

COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.



"That Government is the best which governs least."

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POETRY.



[From the Knickerbocker.]

A Benedic to a Bachelor.

Don't tell me "you haven't got time."
What other things claim your attention?
There's not the least reason or rhyme
In the wisest excuse you can mention
Don't tell me about "other fish."
Your duty is done when you buy'em;
And you never will relish the dish
Unless you've a woman to fry'em.

You may dream of poetical fame,
But the story may chance to miscarry;
The best way of sending one's name
To posterity, Charles, is to marry
And I here I am willing to own—
After soberly thinking upon it—
I'd very much rather be known
Through a beautiful son than a sonnet.

I could give you a bushel of reasons
For choosing the "double estate";
It agrees with all climates and seasons,
Though it may be adopted too late.
To one's parents 'tis gratefully due;
Just think what a terrible thing
'T would have been, sir, for me and for you,
If ours had neglected the ring!

Don't search for an "angel a minute";
For suppose you succeed in the sequel,
After all the deuce would be in it,
For the match would be mighty unequal;
The angels, it must be confessed,
In this world are rather uncommon;
And allow me, dear Charles, to suggest,
You'll be better content with a woman.

THE FRENCH LOUIS.

Dame fortune queerly plays her cards,
And dearly loves a prank;
She turns one Louis up a knave,
Another, out a blank.

Andishman, writing from the west, says pork is so plenty that "every third man you meet is a hog."

MISCELLANEOUS.

The Circuit Preacher.

BY KATE SUTHERLAND.

The Methodist circuit preacher is in the way of seeing human nature in many rare and curious aspects. Under the itinerating system, the whole of these United States are divided into conferences, districts, and circuits. The conference usually embraces a state, the district a certain division of the state or conference, and the circuit a portion of the district. To every circuit is assigned a preacher, who is expected to provide himself with a horse, and his duty is to pass round his circuit regularly at appointed seasons, through the year, and meet the members of the church at various places of worship established on the circuit. Every year he attends the annual conferences of preachers, at which one of his bishops presides, and is liable to be assigned a new circuit, in the selection of which, as a general thing, he has no choice—the bishop making all the appointments. And so, term after term, he goes to a new place, among strangers. Before any strong attachments can be formed, the relation between him and his people is severed; and he begins, as it were, life anew hundreds of miles away, it may be, from the former field of labor. To a single man, this system is one involving great self-denial and sacrifice; but to a man having a family, the self-denial and sacrifice assumes often a painful character.

In those circuits that embrace wealthy and popular sections of the country, the Methodist preacher is well taken care of; but there are many other sections where the people are not only very poor, but indifferent to matters of religion, ignorant in the extreme, and not over burdened with kind or generous feelings. On circuits of this character, the preacher meets sometimes with pretty rough treatment; and if, for this year's service, he is able to get, being, we will suppose, a single man, fifty or sixty dollars in money, he may think himself pretty well off.

To one of these hard circuits a preacher whom we shall call the Rev. Mr. Odell, of the New Jersey Conference, found him-

self some years ago assigned by the bishop who, on that occasion, presided at the annual conference. The change was felt as pretty severe, he having been on a comfortable station for two years. But, as he must take evil with the good, Mr. Odell conscientiously repressed all natural regrets and murmurings, and as in duty bound, started at the close of the conference for his new field of labor. A day or two before leaving, and after the appointments were announced, Mr. Odell said to the brother who had ridden this circuit during the previous year:

"So I am to follow your footsteps?"
"It appears so," was the brief reply.
"How did you like the circuit?"
"I'm very well pleased to change."

"Not much encouragement in that answer."

"We can't all have good places. Some of us must take our turn in the highways and byways of the land."

"True. I am not disposed to complain. I have taken up the cross, and mean to bear it to the end, if possible, without a murmur."

"As we all should. Well brother Odell, if you pass the year on the circuit without a murmur, your faith and firmness will be strong. I can assure you that it will be more than I did—a great deal more."

