

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I HAVE sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson

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MISCELLANEOUS.

From the Lady's Book for January 1843.

THE BLIND FIDDLER.

BY MISS VIRGINIA DEFOREST.

'Harry, what is the use of your fiddling away there all the evening, when you might just as well be reading some useful book, or learning some useful art?'

'Good brother, don't fret. My fiddling does not disturb you. You have such a power of fixing your attention, that you can study your book just as well when I am playing a dancing tune here in the room as you can when I am a mile off. It does not disturb you at all.'

'Granted. We settled that matter long ago. The cheerful sounds of the instrument inspired without disturbing me. I think that on the whole, I get on rather better when you are in the room, especially as you are always willing to give me a lift when I come across anything which I don't understand.'

'Well, then, why do you fret?'

'It is not on my account, but on your own. It seems to me that you are wasting your time, to practice so much as you do. You play in a masterly manner now; and by employing all your evening in study, you might learn a great deal that would be of some practicable use to you as a farmer.'

'Oh, I like to mingle the agreeable with the useful, to fiddle nine-tighths of the evening, and study the remaining fifth, as Patrick O'Dougherty says. Besides, who knows but fiddling may be useful to me some time or other? I may live to get my bread by it.'

Poor Harry Duncan! he little thought that his words would ever come true.—He was a light-hearted, volatile, generous youth, the destined heir of a rich uncle, the favorite son of his father, a flourishing farmer in Ayrshire. There was not a more popular or more promising youth in all Scotland. Not even his staid and studious brother James, was more highly esteemed in their native village. All hearts warmed at the sight of his merry face, and the ring of his cheerful laugh; and right prosperously did he go on for many a long year. He inherited his uncle's estate, a fine, well stocked farm, and was at once placed in a state of complete independence.

James who had not the naturally fine parts and popular address of his brother, was one of your persevering, plodding youths, who, while his brother was learning to play upon the violin, was seriously addressing himself to the study of scientific agriculture. He learned a great many things respecting the chemistry of soil and plants and the alteration of crops, by studying attentively every new work which came out on any of these subjects and finally became satisfied that he could increase very greatly the products of any farm of which he might have the care.

On proposing some of his improvements to his father, he found that it was easier to convince one's self of the possibility of a scheme, than to induce others to adopt it.—The old man was highly indignant at his son's presuming to teach him the art which he had been all his life practising; and he

momentarily told him to carry his book notions to another market. Being a rather high spirited youth, and of age, at the time this ungracious speech was made. James took his father at his word, and began to make preparations for leaving home. This was just after the decease of the uncle, who had left not only his real estate, but all his personal property to Harry.

Coming into his brother's room one morning, and finding him packing his trunk very diligently, he accosted him with—'Halloo! what now? Going a journey?'

'Yes, Harry, a long one,' replied James sedately.

'Indeed! what has started you off now brother, and whither are you going?'

'I will tell you, Harry,' he said, closing his trunk and sitting down composedly on the lid. 'You must know that this morning having very respectfully suggested to father some change with regard to manuring that field which is intended for wheat next season, he took my remarks in high dudgeon, scolded away a half an hour at me, blamed me for pretending to learn farming from books, and finally told me I had better take my book notions to another market. Now as I can do that thing, I think on the whole, I will.'

'Oh no! brother, you won't do so hasty and unkind a thing. You'll think better of it.'

'Harry, I hate to leave you—that's a fact. We have been more than brothers. We have always been friends. But go I must—'

Harry put both hands to his face, bowed down his face on the table, and wept like a child. Tears filled the eyes of James too, but he was firm in his purpose. Recovering in some measure from his agitation, Harry said, 'When do you intend to go? how are you provided for the adventure?'

'I mean,' replied James, 'to go to America, and I have money enough to pay my passage, and support me a year after my arrival.'

'What is your plan of operation?'

'I mean to earn money enough to buy some land; and then I will see if there is any virtue in my book notions.'

'I pray you, James, do not act so hastily—so madly. There is no occasion for it. Stay with us. You will share the same as myself in what father may leave. There are but we two. Why part?—Why be a wanderer and an exile, when you have a comfortable home and a good prospect of future independence before you?'

'It is of no use to talk about it Harry,' replied James, who, in fact expected nothing by way of inheritance from his father but still had too much delicacy to wound his brother by saying so. 'You know I love you, Harry, and would gladly stay with you, but I know also where I am going and what I will do.'

'At least, then,' said Harry, 'if you will go, let me smooth your way a little,' and so saying, he sat down and wrote a check for all the ready money in his banker's hands, the hoarded savings—in fact, nearly all the personal estate of his kind uncle, amounting to a sum which would suffice to purchase his brother a fine tract of fertile land in America. This he handed to James the moment he had signed it.

