when people had expected all sorts of sights, sounds and horrors, in addition to

13. The *Reveille* had published an ironic article, "Justice for the Gallows," August 12, 1844, 1. Its flavor is suggested by its beginning: "The flood has subsided—the Mormon leaders rot quietly in their graves—the eastern churches are safe o' Sundays, and the election has left behind not even a broken head to keep one's passions up! What have we to look forward to? Happy town!—a hanging!—a *public* hanging! Bless our age, bless our country, and bless, above all, *our section of it!* Justice, in demanding her victim, does not refuse Folly her share. All hail, the *public* gallows! that has survived the blood-pools of the arena, the howlings of the bull-bait, and the cheers of the 'ring!'"

a white flag and reprieve, as the trap fell, a cutting down of the men, a rush of the crowd, and the trampling to death of at least a score of women and children, one or more of the former in a state highly interesting to husbands.

The crowd dispersed by short cuts over hills, by dives down hollows, by wedges and masses, and *nothing to tell* about! There was the same mingling of old and young, and, by the bye, one of the latter, a promising youth of eight, we heard shortly afterwards, while under the hands of our barber, entertaining sundry less fortunate, but equally "astonishing" young ones, on the curbstone, with a careless, patronizing recital of the circumstances; assuring them, moreover, that "Brown was nuthin', but McDaniel, *he* was the feller!"

During the evening, we heard similar remarks from the "children of a larger growth;" in fact it is rather complimentary to the memory of McDaniel, that his behaviour alone saved the performance from entire condemnation.

For our own parts, we certainly think that the matter lacked the *dignity* of tragedy, but even in melo-drama much depends upon the expression of the countenance, and henceforward it would vastly increase the effect, were the *cap* to be dispensed with. The pantomime is necessarily injured by binding the hands, for an occasional kick can't do much, however well intended, and the facial distortion would be highly gratifying. No more cap!

Daily Reveille, August 18, 1844, 2.

8

**“THE
FUN
OF
OUR
SETTLEMENT”**

Settlement Fun.

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

LIBERTI MISS SURY,
Mai 18 forty 5.

Deer Cusin:—Thar hes ben a grate trial down at Pine Bottom sence I wrote you last,¹ risin' out of a lie which Jess Norris told Mag. Nelson—he sed he'd marry her, and not keepin' his word Mag's daddy hauled Jess up to cort, to gin his reason why he wouldn't finish cortin' his darter. The lawyers called it an *aggravated* breach of promis'.—Well, I reckon he had *lied* right strong to Mag. 'cause she looked so. Tha hev no squire down in the bottom, so tha sent up fur old Squire Wilson to cum and hold the cort—he wanted 'em to cum up to town, but tha wouldn't do it, 'cause, tha sed, jestis couldn't be got fur bottom fellars in the settlement. Well, to please 'em, the Squire started down, and when he arriv thar, the hull collection of both families war gethered round the old log school house, whar tha'd fixed a table fur the Squire, and a bench fur the jury. Jess war among his kin outside, rippin' and swarin' he wouldn't marry Mag., no how on yearth, unless the lawr made him do it, and he war goin' to hev a trial fust anyhow. Some of the Nelson fellars told him he'd hed a trial and war already sentenced on good evidence.

"Jest perduce it, that's all," ses Jess, "and then I'll gin in."

Tha pinte at Mag. whar she war stanin'!

Squire Wilson tuck his seat and called the court to order, and then selected a jury of fellars present. He picked out old Nelson as one, but the Norris fellars objected agin him, 'cause he war prosecutor, so to make it even, tha put Jess's daddy on. The Squire sed the prosecutor ought to be on in sech a diffikult case, to explain the marter to the jury. Arter the case war opin'd, and the pints of

1. Despite Bill's comment here, this seems to have been the first of eight "Settlement Fun" letters Robb wrote during 1846. In fact, it seems that he did not consider writing a series of letters until he published the next one, which is the first to bear a number in its title.

law sot down, the Squire gin to take in evidence, and while it war goin' on, Mag. and some of the neighborin' wimin got Jess off by hissself, and got a talkin' to him, and arter another spell the wimin left Jess and Mag. together, to talk the marter over. Any quantity of evidence war gin in, statin' that Jess hed ben continuoally hangin' arter the gal. One man sed tha hed ben courtin' ever sence he'd ben a resident of the bottom, and ef Jess hadn't promis'd the gal, it war an eternal shame on his part.

Hevin' got through with the men, Squire Wilson ordered the Sheriff to clar the cort of all but the jury, and bring in the wimin to gin in thar testimony. It war did, and the door shet. The chimley at one side of the house hed fallin' down, and left a hole a fellar could walk through; across this two of the jury hung thur coats. All bein' reddy now, the fust womin war called up, and the Squire sot to questionin' her; while he war percedin', all the men fellars war leanin' agin the outside of the house, with thur ears to the *chinks* atween the logs, listenin' to what war sayin'; and when she would say suthin' that pleased one side tha'd holler "good! by scissors;" and tother side 'ud say it war a cussed no sech thing. Some fellars 'ud rip and tarr agin the Squire, and others 'ud gin thunder to the jury.

"Did you ever see Miss Nelson," asked the squire of the witness, "sittin' in Jess Norris's lap, and he a huggin' and kissin' on her."

"That's cumin' to the *pint*," ses a fellar outside, who hed his ear stickin' through a chink.

"Yes," ses anuther, "let her spread herself on that pertickler view of the marter."

"Oh, yes," ses the witness, "offen!—I've seed her sot, and sot, and sot, jest as ef the gal hed ben pinned thar."

"That'll do!" ses the squire, "thar aint no use examinin' any further—I reckon the jury kin make out a case. The chief pint in this case, gentlemen," continued the squire, "is, ef the gal gin Jess any incouragement, and then ef Jess war courtin' her for good, with the premeditated intention of marryin' at a futur' period; ef these two pints in the case is diskiver'd, thar aint no questi'n

about the verdict, and you kin gin it in any way you may jest see fit. Hevin' now *demonstrated* the law to you, gentlemen, you kin leave and hunt fur the merits of your conclusion."

Thar war no chance for the jury's leavin' by the door, for the fellars war gethered in a crowd round it; so they retired by the chimley openin', and the sheriff tuck them down to a shady place behind the school house, whar tha sot tharselves in a ring on the grass, and the fellars in favor of both sides gethered round 'em. Arter takin' a starr at each other, old Nelson said thar warn't much use sittin' thar long, for the case war clear that Jess ought to marry Mag. One of the Norris fellars, slappin' his fist inter the middle of his tother hand, swore it wouldn't be safe fur that jury to gin in any sech decision. Then a Norris fellar on the jury perposed that the case be just dismissed at onst. Dick Nelson, a cusin of Mag.'s, war stanin' behind him when he sed this, and haulin' off he hit the Norris fellar under the ear, and knocked him inter the middle of the "jury ring." Most of the boys war in favor of a fight, but the old men got 'em to postpone it till arter the decision of the case, which the jury concluded to finish in the school room. In tha went agin, through the chimley, and sot tharselves on the bench—all but one. On countin' noses, it war found that old Nelson wur missin'. This was a reglar stop to percedins. The squire right off sent the sheriff with a crowd to git him, dead or alive; but, arter chasin' him an hour, tha gin up tryin' to sarve the writ, and cumin' inter cort, reported that he warn't "*cum-at-ibus*," as the lawyers ses.

"Well, squire, what the thunder's to be done in sech a case?" inquired the foreman.

The squire hed ben readin' down a page of the statts, and takin' off his specs and closin' the book, he sed:

"It hes ben laid down by the Legislatur as an ondeniable pint of lawr, that whar a jury can't *agree* a case ain't *decided*, 'cept whar the jury ain't a *full* jury. Now, thar bein' a nice pint of lawr stanin' here to decide, arter lookin' at the statts I've concluded as how: Old Nelson hevin' ben *on* that jury, in course belongs *to* it, and it can't be decided 'thout him—he's not thar in his place *to* decide it; tharfore, we fall back on this pint, that the jury not bein' able to

agree for or agin the defendant, why Jess ought to marry Mag. *ef he's agreed*, and tharby settle the hull afarr 'thout any more litigation."

Jess war leanin' up agin the door post when the Squire decided, and one of the fellars holler'd out:

"What do you say, Jess, to the decision?"

"Well," ses Jess, lookin' round at Mag., who war hangin' on his arm, "I reckon I'm agreed. I wouldn't sed nuthin' agin it at furst, ony the Nelson's got so eternal mad—Mag. ses she ain't nuthin' agin me, and I an't agin her, so I consent."

The fellars gin a reglar cheer at this conclusion.

"Come in," ses the squire, "and get tied." And in tha went;—well, mabbe thar wur some corn juice a swimmin' about arter the decision, and the hull crowd tuck a general mix on friendly footin' agin—all but the fellars that hit and got hit at the jury ring. Your cusin,

BILL SAPPER.

Daily Reveille, April 26, 1846, 1-2.

Settlement Fun.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

[No. I.]

LIBERTI, MISS SURY,

Jan. 1, 18 forty 5.