"I have been among some pretty rough people in my time."
"So have I. But—" and he checked himself—"however I will not prejudice your mind. It would be wrong. They do as well, I suppose, as they know how, and the best can do no more."

"Truly said. And the more rude, ignorant, and selfish they are, the more need have they of Gospel instruction, and the more willing should we be to break for them the bread of life. If your Master had not even where to lay his head, it will become us to murmur because every natural good is not spread out before us."

In this state of mind Mr. Odell went to his new circuit. Having deposited his family, consisting of a wife and one child, in the little village of S—, with a kind brother who offered them a home at a mere nominal board, he mounted his horse, and started forth on a three weeks' tour among the members of church to whom he was to minister during the next twelvemonth in holy things. The first preaching place was ten miles distant, and the little meeting-house stood on the road side, nearly a mile away from any dwelling, and in an exceedingly poor district of country.

Before leaving S—, Mr. Odell made inquiries of the brother at whose house he was staying, in regard to the route he was to take, and the people among whom he was going. As to the route, all that was made satisfactory enough; but the account given of the people was not encouraging in a very high degree.

"The fact is," said the brother, rather warmly, "it's my opinion that they don't deserve to have the Gospel preached among them."

To this, however, the preacher very naturally demurred, and said that he was not sent to call the righteous, but the wicked, to repentance.

"Where will I stop, to-night?" he inquired. It was Saturday afternoon, and on Sunday morning he was to preach at his first appointment.

"Well," said the brother, slowly and thoughtfully, "I can tell you where you ought to stop; but I don't know that you will be so welcome there as at a poorer place. Brother Martin is better able to entertain the preachers comfortably than any one else in that section; but I believe he has never invited them home; and they have generally gone to the house of a good widow lady, named Russel, whose barrel of meal and cruse of oil deserve never to fail. She is about the only real Christian among them."

"Is brother Martin a farmer?"
"Yes: and is tolerable comfortably off; but how he ever expects to get his load of selfishness into heaven, is more than I can tell."

"You musn't be uncharitable, brother," said Mr. Odell.

"I know that. But the truth is the truth. However, you must see and judge for yourself. I think you had better go to the house of sister Russel, who will welcome you with all her heart, and give you the best she has."

"And I want no more," said the preacher.
After getting precise directions for finding sister Russel, he started on his journey. It was nearly five o'clock, and he made his calculation to reach sister Russel's by seven, where he would remain all night, and go with her to the preaching place on Sunday morning.

He had not, however been half an hour on his journey, before heavy masses of dark clouds began to roll up from the horizon and spread rapidly over the sky; and ere he had accomplished half the distance he was going, large drops of rain began to fall, as the beginning of a heavy storm.—The preacher was constrained to turn aside, and seek the shelter of a farm house, where he was received with much kindness.

Nightfall brought no abatement of the tempest. The lightning still blazed out in broad masses of fire; the thunder jarred and rattled amid the clous like parks of artillery, and the rain continued to pour down unceasingly. The invitation to remain all night, which the farmer and his wife tendered in all sincerity, was not, of course, declined by the preacher.

In the morning, after being served with a plentiful breakfast, Mr. Odell returned his warmest thanks for the kindness he had received, and proceeded on his journey. He had six miles to ride; but it was only half-past eight o'clock when he started, and as the hour of preaching was ten, there was plenty of time for him to proceed at his leisure. As sister Russel lived nearly a mile from a direct course, he did not turn aside to call upon her, but went to the meeting house. On reaching the little country church, Mr. Odell found a small company of men assembled in front of the humble building, who looked at him curiously, and with something of shyness in their manner, as he rode up and dismounted. No one offering to take his horse, he led him aside to a small grove, and tied the reins to a tree. One or two of the men nodded, distantly, as he passed them on his way to the meeting house door; but none of them spoke to him.

On entering the meeting house, Mr. Odell found some thirty persons assembled, most of them women. If there were any official members present, they made themselves in no way officious in regard to the preacher, who, after pausing at the door leading into the little altar, or chancel, for a short time, and looking round with an expression of inquiry on his face, ascended the pulpit stairs, and took his seat. All was as silent, almost, as if the house was tenanted.

