

Twilight Musings.

My father! 'tis of thee I think, In this thrice calm and holy hour, And all thy well meant counselings...

A DOMESTIC STORY.

From the Star Spangled Banner. HARD TIMES; THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

CHAPTER I.

"What makes you look so dull this morning, Ellen?" inquired Mr. Chester, a young merchant in a small way, of his wife.

The times had begun to tighten up, however, and business was dull. The notes were due, and he had to bestir himself to make his payments.

With this sum he had been able to pay off his more pressing demands, and to lay by a surplus of five hundred dollars to meet a note which would fall due some two months hence.

The receipt of this sum had also induced him to increase the luxuries of his house. The parlor had been newly furnished, and the old parlor furniture placed in the room.

"You look very dull," continued the husband, as he rose from the breakfast table.

"I found it when I was quite a young man, and what prosperity has crowned me, I owe to that."

"Pray explain, Uncle Luke." "After, dinner, I will."

"Somehow in spite of the extraordinary preparations Ellen had made for the reception of her uncle, the dinner did not pass off very pleasantly."

"Now, uncle, come into the parlor and Ellen shall play you a tune on her piano," said Fred, leading the way.

"On her what?" exclaimed the old man with a start of surprise.

"On the piano, of course." "Then you keep a piano?"

"Certainly; we could not possibly get along without a piano, could we, Ellen?"

"I am sure we couldn't," replied the young wife. "O, it is such a comfort!"

"Such a luxury, you mean," answered Uncle Luke, with a cold sneer. "What did you give for it?"

"Five hundred." "Is it paid for?" "Certainly it is."

"And your note due to-morrow which you cannot meet."

THE AGITATOR.

Debated to the Extension of the Area of Freedom and the Spread of Healthy Reform.

COBB, STURROCK & CO., "THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM." PUBLISHERS & PROPRIETORS.

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he could not raise it. Even three per cent, a month, without "collateral," would not procure it. Something must be done.

The note was due on the following day, and he decided to make the application to Uncle Luke, as he was familiarly called.

"Ah!" said the blunt old mechanic. "I thought things were going on swimmingly with you."

"So they were, but the times are so deucedly hard, that I cannot make enough to pay expenses," replied Fred, with a dolorous expression of countenance.

"Where's the two thousand dollars you received from your father's estate?"

"I paid my debts with it." "But didn't you tell me you didn't owe above three thousand dollars?"

"I paid off fifteen hundred." "And the rest?" "Well, that went in various ways."

"And your stock is mortgaged?" "Yes for one thousand." "You have done a good business."

"Yes, well, I am in a hurry just now, but I will go up and dine with you, and we will talk it all over; and Uncle Luke left the shop."

Fred did not half like his uncle's inquisitiveness, but he had a strong hope that he would get him out of his present scrape.

Writing a hasty note, he despatched his boy to inform his wife that Uncle Luke would dine with them.

CHAPTER III. Dinner time came, and so did Uncle Luke. Ellen had a nice dinner ready, and her pretty face was covered with smiles when she welcomed the honest old man to the hospitalities of her board.

Uncle Luke seated himself at the table. His accustomed smile had disappeared, and he looked rather stern.

"Fred," said he suddenly, as the young merchant inserted his fork in the breast of the nicely browned roast turkey, "you haven't found the philosopher's stone yet?"

Fred suspended the operation of carving the turkey, and gazed with a look of astonishment into the face of the speaker.

"What do you mean, Uncle Luke?" asked he. "You don't know what the philosopher's stone is, do you?"

"No." "I found it when I was quite a young man, and what prosperity has crowned me, I owe to that."

"Pray explain, Uncle Luke." "After, dinner, I will."

"Somehow in spite of the extraordinary preparations Ellen had made for the reception of her uncle, the dinner did not pass off very pleasantly."

"Now, uncle, come into the parlor and Ellen shall play you a tune on her piano," said Fred, leading the way.

"On her what?" exclaimed the old man with a start of surprise.

"You ought to have thought of that when you bought the piano," replied Uncle Luke, sternly. "Do you know Waters?"