Cousin Jim.: I'm detarmined to let you inter the secrets, fun, frolick, and fix-ups of our *settlement*, up here, jest to pass off my spar time, and do the clean thing as I promised, by you—that is, tell you all I know, and a leetle more. You know jest as well as I do,

that the old man has sot me up in a store here, which is extensive and considerable in stock and fixtur's. I've got *fore* barrels of Cincinnati recterfied, 3 ditter of corn meal, groceries by the bag, sich as shuger and korffy, and an enormous quantity of amenition, powder and balls, which latter hev redly use ef not sail, seein' *bars* and other "insects" are plenty in this county. Well, hoss, by *virtu* of my sitation, as a western marchint and tradur, I'm one of the aireestocracy, and intitled to an invite to all the fun and fodder doins in these inlitened diggins, and I specelate I'm "some," when I'm *thar*. Howsever I needn't be blowin' up my hasty elevation in this never-stop-growin' republick; it air enough to know that I'm a leetle above tolerable, in the order of human beins. I'm started to tell suthin' else, and predicate I'll git *thar* arter a bit; so without pausin' on the word, as Capt. Mike Sellers sed to the Liberti volunteers, here goes to fire.

You've never heerd, cousin Jim., of widder Dent of Liberti, Miss Sury, but ef you'd a ben *thar* long enough at one time, you'd a sartin heerd on her. She lives in this *yeur* town,—owns nigh onto a small county of first rate tobaccer land, and has a powerfull numerous lot of healthy niggers. She's naterally as cross as a pant'er with young kittens, and proud as a newly elected Squire,—it 'ud jest tickle you to heer her talk about her *decent* frum the furst Virgini families! you wouldn't want to heer a legislatur speechify arter her, 'cause he couldn't do *ashes*. She keeps a carridge waggin, and rides round the town with a nigger behind and one afore, to all the shops and marchint stores, a buyin' up her family necessarys, and lookin' as lofty as a guverner. I needn't say that all the bisness fellars looked and talked *thur* pootyest to git her custom,—its nateral among more people than these Yankee pedlars to talk *iley* when *thur* layin' traps to ketch the *items*, and this old widder hes got 'em. I'm considerable of a favorite with the widder, miself, 'cause she says she knows the old man, and he's one of the "*furst families*," too, and she hes advised me, often, when she'd see me goin' a huntin', to stick to the store and save the *pewter*; that was friendly in the old creatur', but you know it's necessary to my dog Bob's health, to git exercise; so I had to take him out fur a huntin' spell.

Sometime since a pacell of these cute perfeshional fellers tuck it into thur head to try and cum it over the old widder in the matrimonial way, thinkin' that tho' she *was* old the niggers 'ud smoothe out her rinkles, and make her count even with a young gal. Thur warn't many people sick about, nur much lawin' goin' on, and the quantity of perfeshional fellars all the time increasin'. Tom. Massy, M. D., and Dick Mason, Attorney, thor't they'd try the widder, and it war agreed atween 'em that whichever the old gal prefer'd the other fellar was to haul off courtin' on his own account and help the chap she fancy'd—well, both wur mity fast to haul off and help, 'cause they agreed to share which or tother got her, and ary one 'ud rather had the *share* than the *widder*. Tha sot to work brushin' up, and callin' reglar on the old lady, askin' arter her health, given' her advice about it, and what wur necessary fur her niggers—doin' up her writin' fur her, and gallyvantin' her to meetin' on Sunday, 'sides doin' her little errands round town. The wimin in the *settlement* kept a winkin' at one another, but these two fellars wouldn't see it, fur tha had sot thur heds together to git the widder, 'cause it war necessary to git her, to git her niggers—tha wur nuthin' as tha wur, and tha know'd the widder's items 'ud gin 'em a chance to *splurge!*

Well, arter a while, Tom. Massy gin to come it orfull sweet over the widder, and thinkin that he'd make her believe he war a makin' money by his doctorin', and buyin up town lots, he asked her ef she knew he war openin' sum lots round town?

"Well," says the widder, "I did heer that you'd lately got a chance to open a few in the town *grave yard!* The poor people must a ben orful tired of life, Dr. Massy, when tha hunted you up!"

By thunder! Massy'd a gin his body to his perfeshion, ef he could ony a got it out of the widder's company, 'thout hevin' to walk out. His face tarned red as a beet, and his shirt frill kept a trimblin' as ef he'd got a fit of the ager. Jest to tantalize him, the widder asked him what on the yearth ailed him—ef he'd by mistake swaller'd some on his pills? The Doctor sed he hadn't, but guessed tha would'nt be wuss to take than sum old widders he knew—and then he snatched his hat and travelled. Tha do say the

old 'oman *laughed* at him, but that's onpossible—she's too consarned ugly, and it's so long sence she did anythin' of the kind that she's forgot how.

Dick Mason war afear'd fur sum time to go near her, but the Doctor argyed that, as she did'nt like him, why in course she prefar'd Dick, so he sot too a courtin' the old gal agin, at a mity long distance. She listened to him fur a spell, and let him beau her about, and talk nice, and do her lawin' fur nuthin, till at last, one day, he got a tellin' the widder how comfortable it 'ud be fur her to hev a car'ful bisness man, like him, to take care of her estate and see to her niggers. Jest while he wur gittin' off into a reg'lar stump speech on the subject, in walked the two Miss Wilkenses—the pootyest and the sassiest gals in the settlement. Arter they'd got seated, the widder tarned round to Dick, jest as ef thar'd ben no one present, and ses she—

"Mr. Mason, what kind of blood do you spring frum?"

That staggered Dick, and, tryin' to think, he got wusser in a heap than the Doctor; 'sides the gals got a gigglin' at him.

"Why, I was born in Indianee," said Dick, "and I'm of opinion my old dad war as respectable a planter as lived in his county anywhar."

"Indianee!" said the old widder, tarnin' up her nose—"I'm thinkin', Mr. Mason, you'll hev to use a good deal of *sassapariller* to purify Indianee blood up to furst family Virgini standard. Your mixtur' might suit my Sally"—pintin' at her nigger sarvint—"but it can't take car of her misses."

"I guess I'll go try the *sassapariller!*" sed Dick, and, mad as a wild cat, he bolted out of the parler—the gals yellin' and laffin' at the way the widder gin' him the bag.

I reckon it'll be a long while afore these perfeshional fellars'll muster spunk to try her agin, and afore tha do, I specelate tha'll take *sassapariller* with a *stick* in it.

Your relashun, BILL SAPPER.

Settlement Fun.

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

[No. II.]

LIBERTI, MISS SURY,
Feberery 15, 18 forty 5.

Well, Jim, I reckon thar's goin to be Cain raised in our diggins afore long. *Je-e-e-miny*, thunder!—what a snarl the widder Dent's in! Law *and* physic's agin her, tooth and toe-nail, fur the way she flirted thar pertenshuns, but ef tha kin git ahead of an old widder that's got the *items*, tha kin jest take out a patent right fur perpetuil motion, 'cause tha ar ekill to a snag boat, agin a sawyer. The perfeshional fellars held an unmarried-gent's-anti-widder-meetin', up two par of stairs, in Dick Mason's law shop, and while tha did up a few games of *old sledge* fur a picayune a game and the licker, it war resolved that no gentleman what tuck fees fur his law or medicin' *chores*, shud speak to the widder Dent, and arter this hed ben resolved upon, tha started out yellin' like Ingins. Dick Mason got orful tight, 'cause the widder had cut him so dead, and so he kept a yellin' out a varse he made up about her, which said:

Widow Dent is old and bent,
Her skin is parched and yellow;
I'd rather be not wuth a cent,
Than that old gal's bedfellow!

This war all sour grapes which Dick war talkin' about, and the wimin listened to him snortin' it out in the street, tickled at what a fool he was makin' on himself, and a kind of pleased to death at his makin' fun of the widder. The widder didn't hear Dick singin' but, of course, the gals let her know what he *did* sing, and all about the anti-widder-meetin' up in the law shop. *Whew!—scissors!—*take care of your *har!*—didn't the widder *foam*? Well, she did, *hoss!*

"Rot thur mean picturs, the carrion," ses she, "I don't car a pound of tabaccer fur the whole bilin' on 'em! Does the mean pizen creaturs think thar clandestin' efforts to git me and my niggers is agoin to pull the *wool* over me? No, indeed! I'll let these physic pedlers and cat-fish-mouth lawyers know tha aint got a green gal to *honey-fuggle* round when thur artur me," and she stamped and raged tremengus.

The fellars kerried out thar detarmination not to speak to the widder, and next Sunday out of church the old gal cum, lookin' as peert as a rabbit, but when she seen the fellars sidlin' by her, and up to the young gals, without touchin' thur hats to her, she looked as deadly at 'em as a hearse at a buryin'. It didn't sot the young gals back much to see the young fellars slightin' the widder, 'cause none on 'em liked her, she wur so pompous, but they thort the fellars wur eternal mean for courtin' the widder's money, and they poked all sorts of fun at Dr. Massey and Dick Mason.

The widder went home mad as a northwester, and sent for Miss Meeley, an old maid croney, to inquire how she shud git satisfaction.