'I cannot take it, Harry.'

'You must, you shall take it. I will have no denial. Fortune has been unjust to you, James. My uncle did not know your worth, my father does not know it.—No one knows you but myself. I will not see you go abroad like a beggar or a mere laboring adventurer. Take this money and buy yourself a farm. I believe in your ability to distinguish yourself in the country to which you are going, by your skill and science in agriculture. You will do honor to the family and the name, if you have fair play; and have you shall.'

'I can get along without this money,

Harry, and I do not like to rob you.'

'It is no robbery. It is a free gift. Or, if you are too proud for that, call it a loan, and when you may do so.'

'But I may be shipwrecked—'

'I will provide against loss from that cause. You must take it James. You are my only brother; I could never answer it to my conscience, if I were to allow you to go away without providing as amply as I can for your well being. I have enough and more than enough left for myself.'

Thus urged James received the money and at home after left the paternal mansion for ever.

Years rolled on. Harry married, had a fine family of children growing up around him, and all was going on prosperously; when his easy disposition—his unwillingness to say, no! led him into a series of embarrassments which led him to the brink of ruin. In consequence of becoming security for a friend who was engaged in extensive commercial speculation, he was compelled to sell his fine estate which he had inherited from his uncle, and take shelter for his family and himself in the home of his father, now far advanced in life. The decease of the old man, soon after this event once more raised him to competence, by giving him a second inheritance, James having been passed over in the final disposition of his father's property.

Things now went on prosperously for many years, and Harry had passed the middle period of life, when, being engaged one day in overseeing the workmen on his farm, he was surprised by a sudden shower, and taking shelter under a tree, he was struck blind and reduced to premature decrepitude by lightning. At forty he had lost his sight, and his property had been ruined. A succession of bad crops soon ran him deeply in debt, and he found himself once more obliged to sell his farm in order to satisfy his creditors. A kind letter which he had received some months before from James, determined him to join his brother in America, and try with the few hundred to him, to relieve his fortune in that distant land.

He accordingly embarked for Philadelphia, with his wife and the two youngest children; but his fortune still pursued him. The ship was wrecked on the coast of New Jersey, and although the crew and passengers were saved; the trunk which contained his money was lost, and he found himself on a strange shore in a completely destitute condition.

Fortunately his good spirits never deserted him. Although blind and destitute his courage and fortitude were unabated. He found shelter for himself and family in the house of a kind hearted farmer; and among the few effects which were saved from the wreck was one trunk which contained the same violin on which he had been accustomed to play in the happy days of his youth. When it was brought to him he grasped it cheerfully, and exclaimed, 'With this I may yet be enabled to find way to my brother's residence without being dependent on the hand of charity.' His performance on the instrument was, in fact, so skillful, that the villagers, won by its sweet tones, and their sympathy for his misfortunes, got up a little concert, which gave him money enough to commence his journey towards the interior of Pennsylvania, where he hoped to find his brother. And so he travelled on from town to town a poor blind fiddler, pitted and relieved indeed, but still very poor and destitute, knowing not in the morning where he should lay his head at night; and as full of anxiety as he was of affection for a suffering family.

When he arrived at the town from which James's last letter was dated, he learned to his dismay, that his brother had sold his property there and emigrated to the west. No one could tell in what part of the country he had settled, but he had expressed an intention to buy a farm in Illinois. 'Slowly and sadly' did poor Harry resume his

weary journey: Days and weeks did he toil on until at last they told him that he had arrived in the State of Illinois. But it was a great State, and he still wandered on, vainly inquiring after his lost brother, until the hope of finding his brother almost died within him.

Towards the close of a chill autumn day, he found himself in the kitchen of a large farm house into which he had been invited in order to regale the children with a few tunes on the violin. It was a scene of rustic comfort. A cheerful fire blazed upon the hearth, to which his little boy hastened for the purpose of warming himself. The children of the farmer danced about the room, in eager anticipation of the music, till the poor fiddler had drawn forth his instrument from its case and began to play, when its full sounding tones soon lulled the tumult. Two little girls stood before the performer, with pleased attention, on with folded hands, and the other holding the reins attached to the little cart-load of playthings half forgotten behind her. The eldest daughter leaned over the back of her mother's chair, sheltered by which the little boy the wag of the family executed a travesty of the fiddler's motions, with a fire shovel and a pair of bellows. The mother held upon her lap an infant whose interest in the music, the father endeavored to increase by snapping his fingers for castanets.—The poor fiddler's wife had her infant too, in her lap; and wretched as her condition was; she seemed to sympathize in the pleasure imparted to the farmer's family by her husband's music. The old farm servant stood with his back to the fire gazing apathetically upon the whole scene, the group was a subject for a painter.

