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THE WHOLE ART OF GOVERNMENT CONSISTS IN THE ART OF BEING HONEST.—JEFFERSON.

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The Gentle Word.

A gentle word hath a magical power,
The weary breast to beguile;
It gladdens the eye, it lightens the brow,
And changes the tear to a smile.
In the genial sunshine it sheds around,
The shadows of care depart,
And we feel in its soothing and friendly tone,
There's balm for the wounded heart.
Oh! watch thou, then, that thy lips ne'er breathe
A bitter, ungentle word,
For that which is lightly and idly said,
Is often too deeply heard;
And tho' for the moment, it leave no trace,
For pride will its woes conceal,
Remember, the spirit that's calm and still
Is always the first to feel.

It may not be in thy power, perchance,
To secure a lofty place,
And blazen thy name upon history's page
As a friend to the human race;
But oft in the daily tasks of life,
Tho' the world behold thee not,
Thy gentle and kindly words may soothe
A desponding brother's lot.

'Tis well to walk with a cheerful heart,
Wherever our fortunes call,
With a friendly glance, and an open hand,
And a gentle word for all;
Since life is a thorny and difficult path,
Where toil is the portion of man,
We all should endeavor, while passing along,
To take it as smooth as we can.

The First and Last Dinner.

A TALE OF LIFE.

Twelve friends, much about the same age, and fixed, by their pursuits, their family connexions, and other local interests, as permanent inhabitants of the metropolis, agreed one day, when they were drinking their wine at the Star and Garter at Richmond, to institute an annual dinner among themselves, under the following regulations: That they should dine alternately at each others houses on the first and last days of the year; that the first bottle of wine uncorked at the first dinner, should be recorked and put away, to be drunk by him who should be the last of their number; that they should never admit a new member; that when one died eleven were to meet, and so on; and that when only one remained, he should, on those two days dine by himself, and sit the usual hours at his solitary table; but the first time he so dined alone lest it should be the only one, he should then uncork the first bottle, and in the first glass, drink to the memory of all who were gone.

There was something original and whimsical in the idea, and it was eagerly embraced. They were all in the prime of life, closely attached by reciprocal friendship, fond of social enjoyments, and looked forward to their future meetings with unalloyed anticipations of pleasure. The only thought, indeed, that could have darkened those anticipations, was not likely to intrude itself at this moment, that of the hapless wight who was destined to uncork the first bottle at his lonely repast.

It was high summer when this frolic compact was entered into; and as their pleasure yacht skimmed along the dark bosom of the Thames, on their return to London, they talked of nothing but their first and last feasts of ensuing years. Their imaginations ran out with a thousand gay predictions of festive merriment.—'They waned in conjectures of what changes time would create.

"As for you, George," exclaimed one of the

twelve, addressing his brother-in-law, "I expect I shall see you as dry, withered and shrunken as an old eel skin, you mere outside of a man!" and he accompanied the words with a hearty slap on the shoulder.

George Fortesque was leaning carelessly over the side of the yacht, laughing the loudest of any at the conversation which had been carried on. The sudden mutual salutation of his brother-in-law threw him off his balance, and in a moment he was overboard. They heard the heavy splash of his fall, before they could be said to have seen him fall. The yacht was proceeding swiftly along; but it was instantly stopped.

The utmost consternation now prevailed.—It was nearly dark, but Fortesque was known to be an excellent swimmer, and starting as the accident was, they felt certain that he would regain the vessel. They could not see him. They listened. They heard the sound of his hands and feet. An answer was returned, but in a faint gurgling voice, and the exclamation "Oh God!" struck upon their ears. In an instant, two or three who were expert swimmers, plunged into the river, and swam towards the spot whence the exclamation had proceeded. One of them was within arm's length of Fortesque; he saw him; before he could be reached, he went down, and his distracted friend beheld the eddying circles of the wave just over the spot where he had sunk. He dived after him, and touched the bottom; but the tide must have drifted the body onward, for it could not be found!

They proceeded to one of the nearest stations where drags were kept, and having procured the necessary apparatus, they proceeded to the fatal spot. After the lapse of above an hour, they succeeded in raising the lifeless body of their lost friend. All the usual remedies were employed for restoring suspended animation, but in vain; they now pursued the remainder of their course to London in mournful silence, with the corpse of him who had commenced the day of pleasure with them in fulness of health, of spirits and of life! And in their severe grief they could but reflect how soon one of the joyous twelve had slipped out of the little festive circle.