"The carpenter?" "Yes." "Apply to him; he will lend you the money."

"But he is almost a stranger to me." "No matter; go to him," and Uncle Luke left the house.

"Oh! Fred, this is all my fault," said Ellen, bursting into tears.

"No matter, my dear, it will all come round right." Fred did apply to Waters.

"What security can you give?" asked the carpenter. "I don't know," replied Fred, doubtfully.

"My stock is mortgaged." "Household furniture?" "No."

"What have you got?" "A piano and—"

"That will do; give me a bill of sale of that. If not paid within thirty days the piano is mine."

Fred assented and received the money. The papers were executed, and Fred got out of the scrape.

During the succeeding thirty days he tried hard to raise the money to redeem the piano, without success.

Waters took it at the appointed time, and seemed perfectly satisfied with his bargain.

A few days after, the young couple were surprised to receive an invitation to dine with Uncle Luke, and, to their astonishment, when they arrived, they found their piano in his snug little parlor.

"Did you buy this?" asked Fred. But Uncle Luke would answer no questions, yet he promised to make him a present of it as soon as he had paid all his debts.

The dinner consisted of corned-beef and baked potatoes, with an apple pie for desert. Uncle Luke was in unusually good spirits, and never once apologized for the singular fare he had set before his guests.

But they understood the meaning of it. It was intended as a lesson for them, and they profited by it. They brought home the philosopher's stone and began to live by a much humbler system.

The hired girl was discharged, and Ellen had so much to do in attending to her household duties that she had no time to be lonesome. They were much happier than when she moped all day in the parlor, and better than this, the times began to mend, and Fred's business prospered again.

He paid off his mortgage, and the piano was duly returned to them, because they could afford to support such a luxury.

No Sabbath. In a "Prize Essay on the Sabbath," written by a journeyman printer in Scotland, there occurs the following passage:

"Yoke fellow! think how the abstraction of the Sabbath would hopelessly enslave the working classes, with which we are identified. Think of labor thus going on in one monotonous and continuous and eternal cycle—limbs forever on the rack; the fingers forever playing, the eye-balls forever straining, the brow forever sweating, the feet forever plodding, the brain forever throbbing, the shoulder forever drooping, the loins forever aching."

Think of the beauty it would efface; of the merry heartedness it would extinguish; of the giant strength it would exhaust; of the aspirations it would crush; of the sickness it would breed; of the projects it would wreck; of the groans it would extort; of the lives it would immolate; and of the cheerless graves it would prematurely dig! See them, toiling and mowing, sweating and fretting, grinding and hewing, sweating and spinning, sowing and gathering, mowing and reaping, razing and building, digging and planting, unloading and storing striving and struggling—in the garden and in the field, in the granary and in the mill, in the warehouse and in the shop, on the mountain and in the ditch, on the roadside and in the wood, in the city and in the country, on the sea on the shore, and on the earth, in days of brightness and of gloom.—What a sad picture would the world present if we had no Sabbath!"

Adventure with Rattlesnakes.

I noticed a sketch in the Courier a few days since, entitled "Taugannuc Mountain," that recalled to my mind an incident that occurred to me on those mountains, some twenty-five or thirty years ago.

I was at that time a resident of Shoffield. At the time to which I refer, I formed one of a party of young men who made an excursion to the summit of those mountains, to hunt partridge, &c. There are, or were at that time, places there so infested with rattlesnakes that it was dangerous to approach them.

To avoid these abodes, we relied on the acquaintance of one of our party with their locality. After chasing over the hills for six or eight hours, we were tired enough to think of returning to our homes. We were proceeding along in an "Indian file," through a defile some four rods wide, one side of which was a mountain; the other some forty feet high, composed of loose ledges that were overgrown with ivy, when a sharp rattle was heard that sent a chill to our hearts.

The foremost of our line saw the reptile just ahead of him, and without thought raised his gun and fired. As the report of the gun echoed along the crags a most hideous rattling and hissing arose on all sides.

We were in the midst of the "den." Each rock and bush seemed populous with rattlesnakes, and we could see them descending from the higher crags. We stood still, not knowing what to do. To go back would be as dangerous as to advance; and to remain where we were, as perilous as either, for several were moving in the bushes near us.