"Tarn lawyer Mason out of that thar frame buildin' he occupies belongin' to you" (the old maid had a spite agin' Dick, for tellin' that she wore spectacles at home.) "Give a big party and don't invite a single perfeshional to it," said old Miss Meeley.

"I'll do that thing right straight!" said the widder, and she sot to work to do it.

The day arter Miss Meeley's advice war given, Dick wur tarned out of the premises by what lawyers call, in the dead languages, "*ejecto despito nose-endom*." As Dick never paid nuthin', as in course lawyers aint expected to, it war mity hard for him to git in any whar agin, but Deacon Williams had a small office on the main street, to which wur attached a little stable, and into this office Dick got liberty to move his effects, which consisted of a copy of Blackston',² the Revised Stattys of Miss Sury, and Gen. Jackson's last message, together with his inkstand and an old

2. Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780) wrote *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, available in many editions.

table. Arter Dick had got fixed he found that the Deacon had a *jack* in the stable next door to him, and the consarned animal kept a brayin' and a kickin' agin the purtition, so he could scacely stay in the office. It jest appeared as ef the animal found out he war thar and didn't want him fur a neighbor. Some on the boys, who heerd *jack* a brayin' next door, gits a sign and sticks it up over Dick's door, sayin' that *Jack & Mason* had sot up the *law* bisness in partnership. The next mornin' Dick war seen goin' down street, with his Blackston' and Stattys under his arm, cussin' the widder at every step, for bein' the cause of his troubles. Well, mabe the old gal war pleased when she heerd of the trick. "I'd jest give a hansum present to any of my young friends that 'ud play a trick on Dr. Tom. Massey—I'd never forgit the kindness." She said this afore Jake Smith, and you could a seen suthin' tricky in that devil's eye of his'n, jest as ef an idee had struck him. Off went Jake home and sot to work, with Alick William's help, to paint hisself all over, in spots, jest like the small pox, and then gittin' a *pig's-foot*, he fixed it up his sleeve, darken'd the room, and slid inter bed, while Alick started off for Dr. Tom. Massey.

"What ails Jake?" inquired the doctor, as he cum rushin' out of his office arter Alick.

"Why, 'tween you and me, Dr. Tom., I think he's got a dreadful bad case of the *small pox!*" answered Alick.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Massey, tarnin' pale as death, "why, I never tendid a case afore, and I may ketch it! Stop a minit," said he, and back he went to his office, and flung the sweet scents all over him, besides puttin' a big *chunk* of camfire in his handkercher. Away tha started agin for Jake. The patient's room was darkin'd a-purpose, and the doctor, arter one glimpse at Jake's spotted face, put on his gloves, kivered his nose and eyes with the handkercher containin' the camfire, and then reachin' out for Jake's pulse, the creatur' held out the *pig's foot*, and the doctor, arter feelin' the member, sed he war dangerously affected. He got down stairs as soon as possible, perscribed a swingin' dose of *calomel*, and put, instanter. Nuthin' would induce him to go back agin, to see how Jake got along. He sed thar war no hope. About an hour arter the

doctor war a standin' by the tavern door, talkin' with three or four fellars on the dreadfulness of the epidemic, when, tearin' down street, comes Jake, spotted wusser than ever. The doctor war goin' to run, but the fellars caught hold on him and held him.

"Why don't you do suthin' for me, you pizen villin," yelled Jake; "are you goin' to let me die outright!" and then he gin a snort and a starr at the doctor.

All the time Massey war strugglin' to git clear. "Gentlemen, he's mad!" shouted the doctor; "he's got a dangerous simptom of the disease."

"Feel my pulse, you sarpint," said Jake, holdin' out the *pig's foot* from under his coat sleeve.

"Dreadful!" yelled Massey—"ef the afflicted creatur' aint chawed his fingers off"—and, makin' a desperate effort, he got nearly clear, when Jake, graspin' the *pig's foot* with his hand, wrenched it as ef he war twistin' his wrist off, and threw the meat at him. Off dashed the doctor, and the yells of the fellars laffin' he thort sure war Jake tryin' to git arter him, and your lightnin' wires could hev done nuthin to his time, gittin' round the court house corner.

As soon as the widder heerd of Jake's trick, she sure enough gin him a present, and then she announced the stavin' big party, to which no perfessionals war to be invited. She got her old kerridge painted up till it shined like a "pewter dollar," and I'm blessed ef she didn't mount a nigger behind and one afore, with velvet bands on their hats, and buckles on 'em. She sot inside, with a feather in her bonnet, and left cards all round town, which, I speculate, are the invites to the "*kick-show*." Tha say her cousin ar invited from St. Louis, a army officer. It will be a big spread, and nuthin' else.

Yours, as usual, BILL SAPPER.

N. B. I forgot to tell you what kind of a present the widder gin Jake—I'm blessed ef she didn't gin him a piccaninny little *nigger!* and the way the gals are devilin' him about the little creatur' is provokin'.

B. S.

Settlement Fun.

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

[No. III.]

LIBERTI, MISS SURY,
March 2, 18 forty 5.

The threats of widder Dent, about her big party, made the per-feshional fellars a little skary—sum fellars thort her raal intentions agin 'em war wuss than cuttin' thar company, and the idee becum pretty general that the old gal intended to arm her niggers and drive the lawyers and doctors out'n the settlement; and to keep this idee fresh, along comes the cousin she'd ben talkin' about, lookin' as tall and extensive as Captain Sellers, the commander of the Liberti volunteers. He had a cap with a trumpet worked in gold on the front, and a coat with buttons down it, jest like small rollin' pins, all kivered with silk, 'sides a small stripe of tinsel 'cross the shoulder. It war a pictur to see the way he spread hisself—he looked ekill to a legislatur, at least, and his Sunday fixins war allowed to be *scrimptious*.

Liberti war put in a flutter when he appeared, and an extensive feelin' tuk possession of both parties—the law and medicine fellars looked detarmined not to be cried down, even by a raal United States officer, and the widder got considerably peerter. You know, Jim, that the soldiers will stand up for the wimen, and when the wimen jine with the soldiers in any marter, thar's sure suthin' to grow out of it; well, this combination wur *wimen* and the *military* agin *law* and *physic*—and the widder resolved to conker by usin' one to do up the tother—she war raither old and right *smart!*

When the widder tuk a ride round with her cousin, the *Colonel*, as she called him, it war noticed that tho' he wur mity perlite, yet he didn't ventur' to say the furst word until he war about leavin'

any place, when he'd tech his hand to his shiney hat, and say suthin' like "*rorry vorry*." It gin to leak out, arter a while, that he warn't rite sharp of hearin', and I swar, ef it didn't look as ef the widder wur tryin' to hide his failin'. Well, Jim, arter all, this female human natur ar' a queer composition, and when it's riled I'd jest as soon try to hold steam, or stop a streak of lightnin' by clinchin' hold on its tail, as try to play carlessly with wimen in wrath.

I told you, in my last letter, of the widder's present to Jake Smith. Well, tho' Jake thort the piccaninny baby a present wuth havin', he thort the widder gin it to him to plague him, and he got the devil in him to try and git even with her; so, arter a day or two, he gits himself interduced to her cousin, and the varmint, arter hevin' found out the *Colonel's* failin's, picked him out for a subject, detarmined to run a "*saw*" on him. The *Colonel*, as I said afore, couldn't hear well; he jest caught parts of sentences, and sometimes gin 'em a queer twist—and then the creatur' loved *licker* most amazin'. Jake sed these two failin's would make him about as easy to handle as a "suckin' turkey."

The evenin' for the widder's party came at last, and, sure enough, thur warn't any of the perfeshional fellars invited; so some of the gals, that had lawyer and doctor beaux, wouldn't go, but enough went to fill the widder's chock full, without leavin' an inch to spar. They poured in like a parfect stream, all rigged out in thur best kiverin', and lookin' as pleased as boys on a 4th a Juli mornin'. The widder and her cousin did the perlite at the head of the starrs to the cumpany as they cum in; and, arter a spell, in swung Jake, with a shirt frill on quarter of a yard long. The *Colonel* and Jake had taken a drink or two together afore, and the widder's cousin liked him 'cause he could "punish his share." To a man what likes a drink sech a friend is wuth havin', for he allays reflects the spirit of the *licker*, and a fellar kin look rite straight at a sample of its operation, know when to quit, and jest how much more he kin bear.

"How do you do, Mr. Smith?" inquired the *Colonel* of Jake.

"Well, I'm hearty," sed Jake, "and I speculate that arter a spell I'll feel furst rate!"

The Colonel jest caught the last word, and he thort Jake asked him "what he'd *take*," so the creatur sed right off he'd *take* brandy.

"Well, jest as you say," answered Smith, startin' off with him towards the lickier.

"Stop, ef you *please*," broke in the widder, "anuther time, Mister Smith, arter cumpany's done cumin' in"—so she pulled the Col. back.

"I aint pertickler," sed Jake, "jest when it suits all hands, I'm agreeable;" and all the time he war nigh snortin' out a laffin' to see the Col.'s eagerness to drink.

