

Mountain Gentleman.

"WE GO WHERE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES POINT THE WAY;—WHEN THEY CEASE TO LEAD, WE CEASE TO FOLLOW."

VOLUME VIII.

EBENSBURG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 1852.

NUMBER 43.

The Room of the Household.

BY E. COOK.

There's a room I love dearly—the sanctum of bliss,
For the joys all the comforts least like to miss;
Where, like ants in a hillock, we run in and out;
Where sticks grace the corners, and hats lie about;
Where no idlers dare come to annoy or annoy
With their "morning call" budget and scandalous news;
'Tis the room of the household—the sacredly free;
'Tis the room of the household that's dearest to me!

The romp may be fearlessly carried on there,
For the *ajouterie* rubbish solicits our care;
All things are as meet for the hand as the eye,
And patch work and scribbling unheeded may lie;
Black Tom may be perched on the sofa or chairs,
He may stretch his sharp talons or scatter his hairs;
Wet boots may "come in," and the ink-drop may fall,
For the room of the household is "liberty hall."

There is something unpleasant in company days
When saloons are dressed out for Terpsichore's maze;
When the graceful Mazourkas and Weippert-led bands
Leave the plain country-dance peopled all at a stand;
There's more mirth in the jig and the amateur's strum;
When parchment-spread battledoor serves as a drum;
When Apollo and Momus together unite,
Till the household room rings with our laughing delight.

Other rooms may be thickly and gorgeously stored
With your Titians, Nurrillos, Salvator, and Claude,
But the Moreland and Wilkie that hang on the wall
Of the family parlor outvalue them all.
The gay ottomans, claiming such special regard,
Are exceedingly fine, but exceedingly hard;
They may serve for the state purposes—but go if
You please, if you please,
To the household room cushions for comfort and ease.

And the book shelves—where tomes of all sizes are spread,
Not placed to be looked at, but meant to be read;
All defaced and benumbed, and I would not be sworn
But some volumes, perchance the most precious, are torn.

There's the library open, but if your heart yearns,
As all human hearts must, for the song of a Burns,
Or the tale of a Vicar, that ever rich gem,
You must go to the room of the household for them.

'Tis the shadiest place, when the blacing sun flings
His straight rays on the rose and the butterfly's wings;
For the first beams of morning are all that dare creep
Through the windows, where myrtle and eglantine creep.

Happy faces assemble, with cheerful salute,
When the summer meal tempts with its cream and its fruit;
But the boards' not so merry, the meal's not so sweet,
If 'tis out of the room of the household we meet.

And that room is the one that is sought by us still,
When the night-clouds of winter brink darkness and chill,
When the ramblers return from their toil or their play,
And tell o'er the news and the deeds of the day;
When the favored old dog takes his place on the rug,
Curled up in the fire-light—all warmly and snug;
While the master sits nodding before the bright flame
Till the bound snores aloud and the Squire does the same.

I have wandered far off over "moor land and lea";
O'er the fairest of earth, and the bluest of sea;
It was health that I sought; but, alas! I could find
The pursuit was in vain while my heart looked behind;
The room of the household had bound with a spell,
And I know not till then that I loved it so well,
"Take me back to that room," was my prayer and my cry,
"Or my languishing spirit will sicken and die!"

There was light in my eye, when I saw the green roof
Of old elm trees, half screening the turretted roof;
I grew strong as I passed o'er the daisy-girt track,
And the Newfoundland sentinel welcomed me back;
But the pulse of my joy was most warmly sincere
When I met the old faces familiar and dear;
When I lounged in the "household room," taking my rest,
With a tinge on my cheek, and content in my breast.

THE MIDNIGHT MOWER.

A MEXICAN STORY.