In a little while the preacher arose, and gave out a hymn. But there was no one to raise the tune. One looked at another uneasily. Sundry persons coughed and cleared their throats, but all remained silent. Mr. Odell was not much of a singer, but had practised on "Old Hundred" so that he could lead that air very well, and the hymn happening by good luck, to be set to a long metre tune, he was able to start it.—"This done, the congregation joined in, and the singing went off pretty well. After praying and reading a chapter in the Bible, he set down to collect his thoughts for the sermon, which was, of course, to be extempore, as all Methodist sermons are. It is usual for the choir, if there is one, to sing an anthem during this pause; or, where no singers are set apart, for some member to strike up an appropriate hymn, in which the congregation joins. On this occasion all was silent. After the lapse of a few minutes, Mr. Odell arose, and turning in the Bible to the chapter where the text from which he was to preach, was recorded, read the verse that was to form the groundwork of his remarks. Before opening the subject, he stated briefly, that he was the preacher who was to labor among them during the ensuing year, and hoped, in Divine Providence, they would both to them and to him would realize the new spiritual relations that were about to commence. Then proceeding with his discourse, he preached to them and exhorted with great earnestness, but without seeming to make any impression. Not an "amen" was heard from any part of the house; not an eye grew moist; not an audible groan or sigh disturbed the air. Nothing responded to his appeals but the echo of his own voice.

Never had the preacher delivered a discourse in which he felt so little freedom—His words came back upon his ears with a kind of dull reverberation, as if the hearts of his hearers were of ice instead of flesh.

Before singing the last hymn, Mr. Odell gave out that at the conclusion of the service he would hold a class-meeting. After he had finally pronounced the benediction, there was a pretty general movement towards the door. Only seven remained, and these were all female members; most of them pretty well advanced in their life-journey. Mr. Martin was at meeting, but ere the preacher had descended the pulpit stairs, he was out of the house and preparing to leave for home.

"Where is the new preacher going?" asked a member of Mr. Martin, as he led out his horse.
"To sister Russel's, I presume."
"Sister Russel is not here."
"Isn't she?"
"No. She's sick."
"He stayed there last night, I suppose, and will go back after class," Martin sprang upon his horse as he said this.

"We ought to be sure of it," remarked the other.
"I can't invite him home," said Martin. "If I do I shall have him through the whole year, and that is not convenient. The preachers have always stayed at sister Russel's, and there is no reason why they shouldn't continue to do so."
"I haven't a corner to put him in," remarked the other. "Besides these preachers are too nice for me."

"It is all right, no doubt," said Martin, as he balanced himself in his saddle; "all right. He stayed at sister Russel's last evening, and will go back and stay there until to-morrow morning. Get up Tom." And with this self-satisfying remark, the farmer rode away. The man with whom he had been talking, was, like him, a member, and, like him, had omitted to attend class, in order to shift off upon some one else, the burden of entertaining the new preacher; for whoever first tendered him the hospitalities of his house and table, would most probably have to do it through the year. He, too, rode off, and left others to see that the preacher was duly cared for.

An icy coldness pervaded the class meeting. Only four out of the seven sisters, one of whom was an old black woman, could muster up courage enough to tell in answer to the preachers call, the "dealings" of Providence with their souls; and only two of them could effect an utterance louder than a whisper. What they did say had in it but little coherence; and Mr. Odell had to content himself with an exhortation to each, of a general rather than of a particular character. When the hymn was sung at the close, only one thin, whispering voice, joined in the song of praise, and not a sob or sigh was heard in response to his prayer. The class paper showed the names of thirty members; but, here were only seven? This was rather discouraging for a commencement. Mr. Odell hardly knew what course to take—whether to stir up with some pretty sharp remarks the little company of believers who were present, and thus to seek to impress the whole through them, or, to wait until he came round again, and have a good chance at them from the pulpit. He concluded, in the end, that the last course might be the best one.