When the company had all sot theirselves round on the cheers, the widder opened perceedins by a song on her *pianor*; and when she got takin' up with hollerin' and thumpin' at the music, Jake pulled the Col. off inter anuther room, and sot a drinkin' with him—the natral eagerness of the widder's cousin and the long time he'd ben gitin' dry, made him walk into the *fluid* like sin, and when he cum back to the parlor he war prime for fun.

"That's *screamin'* good brandy," sed Jake to him as they cum back through the foldin' doors—"I say it's *screamin'* good brandy, and '*tant nuthin else!*' "

The Colonel had got behind the widder's cheer afore he quite made out what Jake sed, and then, as ef the sound had jest got fixed in his ear, he tarned round to Jake—you know how deaf people will holler, as ef other people had the same failin' as theirselves—and yelled out:

"Yes—*screamin'!* and it 'aint anything else—perfectly right in your opinion!"

"Who is a *screamin'?*" asked the widder, lookin' crooked lightnin' at her cousin.

"The *brandy!* the *brandy!*" sed the Col., lookin' her in the countenance with a grin.

Well, Jim, you'd a thort by the widder's color that minit that she did do suthin' in the drinkin' way, for she got as red about the ears as a turkey gobler.

"I'd hev you to know, Col.," ses the widder, gittin' up as stiff and peert as the President of a political meetin', "that it's *me*, the

mistress of this manshun, and not brandy, that's singin' here—I won't be told, in jeest or airnest, that I'm a *screamin'!*"

You'd a busted laffin' jest to heerd Jake explain, that the Col. war anserin' his remark about the brandy they'd ben drinkin'; and I predicate thar wur some screamin' done by all hands about the mistake. Arter the explanation things went on very well for a spell, 'till passin' by Miss Sally Snelling, the Col. put his hand kind of accidental upon her neck; she tarned round and looked at him kind of astonished—

"Why, Col." ses she, "you put your hand on my *bar skin*."

He couldn't jest make out what she had said, but he thort she had charged him with treatin' her pretty, round, full neck, as ef it had ben a *bar skin*, and the Col. felt hurt at the charge, for Sally war a raal hansum gal, and what's better, a perfect lady by natur', which is ahead of *family*, any time, so he cum up to her, and, lookin' in her eyes told her:

"Miss Snelling, I beg your pardon, but may I die an ungallant death ef I ever could mistake your ivory neck for your—no—for the—no, no—for a *bar skin*."

The liquor war takin' effect on the creatur', and he couldn't talk smooth. Sally fired up either at what the Col. sed, or 'cause he teched her when in licker, and startin' away from him, her eyes glistenin' like stars on a frosty night, she hunted up Ike Miller, a clever little fellar, who war a courtin' her, and told him she wur goin' home, instanter. I seed her whisper then to a gal acquaintance, and that gal whispered to anuther, till little Ike found out that the Col. had offended Sally, and his spunk flared up like a house afire. It war tight holdin' kept him from mountin' the Col. Walkin' up to him, arter he'd got a leetle cool, Ike told the Col. he shud hear from him. The creatur' thort Ike war biddin' him the partin' compliments, and he hollered:

"Happy to see you at any time, my dear fellar—wont you take a drop of suthin' afore you start?"—he was yearnin' to drink agin. Ike looked at him, pussued up his mouth and farly trimbled, he war so mad, then off he dashed.

"What in the yearth," asked Jake, "did you say to Sally?"

He swar that he'd done nuthin' 'cept makin' an apology for techin her; but Jake thort he'd ben cumin' some military notions, that had riled the gal to indignity *pint*.

"You'll git a chance for a fight," said Jake to him, "that's sartain as shootin', for I seed it in Ike Miller's eye."

"Will you stand by me?" asked the Col.

"In course, I'll do that thing," replied Jake.

"Then, lord bless the lover and his little gal—let us go and *licker!*" and off tha started to git anuther drink. While tha wur ingaged goin' onct time round, in cum Dr. Massey and handed the Col. a tight folded paper, which he handed over to Jake.

"Jest as I thort," sed Jake, then turnin' to the Dr., he told him tha'd be on hand to the appintment. Marters ar lookin' riley, but by the glisin' of Jake's eye I'm sartain he'll shake sum fun out'n the fight.

Your cousin, BILL SAPPER.

Daily Reveille, June 2, 1846, 1-2.

Settlement Fun.

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

[No. IV.]

LIBERTI, MISS SURY,
April 1, 18 forty 5.

The fight atween Ike and the Col. has come off, and thar ain't ben so much fun for a coon's age afore, as thur row created. I told you that Jake looked pleased about it, and I knew the varmint wur hatchin' a joke out'n it, so I kept my eye skinned for the afarr, expectin' to see sights. The Doctor and Jake Smith had a long talk together next mornin' up in Massey's medicine shop, and when

tha cum down, it war easy to see that both wur agreed, 'cause they looked pleased and tuk a drink together. "In Snake Bottom at six," sed Massey.

"Exactly," ansered Jake, "and the insterments rifles."

Tha both started off in different directions to git thur men ready, and I concluded to be on hand to see the shootin'. I knew ef Ike war ony steady in the narves, it wur a clar case for the Col., 'cause the little fellar can hit a button at *eighty*, off hand.

Towards evenin' I seed Jake Smith startin' down to the timber below the town, and along side of him the Col., while behind cum widder Dent's nigger Tom., carryin' a basket and a rifle; I jest took a circuit to git near 'em, and thar, sure enough, tha got to practisin' with the shootin' iron. The Col. war an excellent shot, but every time he loaded his rifle he primed from the basket, whar he had a small fluid flask, and arter a while the Col. couldn't see the mark very well; he kept blazin' away tho', until Jake told him he wur perfect, and could hit a mosquito upon the wing. Arter takin' all the primin' that war left out'n the small flask, tha started back, and comin' in tha met Ike and the Doctor returnin' from shootin' exercise, too, and tha tuk a stiff bow at each other as tha passed.

Bright and airly next mornin' I seed Jake and the Colonel start. It war cold and chilly, so the Colonel had prepar'd himself with the stimulant, and as tha walked along, every now and then he'd swaller a drop of the fluid to steady his narves and warm up. Jake kept recommendin' the measure as a protection agin the mornin' air, and when the Colonel's canteen run out, he offered him his'n. It war so consarned cold that he got perfectly blue; so what with the mornin' and the licker, it tuk all sorts of balancin' for the Colonel to keep on his feet. At last tha tarned down inter Snake Bottom, and found Ike and the doctor a waitin' for 'em. The Colonel shut one eye, wiped his mouth, clar'd his throat, and tried to see whar Ike stood, but I'm blessed ef he warn't so *tight* he couldn't, so he gin it up, and leaned raal soggy agin a tree. The distance war measured off, and Dr. Massey and Jake tuk a wink at each other, and commenced loadin' the shootin' irons. This leetle marter bein' arranged, tha approached the fightin' parties, pinte

out thar positions, and told 'em to take thar places. Now, this wur all in order, but it wur no easy marter for the Colonel, jest then, to manoeuvre; he looked at Jake, then at the rifle, and then tried to see Ike; at last he made out to say:

"Mister Smith, help me to the spot, and stand me facin' my antagonist; and, tho' I'm sartainly a leetle unsteady, I'll make out to knock him off his pins."

An idee struck Jake; so, gittin' a forked stick, he piloted the Colonel to his position, stood him facin Ike, and propped him up with a branch. The Colonel declared himself easy, and by a good starr he pooty near made out whar Ike was standin'.

"Now, gentlemen," hollered Jake, "between *two* and *three*, you'll please to crack away." They nodded, and, gittin' out of the Col.'s range, he gin the word. One—two!—bang!—bang! went the rifles—down went the Colonel *co-whallop!* Ike tuk one starr at him whar he wur sprawlin', and he *leaned* for the timber faster than any quarter nag I ever seed. Tha hollered at him, but he ony put in bigger licks; so, leavin' him to take his exercise in tall walkin', tha made up to whar the Colonel lay, and the two varmints were a most dyin' a laffin'. Jake raised his head up, and the Colonel snored as comfortably as ef he war in bed.

"Well, well," sed he, dreamin' of the afarr, "ef that aint sorter queer, (hic.) I've knocked his whole head off with a small rifle ball, (hic.) Mity bad made up young man, that, (hic.)"

I thort Jake'ud a went inter fits, and Massey shook as ef he'd got a spell of the ager. Arter a minit, Jake pulled out a small bottle of *red ink*, and sprinkled the Col., poured it in his bosom, and slather'd it all about him; tha then hollered to a couple of nigger fellars in sight, and makin' a hand-bearer of some branches, tha brings the Col., in orful state, inter town. The citizens looked wild, and the gals tarned pale as deth as tha carried the body up to the widder's. As soon as the widder seen him she screeched like a 'scape pipe to a high pressure boat, and kept a hollerin' that he war murdered. Old Dr. Wilkins war sent for—a stiff, proud old fellar, that belonged to the same church as the widder, and sot in a pew right agin her's—and when he arriv, every gal and fellar wur

breathless. Old Wilkins tuk one of the widder's nigger men in with him to the Col's chamber, and gitin' a bason of hot water, he tuk out his steel insterments, put on his specs, and then clar'd every body else out.