The slightest touch of a fang was certain death, as we were too far from any habitation to enable us to reach it before the deadly virus would have taken effect. We feared to stir, lest we should attract their attention sooner than if we remained quiet.

What passed in the minds of my companions I know not, but I remember that my own thoughts were of no very agreeable nature.

At this juncture, one of us perceived a large flat rock, some three rods from us, and proposed in a whisper that we should make for it. Having ascertained that none of our assailants were between us and it, we made a rush for it, and gained it unscathed. Our last movements notified our creeping foes of our whereabouts, as well as to irritate them more, and they made for our position.

Our weapons of defence were four guns, two pistols and an axe. We were then so situated as to be able to defend ourselves, in some measure. We cut a couple of very slender sprouts that grew close by the rock, stioned ourselves in the center, and as the snakes came on the edge of our citadel we killed them. Only five or six made the attempt, and we pitched their mangled carcasses back to their comrades. It was evident that so long as we remained on the rock we were safe; but how to escape was more than we could predict. If we could have killed all of the reptiles on one side, with our guns and cudgels, we should have encountered more in scaling the ledge.

We remained quiet on the rock, and in a short time the rattlesnakes ceased their attacks, but on our making any movement, they commenced hissing again. These snakes emit a disagreeable odor when disturbed, and the air was filled with it. We had noticed a tall tree growing close by us, and one of our party proposed to cut it, so as to cause it to fall against the top of the ledge, and thereby form, if it did not break, a way by which we might extricate ourselves. We instantly commenced cutting it, keeping a sharp look out for the spotted rascals, who were now doubly enraged by the resounding blows.

The tree fell with its top against the summit of the ledge, and we ascended its trunk and escaped. Before we left we just took a farewell glance at our baffled belligerents, who had then taken possession of our rock, and were engaged in snapping a handkerchief dropped by one of us. We formed a line, and shot at them, and then left.

Fatal as is the bite of a rattlesnake, yet there is a weed growing in our meadows, which being properly applied, renders it harmless. Many persons are not acquainted with it, indeed very few are. I have known persons who, knowing antidotes for this poison, refuse to disclose them.

The weed to which I refer grows from twelve to eighteen inches high, one stalk, leaves narrow, and grow singly from the stem from one to two inches apart. This weed is surrounded with small bluish blossoms that have five leaves; these are on the lower portion and two above. I see one growing a short distance from me, which I enclose. If this weed be bruised in cold water and applied, the bite is harmless.—Were I a botanist I might give a better description of it.—Boston Courier.

The following little incident was related to us by a friend who vouches for its truthfulness.

A teacher in a neighboring Sunday School was examining a class of little boys from a scripture Catechism. The first question was, "who stoned Stephen?" Ans. "The Jews."

Second question "where did they stone him?" Ans. "Beyond the limits of the city." The third question "Why did they take him beyond the limits of the city?" was not in the book and proved a poser to the whole class.

It passed from head to foot without an answer being attempted. At length a little fellow, who had been scratching his head all the time, looked up and said: "Well I don't know unless it was to get a fair sting at him."

The traveling artist who went around the country taking likenesses, has been arrested for taking some that didn't belong to him.

AMUSING SKETCHES.

Anecdote of General Taylor.

If there was one thing that the late President valued less than any other, it was dress. This indifference to the fine arts, of the tailor, as might have been expected, led to a great many amusing blunders on the part of his subordinates.

On the day after the battle of Monterey, the General was in company with two other officers, in undress, "talking over matters" in the dining room of a cafe. The General was dressed in a white jacket, straw hat and nankeen continuations. The party had been in close conversation but a few minutes, when a young Lieutenant, fresh from Iowa, made his appearance.

It was his first day in camp, having arrived that morning by the way of an up train from the Rio Grande. He was, of course, unacquainted with anybody. After looking about him for a few minutes, he took his seat at a marble topped table, and commenced "ordering up."