In calling over the names on the class paper, he found that sister Russel was absent. On dismissing the meeting, all except the old black woman retired. She lingered, however, to shake hands with the new preacher, and to show him that, if she was old, her teeth were good, and her eyes white and lively.

On emerging into the open air, Mr. Odell saw the last of his flock slowly retiring from the scene of worship. For two of the women, their husbands had waited outside of the meeting-house, and they had taken into their wagons two other women who lived near them. These wagons were already in motion when the preacher came out, followed by the old black woman, who, it now appeared, had the key of the meeting house door, which she locked.

"Then you are the sexton, Auntie, remarked Mr. Odell, with a smile.
"Yes, massa, I keeps de key."
"Well, Nancy," said he, who had already made up his mind what he would do "I'm going home to dinner with you!"
"Me, massa?" Old Nancy looked as much surprised as a startled hare.

"Yes. You see they've all gone and left me, and I feel very hungry. You'll give me some of your dinner?"
"Yes, massa, please God! I'll give you all of it—but, it's only pork and hominy."
"Very good; and it will be all the sweeter, because I am welcome."

"Deed, massa, and you is welcome, five hundred times over! But it was a downright shame for all de white folks to go off so. I never seed such people."
"Never mind, Nancy, don't trouble yourself. I shall be well enough taken care of, I'll trust you for that."

And so Mr. Odell mounted his horse, and accompanied the old woman home.—She lived rather over a mile from the meeting house; and the way was past the comfortable residence of Mr. Martin. The latter did not feel altogether satisfied with himself as he rode home. He was not certain that the preacher had stayed at sister Russel's on the night before. He might have ridden over from S—, since morning. This suggestion caused him to feel rather more uneasy in mind; for if this were the case, it was doubtful whether, after class was over, there was any one who could or would invite him home.

"What kind of a man is the new preacher?" asked Mrs. Martin of her husband, on his return from meeting.
"He seemed to be a very good sort of man," replied Martin, indifferently.
"Is he young, or old?"
"He's about my age, I should think."
"Married?"
"I'm sure I don't know."
"Did you speak to him?"
"No; I came away after the sermon."
"Then you didn't stay to class?"
"No."
"Sister Russel was not there?"
"No; she's sick."
"So I heard. The preacher didn't stay at her house last night?"
"How do you know?"
"Mrs. Williams called in while you were away. She had just been to sister Russel's."

"And the new preacher didn't stay at her house last night?"
"No. Mrs. Williams asked particularly."
"He must have ridden over from S—, this morning. I'm most sorry I didn't wait, and ask him to come and stay with us."

"I wish you had. Sister Russel is too sick to have him at her house, if he should go there. Who stayed to class meeting?"
"Not over a half dozen, and they were all women. I left Bill Taylor and Harry Chester waiting outside for their wives."
"They wouldn't ask him home."
But it can't be helped now; and there is no use fretting over it."

Soon after this, dinner was announced, and the farmer sat down with his family to a table loaded with good and substantial things. He ate and enjoyed himself;—though not as highly as he would have done, had not thoughts of the new preacher intruded themselves.

After dinner, Martin took a comfortable nap, which lasted about an hour. He then went out and took a little walk to himself. While standing at the gate, which opened from his farm to the country road a few hundred yards from the house, a man who lived half a mile below, came along. This man was not a member of any church, and

took some delight, at times, in having his jest with professors of religion.
"Fine afternoon, Mr. Ellis," said Martin, as the man stopped.
"Very fine. How are you all?"
"Quite well. Any news stirring?"
"Why no, not much. Only they say that the Methodists about here have all joined the Amalgamation Society."
"Who says so?" enquired Martin, slightly coloring.

"Well they say it down our way; I thought it was only a joke at first. But a little while after dinner Aunt Nancy's Tom came over to my house for some oats and hay for my minister's horse.—He said the preachers were going to stop at the old woman's after this. I half doubted the rascal's story, though I let him have the provender. Sure enough, as I came along just now, who should I see but the preacher, sitting before the door of old Nancy's log hut, as much at home as if his skin were the color of ebony. These are rather queer doings, friend Martin; I don't know what the folks'll say."

