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Select Poetry.

THE LABORER'S HYMN.

At close of day, when labor's done,
And all around is still,
When homeward wends each weary one
That work the plow or mill,
I'll bend my knees in gratitude
To thee, my dearest Lord;
Alone, in silent solitude,
I'll ponder on thy word.

Thy truths upon my heart I'll stamp,
My comfort they shall be;
The Gospel, that unerring lamp,
Shall guide my soul to thee.
Let saints and angels bless thy name,
Thou source of every good;
Let thrones and choirs proclaim the same,
By Christians understood.

O loving Jesus, kind and good!
Of whom I've so much need,
Who for poor sinners shedst thy blood,
For me now intercede!
Praise unto the great Father be,
With Christ, thy only Son,
And Holy Ghost, eternally,
O blessed Three in One!

THE ROBBERS' RETREAT.

SOME years ago my physician told me I must leave the counting house and travel for my health. Let it not be thought from this that I was a weak, puny man. Far from it. In fact, I was too stout and strong for so much confinement, the result of which was a morbid state of the liver, and a weakening of the digestive organs, with accompanying dyspepsia and constipation. I knew the physician was right, and I at once planned a voyage to Europe; but my parents were anxious to know if a horse-back ride through the Southern States would not be as good for me. The doctor said it would be better. "Then," cried old Lattitad, the head of the firm, "you will kill two birds with one stone." The meaning of which was that I could visit a thousand and one correspondents in the Cotton States, and square up a thousand and one accounts, while looking after my lost health. I had no objections to this. I steamed it by rail as far as Cincinnati; thence by water to New Orleans. Then I took the river back to Vicksburg, where I bought a horse, and started across the country to the eastward, intending to strike the Atlantic coast at Savannah.

Late one evening I arrived at a small settlement near the Tombigbee, in Alabama, where I found quite a comfortable inn. After supper I sat down in the bar-room, and soon discovered that among the guest presents, was the Sheriff of the district and two of his deputies; and by listening to the conversation I learned that they were out on important business. Later, when alone with the landlord, I was informed of the particulars. That section of the country had for a long time been infested by a gang of desperate villains—river-pirates and horse thieves—who had robbed and murdered both travelers and citizens, and who had thus far succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the officers sent after them. There was something wonderful in this, for the most expert detectives had been upon the track of the marauders many times, and yet not even a clue had been gained of their hiding-place. That they had a hiding-place was very evident; and further, it was a place where both men and horses could be effectually concealed. The host declared that it was very mysterious, it was past his comprehension. For more than a year plantations have been robbed; travelers have been robbed; boats upon the river have been robbed; and even large settlements have been in-

vaded, by these bold outlaws. The publican's idea was that they had a big cave somewhere under ground; for if their rendezvous had been above ground the officers would have found it before this.

On the following morning we ate breakfast at an early hour, and shortly afterwards the Sheriff and his deputies started off to the southward, towards a bend in the river, where the crew of a flatboat had been robbed only a few days before. My course lay to the eastward, as I had business at Cahawba.

"You'd a made it better," said my host, "if you'd crossed the river at Bluffpost. In that case you'd a had a direct road to Cahawba; but now you've got to take nearly half the distance in a wildcat road and mule-path. Howsom-ever, if you've got a good hoss, you'll make out, I reckon—that is, if you don't get picked up by the pirates."

I had been aware of the character of the road that lay before me, and had rather preferred it to the better route to the northward. I had plenty of time, and I liked to see these out-of-the-way plantations, and as far as for hospitality, it was all alike. I was at home anywhere. With one or two exceptions it seemed to be the chief aim of the planters to make my stay with them as agreeable as possible; and I found more difficulty in getting away from their doors than I did in gaining entrance.