To make the marter look more serious, Jake and Dr. Massey wur seen gitin' thur horses reddy, and fixin' valises on thur backs. The squire thort it his duty to arrest 'em, so he sent a forthwith, and jest stopped thur proceedin'. Tha looked so long-faced, that all war of the opinion the Col. wur a *goner*. The truth of the marter is, Jake had a cramp in his stomach with tryin' to smother his laffin'.

All war waitin' in the widder's to hear the Dr's opinion, and thur faces looked white as chalk, while the widder herself had got inter histericks, and the wimen and female niggers war soothin' her. Arter a spell out cum old Wilkins, lookin' like a thunder gust.

"How is he?" hollered the widder; "whar is my dear cousin shot?—do relieve this orful expense, Dr.—say, whar is he shot?"

The old fellar looked her in the eye, to see ef she war playin' possum, but she looked so serious that he gin up the idee about her tryin' to fool him, and slowly foldin' up his specs, he told her:

"Why, Mrs. Dent, he is, in my opinion, badly '*shot in the neck!*'"

"Then, he'll die, sure!" yelled the widder, and off she went to screamin' agin.

"No, he won't," said old Wilkins, "he ain't ben shot with a bullit; he's ben shot with a bottle of whisky—the fact ar, marm, he's *drunk as a fiddler*, and has ben painted with *pokeberry juice!*"

Sech another spell of larfin' as tuk place then all over town war good for dyspeptics—tha perfectly shouted at the idee of a fellar gitin' shot with *corn juice* and dyin' off under touches of the *pokeberry*. A pacel of fellars now got on horseback, to go arter Ike and tell him;—Massey, and Jake, and Dick and myself, and a whole lot of boys, arter givin' the Squire three cheers for his sustainin' the law in arrestin' the seconds, started off a roarin' at how cheap he looked. Jest as we got inter the edge of the timber we seed a glimpse of Ike, and tuk arter him, hollerin'; but it warn't in horse flesh to ketch him in the timber, and he jest slipped us "as easy as rollin' off a log." Arter huntin' for him every place, holler trees and

bushes, we gin up the sarch, and pinned notes to the trees, tellin' him the Colonel war alive. When we got in the boys proposed to watch at night for him, knowin' he'd cum in to git suthin' to eat, and to git a glimpse of Sally—so, arter dark we posted ourselves, and, sure enough, about 10 o'clock, he cums stealin' in, lookin' as wide awake as a wolf. We got him inside of a circle on us, and then closed in to him, but I speculate it war a mity tight bisness to ketch him then. He didn't believe us when we hollor'd to him the Colonel warn't hurt, for he tuk dead aim at him—but powder, only, wont kill at thirty yards. Ike, howsever, war caught at last, and when the little fellar war convinced he hadn't killed the Colonel, he cried like a babby—he wur so glad. Sally cried, too, when she got Ike back, and sed he shouldn't fight for her agin, 'cause she'd a died ef he'd ben killed, and so the marter endid.

The widder is dreadfully hurt about the trick played upon her cousin; but it's generally thort that all hands hev quit about even, and insted of gitin' ahead hev only made "*fun* for the settlement."

YOUR COUSIN. BILL SAPPER.

Daily Reveille, June 6, 1846, 1-2.

The Fun of Our Settlement.

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

[No. V.]

LIBERTI, MISS SURY,
April 12f 18 forty 5.

Deer Cusin:—I hev ben injoyin' a mite of amusemint sence I wrote to you afore, with a sixteenth removed relashun of mine, who lives jest at the edge of Sandy Bottom, whar it jines the timber. I don't know reglar whether he is a blood *kin* or no, but he's named Ike Sapper, anyhow. Well, he cum inter the settlement the

other day, showin' considerable white shirt above his neck tie, and swingin' a new jeans coat, with side pockets—the gals at home hed topped him out with a deer skin cap, and he wore on each hand a thick woolen mittin. He didn't ware any under jacket, but kivered his busum with the eends of the shawl round his shirt collar. He war strikin' a bee line down the middle of the street, when all at onst he tuck a starr round and made a shute for my warehouse.

"Hello, Mr. Sapper," ses he, "I know'd I'd find your location afore long."

"Well," ses I, "you'r thare, what ar you arter?"

"Oh, nuthin," ses he, "I ony cum down to see the settlement, and git a leetle dust of notion how tha live here. I'm told the folks are powerful rich in this town, and I've sorter got an idee of cumin' to larn tradin'—I reckon I'm as smart as some of these fellars, ef I aint as finefied."

He talked as peert, and hitched up his trowsers as sassy, as ef he'd ben a State officer. I looked at him a spell and asked him to take a drop of suthin', and he did; arter he'd taken a swaller and gin his opinion on the licker, I asked him whar he put up—he sed no place in pertickler, but speculated he'd feed whar I did; so I told him wee'd go down presently to the tarvern. He war amazin' green, but the fellar thort he war jest the contrary. In walked Dr. Massey, while Ike war splurgin', and I interduced him.

"Hello," ses Ike, "you're one of the medicin' fellars, eh? well, I've seed one of you chaps out at our bottom, goin' round distributin' babbys."

Well, I thort Massy 'ud a busted at the fellar's innocence—he jest laid down on a barrel and squealed till he war clean out of breth.

"You'll do!" ses Massey, clappin' him on the back.

"Well, I *pre*-decate," ses he, "I jest will. I aint easy got ahead of in daylight. I'm a leetle of the mosquito breed—allays at home!" and then he cut a pigeon-wing, and lit on his heel with a wolf-yelp. Massey's eye gin to lighten up with suthin' of mischief, and, givin' me a wink, he ses to Ike:

"Come, old fellar, let's go take our feed, and take carr that you

swing yourself easy down thar at the hotel, or some of them cussed fools'll git wantin' to be acquainted with you."

"Do you ware your mittens at table in the hotel?" asked Ike, "cause I've heerd of that bein' fashionable."

"Sartainly, in course," ses Massey, "when you've ben brought up right you allays ware mittens to eat;" and then the Dr. tuck another guffaw at Ike.

"Dad sed to me," ses Ike, "when you're in Rome you must 'do as Rome does;' so, Ike, jest keep your eye skinned, and foller sum good leader, and arter a spell you'll git cute enough to travel 'thout help."

"The old fellar's a trump," sed Massey.

By this time we'd got to the hotel, and dinner bein' reddy, in we went and sot down, Massey takin' his cheer right opposite our'n. Ike's mittens were dreadfully in the way, but to git him to keep 'em on Massey put on his gloves, and then reachin' for some lettuce, he gin to mix it up inter a mess. Ike kept his eye on him, wiped his nose with his mitten, and seed the hull operation through. Arter Massey had *iled* it all slick, and sot the dish afore him till he got a bit of beef, Ike reaches across and gitin' a hold on the dish, he tuk a knife and wiped about half the mixtur' inter his platter, tuk a grin at Massey, and handed it back.

"This green sass is done up raal slick," ses Ike, fillin his mouth chuck full. Massey gin me a quiet wink, and I sed nuthin'—arter a spell, when "*mittens*" hed nigh onto got thro' his dish full, he got to lickin' his lips, and then lookin' at the Dr. jest ventur'd to say it war an oncommon greasy dish, and he had an idee that he *iled* it to make it slide slick.

"Oh, no, bless your pictur," sed the doctor, "I fixed it up for my constitutional affliction. I predecate *you're* troubled suthin' that way makes you take it."

"A consti—what?" ses Ike, takin' a starr at him.

"Why, my *disease*," ses Massey.

"You don't pertend to say that mixed green sass is medicin'?" inquired Ike, his mouth wide open.

"Well, I don't pertend to say anythin' else," says the doctor.

"What in the yearth do you take *that* stuff for?" hollered Ike, twistin' his face up inter a knot at the same time.

"The *obsteterics*," ses the doctor; "and onless you're afflicted in that way, it'll plow your innards like a steam ingine—it's dreadful on a reglar healthy constitution!"

"Cuss the constitution!" hollered Ike; "jest sot mine to rights agin, or I'll hev a row with you, sartain. You've jest come some infarnal settlement trick on me." Jest then he thort he felt a twinge, and, twistin' his body round, he begged Massey to do suthin' for him, in as pitiful a voice as a sick infant.

"Cum along rite strait," ses the doctor; and, hurryin' Ike to his office, he stripped him, homespun shirt and all, and got to pourin' water on his head. Arter he got a shakin', like a fellar with the buck ager, and gin to look as blue as indiger, Massey sed tha must sot the 'lectricity machine at him, 'cause the cold war mountin' up'ards to his eyes, and tha wur gittin' orful *green!* Ike gin to jest wilt down; he thort he war in a dreadful sitation, and I thort he'd a shuck his toe nails off. Massey got out his 'lectrifyin' machine and sot it agoin', and as soon as it gin to buzz and crack, Ike opin'd one eye and tuck a squint at it, and his eyes stretched wide as a skeer'd bull.