One morning in the summer of 1814, a party of four individuals left the little town of Pucarro for Tehuacan, in the State of Oaxaca, more than 200 leagues distant. At that time traveling was attended by more than ordinary risk, for it was one of the most critical periods in the Mexican War of Independence, when the effort to throw off the Spanish yoke seemed likely to be defeated, and the fierce passions and animosities called into existence by the struggle, had produced a degree of insecurity highly alarming to timid travelers, and involving positive danger. The party, however, set out on their journey; two of them were women, mother and daughter, the latter called *Luz la Cigarra*, from her occupation of cigar making—a pretty and sprightly damsel, the *belle* of the town, and the object of intense admiration on the part of the two horsemen by whom she and her parent were accompanied. Of the men, one was Gamboa, a daring guerrillero of the revolutionary army, the other, Andres Tapia, was better known as the track-seeker; each considered himself destined to receive the hand of the maiden at the end of the journey, as a reward for their vows of attachment and protection by the way.

Had it not been for the sagacity and promptitude of the track-seeker in avoiding the posts occupied by Spanish troops, and in making *detours* where a direct route was impracticable, the fate of the party would soon have been decided. Night after night, taking advantage of the darkness, he led them by paths known only to himself, until but one more stage lay between them and their destination. Here they fell in with an Indian who had halted to feed his horses, and after resting for a time, were preparing to resume their route, when the cigarra's mother, hastily approaching the two men in great alarm, expressed her desire, as Tehuacan was so near, to finish the journey by daylight.

"And why so?" asked the track-seeker, greatly surprised.

"Why," answered the lady, making the sign of the cross, "our entertainer, the Indian says that last night he saw the Midnight Mower, and that we shall most likely see him mowing the field of *alfalfa* (lucerne) by moonlight, with his great shears. By all the saints in heaven!" she continued, trembling with fear, "the sight of him would make me die of fright."

"Well, and if we do see him?" rejoined Andres; the Midnight Mower never harms any one. The traveler whose horse is tired, is very glad to meet with grass of his mowing. So there's no danger, and we might come upon something in the daytime much more terrible than a night adventure. I can't answer for you by daylight."

This consideration prevailed, and the party having mounted, betook themselves once more to the route. The belief in the Midnight Mower is one of the old superstitious accredited in the State of Oaxaca, where it is reported, that at the commencement of the conquest—an event dishonored by so many cruelties—a Spanish cavalier, who had signalized himself by his ferocity towards the natives, riding one day at full speed, inquired of an Indian whom he saw mowing lucerne in a field—"Halo! amigo, how soon will this pace take me to Oaxaca?"

"Never!" was the answer; and as it turned out, a little further on, the over-ridden horse died of fatigue. The Spaniard not understanding that the Indian meant he would never arrive with that horse, returned furious with rage upon the impression that a spell had been cast upon the animal, and killed the native with a thrust of his sword. The last murder put the finishing-stroke to his iniquities; he disappeared the same evening, condemned, as the Indians say, to mow lucerne eternally, in order to terrify those who would maltreat them.

The travelers kept on their way in silence; another hour or two, and they would emerge from the by-path upon the main road to Tehuacan when suddenly two pistol shots were heard in quick succession followed by the galloping of a horse, from which, as it approached the party, a Spanish soldier fell dead to the ground.

The track-seeker gazed intently forward into the gloom. "Those two pistol-shots," he said, "gave the same sound, they were both loaded by the same hand, and with equal measures of powder, and the same hand fired both." Now I hear only the clash of swords; it is evident that some one is to be disarmed, and taken alive; I hear him cry for help; he is a foreigner."

Andres darted off at a gallop in the direction of the sounds, and Gamboa was preparing to follow, when the cries of the daughter held him back; "*Maria Santissima!*" she exclaimed, "you are not going to leave us alone?"

The guerrillero remained; meantime the voice renewed its cries for succor. The track-seeker urged his horse the more, and fortunately the soft sand deadened the sound of the hoofs, and it was without being perceived that he became aware of three soldiers stooping over a man lying on the ground and binding him with cords. He fell upon them unperceived. It was too late when they attempted to put themselves on the defensive. They were three Spanish dragoons, a sufficient reason to Andres for not waiting to

consider whether he was wrong or right; in them he saw only enemies, and a poor wretch yielding to their number, and with two shots of his pistols he brought down two of the aggressors, ready to come to an explanation afterwards with the third. But the Spaniard flew to his horse, and plied the spurs so desperately that in a minute he was out of sight.