I set out from the settlement at eight o'clock, and at the distance of some five or six miles I met a man who informed me that the water was too high for a comfortable fording of Linda Creek, and that I would find it pleasant to turn to the southward, and go below the Big Brake; referring to a cane brake not far distant that covered several hundred acres of the rich bottom land. This was a route but little traveled, but I minded not that so long as there was a plain path; so I jogged along upon this new way, which I found to be dreary and lonesome enough. I had no fear of robbers, but still the character of the road was calculated to excite one's caution, and I instinctively drew out my revolver and examined the charges, and the caps; and when I had done this I slipped into the side-pocket of my sack, where I could reach it most handily.—After this I whistled, and then I sang a few verses of an old song, for the purpose, I suppose, of convincing the birds that I was cheerful and easy.

By and by I reached a point where the path crossed a little stream, and here I was joined by a horseman who had come out from the timber to the eastward. As his beast had been drinking, I did not notice him until I was close upon him. He was a middle-aged man, of medium size, dressed in a common hunting garb, and carrying a rifle before him upon his saddle-bow. If this man was really a hunter, I thought he was entirely different from other hunters I had met in that country. His clothes were vastly better, and he lacked the free and easy off-hand way of your genuine forester. He hailed me as though he was surprised to see me there, and I could not divest myself of the impression that he regarded me as an interloper. He looked at me sharply, and as he drew up near to my side he asked:

"Do you belong in these parts?"

It struck me then that he might be an officer looking after the river pirates. I told him that I was a stranger in that section, traveling partly for my health and partly on business; furthermore told him that I was on my way to Cahawba.

He looked at me again, taking a careful survey of my whole figure, and then remarked, as we started away from the brake:

"I a'pose the Creek is full?"

"Yes," said I.

"And so you have to come this way?"

I said "yes" again.

"That's partly the case with me," he said, "though I ain't going exactly your way for any great distance. Rather a lonesome road, isn't it?"

"It is, certainly."

"Not a very pleasant place to meet robbers," he suggested.

I admitted he was correct.

"Have you heard anything about those chaps?"

"You mean the robbers?"

"Yes."

I now felt sure that my companion

was a detective, and I told him what I had seen and heard at the inn where I had last stopped. He was deeply interested—very deeply interested; and I ventured to suggest that he might be searching after those very villains.

"Do you really think so?" he asked. I told him I thought so from the first.

"Zounds!" he muttered, with a smile, "I must be more careful, or I shall expose myself too much."

Then he acknowledged that he was an officer, and as we rode on I told him all I had heard concerning the outlaws.

In the course of half an hour we left the timber, and soon afterward we came in sight of the cane brake. It was a curious sight, that maze of canes stretching away almost as far as the eye could reach; and as I came nearer I wondered not that even experienced hunters sometimes lost their way and starved to death in the trackless depth of such a labyrinth. For the distance of some two miles we rode along close by the edge of the brake, and then we were forced to bear to the right on account of the softness of the soil, and pretty soon we came to where a body of water lay between us and the canes. This water seemed to be a sort of bayou, fed by some stream beyond my sight, and it certainly had a swampy, dismal look, suggestive of snakes and alligators. We had passed a point of wood that made close down to the water, when I fancied that I heard the sound of horses' feet behind me, and upon turning I beheld four horsemen just emerging from the wood. My companion certainly endeavored to make some sign to them, but they did not see him. They kept straight on to the edge of the bayou; went into the water as though it were a continuation of the road, the horses moving with perfect assurance, and finally disappeared within the depths of the cane-brake.

I looked at my companion, and he looked at me.

"That's rather curious, isn't it?" he said. And he looked into my face very sharply.

"Curious enough," I replied.

"What d'ye s'pose it means?" he queried.

It had naturally occurred to me that within the cane-brake might be the hidden retreat of the robbers, and that the place of passage across the bayou was known only to themselves, but I did not speak my mind to my companion, I intimated to him that I had no idea of its meaning.

"It isn't impossible," he pursued, with his eyes still fixed sharply upon me "that the rascals we've been speaking of have a haunt in there somewhere."