"I say, shortly, pass the bill of fare." This was addressed to the General. "Humor the joke, General," whispered one of the officers, "he evidently takes you for the waiter."

"We'll see!" said the General. "What do you want?" he inquired. "A mutton chop and cup of coffee, and suddenly too," responded the Iowa officer. "James, get the gentleman what he desires," said the General to one of the real waiters.

"No, sir!" energetically and quite indignantly responded the subaltern, "that won't do. If I wanted James to get my dinner, I would have given my orders to James. I want you, old fellow," he continued, rather facetiously, "to attend to the matter. It would do me good to see a man of your build fly around. Ha! Ha!"

"But I am engaged, sir, and cannot attend to you. James must wait upon you, or you must wait upon yourself," replied the General.

"Well, let James go," the subaltern replied. "Queer people, these," he muttered half audibly, "two big lubbers to get one mutton chop! No wonder they cannot resist invasion."

James attended to the order. The Lieutenant partook of his mutton chop, and coffee, paid his bill, picked his teeth, adjusted his cap, and sauntered forth to take a look at things. The first person he met on the Piazza, was "shorty," the waiter, arm-in-arm with Gen. Quitman and Col. Duncan.

"Well, if this ain't rushing things, you may shoot me!" exclaimed the surprised subaltern. "A getter up of fried potatoes supported by a live General and a Colonel of Artillery. I wonder who the devil he is, and where he got his impudence. My friend," he continued, accosting another officer, "can you tell me who that little old fellow with a white jacket is, and what he does for a living?"

"What! the one supported by Gen. Quitman?" "Yes."

"Why that's old Zachariah, and he makes his living by wallowing folks," answered the interrogated. "What Zachariah do you mean?" asked the Iowa subaltern.

"Why, old Zachariah Taylor, the commander of the Rio Grande army." "You don't say so! Not General Taylor? Je-r-u-salem!" exclaimed the dumb-founded subaltern, and left.

Evading the Law.

Two worthies had occasion a few days since to journey a short distance in the State of Vermont, on business. The weather being some what chilly, the friends concluded to stop at a tavern on their way and warm up. Acting according to their resolutions, the friends walked up to the bar of a public house, and said they "would take a little brandy."

"We do not keep the article," said the man in attendance. "Well, we will take some gin, then, said one of the applicants. "Hav'n't got it," said boniface.

One of the thirsty applicants beginning to get a little impatient asked: "Do you keep whiskey?" "No," was the reply. "If you hav'n't got whiskey, what do you keep—beer?"

"No air not a drop?" After muttering some thing about Yankee fanatics and the confounded Maine Law, the friends took a seat by the stove. Presently a trio came in, went up to the bar and after a short consultation, in which the landlord who was heard to say "they are all right," one of the party called for a bundle of straw.

The straw was promptly handed over and the man went out. The other two followed his example, and each left with a similar bundle. Our heroes, by this time began to "smell the rat," and one of them stepped up, saying; that he guessed he would feed, and accordingly purchased three bundles, upon opening which the anxiously sought, "red eye" made its appearance, enclosed in small black bottles, much to the satisfaction of the friends who, after "warming" departed with the impression that the Maine Law was not a bad institution after all.

"John, how does the thermometer stand?" "Against the wall, dad." "I mean how is the mercury?" "I guess it's pretty well, dad; it hasn't complained lately."

"You little rascal, is it colder than yesterday?" "I don't know, dad, I'll go out and feel."

Theodore Parker.

Somebody in the Boston Transcript, writing from Jerusalem, in Virginia, tells the following good story, illustrating at once the importance of the letter "D," and the bad odor of Abolitionism in the old Dominion.

Theodore D. Parker, Esq., a merchant in Boston, happened a few weeks since to be a guest for one night at Knapp's hotel in this place. After tea, as he was enjoying the coolness of the evening on the piazza, he noticed a gentleman in the office who was examining the books of arrivals, and who afterwards walked up and down the piazza, scanning him (Mr. R.) very closely. Some ten or fifteen minutes passed in this way, when the stranger broke the silence by addressing him.

"Is your name Parker, sir?" "Yes, sir." "Theodore Parker?" "Yes, sir."