The track-seeker, remaining master of the field, hastened to liberate the captive from his bonds, and seizing the horse belonging to one of the vanquished dragoons, placed the rein in the hands of the stranger, who sprang lightly into the saddle. Luz murmured a fervent thanksgiving as she saw them approach. The individual who had been so happily rescued was an Englishman, named Robinson.

"Thanks," he said to Andres, "you have rendered a more important service to your country's cause and to General Teran, than you might imagine;" and after this formal acknowledgment in mysterious terms, he shut himself up in imperturbable silence.

A few miles further, the *cavalcade* were at last about to see the houses of Tehuacan in the moonlight, when the track-seeker, pointing with his finger, indicated a sight to his companions that sent a shudder of horror through their veins.

In a field adjoining the road, amidst a thick carpet of *alfalfa*, across which the moon threw the shadow of a few pale-leaved olive trees, they saw a man bending over the ground, and mowing, or pretending to mow the herbage around him. An old gray, felt hat, looped up behind, and ornamented with a long feather, concealed his features, while a shirt with puffed sleeves, and short pantaloons tight at the hips, gave him a resemblance to the old portraits by Murillo, of the time of the conquest.

The travelers were, however, too much agitated to look with composure on this singular apparition of the Midnight Mower. The two blades of his huge shears shone between his hands in the moonlight, as he opened and reclosed them without noise; and when a swarth of lucerne fell at his feet, it seemed that he searched in his pocket and then described a mysterious half circle in the air, with outstretched hand.

After that, he again went on with his shears, and ever as before the *alfalfa* fell beneath his strokes.

It seemed for a moment, in the pale light of the moon, that the track-seeker turned pale; but his expanding nostril and the fire of his eye showed that if fear had taken possession of him, it was at least not to the detriment of his infallible sagacity.

"*Madre di Dios!*" he said in a low voice, it's the Midnight Mower!"

"Indeed!" answered the Englishman, who comprehended nothing of the sense of his words. The track-seeker shook his head, and made no reply; but motioning to his companions to remain still, he slid quietly from his saddle and threw the bridle to Gamboa.

"What are you going to do?" asked Luz, terrified.

"Hush!" he answered; the next moment he was seen creeping behind the bushes which bordered the road, until he found himself in a line parallel with the mower. The road was hollow and the ground on either side on a level with the heads of the travelers, so that by a little precaution they could see all that took place on the slope, without being observed. While Andres, from the place of his concealment, kept his eye fixed on the mower, the latter again interrupted his labor to describe the strange circle in the air. Then, in a low and stilled voice, he was heard to hum some mysterious chorus of the other world.

All at once the track-seeker disappeared; at the same moment the mower became visible in the shadow, and behind the trunk of a tree, and nothing more was seen but the silent field and swaths of dewy herbage.

Robinson being altogether ignorant of the legend, remained perfectly unmoved; presently Andres came back with a slow and measured step, and said, as he took his horse's bridle, "I did wrong not to take my rifle with me; I should now know what to think of it."

"Of what use are balls against phantoms?" retorted the guerrillero, in a low tone. "Did you not see how this one disappeared, in spite of all your precautions and skill?"

"Ah! if I had but time I could follow on its trail, even if he were a spirit of the air; but stop here would be exposing ourselves to shipwreck in sight of port, for in a few minutes we shall see the towers of Tehuacan." As he said this, Andres remounted his horse, and the party rode onwards at a pace that made up for its slowness. The track-seeker, however, remained silent and seemed to be deeply absorbed in thought.

"You do not believe, then, in the Midnight Mower?" said Luz, interrupting his meditations.

"It is a mower of flesh and bone as we!" replied Andres. "But what was he really doing there?"

"*Per Dios!*" answered the guerrillero, "he was mowing; accomplishing his eternal expiation.—Did you not remark the hat with the feather, in the fashion of three hundred years ago?"

