

Rocky Mount, Mecklenburg Co., Va., Jan. 6th, 1868.

Mr. F. G. Mason—Dear Sir: Christmas and New Year's Days are both gone. And if the New Year, which has in reality begun is fraught with new pleasures, brighter hopes, or "better times," they are rather slow in making their appearance, for things in general wear the same aspect they did a month previous, with this exception, viz: very few of the freedmen have begun work. Around the stores, groceries, and "pop-shops," may be seen plenty of negroes idling away time, and drinking the whiskey, bought by the proceeds of a night's plunder. A great many bring forward as an excuse for idleness, the unsettled state of the times, or in other words, "waitin' to see what's gwine to happen."

I am unable to say what this may portend, but am inclined to think it relates to some of the many rumors that have been afloat for the last few years; such as the confiscation of land; land monopoly; social equality, negro supremacy or some such "thundering, bloody out" humbug, of the Radical party. At this season of the year planters are busy preparing for a crop; but numbers of the negroes are unwilling to enter into any contract for this year; or for a year at a time. Now, if a planter does not engage laborers for the entire year, he is, ten to one, left in a bad predicament; for if he were to engage hands by the month, the unprincipled negroes would leave him at the very busiest season of the year, which comes in August and September; when the broiling sun opens the pores on a niggers back, and causes him to emit a very savory odor. Such an one as would be rehished in a Radical parlor; a most delightful scent it is, and doubtless this sweet perfume—in comparison with which Phobos' extract of night blooming cereus, sinks into utter insignificance—was, what first attracted the admiration of the Rads, and of course one cannot but respect the choice of lunatics, however ridiculous that choice may appear.

"So I will 'em leave them to enjoy. The goods the gods provide." A very striking scene occurred a few days ago at a "hog killing;" (no very romantic plager for a scene) for the sake of mystery I shall omit names, and give particulars as they occurred: At four o'clock, a. m., the hogs' funeral pile was lit, and the negroes began to assemble for the bloody work of death. And as the gentlemen were liberal, the negroes were drunk of course. Then began a dance round the "scalding tub" that resembled the Indian war dance. When, lo! all of a sudden was heard a terrible noise, by one of the Ethiopian performers, who was found in the centre of about forty gallons of hot water. Another in the attempt to rescue him from Sileas' pool, dived the top of his cranium of enough "curl hair" to stuff a medium sized sofa. Another of the colored chivalry seized his hands full of clotted blood, and holding it up, exclaimed, with the voice of a Stenator, "So I is gwine to wash my hands in white folks' blood, some of dese days before long." And the few white men that were superintending, becoming alarmed at this turn of affairs, armed themselves with knives, for their mutual protection; and it was well they did. For a plot was formed for their assassination, but was luckily discovered. The sight of the knives, and a little summary chastisement inflicted on the ringleaders, had the good effect of tranquillizing the murderous crew, who however, continue to vow vengeance on the whites. Whether they will carry their threats into effect or not, remains to be seen. I am convinced of the fact that they should like to do so, but I do not think they possess the courage to carry their threats into execution. I may say more on the subject another time, for the present adieu. EMANUEL NOLL.

—We were amused the other evening at three little girls playing among the sage brush in a back yard. Two of them were "making believe keep house" a few yards distance from each other—neighbors as it were. One of them says to the third—little girl: "There now, Nelly, you go to Sarah's house, and stop a little while and talk, and then you come back and tell what she says about me; and then I will talk a bout her, then you go and tell her all I say, and then we'll get mad and don't speak to each other, just like our mothers do, you know. O! that'll be such fun."

—A perky little girl boasted to one of her little friends that her father kept a carriage. "Ah, but," was the triumphant reply, "my father drives an omnibus."

—An enraged husband in Omaha sought to take the life of his wife by loading a stick of firewood with gunpowder. He managed to blow the house up, but the wife still lives to punish him.

Two Iowans waded the Mississippi in rubber boots, at Keokuk the other day.

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For the WATCHMAN. RECKLESS.

Oh, what a night this is to me,
The winds are whirling 'er the lawn,
And in the dark I hear and see
Ten thousand devils, drive them on,
The earth recoils beneath their tread,
The shivering stars conceal their light,
The pine tree moans, with fear and dread,
And all is wild this awful night.