The months rolled on, and cold December came with all its cheering round of kindly greetings and merry hospitalities; and with it came a softened recollection of the fate of poor Fortesque; eleven of the twelve assembled on the last day of the year, and it was impossible not to feel their loss as they sat down to dinner.—The very irregularity of the table, five on one hand, and six on the other, forced the melancholy event upon their memory.

A decorous sigh or two, a low, becoming ejaculation, and an instinctive observation upon the uncertainty of life, made up the sum of tender posthumous offering to the name of George Fortesque, as they proceeded to discharge the more important duties for which they had met. By the time the third glass of champagne had gone round, in addition to potations of fine old hock, and 'capital madeira,' they had ceased to discover anything so very pathetic in the inequality of the two sides of the table, or so melancholy in their crippled number of eleven.

Several years had now elapsed, and still our friends continued to celebrate their double anniversaries, as they might properly enough be called, with scarcely any perceptible change. But, alas! there came one dinner at last which was darkened by a calamity they never expected to witness; for on that day, their friend, companion, brother-almost, was hanged! Yes, Stephen Rowland, the wit, the oracle, the life of the circle, had, on the morning of that day, forfeited his life upon a scaffold, for having made one single stroke of his pen in the wrong place. In other words, a bill of exchange which passed into his hand for £700, passed out of it for £1,700.

It would be injustice to the ten to say, that even wine, friendship and a merry season, could dispel the gloom which pervaded this dinner. It was agreed before hand, that they should not allude to the distressing and melancholy theme; and having thus interdicted the only things which really occupied all their thoughts, the natural consequence was, that silent contemplation took the place of dismal discourse; and they separated long before midnight.

Some fifteen years had now glided away since the fate of Rowland, and the ten remained; but the stealing hand of time had written sundry changes in most legible characters.—Raven locks had become grizzled, two or three heads had not as many locks altogether as may be reckoned in a walk of half a mile along the Regent's Canal—one was actually covered with a brown wig, the crow's feet were visible in the corner of the eye—good old port and warm madeira carried it against hock, claret and red burgundy, and champagne, stews, hashes, and ragouts, grew into favor; crusts were rarely called for to relish the cheese after dinner—conversation grew less boisterous, and it turned chiefly on politics and the state of funds, or the value of landed property—apologies were made for coming in thick shoes and warm stockings—the doors and windows were most carefully provided with list and sand bags—the fire more in request—and a quiet game of whist filled up the hours that were wont to be devoted to drinking, singing and riotous merriment. The rubbers, a cup of coffee, and home by 11 o'clock, was the usual cry, when the fifth or sixth glass had gone round after the removal of the cloth. At parting, too, there was a long ceremony, in the hall, buttoning up great coats, tying on woollen comforters, fixing silk handkerchiefs over the mouth and up to the ears, grasping sturdy walking canes to support unsteady feet. Their fiftieth anniversary came, and death had indeed been busy!

Four little old men of withered appearance and decrepit walk, with cracked voices and dim, rayless eyes, sat down, by the mercy of Heaven, (as they themselves tremulously declared,) to celebrate for the fiftieth time, the first day of the year; to observe the frolic compact which, half a century before, they had entered into at the Star and Garter at Richmond. Eight were in their graves! The four that remained stood upon its confines. Yet they chirped cheerily over their glass, though they could scarcely carry it to their lips, if more than half full; and cracked their jokes, though they articulated their words with difficulty, and heard each other with still greater difficulty. They mumbled, they chattered, they laughed, if a sort of strangled wheezing might be called a laugh; and when the wines sent their icy blood in warmer pulses through their veins, they talked of the past as if it were but yesterday that had slipped by them—and of the future as if it were a busy century that lay before them.

They were just the number for a quiet rubber of whist; and for three successive years they sat down to one. The fourth came, and then their rubber was played with an open dummy; a fifth, and whist was no longer practicable; two could play only at cribbage, and cribbage was the game. It was little more than the mockery of play. Their palsied hands could hardly hold, or their fading sight distinguish the cards, while their torpid faculties made them doze between each deal.