"It is playing a part," rejoined the track-seeker, "and when any one plays a part, he always tries to take a right costume; but why this comedy? that is what I say to myself. I will know," he exclaimed, "what this man or this phantom was doing! In an hour's time you will be safe in Tehuacan; I shall be there two hours after you." And deaf to the remonstrances of the two women and Gamboa, who continued to see a supernatural apparition in the Midnight Mower, the track-seeker retraced his steps at a gallop, and soon disappeared a second time. Shortly afterwards, the party drew near to the town; a few minutes more and all danger would be over, when a troop of twenty soldiers who had just issued from their gate, stopped their way. Day was beginning to dawn and the nets which each rider carried showed that they were out in search of forage. Such in fact was their design. The leader of the detachment questioned the travelers; and in the dragon's horse, still mounted by Robinson he saw confirmation of the report furnished by Gamboa, to reply to his questions.

After this incident, the *cavalcade* entered Tehuacan without further interruption or delay.—While they are seeking quarters, we may say a few words respecting the stranger who had come so unexpectedly into their company. Robinson was owner of a considerable freight of muskets on board of a brig anchored outside the bar of the Gozalcacos, and had sailed with the intention of selling them to the first customer, royalist or insurgent. He had fallen in with a Spanish commandant, who, after hearing and agreeing to his propositions, contrived a scheme for obtaining possession of the cargo of arms without payment. The Englishman was thereupon seized, shut up in prison, and given to understand that the price of his liberty would be an order for the delivery of the muskets—a practical illustration of might makes right—against which he remonstrated vigorously but in vain. Robinson then betheought himself of the insurgent General Teran, and bribed his keepers to let him escape. They feigned compliance, and received the stipulated sum; but the prisoner had scarcely left the feet behind than they attempted to recapture him, and would have succeeded, but for the happy intervention of Andres, as has been related.

Notwithstanding his recent elevation, the insurgent chief was accessible at all hours, as well by night as by day. Robinson took no further time than to lodge his horse at the *pasado*, to eat a mouthful, and at the moment that the bugles sounded the *reville*, he presented himself at the gates of the palace. He was at once admitted, and found himself face to face with a young man, whose visage denoted at once distinction, affability and high intelligence. It was the independent general, Don Manuel de Mier y Teran; he was seated before a paper covered with papers and maps, for the business of the day had already commenced. Cash was then plentiful with the revolutionary leader, and he received Robinson's offer of the freight of muskets with the greatest satisfaction. They were settling the terms of the purchase, when a noise was heard in the square outside, where the rising sun shone on two regiments encamped in the open air for want of barracks. The general approached the window to see the cause of the disturbance.

"Ah," said he, "our foragers—they have come back still more abundantly laden than yesterday; but what does that man want with them?"

"That man," answered the Englishman, is Andres Tapia, the track-seeker. It is he who rescued me so bravely from the hands of the Spaniards, and if your cause triumphs by the aid of the arms I supply you with, it is to that man your thanks will be due."

Andres was gesticulating and speaking vehemently, but his words were answered by laughter. "If it please you to listen to him," said Robinson to the general. "I am convinced you will be of his opinion."

"Well, we will see," replied the chief, and he ordered the track-seeker to be admitted. The latter cried as soon as he entered, "Will it please your excellency (*mesa celeria*) to give orders to burn, as quickly as possible, all the forage that your men have just brought in?"

"And why, if you please?"

"Because our enemies use all sorts of arms against us, and they have profited by a superstition believed all over our province, to poison the forage supposed to be cut by the Midnight Mower, and of which the quality is not suspected. This forage, I say, will cost us the horses of a whole regiment."

Andres seemed persuaded of the fact. The general, therefore, gave orders for a temporary sequestration of the forage—too rare to be lightly sacrificed—until a worn-out horse had been fed with the lucerne, and the result ascertained. The order was obeyed.

"So," said the guerrillero to the track-seeker, when they found themselves alone, "this Midnight Mower—"

"Was only a knave who played the part that had been marked out for him, but who was not ever enough for a match with me."

"Then he confessed that the forage was poisoned?"

"He did not tell me a word about it; we only spoke of the fine weather and the late rains," answered Andres, as he finished taking the bridle off his horse.

"And did that satisfy you?"