Hitherto the fiddler had played the national tunes of the country, Washington's compliment to the supposed taste of his auditors; but he now began an old favorite air which had been the delight of the youthful days, the Yellow Haired Laddie. Suddenly, the joyful chattering of the farmer to his little one ceased; the castanets were no longer heard snapping. As the notes of linked sweetness long drawn out fell upon his ear the farmer stood still and gazed upon the performer, wrapt in other scenes, carried back as we are wont to be to older times, to older times. At length the music ceased.

'Pray my good man,' said the farmer 'where did you learn that tune?'

'In benny Ayrshire, sir.'

'I never heard it played in that style before save by one hand which is far enough from here. In Ayrshire did you say? Tell me—what is your name?'

I am called poor Harry, the blind fiddler, but, in prosperous days, I was blithe Harry Duncan.'

'That I should ever live to see you thus Harry!' cried the farmer, flinging himself into the arms of the astonished blind man, in a passionate gush of tears, 'it is your brother James that embraces you! Why, oh! why do I see you thus?'

'Ah Jamie,' replied Harry, adopting for the nonce the phraseology of the humble peasantry of his country, a little of his old humor returning even at this touching moment, 'ye ken I told ye many a time, lang syne, that fiddle might one day be the means of winning my bread.'

'Well,' replied James, recovering a little at this sally; 'I think the prophecy has been sufficiently fulfilled. You shall no longer fiddle for your bread, Harry.' And he was as good as his word, James's skill in the application of sound science to agriculture had made him immensely rich, although he retained his original simple style of living. He had long ago repaid his brother his generous loan; but his gratitude for that favor and his true affections conspired to make him place Harry and his family far beyond the reach of want for the remainder of his days.

'I'm very much put out,' as the fellow said when he was kicked out of doors.

Female Society.—Among all the means of recasting the exhausted energies of the mind after the toils and vexations of the day nothing is so admirably fitted to fill up the elegant leisure of the scholar, as the society of women. Conversation with men requires some exertion, exacts some labor; it is too often a theatre in which the parties exert themselves to outdo each other in argument or mortify their unbridled leaders by showing the immense extent of their information, and the grasp of their minds. Even when free from every thing approaching to rivalry of contention, it is, in many instances, a mutual and incessant training to things which have an epigrammatic point and pungency, which are flavored with the salt of wit, startlingly their abruptness, or give a pleasant shock of surprise. Conversation thus conducted, instead of soothing the ruffled, only tasks anew the faculties which have toiled all the day long in the world's mill. In conversation with women, there is nothing of all this; nature has established a mutual spirit of concession between the sexes, which forbids all contention; while that delicate tact, which discovers instinctively the tastes and habits of thoughts in another, and adapts its conversation to them—which slides gracefully over matters, without resting on them, and without effort—extracts the delicate aromas and the volatile essences, and gives, as Dr. Donne said of Lady Anny Clifford to every subject, from predestination to sea-silk, a pungent flavor and a piquant relish—is rarely found but in the company of intelligent and accomplished women.

They have a dog at the Circus in New Orleans, that can do every thing but talk. While performing his wonderful tricks, the other evening the following conversation took place in the corner appropriated to them as reported by the Pleasure:

'De lor! whoop! Jes look at dat dog! I declar he knows more than folks does.'

'Dog? Does you call dat a real sure enough dog?' said another dandy by his side, whose eyes were opened so wide they looked like a couple of half dollars.

'In course I does,' said the first speaker.

'What you think he is yourself?'

'What I think? I think dar's a white boy inside the dog skin—I knows dar is. You can't fool dis nigger dat dis all dog doins. Look dar! look dar!' continued the grinning lump of ebony as the sagacious animal was showing the audience how his brother dogs could run on two lame legs.—'Look dar! You spose a dog can do dat when he asked? Naber!'

Conjugal Affection.—A woman from the neighborhood of Granville, in England, went into an apothecary's shop the other day with two prescriptions, one for her husband and the other for her cow. She inquired what was the price of them; and the apothecary replied that it was so much for man, and so much for the beast. The woman finding that she had not enough money, reflected for a moment, and said: 'Give me, at all events, the medicine for the cow; I can send for my husband's to-morrow.'

Talking Turkey.—A white man and an Indian went hunting in company agreeing to share their game. They killed a turkey and an owl, and on separating undertook to divide. Says the white man—'You may take the owl and I'll have the turkey; or I'll take the turkey and you may have the owl.' 'Ah but,' says the Indian, 'You don't say 'turkey' once to me.'

A Modest Young Lady.—A young lady once remarked that there was but one word in the Bible she wished altered—and that was in the passage, 'Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.' She would have the word *smite* changed to *kiss*.

An old man out west has the same much mutton in his time that wool is growing all over his face.