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J. C. GROVE & CO.,
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nov 13—3m

Poetry.

Coming Home.

O, brother and sister, growing old,
Do you all remember yet
That home in the shade of the rustling trees,
Where once in our household met?

Do you know how we used to come from school,
Through the summer's pleasant heat;
With the yellow fennel's golden dust
On our tired little feet?

And how sometimes in an idle mood
We loitered by the way;
And stopped in the woods to gather flowers,
And in the fields to play?

Till warned by the deepening shadow's fall,
That told of the coming night,
We climbed to the top of the last, long hill
And saw our homes in sight!

And brothers and sisters, older now
Than she whose life is o'er,
Do you think of the mother's loving face,
That looked from the open door?

Alas! for the changing things of time;
That home in the dust is low;
And that loving smile is hid from us,
In the darkness, long ago!

And we have come to life's last hill,
From which our weary eyes
Can almost look on that home that shines
Eternal in the skies!

So, brothers and sisters, as we go,
Still let us move as one,
Always together keeping step,
Till the march of life is done;

For that mother, who waited for us here,
Wearing a smile so sweet,
Now waits on the hill of Paradise
For her children's coming feet.

[Written expressly for the Staunton Spectator.]

OUR MESS—BY A REBEL SUBALTERN.

CHAPTER III.

TOUGH STORIES.

It was a beautiful moonlight night in October; the air was balmy, and, as we were not allowed to light our fires, we were compelled to use shrubbery for our canopy and the softest kind of rocks we could find for our pillows.—Our mess gathered as usual to partake of the luxuries of our haversacks. Tobacco and "torch-light" corn whiskey constituted the desert, and then came the "feast of reason and the flow of soul."

Major Stretcher had found him a moss bank as far from Captain Smilax as possible without absolutely leaving the circle. Mildew sat beside me, and Ben Muckton with Chester Duncan tugged away at their pipes in a kind of unison of feeling and action.

"Hard times in Richmond," said Duncan;" only two hundred and fifty dollars a barrel for flour—and cut-throat whiskey five dollars a drink! I wonder how the "Maryland line" manages to exist under the rigime of Famine and her haggard staff?"

"Hard times!" exclaimed Stretcher, raising himself up, and knocking the ashes from his meerschaum; "you, none of you, know what hard times are—you are living in luxury when compared with the times I have witnessed. Experience, gentlemen, is a good master—in fact, the only master. I—Major Sam Stretcher—have experienced many hardships, and know what it is to suffer. I am not so young but I can remember distinctly every circumstance of the Texan war of independence. General Sam Houston was my most intimate friend, though much my senior both in years and rank—for I was then only a young midshipman in the navy of the infant Republic. Houston used to consider me a youth of promise"—

"What—promise to pay?" interrupted Duncan.

"I wish to proceed with my narrative without being cut off by flankers," tartly replied the Major. "As I was saying, gentlemen, I was considered a youth of nerve by the commanding General, and he frequently entrusted me with important duties—duties involving great responsibility. At one time, I never shall forget it, I was commissioned to bear despatches to Galveston, coast-wise in an open boat. I had with me six half-breeds for oarsmen, as villianous a set of cut-throats as ever you clapped eyes upon. Our voyage was from San Jacinto, at the mouth of the Trinity river down the bay to Galveston. We had barely pushed off from the shore, and were gently sweeping over the calm waters, when I thought I perceived an unusually strange expression in the swarthy features of my crew. They frequently glanced at me, and then at each other with an expression anything but friendly to your humble servant.

"Americano—carahoo! quartero in Meyhecano!" muttered one of them.

"Christi! stingarro terrambo," exclaimed another.

Fortunately I understood their mongrel Spanish and Indian dialogue; they contemplated a mutiny, and I was to be their victim. I continued calm and collected at the helm, and pretended not to notice their sinister actions. My pistols were in prime order, and I had a heavy cutlass by my side.

"Pull smartly on the larboard oars!" exclaimed I, assuming an air of authority.

"Chi untoo quanto abajos!" responded the leader; which translated, gentlemen, means "Who cares for you!"

Night began to draw her dark vail over the waters, and as the darkness became deeper and deeper, I began to mature my plans of defence, in case they should offer me violence. The pitchy darkness was, however, soon dispelled by myriads of meteors that rolled over the lagoons lining the shore. You who have never visited the coast of Texas, can have no conception of the beauty and grandeur of these ignsfatui. They are immense balls of phosphoric fire, about ten feet in diameter, that are formed in the river marshes and roll majestically over the waters. One of them, of changeable hues and intense brilliancy, followed immediately in the wake of the boat. This was a lucky circumstance for me, but the oarsmen did not appear at all to relish the proximity of the meteor.

It was nigh upon midnight when the foremost of the crew stopped tugging at his oar; this was the signal for the others who followed his mutinous example. I ordered them with a tone of authority to work—they refused to comply, and with a loud yell, raised their oars and aimed them at my head. In a second I let go the helm and seized my pistols. The first fire felled the leader, and the second his companion—there were four left, and my good cutlass was called into requisition. Two more fell beneath my herculean blows—the remaining two, becoming desperate, threw away their oars and leaped upon me like panthers. The struggle for the weapon was fearful, I having determined to resign it only with life. At this crisis of the fight the fiery ball that blazed in the wake approached the boat and enveloped us in a sheet of living flame. The mutineers struggled hard, but my muscle was too much for them; in our combat for life the boat was upset and we sank several fathoms beneath the surface of the water, but shortly arose and were again covered by the fiery meteor. The sight was grand indeed—fire and water all around. I had one of the wretches by the throat, my grip was like that of a vice—and I strangled him to death. The other, a gigantic fellow seven feet tall and weighing about six hundred pounds, I conquered by seizing him by his long black hair and holding his head under water until he was drowned!