It brings no terror unto me,
Nor in my soul has fear a part,
The wilds are wild, and fierce, and free,
And not so reckless as my heart.
I never knew until this hour
The strength that does on passion wait;
I never felt the frenzied power
That nature gives to those who hate.

I hate him for he stole from me
The love with which my life was light,
And left it like the raging sea
All wild with storms, this fearful night.
The billows heave and swell, and roll,
And dash their waters on the rocks
In wild dismay,—without control,
But I am calm amid their shocks

Aye, calm with joy, and light, and glad,
Love knows no pleasure such as scorn,
My soul with wild delight is mad,
And laughs amid this wintry storm,
No more I care for love's soft spell,
I only feel the force of fate,
Impelling me to work so well
That I shall taste the joys of hate.

The winds, and tell him as he cowers
Beneath the fury of thy blast,
A storm, with all its awful powers,
Shall burst upon his head at last,
And when my vengeance on him falls
Far happier the wretch shall be,
That lies within the graveyard walls,
Or groans in hell's eternity.
Moshannon, Pa. Jan. 11, 1868.

A Rift in the Clouds.

A STORY FOR MARRIED FOLK.

Andrew Lee came home from his shop where he had worked all day, tired and out of spirits; came home to his wife, who was also tired and out of spirits. "A smiling wife and cheerful home—a paradise it would be," said Andrew to himself, as he turned his eyes from the clouded face of Mrs. Lee, and sat down with knitted brows and moody aspect.

Not a word was spoken by either. Mrs. Lee was getting supper, and she moped about with a weary step. "Come," she said at last, with a side glance at her husband. Andrew arose and went to the table. He was tempted to speak an angry word, but controlled himself and kept silent. He could find no fault with the chop nor the homemade bread, nor the fragrant tea. They would have cheered his inward man, if there had been any gleam of sunshine on the face of his wife. He noticed she did not eat.

"Are you not well Mary?" The words were on his lips, but he did not utter them, for the face of his wife looked so repellant, that he feared an irritating reply. And so in moody silence, the twin sat together until Andrew had finished his supper.

As he pushed his chair back, his wife arose and commenced clearing off the table. "This is purgatory," said Lee to himself, as he commenced walking the floor of his little breakfast room, with his hands thrust down into his trousers pockets, and his chin almost touching his breast.

After removing all the dishes and taking them into the kitchen, Mrs. spread a green cover on the table, and placing a fresh trimmed lamp thereon, went out and shut the door after her, leaving her husband alone with unpleasant feelings. He took a long deep breath as she did so, pausing in his walk, stood still for some moments, and then drawing a paper from his pocket, set down by the table, opened the sheet, and commenced reading. Singularly enough, the words upon which his eyes rested were "Praise your wife." They rather tended to increase the disturbance of mind from which he was suffering.

"I should like to find some occasion for praising mine." How quickly his thoughts expressed that ill-natured sentiment. But his eyes were on the page before him, and he read on: "Praise your wife man; for pity's sake give her a little encouragement. It won't hurt her." Andrew Lee raised his eyes from the paper and muttered: "Oh, yes that's all very well praise is cheap enough. But praise her for what? For being sullen, and making her home the most disagreeable place in the world?" His eyes fell again on the paper.

"She has made your home comfortable your hearth bright and shining, your food agreeable; for pity's sake tell her you thank her, if nothing more. She don't expect it; it will make her eyes open wider than they have for twenty years; but it will do her good for all that, and you, too." It seemed to Andrew as if this sentence was written just for him, and just for the occasion. It was a complete answer to his question—"Praise her for what?" and he felt it also a rebuke. He read no further, for thought came too busy in a new direction. Memory was con-

ting him of injustice to his wife. She had always made his home as comfortable for him as her hands could make it, and had offered the light return of praise or commendation? Had he ever told her of the satisfaction he had known or the comfort he had experienced? He was not able to recall the time or occasion. As he thought thus, Mrs. Lee came in from the kitchen, and taking her work basket from the closet, placed it on the table, and sitting down without speaking, began to sew. Mr. Lee glanced almost stealthily at the work in her hands, and saw the bottom of a shirt, which she was stitching neatly. He knew that it was for him that she was at work.