"Do you come from Boston, sir?" "Yes, sir." "Then sir," (with the look as if the identity of the individual were fairly established,) "I suppose that you are the man that goes about in New England vilifying the institutions of the South."

"Oh, no, no!" answered the astonished Mr. Parker, before whose eyes a bag of feathers and a kettle of tar danced a momentary pas de deux. "I am Theodore D. Parker—I am a merchant of Boston—I am not the Minister of whom you speak."

"Ah, that alters the case," responded the chivalric Virginian in a milder tone. "But allow me to give you one piece of advice; and that is this, if you are going to travel around those diggings, you had better, in future, when you sign your name, be particular, and put that "D," d—n plain."

"Will you keep your eye on my horse, my son, while I step in and get a drink?" "Yes, sir." [Stranger gets his drink and comes out.] "Where's my horse, boy?" "He's runned away, sir."

"Didn't I tell you to keep your eye on him, you scamp?" "Yes, sir; and I did keep it on him till he got clean out of sight."

A Very Nice Lady.

When the town of Woodstock, Conn., first began to be settled, there was a time when the few and scattered families were filled with the dreadful apprehension of being taken and perhaps killed or carried off by the Indians. No man retired at night without at first having his gun well loaded, and placed over his head where he could seize it instantly.

With these and other precautions, one of these brave men, and his no less courageous companion, on a certain night retired to bed. In the dead of night they were awakened by an unusual noise around the house. They listened—presently they heard it again; it sounded like a slight knocking against the window-shutter at the opposite end of the house. The man seized his gun, and boldly entered the apartment whence the noise proceeded, and in thunder tones demanded—

"Who's there?" A gentle voice, which he well knew, replied— "I am your neighbor, and have come to get some medicine for one of my children that is sick."

He lowered his gun, and turned to go, and replace it over his bed, almost in vain struggling as he went to let his courage down, and to calm his perturbed feelings; as he entered his bedroom he discovered his wife deliberately changing her inner garment.

"Pray, what are you about?" he exclaimed, "at such a time as this?" "Why," she replied, "you see what I am about, don't you? I wasn't going off among the Indians without clean clothes on, I would have you to know."

Dobbs in the Legislature.

Owing to a new phase in politics, Dobbs was elected to the Legislature. Though gratified, he was also a little intimidated by the honor, and but for the thought that he was not necessarily obliged to speak, would have declined serving. As it was, he accepted.

All things went on smoothly for a time. Mr. Dobbs could vote on other people's motion, though he couldn't make any himself. One unlucky day, however, the proceedings being rather dull, and Mr. Dobbs rather thirsty he concluded to go over to Congress hall, and get a glass of lemonade. As he rose to leave the hall, he caught the speaker's eye. The speaker supposed he intended to address the House, and accordingly announced in a loud voice:

"Mr. Dobbs." Dobbs started as if he had been shot.—The assembled wisdom of the State had their eyes fixed upon him. He pulled out his pocket-handkerchief to wipe away the perspiration, and feeling it necessary to say something, blubbered out—

"Second the motion." "There is no motion before the House," said the Speaker. "Then I—I."

The silence was breathless. "I—I." Dobbs couldn't think of anything to say. But a bright idea came to him, and he finished the sentence— "I move we adjourn"

The motion didn't go, but Dobbs did, and nothing more was seen of him that day.

AN EXPLANATION.—In addressing a jury upon one occasion, the celebrated Mr. Jeffrey found it necessary to make free with the character of a military officer, who was present during the whole harangue. Upon hearing himself several times spoken of as "the soldier," the son of Mars, boiling with indignation, interrupted the pleader.—"Don't call me, soldier, sir, I am an officer." Mr. Jeffrey immediately went on—"Well, gentlemen, this officer who is no soldier," was the sole cause of all the mischief that has occurred."

A drunken lawyer on going into church, was observed by the minister, who addressed him thus: "I shall bear witness against you at the day of judgment."

The lawyer shaking his head with drunken gravity replied: "I have practiced twenty five years at the bar, and have always found that the greatest rascal is the first to turn State's evidence."