"Let's put the machine up to the *melt-fire* pint," ses the doctor; "nuthin' less will jerk the pisin of the ile out'n him"—and bu-z-z-z-z, crack, crack, crack! went the machine.

"Now put the wires round him," hollered the doctor; but when tha tarned round fur Ike, he war clean gone and missin'. Tha looked out the winder, and thar he wur, leanin' fur tall timber, ekill to a quarter hoss, and the boys makin him jump like a deer with thur yelpin' at him! We aint seen nothin of Ike sence, and I've an idee he'll not taste *iled sass* on his next visit.

Your cusin, BILL SAPPER.

The Fun of Our Settlement.

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

[No. VI.]

LIBERTI, MISS SURY,
May, 18 forty 5.

Cusin Jim: Tha hev diskiver'd a new cure for the *ager fits* up here, and it's worked a miracle in one case, whar it hed ben prevailin' powerful bad fur a long spell. The east has ginerally hed the highest name fur new invenshuns, but tha never made anythin' to compar' with the "*Panter Squeal Specific*," or "*Jumpin' Ager Cure!*" It tuck the Sandy Bottom fellars to sarch out this mixtur', and whar tha hev applied it, most astonishin' effects ar afore the univarsal world! as the patent doctors say.

Levi Harris, a fellar who lives in the Bottom, hes ben a complainin' nigh onto ever sence he came inter the diggins, about the state of his health, and how powerful weakly he kept a gittin'—he sung this tune so much that tha gin him up as good as dead, but all the whole time the creatur' kept a eatin' his share of dodger, drinkin' his reglar ration of licker, and callin' hissself a new daddy about onst a year—raal healthy young ones tha wur, too, them young Harrises. Arter he'd got fairly sot in the notion of bein' right lazy, he jest gin up doin' anythin' but talkin' about the *ager*, and the prairie fever, and suckin' corn juice. I've seed him sittin' aside the tavern talkin' for hours about how many cows he *could* raise in Miss Sury, and what dreadful nice butter tha perduced, when the fellar hadn't tasted milk nor butter fur a year, and all along of his consarned lazy prairie fever. Thur warn't no latch to his cabin door, and no door fur the latch,—ony a buffalo skin hid him from the weather. All the time this good fur nuthin' sarpint war livin' off'n his wife's airnins, and lettin' her struggle along, with babbys and all, jest the best she could.

"Let us cure Levi of that fever and ager," sed Hiram Bacon, a cusin of Levi's, to his brother Amos Bacon, one day arter tha'd ben hearin' the fellar complainin'.

"Agreed," sed Amos, "but how'll we git about it?"

"Skeer it out'n him," answered Hiram.

"I'm thar, ef it kin be done," ses Amos, who war always keen fur devilment.

"You know," sed Hiram, "how afeard the fellar is of *panters*, and how off'n he's sed he thort he heard and seed em in the ridge timber?"

"Not more'n a day ago he gin me the diminshuns of a varmint's track he foller'd thar," answered Amos.

"Well," ses Hi., "we'll gin him a leetle mite of the '*Panter Squeal Specific*,' some night when he's goin' home, and see ef we can't make his ager leave."

It warn't more'n a week arter this, afore Levi walked inter the settlement, lookin' well enough, but complainin' dreadfully.

"How are you, Levi?" asked Amos Bacon.

"Oh, I'm dreadful poorly," ses Levi, "and kin scacely git about—I'm jest come down to git an atom of whisky to mix with some bitters, to see ef it'll do anythin' fur this ager of mine. You ain't ben up to see the old 'oman sence little *Andy* come to town," and then the creatur squirmed and wriggled.

"What! another babby, Levi?" asked Amos.

"Yes," ses he, wipin' his nose and lookin' as pleased as a school boy with a holy-day; "Providence blesses us with raal smart children ef thur daddy is afflicted. This is jest six, and I named him arter the old General, 'cause we want one *hero* in the family—all the others are named arter *Scriptur*' people."

"I'll swar," ses Levi, "ef you ain't the luckiest fellar in the settlement."

"Well, I reckon I'm 'some' in a *new* country," ses he, "and I'd be a mite more ef I could ony git well onst."

Arter gittin' his whisky, takin' a taste on it a few times, and talkin' considerable, he found it edgin' to'ards dark, so off he started, and off started Hiram Hayes and his brother Amos rite on

his trail. When Levi gin to near the ridge timber, he sot to primin' up with the whisky, to keep his courage even, but when he got inter the timber, and seed how dark it war, both heart and whisky failed him. Jest that minit *Hi.* let out a *m-e-w!* that sot his blood runnin' like quicksilver.

"What in the yearth's that?" ses Levi, his har beginnin' to raise his hat—"thur sartainly aint *panthers* about." His doubts travelled when Amos broke in with a reg'lar squealin' *m-e-w-ou!*

"*S-c-a-t!*" hollered Levi, jumpin' as ef he'd ben scratch'd—"git out, you varmints! Oh, gracious! they'll tarr a fellar to chitlins, consarn 'em, and *then* what'll become of the babbys!" and now he gin to paddle right sharp to'ards home.

"*M-e-w, le-vi-ou!*" yelled Amos.

"*Go-o-d-b-y le-vi-ou-m-e-w-ou!*" chimed in *Hi.*, and off sot Levi as ef *panthers* wur about fur sartain. Off tha sot arter him, and it war *mew!* from them, and *scat!* from Levi, while all hands war doin' thur pootyest at runnin'. Levi dropped his licker, toss'd off his hat, and I predicate thur warn't no *ager* about him while he war travellin' that two mile of timber. Jest as he bounced inter the clearin' tha' sot up a yell at him that shuck the last shake of the old disease inter fritters, and in a few more jumps he landed inside of his cabin, with the grease pourin' out'n him like snow meltin' from a mountain.

"Why, *you* Levi," ses Mrs. Harris, "what in the yearth's the marter?—what ails you?"

Levi's eyes wur sot, his har wur standin' on eend, and his nostrrels wur wide opin' and blowin', jest for all creation like a double engine boat under the whole weight of steam. Arter a spell he gin to lick his lips and moisten thur white color, and then let out a distressin' long—"O-o-o-o-h! *panthers!*"

"What is it, Levi?—hev you seen 'em?" inquired his wife, shakin' him by the shoulder.

"Seed 'em!" shouted he, "I aint seed anythin' else sence I left home!"

"Why, Levi!" ses Mrs. H., in astonishment; "tha must a ben a powerful lot on 'em, and what a parspiration tha put you inter."

"Well," ses Levi, "ef runnin' the ridge timber, agin a quarter mile string of *panthers* and thur *kittens*, would'nt knock the juice out'n a fellar, then he must be a dreadful dry affarr. I reckon tha sot my springs goin' like a freshet."

Amos Bacon and Hiram war standin' outside, leanin' agin the chinks of the cabin, listenin' to him, and jest at that minit he said "freshet," Hi. squealed a *m-e-w!* through an opin chink, and Levi like to went inter fits; he war so skeert that ef Mrs. H. hadn't grabbed him, he'd fell eend foremost inter the fire.

"*S-c-a-t!*" ses he; "cuss the varmints, tha'll git inter the cabin, and chaw up the whole family."

"*M-e-w-ou!*" hollers Hiram, pullin' aside the buffalo and stickin' his head in, and then sech a hollerin' and laffin' as tha sot up at Levi. "Whar's the *ager* now?" ses Amos; "I reckon we run the consarned old complaint out'n you, didn't we?"

"What!" shouts Levi, jumpin' up, mad as a porcupine. "Consarn your pictur, you aint ben a foolin' me!—it aint ben you that kept up that caterwaulin'?"

"Well, it wur, hoss!" sed Hi., "and you needn't git mad, nuther, fur you've ben actin' consarned mean fur a long spell. You know, Levi, thar aint nothin' the marter with you but a leetle dust of the *lazy ager*."

"I tell you I'm dreadful poorly, and you know it," ses he.

"Well," ses Hi., "fur a afflicted fellar, you made the most amazin' *healthy* run I ever seed!"

Levi had to "acknowledge the corn," and sence that night he aint had a shake of the *ager* onst!

Yours, ever, BILL SAPPER.

P.S. If you hev any friends dreadfully afflicted, jest send 'em up to our diggins. The boys want to test fully the vartue of the new mixtur'.

Yours, with a *squeal*, B.S.

The Fun of Our Settlement.

Bill Sapper's Letters to His Cousin.

By Solitaire. [John S. Robb]

[No. VII.]

LIBERTI, MISS SURY,
May, 18 forty 5.