"*Caramba*, I have guessed the thoughts of many a man from fewer words than those. I had watched him for some time without his seeing me, and when I accosted him, I already knew what to expect. Friend, I said, I am sent as extraordinary courier to the commandant of Fort Villegas, on a message of life or death; my horse is dead beat, and if you will let me take a bundle of lucerne, it will set him up again; otherwise the fort will be taken. I foresaw the answer: the Mower said that my horse would arrive much sooner if he fed elsewhere because—because the lucerne was green, and damp with the night dew. Very well, I replied, I carry off a fool's hat. So saying, I snatched his masquerading beaver from his head, and he had not recovered from his astonishment, when I galloped on to overtake you, and to convince you that the Midnight Mower is only a man employed to poison the fields of *alfalfa* in the neighborhood of the insurgent post. In half an hour's time we will go and see how the horse is that has eaten the forage."

The event confirmed in every point the assertions of the track-seeker. The poor animal died in convulsions produced by the poison, and soon a huge fire had destroyed the last stalks of the lucerne, which, but for Andres, would have been fatal to the cavalry of General Teran.

Whig Slanders Silenced.

The following letter which originally appeared in the *Boston Courier*, (a paper thoroughly Whig in all its political affinities) would cause the blush of shame to mantle the cheeks of the Whig editors and stump orators, if from any cause they could be brought to such a condition. The *Courier* introduced this letter to its readers by saying:—The following letter from Col. SMITH, of New Hampshire, a gentleman who rendered distinguished services to the Americans in Mexico, during the invasion of that country by our troops has been presented to us for publication.

GILMANTON, N. H., June 24, 1852.

You are probably aware that at the commencement of the war with Mexico, I had been more than fifteen years a resident of the Azteca. During the war, I was twice expelled from the city—the suspicions of the government having been awakened and its displeasure incurred in consequence of the manner in which I treated Major Gaines, Major Borland, and other Encarnacion prisoners. Immediately after the second order for my expulsion, desiring to control my own movements, I made my escape, passed the mountains in two nights, on horse having bribed a famous guerrilla chief, Colin, who accompanied me with five of his desperate associates. I carried despatches from — to Gen. Scott, (then at Puebla,) which I delivered at four o'clock in the morning, and afterwards continued with that noble commander, he availing himself of my minute knowledge of the country, until I again entered the city with the Americans; arrived at Puebla two days before Gen. Pierce's brigade arrived there—and never was prouder of my country, and never so proud of my native State, as when that fine command marched into the city. All balconies were crowded, and such a reinforcement spread general joy through the army. The circumstances of the march, the energetic, prudent, and skillful manner in which it had been performed—the daring courage manifested by the commander, particularly in crossing the National Bridge, when his hat was shot from his head, were of course the subjects of much conversation, and secured for Gen. Pierce high admiration and entire confidence.—And these, I may safely say, were never abated during the campaign.

I do not propose to give you details of that campaign, but to state some facts within my own knowledge in relation to the operations of the 19th and 20th of August, and the 8th of September. On the 19th of August, I was in St. Augustine, about 7 miles from Contreras.—Pierce's brigade marched out early to open the road across the mountain, for the artillery which followed that afternoon. I did not see General Pierce again till near noon the next day. I had been with Gen. Scott's staff all the morning of the 20th, and had heard of the dangerous injury Gen. Pierce had sustained by the fall of his horse on the Pedregal, the afternoon before.—The horse was supposed to have caught his fore foot in the cleft of a rock, being at a hard gallop. The preservation of the life of the General, seems here, as at the National Bridge, to have been Providential. Although the bones of the horse were broken, so that he was left upon the spot, the tenacity with which the rider held to the command during that day and the next, was the wonder of all. He rode, during the residue of that evening, the horse of the gallant Lieut. Johnson, who had just been shot in his saddle.

I met General Pierce on the 20th, near Coyacan. General Twigg's division had advanced on the road towards the church at Cherabasco, and when I met Pierce the heavy firing of the batteries had opened. I shall never forget his

appearance as he rode at the head of that noble brigade destined to suffer so terribly in the afternoon. He was exceedingly thin, worn down by fatigue and pain of the day and night before—and then evidently suffering severely. Still there was a glow in his eye as the cannon boomed, that showed within him a spirit ready for the conflict.