I told him I thought it quite likely. We rode on a short distance further, and close by a spur of the timber he told me that he must leave me.

"I should like to keep on with you," he said, "but I must take the rest of my way alone. Here is my path."

He bade me good-bye; hoped we should meet again, gave me some directions touching my route, and then turned toward the timber. Dear reader, did you ever, either while standing in the street, or in some crowded assembly, grow nervous and uneasy under the impression that some one was gazing upon you? and have you not, under such circumstances, looked around and found a pair of bright, electric eyes fixed upon you? Something so felt I as I rode away from that stranger.

At length the feeling became oppressive and I stopped and turned. In another instant I should have been a dead man! The seeming hunter had dismounted, and his keen black eye was glancing along over the barrel of his rifle directly at my heart. Quick as thought I slipped from my saddle, and on the same second a bullet came whizzing over my shoulder close by my ear. I think the tenth part of a second lost by me at that time would have been fatal. The villain supposed, of course, that he had shot me, and leaving his horse behind he hurried toward me. Under such circumstances I could have no hesitation. I waited until he had arrived within a few paces, and then I leveled my pistol and shot him through the heart. He kept on toward me, and I fired a second time; but the first shot had been sufficient.

"You're a fine traveling companion, aren't ye?" said I, as I bent over him.

He started to his knees, and raised his hand toward the cane-brake, and tried to cry out, either for help, or else to warn his companions there hidden, but his voice had failed him, and he sank back dead without having spoken a word.

With a little delay as possible I dragged the body up into the timber, and having re-mounted my own horse and taken the rein of the dead man's horse over my arm, I started back. I did not follow the road over which I had come, but kept to the southward, toward Brickett's Ford, where the sheriff had talked of going. By the middle of the afternoon I was on the track of the officers, though I did not find them until evening. I told them what I had discovered, and early on the following morning, with fifty or sixty well armed citizens, we set off toward the Big Brake. I remembered the place where the horsemen had taken to the water, and upon entering here, and following carefully along, we found a hard road, where some peculiar movement of the flood had thrown up a ridge of gravel. Having gained the cane brake our way was clear enough, for we found an open path, out through the canes, and at the end of a quarter of a mile, where the ground was high and dry, we came upon the robbers' camp. Twelve of the desperadoes were there, and were easily captured; and the amount of property which fell into the hands of the officers was large. Some of the villains were away, and probably made their escape. The chief of the gang, a Texan ranger, of the name of Bastrop, was the individual who had overtaken me on the road, and whom I had shot. Had he been content to let me depart in peace I doubt if I should have been the cause of trouble to him. As I have already said, it had occurred to me that the haunt of the robbers was in the cane brake; but as I had no particular desire to be mixed up in such a mess, I might have kept on my way, allowing the proper officers to attend to the finding of the outlaws. The cowardly attempt upon my life, however, determined me otherwise; and the last act of John Bastrop's career, instead of saving his gang from arrest, as he had intended, proved the signal of the destruction of both him and them.

Not as Cunning as the Fox.

The Somerset (Me.) Reporter is responsible for the following fox story:—"The fox which Mr. Fairgrievies now has, occupies a yard back of the store, to which Mr. F.'s dog has free access. The dog and fox are great friends. They frolic together, play 'no end' of jokes on each other, and live in the most perfect harmony save at 'meal time.' The discussion that a choice bit will call forth is sometimes most interesting. Mr. F. gave the fox a bone the other day. The dog had been taught by experience that it was no use for him to try and capture it, so he retired into the store to watch the proceedings, doubtless hoping something would turn up in his favor. The fox ate what he wanted of the bone and preferred to lay it away for future use.—The dog pricked up his ears, but yawned and betrayed no especial interest. The fox dug a hole, placed the juicy bone in the bottom and covered it over with earth, 'patted' it down. He then went into his kennel, brought out an old dry bone that he had kept away from the dog for several days 'out of pure cussedness,' placed it in the hole over the sweet one, covered it up with apparent care, and retired to his kennel to watch operations. The dog saw the fox safely housed, and, as he had done before, stealthily approached the treasure, resurrected the dry bone and trotted off."