At length came the last dinner; and the survivor of the twelve, upon whose head four score and ten winters had showered their snow, ate his solitary meal. It so chanced that it was in his house and at his table, they had celebrated the first. In his cellar, too, had remained, for eight and fifty years, the bottle they had uncorked, recorked, and which he was that day to uncork again. It stood beside him; with a feeble and reluctant grasp he took the frail memorial of a youthful vow, and for a moment memory was faithful to her office. She threw open her long vista of buried years; and his heart travelled through them all. Their lusty and blithesome spring, their bright and fervid summer—their ripe and temperate autumn—their chill, but not too frozen winter. He saw, as in a mirror, how one by one, the laughing companions of the merry hour, at Richmond, had dropped into eternity. He felt all the loneliness of his condition, (for he had eschewed marriage, and in the veins of no living creature ran a drop of blood whose source was his own,) and as he drained a glass "to the memory of those who were gone," the tears slowly trickled down the deep furrows of his aged face.

He had thus fulfilled one part of his vow, and he prepared himself to discharge the other, by sitting the usual number of hours at his desolate table. With a heavy heart he resigned himself to the gloom of his own thoughts—a leth-

argic sleep stole over him—his head fell upon his bosom—confused images crowded into his mind—he babbled to himself—was silent—and when his servant entered the room, alarmed by the noise which he heard, he found his master stretched upon the carpet at the foot of the easy chair, and out of which he had slipped in an apoplectic fit. He never spoke again, nor once opened his eyes, though the vital spark was not still extinct till the following day.—And this was the LAST DINNER.

The Culinary art in the Texas Prairies.

The following graphic account of the straits to which the Texan Rangers are sometimes reduced for cooking materials, addresses itself to "the charity that believeth all things"—nevertheless many things have had their day as sooth, which are not quite as credible as this. There is no compulsion intended upon the credit of any body, though the story, all must admit, is easier of deglutition than the meat when roasted.

MATAMORAS, JUNE 13, 1846.

Race nags may be found among the Texas Volunteers, yet the funniest fellow of all is a happy-go-lucky chap named Bill Dean, one of Chevalier's spy company, and said to be one of the best "seven-up" players in all Texas.—While at Corpus Christi, a lot of us were sitting out on the stoop of the Kinney House, early one morning, when along came Bill Dean. He did not know a single soul in the crowd, although he knew we were all bound for the Rio Grande; yet the fact that the regular formalities of an introduction had not been gone through with, did not prevent him stopping short in his walk and accosting us. His speech, or harangue, or whatever it may be termed, will lose much in the telling, yet I will endeavor to put it upon paper in as good shape as possible.

"Oh, yes," said he, with a knowing leer of the eye, "oh yes; all goin' down among the robbers on the Rio Grande, are you? Fine times you'll have, over the left. I've been there, myself, and done what a good many of you won't do—I come back; but if I didn't see nateral h—ll—in August at that—I am a teapot. Lived eight days on one poor hawk and three blackberries—couldn't kill a prairie rat on the whole route to save us from starvation. The ninth day come, and we struck a small streak of good luck—a horse give out and broke down, plumb out in the centre of an open prairie—not a stick in sight big enough to tickle a rattlesnake with, let alone killing him. Just had time to save the critter by shootin' him, and that was all, for in three minutes longer he'd have died a nateral death. It didn't take us long to butcher him, nor long to cut off some chunks of meat and stick 'em on our ram-rods; but the cookin' was another matter. I piled up a heap of prairie grass, for it was high and dry, and sot it on fire; but it flashed up like powder and went out as quick. But—"

"But," put in one of his hearers, "but how did you cook that horse meat after that?"

"How?"

"Yes, how?"

"Why, the fire caught the high grass close by, and the wind carried the flames streakin' across the prairie. I followed up the fire, holding my chunk of meat directly over the hottest part of the blaze, and the way we went it was a caution to anything short of locomotive doins. Once in a while a little flurry of wind would come along, and the fire would get a few yards the start; but I'd brush upon her, lap her with my chunk, and then we'd have it again, nip and tuck. You never seed such a tight race—it was beautiful."