"Praise your wife" The words were before the eyes of his mind, and he could not look away from them. But he was not ready for this yet. He still felt moody and unforgiving. The expression of his wife's face he interpreted to mean ill-nature for which he had no patience. His eyes fell upon the newspaper which lay spread out before him, and he read the sentence: "A kind, cheerful word spoken in a gloomy house is the little rift in the cloud that lets the sunshine through."

Lee struggled with himself a while longer. His own ill-nature had to be conquered first; his moody accusing spirit had to be subdued. He thought of many things to say, yet he feared to say them lest his wife should meet his address with a cold rebuff. At last, leaning toward her and taking hold of the shirt bosom upon which she was at work, he said in a voice carefully modulated with kindness: "You are doing the work beautifully, Mary."

Mrs. Lee made no reply, but her husband did not fail to notice that she lost almost instantly that rigid erectness with which she had been sitting, nor that the motion of her needle had ceased. "My shirts are better made and whiter than those of any other man in the shop," said Lee, encouraged to go on.

"Are they?" Mrs. Lee's voice was low, and had in it a slight huskiness. She did not turn her face, but her husband saw she leaned a little toward him. He had broken the ice of reserve and all was easy now. His hand was among the clouds and a feeble ray was already struggling through the rift it had made.

"Yes, Mary," he answered softly, "and I've heard it more than once, what a good wife Andrew Lee must have."

Mrs. Lee turned her face toward her husband. There was light in it, and light in her eye. But there was something in the expression of the countenance that a little puzzled him.

"Do you think so?" she asked, quite soberly. "What a question!" ejaculated Andrew Lee starting up and going round to the side of the table where his wife was sitting. "What a question Mary!" he repeated, as he stood beside her.

"Do you?" It was all she said. "Yes, darling," was the warmly spoken answer, and he stooped down and kissed her. "How strange that you should ask me such a question!"

"If you would only tell me so now and then, Andrew, it would do me good." Mrs. Lee arose, and leaning her face against the manly breast of her husband, stood and wept.

What a strong light broke in upon the mind of Andrew Lee. He had never given his wife even the small reward of praise for the loving interest she had manifested daily, until doubt of love had entered her soul. No wonder that her face grew clouded, nor what he considered moodiness and ill-nature, took possession of her spirit.

"You are good and true, Mary, my own dear wife, I am proud of you—I love you, and my first desire is for your happiness. If I could always see your face in sunshine, my home would be the dearest place on earth."

A Skull that had a Tongue.

When Dr. John Doane, the famous poet and divine of the reign of James I., attained possession of his first living, he took a walk into the churchyard, where the sexton was at the time digging a grave, and in the course of his labor threw up a skull. This skull the doctor took into his hands and found a rusty, headless nail sticking in the temple of it, which he drew out secretly, and wrapped it in the corner of his handkerchief. He demanded of the gravedigger whether he knew whose skull that was. He said it was a man's who kept a brandy-shop—an honest, drunken fellow, who one night having taken two quarts, was found dead in his bed next morning.

"Had he a wife?" "Yes."

"What character does she bear?" "A very good one: only the neighbors reflect on her because she married the day after her husband was buried." This was enough for the doctor, who, under pretence of visiting the parishioners, went to see the woman. He asked her several questions, and among others what sickness her husband died of—she giving the same account he had before received. He suddenly opened the handkerchief, and cried in an authoritative voice, "Woman do you know this nail?" She was struck with horror at the unexpected demand, instantly owned the fact, and was brought to trial and executed.

Truly might one say, with even more point than Hamlet, that the skull had a tongue in it.