The brigade was soon formed on the west side of the plaza of Coyacan, opposite to the church. I was familiar with all the roads and paths in that neighborhood, and informed Gen. Scott—who was in his saddle, under a tree near the Church, from which he was issuing orders to different members of his staff—that I knew a route by which the enemy could be attacked in the rear. Having decided at once to send Pierce's brigade, and support it by other troops that might be at his command, he despatched me to call Gen. Pierce. I did so; and when I did so; and when he rode up, a conversation, in substance, and as near as I can recollect, in the following words took place:

Gen. Scott said, "Pierce, my dear fellow, you are badly injured; you are not fit to be in your saddle." "Yes, I am," said Pierce, "is a case like this." Gen. Scott said, "It is temerity, you shall lose you, and cannot spare you. I ought to order you back to St. Augustine. You cannot touch your foot to the stirrup." "I can, one of them," said Pierce, "and that is enough for to-day. This will be the last great fight, and I must lead my brigade." The order was then given, I acting as guide by the direction of Gen. Scott, Maj. Lee, of the Engineer Corps, accompanying the command. The brigade moved rapidly forward for about a mile, when we came to a ditch, as I recollect, ten or twelve feet wide, and six or eight deep. Pierce was lifted from his saddle, and as if he could tread upon impossibilities, he led the brigade, then under fire, in his crippled condition, for a considerable distance on foot, when he fell from exhaustion and suffering, too great even for his energies.—He refused to be carried from the field, and remained until the final rout of the enemy. More inflexible determination and daring courage, I do not believe, was ever exhibited upon a battle field.

On the night before the battle of Molino Del Rey, Gen. Pierce's brigade was at the Hacienda of San Borja about one mile from Taboaya, where it had been held from earliest dawn under arms. You know how Gen. Worth's most gallant division suffered. The carriage on the field was dreadful. Gen. Scott despatched me to accompany my friend Major Gaines with an order for Pierce to advance. They were ready on the instant, and moved rapidly forward. I was on the field and witnessed Pierce's fine movement upon the King's Mill, to relieve Garland, who had been fighting till that hour. He advanced with the 9th Infantry (and as I recollect, 2d Artillery not of his brigade proper.) The enemy, whose fire had nearly ceased, upon the movement of these new regiments, reopened with round shot and shell from Chelupetec. I well remember that the bay horse that the General took from the States, became under fire, difficult to manage; and was well nigh plunging over a precipice close by the King's Mill at the Bridge, in consequence of the bursting of a shell but a few feet from him. Nothing could have been more cool and admirable than this whole movement.

I made the acquaintance of General Pierce thousands of miles from our native land, under circumstances that "tried men's souls." I found him there, what all know him to be here, and I cannot withhold this act of justice from one, who has as brave a heart, and as self-sacrificing a spirit, as ever warmed a true man's bosom.—I know Gen. Pierce needs no vindication of his military conduct. His merit in this respect is proclaimed by the united voice of officers and men—those who participated and who know.—But at the same time he may not be displeased with these hasty reminiscences from me. I have been so long from the country, that I feel but little interest in mere party conflicts.

Your obedient servant,
NOAH E. SMITH.

Greely on Scott in 1848.

The N. Y. Mirror says that in a letter to a politician in the interior of New York, previous to the appointment of delegates to the National Convention in 1848, Horace Greely wrote in this wise:

"Send a delegate to the Convention, if you can, for Clay; if not for Clay, for Corwin; if not for Corwin, for Seward; if not for Seward, for Taylor. But last of all Scott. Scott is a vain, conceited, cockcomb of a man. His brains, all that he has, are in his epaulettes, and if he should be elected President, he would tear the Whig party into tatters in less than six months."

Black Rain.

On Friday morning, says the "Kilkenny Moderator," (Ireland,) between six and seven o'clock a heavy shower, which lasted for upwards of twenty minutes, fell over the city and a considerable district adjoining. The rain proved, upon examination, to have been of almost an inky blackness, and had all the appearance of being impregnated with soot or charcoal. In the last year of the cholera we were visited by a similar shower, and in the popular superstitions the appearance of that dreadful disease was largely attributed to the circumstance.