"Very, we've no doubt," ejaculated one of the listeners, interrupting the mad wag just in season to give him a little breath: "but did you cook your meat in the end?"

"Not bad I did'nt. I chased that d—n fire a mile and a half, the almighty hard race you ever heer'd on, and never gave it up until I run right into a wet marsh; there the fire and chunk of horse meat came out even—a dead heat, especially the meat."

"But, wasn't it cooked?" put in another of the listeners."

"Cooked! no!—just crusted over a little.—You don't cook broken down horse flesh very easily, no how; but when it comes to chasin' up a prairie fire with a chunk of it, I don't know which is toughest, the meat or the job."

You'd have laughed to split yourself to have seen me in that race—to see the fire leave me at times, and then to see me a brushin' up on her again, humpin' and moven' myself as though I was a runnin' agin some of those big ten mile an hour Gildersleeves in the old States. But I'm a goin' over to Jack Haynes's to get a cocktail and some breakfast—I'll see you all down among the robbers on the Rio Grande."

And so saying Bill Dean stalked off. I saw the chap this morning in front of a Mexican *fonda*, trying to talk Spanish with a Greaser and endeavoring to convince him that he was a 'd—n robber.' Such is one of Bill Dean's stories—if I could only make it as effective on paper as he did in the telling, it would draw a laugh from those fond of the ludicrous.

N. O. Picayune.

Correspondence of the N. Y. Spirit of the Times.

Incidents of the War—Delicacy of the Wolves—Folks in Matamoras—The Ladies—their dress, bathing, &c.

In the memorable engagements of the 8th and 9th, none fought with more *vim* than the Irish. In the midst of death, surrounded by the dying, their mother wit and humor would break out. At the risk of repeating an anecdote, which is now going the rounds of the papers, I must record it for the "Spirit."

Very early in the morning, after the battle of the 8th, an Irishman walking over the battlefield, heard a pack of wolves, apparently from their growling, quarreling over the bodies of the dead. He exclaimed—"Be asy with yez; where's the use of quarrelin, sure there's enough for all of y'es."

He little knew that the wolves would not eat them. Their howl must have been a wail at their not finding Americans. It's a singular fact, Mr. Spirit, that neither the wolves nor buzzards will touch them. At this moment, on the field of Palo Alto, are to be seen numbers of the dead completely dried up with their clothes on them, giving evidence of not having been touched by any beast or bird of prey. It is unaccountable to me. The bodies of our men would be destroyed immediately—the Mexicans remain untouched. Some pretend to account for it from the fact of their eating so much *garlic* and *cayenne pepper*—the wolves not enjoying such pungent condiments. As far as I am concerned, I give due weight to the above reasons, for I have none to assign. Some of your scientific readers may account for it. Of the fact that they will not touch them, they may be assured. Set your scientifics at work to discover a better cause than that assigned by the vulgar.

The good citizens are becoming more at home with us; many of the genteeler classes are showing themselves. There is a great deal of beauty among them—some most strikingly beautiful faces. They have a luxurious life, at least I call it so; if you, friend Porter, had inhabited a Southern clime, and felt the enervating effects of the climate, you would be of my opinion. They sit all day long in buildings with thick walls and brick floors, with their beautiful suits of hair nicely braided and tied up, with the least possible quantity of dress (like Mrs. Trollope says of us, I'm a little modest and hate to mention it) that you can possibly fancy. I say there they sit the live long day, without hardly a particle of heat reaching them, and in the evening they emerge like bees from their hives, and take possession of their balconies, and enjoy one of the most delicious evening climates that God has ever granted to us poor mortals. I apply this, of course, to the better class, for the filth of the lower is not endurable. They are very *sociable*, and will permit you to stop and gaze on their beautiful faces, whether from sheer laziness, or from the inherent love of admiration, part and parcel of the sex, I leave you to judge. If you are a lover of nature—unadorned—you can gratify your taste by looking up to Fort Paredes, and witness the fair creatures bathing in the Rio Grande. Every evening you will find crowds of them bathing, and no offence is taken by looking at them enjoying their aquatic amusements.

G. de M.

An intelligent captain in the navy, who has cruised three years in the Pacific, states, that in Monterey a piece of fresh beef can be exposed to the sun for thirty-six hours without the least taint—the air is so pure.