AN UNDERGROUND RIVER IN OHIO, A GREAT NATIONAL CURIOSITY.—It is not generally known that there exists about a mile west of Fremont, a remarkable underground stream, with a swift current, and no outlet above the surface of the ground this side of Lake Erie. It was discovered several years ago on a farm North of the Four Mile House now owned by Mr. Sheffer, by a man who was returning from a day's chopping in the woods. In walking over a slightly sunken place, he noticed a hollow sound and turning, struck the ground with his axe. The axe broke through and disappeared and never has been heard from since. Further investigations showed a rock about six feet below the surface, with a crevice a foot or more wide, in which water could be seen several feet below. By tracing his course further down and breaking through the crust, the same phenomenon appeared again, and by dropping a piece of wood or other floating substance in the upper aperture, it was soon seen to pass the lower one, showing a strong current. A lead and line, let down to the depth of seventy feet, found no bottom.—The supply of water is only slightly affected by drouth, and a pump set up in one of the places above mentioned has furnished the purest water to the neighborhood during the late dry season. It is certainly quite a remarkable stream.—Rz

—A lady who went out shopping, promised to get her little son a cocoanut. She procured one with the husk on, in which state he had never seen one. On arriving at home she gave it to the boy, who look at it curiously, smiled, and laid it down. Presently he said, "Mother, where's my cocoanut?" "I just gave it to you," she replied. Taking it up again, he viewed it contemptuously for a moment and exclaimed, "That thing a cocoanut—I thought it was a waterfall!"

—Affected young lady, seated in a rocking-chair, reading the Bible, exclaims,—"Mother, here is a grammatical error in the Bible!" Mother, lowering her specks, and approaching the reader in a very scrutinizing attitude, says,—"Kill it! kill it! It's the very thing that has been eating the leaves and book-marks."

—When a young gentleman in Canada wishes to pay attention to a young lady, if it be winter, he undertakes to kill her with kindness—by taking her out and sleighing her.

"I wonder what causes my eyes to be so weak?" said a fop to a gentleman. "They are in a weak place," replied the latter.

—Last week a Southern savings bank established by negroes, collapsed because the depositors withdrew all the funds to attend a circus.

The New Reconstruction Bill.

The Rump Congress, it would appear has passed another, a third, pronouncement against the lives and liberties of the Southern people, and call it "A New Reconstruction Bill." It is infamous, cowardly and damnable, in all its parts and bearings. The New York Times, thoroughly understanding the objects and tergiversations of the "Radical Rump Rebels" in Congress, minutely explains its provisions when it says:

The Reconstruction Committee has not quite got up to the standard of the Southern Convention. They, or some of them, have modestly asked that the civil offices of their respective States be declared vacant, and that they be filled by appointees of the Conventions. This seems to have been a little too much for the committee. But, though the new measure which it has prepared does provide for a great deal of confusion and for a central military dictatorship by way of remedy.

It will not be easy, by and by, to define the civil Government of the ten excluded States, or to say how or for what they exist. Provisional they have already been declared to be. Under the proposed measure they will be several shades less than Provisional, if it be possible to comprehend an organization which has an existence and still has none. The notion is paradoxical, but so will be the law. The State Government will go on at present, but the Federal Executive and Judiciary are forbidden to recognize their validity, or the validity of anything they do. If Hunnott or Bradley were to organize a revolutionary junta and call it a Government, it would have the same title to recognition at Washington that the present Provisional Government of Virginia or Georgia will have under the law.

The only authority that will be viable or recognized, as between the South and the Union, if this project become law, will be the military authority. It will be a central military authority, too. The discretionary power now wielded by the District Commanders is to cease; and the General-in-chief, sitting in his office at Washington is to be the absolute master of the South. He is to be the dictator. The administration of the Reconstruction law, and of all laws will be under his exclusive supervision. He may appoint or remove. He may knock down Governor, Judges, Sheriffs and every civil functionary in a State, as unceremoniously as he would knock down nincompoops, and may play mischief generally, with none to call him to account. Provided only, the States prove themselves reconstituted by adopting constitutions filled with "loyal safeguards," and by sending to Washington Senators and Representatives with the mark of the Radical Cain upon their brows, the General-in-Chief may do or undo, obey the law or break it, respect white men's rights or disregard them, according to his sovereign will and pleasure.

If Congress insists upon having a dictator, Gen. Grant is certainly the best man for the office. Cool, clear-headed, free from partisanship, and inclined to be magnanimous, he is the best man on whom Congress can confer these enormous powers. But there can be no mistake about the main fact. Congress now proposes to operate by and through a dictatorship. A soldier is to do the work which the Radicals are unable otherwise to do. The sword is to take the place of statesmanship in the business of Reconstruction. To this complexion has the jugglery of the Reconstruction Committee finally come.