Deer Cusin:—Old Deacon White, a raal pious fine old fellar, hes got hisself inter a nice scrape up here, and I think the perticklers wuth a letter, 'cause tha display humin natur, and you know all fellars that rite ought to keep lookin' at that pint. The deacon is a raal good old fellar, and hes ben all his life, I reckon, lecturin' agin the evils of the present gineration, and givin' balls, parties, groceries and shows pertickler goss! 'Sides that, he allays would scold the fellars fur thur bad doin's, wharever he could ketch 'em. Well, about a week since thar arriv in our settlement a show circus, and getherin' of wild animals—tha call it a thunderin' queer name, sech as *managgeree*, and the whole town got in a fever to see it. Everybody sed thur warn't any harm in lookin' at wild beasts, 'cause tha war natur', and hed all ben mentioned in scriptur'. So, general consent war gin in favor of the show-with-the-queer-name. A large pictur' of a *eliphint* war stuck up in front of the tent, and the music kept blowin' away like all creation. At night the wimen folks and fellars sot off in a stream to see it. Among the crowd war old deacon White, with two lettle nephys a hold on his hands, and the old fellar hed brighten'd up his specs to a polish, to see the doin's. The door-keeper tuk a squint at his white neck tie and broad rim hat, and sot him down fur a parson—and hevin' taken his ticket, he whisper'd to a fellar alongside on him, who showed them to a top seat inside, whar, as soon as he got fixed, the people gin to pile on the seats below, and all round him. The deacon tuck off his hat, gin his specs anuther wipe, then wiped his nephys' noses, and sot hisself all expectation with eyes wide opin.

"Bang! bang! bang! *Te-tan-te-tan-te-tan*," went the insterments. "Hats off!" war holler'd, and in cum the hosses, *clown* and all—now for it! The ridin' commenced in airnest, and the fellars on the benches like to went inter fits. I kept my eye on the deacon, and he wur a *pictur!*—he clapped, and holler'd, and wiped his specs and the boys' noses till his excitemint got *dangerous*, and at the end of every part of the show doin's he'd hollar—"Whar's the eliphint?" At last the boys gin to take notice to the old man hollerin', and when tha seed him in thar tha gin a universal cheer—all the little fellars concluded that as the deacon war thar tha could stay to the eend of the doin's 'thout committin' any sin, so feelin' safe tha got to hollerin'—"Whar's the eliphint?" On went the show, gittin' thicker and stronger, and all hands more tickled, and jest in the middle on't in came Nat. Robbins, a terrible dissipated creatur', who staggered round the ring jest opposite to the deacon, when the old fellar gin out anuther holler—"Now, whar's the eliphint?" Nat. straited hissself up and tuck a starr at the old man, wiped his mouth, and, pullin' off his cap, holler'd back:

"I've seed him, deacon—I've ben buttin' the old fellar this half hour, and I'm good as wheat yet—aint a bit hurt."

"Whar is he, Nat.?—whar did *you* see him?"

"Thar, bless your old pictur," ses Nat., haulin' out a long-necked bottle, fat with whisky; "thar he is—jest come take a small pop at him, and you kin see a elephint every time."

In course this talk atween the deacon and Nat. tuck the attention of every one, and tha gin to holler—"Go it, deacon"—"go it, Nat."—"whar's the eliphint?" and all sorts of noises.

"You're a good fur nuthin' sarpint, Nat.," holler'd the deacon.

"And you're a nice deacon to be incuragin' shows arter all you've sed agin 'em!" holler'd Nat., back.

The cheerin' now was tremendous!

"It aint possible," ses the deacon, "that I've ben enticed inter the tents of evil—aint this a wild beast collection?"

"Poatly wild, old fellar," ses Nat; "but tha aint no beasts but the hosses," and then he ha, ha, ha'd, and ho, ho'd at the old man till he got in a passion.

"Jest let me down," cried the deacon—"jest clar the path, and I'll shake the dust of this evil place from my garments."

"Don't move—keep him in—hold on to the deacon," war holler'd from every side. In the excitement the deacon lost his specs, and couldn't see a foot ahead of him; the show doin's stopped, and everybody in the tent got to know that deacon White war thar, sure enough, and hed ben applaudin' the fun with all his mite.

Arter plagin' the deacon fur a spell, by keepin' him in his seat, tha concluded to let him out; and, havin' found his specs, the old man gathered his nephys to his side, and, climbin' down, made his way out, without ever gittin' a chance to see the eliphint onst. When he cum to the man keepin' door, he looked at him, gin a sigh, and sed to him that he war engaged in a orful occupation, and he hed ought to repent. "It's a deceivin' one," ses the deacon. "I've ben here a hour, lookin' at your evil doin's, feedin' the lust of the eye with outrageous show actin', and now I want to know *whar's the eliphint?*"

"Hold on a spell," ses the door-keeper, "and you'll git to see him yet."

"You aint got any, young man," replied the deacon, "you aint got any—you know it, but it is a part of your doin's to deceive humin' natur'."

"Well, but, uncle," asked the door-keeper, "warn't the portion of the show doin's you seed right smart and raal funny?"

"Ah, yes," sed the deacon, "tha wur, and that's jest the evil on 'em—I got a laffin' so, I couldn't git reason enough about me to see inter thur raal natur', and arter bein' so deluded I never onst got to see the *eliphint!*"

The deacon departed mournin', and hasn't shown hissself sence—no doubt he is repentin' of the hull afarr. No one thinks it half as bad a act, his goin', as he does hissself, 'cause the old man war raaly deceived.

Whenever the boys are goin' to the circus now, tha allays say—*"Let's go see the eliphint!"*

Your cusin, BILL SAPPER.

APPENDIX 1

GLOSSARY

Ager. Ague or malaria.

Arkansaw toothpick. A Bowie knife whose blade shut up into the handle.

Arter. After.

Baldface or ballface. Unaged whiskey fresh from the still.

Boiler deck. A steamboat's second deck, directly above the boiler. Oddly named, for the boiler was on the lower deck, while the second deck provided living quarters for the crew.

Bowie knife. A strong, heavy, single-edged knife from nine to fifteen inches long. Bowie knives were named for Col. James Bowie of Alamo fame and made by frontier blacksmiths from a variety of materials.

Buck ager. Buck fever, the nervous excitement of a hunter on seeing game, originally deer.

Camfire. Camphor.

Chip. Short for chip hat, made of chip or chip-hat palm.

Chouse. As a noun, a gull or dupe; as a verb, to cheat, trick, defraud, or to drive herd roughly, to chase, harass, or stir up.

Chunk. Chunk of a fight, a considerable encounter or fray.

Clean thing. To do the clean thing is to do what is honorable or proper.

Come over or come it over. To deceive or take advantage.

Consarn, consarned. Darn or damn, darned or damned.

Corks. Erroneous for calk, a plate with spurs, projecting a little below the heel on a pair of boots.

Corn. Short for corn whiskey.

Critter. Creature, can refer to any of various domestic animals or to a wild animal such as a bear or panther; often, however, refers to whiskey or other liquor.

Cum bar. Play the part of a bear.

Dernier. The last or final; in roulette refers to the third of three columns on the layout on which one may bet.

Diggins. Neighborhood or particular section of country, first used at the Western lead mines but later more generally.

Doxy. Girlfriend or sweetheart.

Fell. Skin.

Fixturs. Fixtures, attachments or articles serving a special function, such as accessories, clothes, or traveling equipment.

Fix-ups. Arrangements or conditions.

Flies. Space over the stage where scenery and equipment can be hung out of sight when not in use.

Flimsy. A banknote.

Flummixed. To be overcome, frightened, bewildered, or foiled. To flummix could mean to give in, give up, or die.

Fodder. Food, provisions.

Frolic. A lively social gathering, such as a party, dance, or wedding.

Gill. Unit of measure, either one-quarter British imperial pint or one-quarter U.S. liquid pint.

Gin. Give, gave, begin, began.

Gin or give thunder. To give hell, "thunder" here a euphemism, as also in "by thunder."

Good as wheat. Sometimes used for the more general "good as gold."

Goss. A lashing, verbal or otherwise. The expression may derive from goose, as in "to get goose," a good scolding.

Grocery. Tavern or whiskey shop.

Guards. Portions of a steamboat's deck located outboard on the sides; the main deck guard usually extended three-fifths the length of the boat and could be six to ten feet wide on a stern-wheeler or twice that on a side-wheeler.

Half-eagle. Five dollar gold piece, issued by the U.S. from 1795 to 1916.

Honey-fuggle. To humbug, swindle, or cheat.

Horse pistol. Large pistol formerly carried by horsemen.

Hull bilin'. The whole lot, applied to persons or things.

Ile, iley. Oil, oily.

Keep shady. To keep quiet to escape discovery or detection.

Kivered. Covered.

Leads. Pieces of sash cord about thirty feet long with lead weights attached; marked off by fathoms, the leads were used on a steamboat to determine water depth.

Lean. To move, usually swiftly, to make tracks.

Lethean. Ether, used as an anesthetic.

Lever. Watch having a lever escapement.

Lucifers. Lucifer matches, friction matches.

Mania a potu. Madness from drinking, delirium tremens.

Nigger break down. Rapid shuffling dance sometimes performed competitively by dancers and often accompanied by patting juba.

Old sledge. Southern and Western name for a card game otherwise called All Fours.

Pewk. Variation of Puke, nickname for a Missourian.

Pigeon wing. Fancy dance step executed by jumping up and striking the legs together; also the music for the dance.

Pilot house. Glassed-in structure of a steamboat which sat above the texas and from which the pilot guided the boat.

Pizen. Poison, hateful, very objectionable, extreme.

Punish his share. Deplete or consume, especially whiskey.