A Cure for Gossip.

WHAT is the cure for gossip? Simply culture. There is a good deal of gossip that has no malignity in it. Good natured people talk about their neighbors because, they have nothing else to talk about. As we write there comes to us the picture of a family of young ladies. We have seen them at home, we have met them in the galleries of art, we have caught glimpses of them going from a book-store, or a library, with a fresh volume in their hands. When we meet them, they are full of what they have seen and read. They are brimming with questions. One topic of conversation is dropped only to give place to another

in which they are interested. We have left them, after a delightful hour, stimulated and refreshed, and during the whole hour not a neighbor's garment was soiled by so much as a touch. They had something to talk about. They knew something and wanted to know more. They could listen as well as they could talk. To speak freely of a neighbor's doings and belongings would have seemed impertinence to them, and of course, an impropriety. They had no temptation to gossip, because the doings of their neighbors formed a subject very much less interesting than those which grew out of their knowledge and culture.

And this tells the whole story. The confirmed gossip is always either malicious or ignorant. The one variety needs a change of heart and the other a change of pasture. Gossip is always a personal confession either of malice or imbecility, and the young should not only shun it, but by the most thorough culture relieve themselves from all temptations to indulge in it. It is low, frivolous, and too often a dirty business.—There are country neighborhoods in which it rages like a pest. Churches are split in pieces by it. Neighbors are made enemies by it for life. In many persons it degenerates into chronic disease, which is practically incurable. Let the young cure it while they may.

The Kind of Religion we Want.

We want a religion that softens the step, and tunes the voice to melody and fills the eye with sunshine, and checks the impatient exclamation and harsh rebuke: a religion that is polite, deferential to superiors, courteous to inferiors and considerate to friends; a religion that goes into the family, and keeps the husband from being cross when dinner is late, and keeps the wife from fretting when the husband tracks the newly washed floor with his muddy boots, and makes the husband mindful of the scraper and the door-mat; keeps the mother patient when the baby is cross and amuses the children as well as instructs them; cares for the servants besides paying them promptly, projects the honey-moon into the harvest-noon, and makes the happy home like the Eastern fig-tree, bearing in its bosom at once the beauty of the tender blossom and the glory of the ripened fruit. We want a religion that shall interpose between the ruts and the gullies and rocks of the highway of life and the sensitive souls that are traveling over them.

A Spanish sentinel one dark night was posted at the entrance of a fort outside of Malaga. About midnight he heard some one approaching, and gave the usual challenge, equivalent to "Who comes there?"

To his amazement the answer was, "Jesus of Nazareth!"

He at once called the sergeant of the guard and reported the facts to him.—The sergeant went forward, challenged the intruder in his turn, and received the same answer. Infuriated at what he considered an attempt to trifle with him, he knocked the man down with his musket and beat him severely. He then sent for a lantern to ascertain who it was. When the light came, he saw that it was a gentleman of high standing who lived in the neighborhood, but who was out of his mind. The sergeant, deeply regretting his hasty action, said to the man:

"I am sorry I hurt you; but hereafter when I challenge you, remember to give your own name."

The poor victim replied:

"I am not such a fool as to do that.—If this is the kind of reception you give to Jesus of Nazareth, you would have killed me outright if I had given my own name."

The triumph of a woman lies not in the admiration of her lover, but in the respect of her husband, and that only can be gained by a constant cultivation of those qualities which she knows he most values.

An hour's industry will do more to beget cheerfulness, suppress evil humors, and retrieve your affairs, than a month's moaning.

An old negro cook says, "Sass is powerful good in everything but chillum. Dey needs some oder kind o' dressin'."