What signifies the constitutional designation of the President as Commander-in-Chief? He may command, but the new bill enjoins indifference to his orders. In relation to the army and the South, he will be laid upon the shelf until the dictatorship make room for constitutional government—if that ever happens. To call this Reconstruction, is a perversion of the terms. To imagine that it will promote peace at the South, or in any degree contribute to the restoration of the Union, were transparent folly.—What it really amounts to is a confession that Congress has sunk so deep into difficulties of its own making that it sees no lawful method of deliverance; and like all such bodies, in similar dilemmas, flies to "military despotism" for relief.

INCREASING.—Our subscription list.

LONG YEARS AGO.

All for a pretty girlish face,
Two cheeks of rosy hue,
Two laughing lips of vermilion tint
And eyes of heaven's blue.

All for a little dimpled chin,
A round throat snowy fair,
A darling mouth to dream upon,
And glorious golden hair.

All for a tender cooing voice,
And gentle fluttering sighs;
All for the promise made to me,
By story, telling eyes.

All for the pretty girlish face,
For a hand as white as snow,
I dreamed a foolish dream of love,
Long, long years ago. —E. Chang

THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER.

—Beecher now orates from a pulpit made of wood from the Mount of Olives.

—In sitting for his portrait Grant will not probably take a political attitude.

—Christmas dish most prevalent in England—Fenian broils.

—Sumner's political and social reconstruction—permanent separation.

—There is a man in Danville, Va., who eats spiders!

—Massachusetts makes \$21,000 out of its State prison annually.

—The latest political caricature represents Grant's platform. He is standing on nothing.

—A man recently died of hydrophobia in New Orleans, from a bite received two years ago.

—A. T. Stewart has given State Senator Creamer a \$30,000 house and lot for making a speech for him.

—It cost \$400,000 to find whether the Kentucky members were "loyal" or not. An expensive piece of information.

—If the war was prosecuted for the preservation of the Union, why are ten States kept out of it.

—Brigham Young has just married his seventy-third wife, and there was a big jubilee over the nuptials.

—A Chicago paper asks whether Gen. Grant is in favor of purchasing territory. Of course he wants to know whether he is a land Grant.

—The Mobile Advertiser suggests that Dickens' reason for not attending church here is because he is not interested in American politics.

—The marks of pencil writing may be made indelible by passing the tongue over it. Even breathing slow over the lines protects them from erasure.

—A rich old lady has, recently died in Somersetshire, England, who for years could only sleep when riding in her carriage. Did she ever try a stupid preacher?

—Pringle one of the Georgia registers, was defeated by a negro for the office of Sergeant at Arms of the Reconstruction Convention, and hung himself in disgust.

"Nancy," said a girl to her companion, "which railroad train do you like the best?" "That one," replied Nancy, "which furnishes a spark catcher."

—Morals are improving about the "Hub." The Boston Post says "No bank was robbed in this city—so far as known to the public—yesterday, and no teller ran away."

—Many of the coffins of soldiers, buried by contract in St. Louis have been found filled with sticks and stones. The bodies were doubtless sold by the contractors for anatomical purposes.

—A few days ago, a car loaded with barrels of elder was thrown from a track at West Cornwall, Ct. The weather was so cold that the elder became frozen, and was taken away in paper bags by the people.

—A statistician estimates that every married couple may calculate up 4,181,304 descendants in about 500 years. Let young people pause and reflect upon the dreadful consequences of matrimony.

—George Francis Train has declared General Grant to be the most gigantic sell ever put upon a Christian people, and compared him to the Irishman's owl, that kept up a "devil of a thinking."

—A man in Connecticut had one of his eyes put out by a piece of chip striking it while chopping wood, some time since, and last week he was thrown from a sleigh, and will probably lose the other eye from the injuries received.

—A large bundle, which was tumbled about on the ground in the hurry of extricating the sufferers at Angola, at last emitted a wail, and on being opened was found to contain a six months old baby, without a scratch upon its body. The mother was dead.

—Judge Clark of the Supreme court of New York, has decided that gold and silver are no longer lawful money of the country, but merchantable commodities, and promissory notes made payable in gold must be paid in gold or currency of an equivalent value.