We will not pause to describe the astonishment and confusion of Martin, on learning this, but stepped down to Aunt Nancy's, where Mr. Odell, after dining on pork and hominy, with the addition of potatoes and corn bread, was sitting in the shade, before the log cabin of the old negro. The latter was busy as a bee inside, in the preparation of something for the preacher's supper, that she thought would be more suited to his mode of living and appetite, than pork, corn bread, and hominy.

Mr. Odell was rather more inclined to feel amused than annoyed at his new position. Aunt Nancy's dinner had tasted very good; and had been sweetened rather than spoiled by the old creature's loquacious kindness, and officious concern, lest what she had to set before him would not be relished. While he thus sat musing—the subject of his thoughts is of no particular consequence to be known—his attention was attracted by hearing Aunt Nancy exclaim—
"Kie! Here comes Massa Martin!"

"The preacher turned his head, and saw a man approaching with the decided and rather quick step of one who had had something on his mind.
"Is that brother Martin?" asked Mr. Odell, calling to Aunt Nancy, who was near the window of her hut.
"Yes, please goodness! Wonder what he's comin' here 'bout?"
"We'll soon see," returned the preacher, composing himself in his chair.

In a few minutes, the farmer, looking sadly "flustered," arrived at the door of the old negro's humble abode. Mr. Odell kept his seat with an air of entire self-possession and unconcern, and looked at the new comer as he would have done at any other stranger.
"Mr. Odell, the new preacher on this circuit?" said Martin, in a respectable manner, as he advanced towards the minister.
"Yes, sir," replied Odell, without rising or evincing any surprise at the question.

"I am very sorry, indeed, sir! very sorry," began Martin, in a deprecating tone of voice, "that you should have been so badly neglected as you were to-day. I had no idea—I never once thought the preachers have always stayed at sister Russel's. I took it for granted that you were there.—To think that you should not have been invited home by any one, I am mortified to death."
"Oh, no," responded the preacher, smiling, "it is not quite so bad as that. Our good old sister here, very kindly tendered me the hospitalities of her humble home, which I accepted gratefully.—No one could be kinder to me than she has been—no one could have given me a warmer welcome."

"But—but," stammered forth Martin, "this is no place for a preacher to stay."
"A far better place than my Lord and Master had. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. The servant must not seek to be greater than his Lord."

"But my dear sir, my home is a far more suitable and congenial home for you," urged the distressed brother Martin. "You must go there with me at once. My wife is terribly hurt about the matter. She would have come over for you herself, but she is not very well to-day."
"Tell the good sister," replied Odell, affecting not to know the individual before him, "that I am so comfortable here, that I cannot think of changing my quarters, besides, after Aunt Nancy has been so kind as to invite me to her home, and provide for both me and my horse, when no one else took the least notice of me, nor seemed to care whether I got the shelter of a roof or a mouthful of food, it would not be right for me to turn away from her because a more comfortable place offered."

It was in vain that Martin argued and persuaded. The preacher's mind was made up to stay where he was. And he did stay with Aunt Nancy until the next morning, when, after praying with the old lady, and giving her his blessing, he started on his journey.

When, at the end of four weeks, Mr. Odell again appeared at the little meeting house, you may be sure he was received with marked attention. Martin was the most forward of all, and after preaching and class meeting—there was a pretty full attendance at both—took the minister home with him. Ever since that time the preachers have been entertained at his house.

self some years ago assigned by the bishop who, on that occasion, presided at the annual conference. The change was felt as pretty severe, he having been on a comfortable station for two years. But, as he must take evil with the good, Mr. Odell conscientiously repressed all natural regrets and murmurings, and as in duty bound, started at the close of the conference for his new field of labor. A day or two before leaving, and after the appointments were announced, Mr. Odell said to the brother who had ridden this circuit during the previous year:

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"True. I am not disposed to complain. I have taken up the cross, and mean to bear it to the end, if possible, without a murmur."

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