Put. To start, go, be off.

'Ruction. Perhaps a shortening of insurrection; a noisy rough-and-tumble fight, a heated quarrel, or disturbance.

Saw. Joke or trick; as a verb, to trick or deceive.

Sawney. To fool about.

Sawyer. Log or tree caught in a river so that it "saws" back and forth with the waves.

'Scape pipes. Steamboat pipes through which steam was released; usually located toward the aft end of the roof over the engines.

Screamer. Person of unusual size, strength, capabilities.

Seeing the elephant. To undergo a disappointment of high expectations.

Sell. To deceive or swindle; or, as a noun, a successful deception, hoax, or swindle.

Shad-bellied. Thin or flat-bellied. *Shad-belly* was a term of contempt for a preacher.

Shavers. Money brokers who purchase notes at higher than the legal rate of interest.

Skeet. To scoot, move very quickly.

Sky-blue. True blue, dyed-in-the-wool.

Sloped. Departed, decamped, run away.

Smoke. To deceive or hoax; also, from "smoke out," to make someone come out of hiding or divulge a secret.

Socdoliger. Probably a corruption of doxology; a conclusive argument, the winding up of a debate, or, figuratively, in a fight, a heavy blow that brings it to a close.

Social hall. Drawing-room or salon on a river steamboat.

Some. Of some account, considerable, notable.

Spars. Stout poles with sharp iron points used to push steam boats away from the shore in order to avoid their running aground.

Spread oneself. To exert oneself, to make a show or display of oneself.

Stage plank. Landing stage or gangplank.

Stattys. Statutes.

Stavin'. Big, immense, excessive.

Sucker. Native of Illinois, also known as Suckerdom.

Supe. Short for supernumerary, an actor employed to play a walk-on, as in a mob scene.

Tall. Great, fine, extravagant, splendid.

Tall walkin'. Walking proudly or handsomely.

Tarnal. Corruption of eternal.

Tile. Hat, especially a high silk hat.

Tinto. Deep-colored wine, Spanish or French.

Tom-tit. Titmouse, any of several small American birds of the genus *Parus*; by extension, a little man or boy.

Tonnish. Tonish; in high fashion, modish.

Wake snakes. To rouse up, get into action.

Washy. Lacking in substance or strength.

Wheel house. On a steamboat, the structure above the wheel.

Whitehead. Like a whitehead, vigorously, hard, immediately, as in to clear out like a whitehead.

APPENDIX 2

TEXTUAL APPARATUS

The following list includes all emendations to the copy-text; the reading in the present text is listed first, followed by a square bracket and the rejected copy-text reading. Also listed are all variants between the *Daily* and *Weekly* texts. In these cases, the reading in the present text appears first, followed by a square bracket and the *Daily* reading; these are in turn followed by a second square bracket and the *Weekly* reading. Numbers given are those of page and line. Line numbers include titles, authors, epigraphs, and dates of the stories as well as all lines of text.

- 41: 13 "saw,"] "saw,"] "saw"
- 41: 14 day,) day,) day
- 42: 5 berths which] berths which] berths in which
- 43: 2 aroused] aroused] roused
- 43: 6 enquiry] enquiry] inquiry
- 43: 15 It] It] I
- 43: 16 yet] yet] ye
- 43: 18 wind-pipe] wind-pipe] wind pipe
- 43: 25 aroused] aroused] roused
- 44: 18 a] a] *a*
- 45: 17 *ceremonie*] *ceremoni,e*
- 45: 18 Squegle] Squeg'e] Squegle

- 46: 26 with axes] with, axes
- 49: 21 "nor] nor
- 52: 11 mute] mu'e] mute
- 52: 17 it's] its
- 58: 17 '!] !'
- 62: 11 Didn't they] Didn't they] Did' nt they
- 66: 22 proud as] proud, as] proud as
- 66: 22 tail when] tail, when] tail when
- 67: 18 counter] ceunter
- 67: 18 wink] wish] wish {emendation follows 1854 and 1868 revisions
by Smith}
- 69: 31 can't] cant
- 74: 29 to] too
- 76: 4 rescue] rescue,
- 76: 15 keeping him] keeping him him
- 79: 35 pilot-house] pilot-house] pilot house
- 79: 36 passengers,] passengers;] passengers,
- 82: 15 "take] take
- 82: 34 *you're]* *your'e*
- 82: 36 juncture,] juncture,] juncture

84: 1 "I] I

84: 25 continued] continuép

85: 18 *peell]* *peell]* *peel*

86: 8 *Cockaigne]* *Coackaigne]* *Cockaigne*

88: 10 right!"] right!'

95: 22 "Good] 'Good

100: 30 lip,"] lip,

101: 5 two] too

101: 24 board of one] board one] board of one

101: 27 fact] fact,] fact

101: 30 I'm in a] I'm a] I'm in a

102: 12 this] this,] this

102: 33 vain!] vain;] vain!

105: 30 "One] One

109: 9 silent; for every eye had been fixed on Bob, and a pin might
have been heard to fall to the ground.] silent; for every eye
had been fixed on Bob, and a pin might have been heard to
fall to the ground.] silent.

109: 36 I implore] I implore] implore

110: 4 gauged] guaged

113: 25 wheel-house] wheel-whouse

- 113: 30 strewn] trewn
- 118: 28 “—another] —another
- 119: 1 huggin’s] huggin’s] huggin’s,
- 121: 11 nuthin’] unthin’
- 122: 29 an] au
- 123: 15 ‘I] “I
- 123: 15 shoes’] shoes”]
- 123: 17 ‘I believe] I believe
- 125: 5 could.”] could.
- 132: 11 “Well!] Well!
- 132: 16 Bellzy’] Bellzy”
- 132: 20 ‘old Bellzy’] “old Bellzy”
- 132: 35 which] wich
- 133: 3 ‘Racer,’] “Racer,”
- 133: 32 ‘fighting] “fighting
- 133: 32 tiger.’] tiger.”
- 133: 32 drink?”] drink?
- 138: 14 threatening] threatening
- 139: 2 face!)”] face!)

- 142: 19 "Ph-e-w-w!] "Ph-e-w-w!"
- 143: 32 Guildenstern] Guilderstern
- 149: 25 Sol.] S l.] Sol.
- 154: 3 Augusta] Agusta
- 156: 13 Hear] Here
- 156: 26 it."] it.
- 157: 8 do."] do.
- 157: 29 case."] case.
- 157: 30 the] tho
- 167: 23 *useful*] *ueeful*
- 167: 24 it's] its
- 167: 30 it's] its
- 170: 14 mattress,] mattress, '] mattress,
- 171: 8 mournful] mournful
- 171: 10 Snipes] Snypes
- 172: 17 nor] not
- 173: 8 cabin!] cabin?
- 173: 13 kicking, you've] kicking," you've
- 174: 21 he;] he;] he,

174: 29 you!] you!'

178: 12 chucks] chukcs] chucks

182: 9 visitor] visiter

184: 2 Tobias'] Tobias] Tobias'

184: 30 afterwards."'] afterwards.

187: 13 The Lethean!] The Lethean!] The Letheon!

187: 18 lethean] lethean] letheon

187: 26 *lethean!*] *lethean!*] *letheon!*

188: 21 *lethean*] *lethean*] *letheon*

188: 31 this] this] his

189: 11 remarked] remarked] remarked

189: 17 again, I] again I] again, I

189: 22 *Lethean*] *Lethean*] *Letheon*

201: 24 three,"'] three,'

201: 29 and in] and in] and, in

201: 30 remained] remained,) remained

202: 12 know] knew

202: 16 shoulder] sholder] shoulder

202: 24 Gordo] Gorda

203: 17 volunteer] volunteer,]

203: 30 Jo] Joe

204: 8 *slow deer's]* *slow a deer's]* *slow deer's*

207: 32 I declar] declar] I declar

208: 1 'open,'] "open"

208: 11 more,"] more,

208: 20 "for] for

215: 6 *friend."]* *friend.*

215: 14 it.] it,

215: 29 terms,] term,] terms,

218: 22 tumblers, a] tumblers, a] tumblers a

223: 5 Khaustiff:"—] Khaustiff:"

223: 6 surname—] surname

223: 11 chloroform] cholrofrom

223: 26 all] all] al

223: 30 fled.] fled."

224: 12 transfixed] tranfixed

226: 3 Bowie.]] Bowie.]

226: 10 wiry] wirey] wiry

- 227: 17 night] ni ht]
- 228: 18 sheep's] sheeps'] sheep's
- 228: 22 'dear-born,'] "dear-born,"
- 229: 10 'dearborn'] "dearborn"
- 230: 21 man?' said] man, said
- 230: 21 I.] I?'
- 230: 24 then,'] then,
- 230: 24 I.] I.'
- 245: 28 laffin'] lauffin'] laffin'
- 252: 2 "what] what
- 252: 32 Well] "Well
- 256: 25 I] "I
- 259: 27 babbys."] babbys.
- 259: 28 Well] "Well
- 260: 5 "when] when
- 260: 8 'do] do
- 263: 24 Levi] Levy
- 267: 34 Poatly] Poatly] Poatty

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