Thus it was, gentlemen, that I got rid of the whole six. Being a very expert swimmer, I found no difficulty in reaching the shore, to which I was guided by the light of the meteor which still followed me in my aquatic journey of ten miles—and, strange to say, I had no sooner reached the shore in safety, than it melted into air!

I threw myself upon the sand and fell into a sound sleep, which lasted about two weeks, and might have been prolonged to a month, had not the mosquitoes proved extremely troublesome. You can have no conception of the great size and wonderful instincts of these creatures, I mean the mosquitoes of Texas. I can compare them in magnitude only to winged dragons; they attack their prey only in the night, and, ere they make the assault, you can hear them sharpening their beaks upon patent hones which they carry under their wings. I had to defend myself against them with my cutlass, which I fortunately, managed to save.—One, however, succeeded in alighting on me when I was asleep and driving his probosis into my jugular vein; any other man would have died under such phlebotomy; but, when I found that my blood was nearly extracted from my body, I bethought me of the wild beet which grew in profusion around me. I immediately swallowed a large quantity—it partook of the nature of blood—filled the empty arteries, and I was as good as new. This kind of food, however, did not nourish me—it was only a restorative not a nutritive. Hunger and thirst came, and with them all the horrors of starvation. I looked around me for something to sustain life. As far as the vision could reach there was one wide stretch of sand and water, while the sky was of a copper-color heated by the beaming rays of a July sun!

Don't talk to me, gentlemen, about your hard times—I know what hard times are. I had to spit on the sank bank on which I sat to keep it cool, and the only food I lived upon was horned-frogs and prickly-pears. I thought to myself that it was folly to remain suffering so severely, while awaiting for some vessel to pass that way that I might signal her; so I started off for the interior, hoping to find some human habitation where I might obtain relief. My way was over hills of sand so hot, that, when I found a sand turtle's egg, which luck came to me twice on my journey, all I had to do was to bury it, and, in about five minutes it was cooked. To obtain drink, I took this method. At night I spread out my coat, which soon became saturated with dew which I sucked from the cloth.

After seven days of weary travel, I saw a solitary house in the midst of the desert. I cheered in my great joy and pushed on. Arrived at the dwelling, I was surprised to see not a living soul near it—not even a domestic animal—all was solitude and silence. I knocked. No answer; I then halloo'd, but there was no reply.

"If there is any person within this house," bellowed I as loud as my weak lungs would permit me to, "in the name of humanity I beg him to open the door to a dying man."

"Get away, you thief, or I'll blow you to Jerrico!" exclaimed a female voice above me.

I looked up and beheld a woman at the loft window with a musket in her hands pointed towards me.

"Madam," said I imploringly," I entreat you let me in, I am perishing with hunger and thirst."

"Be gone, you vagabond, or I'll shoot you," replied she, pulling back the hammer, "you can't come that story over me; I've met with the likes of you before, and never knowed any good to come out of you."

"But, madam," said I, "I am no robber, I am a perishing fellow creature claiming your hospitality."

"Well, well—that may be so; but, I'm a lone woman and must keep on the lookout for Sam Houston's thieving soldiers, who wander about in these diggins and steal whatever they can lay their hands on. Are you sick and truly honest?"

"I am," replied I, "on the honor of an officer of the Texan navy."

"Well," replied she, "I'll open the door, but mind you, take care how you behave yourself, this gun is loaded with buckshot, and I know how to fire it."

I assured her that she would find me perfectly harmless, and, on this assurance she closed the window shutter, came down and opened the door, still holding the musket in her hand.

"You look monstrous bad," said she, when I had entered the shanty, "and I believe you are suffering moughtily. What will you have?"

"Ah, my good woman, anything to allay this dreadful hunger," said I, seating myself on a tub, for there was not a chair or a stool in the room. "First give me some water—my mouth is parched and dry, and I cannot swallow solid food."

"Water, did you say?" asked she, "I'm sorry to say there's not a drop within four miles of the place. If you'll but wait an hour or so, my husband will be back, and he'll bring a bucket of water with him. He's gone to Skinner's store, a matter of ten miles, and on his way back he will take up the water."

My situation was desperate, gentlemen, so I begged her to give me something to eat. She had nothing—her husband would bring some corn meal with him.

"Have you nothing at all?" asked I despairingly.

"Nothing that I know of," was her harrowing reply. "Hold on—there may be some flour left in the barrel up stairs—I'll go and see."

"For mercy sake do, madam," said I despairingly, "for I'm a dying man."

In a few moments I heard her up in the loft, pounding and scraping, and then she came down the ladder smiling and exclaiming—"I've been lucky; I've found a whole hand full—that'll do you until the old man comes back."

She held the handfull of flour that she had scraped from the barrel up to my mouth. I made an effort to lap it up with my tongue—but my parched throat refused to swallow it.—I made several gulps, but in vain. At length I said,

"I cannot swallow it, madam,—can you not moisten it with water?"

"I have none, I tell you," said she.

"Not a drop?"

"Not a drop!"

"Then I must die," said I—"for I cannot swallow that dry flour."

"I'll spit in it—if that will do," said she.

"Anything," was my reply, "but moisten it well."

She spit in the flour, and, while doing so, sneezed and blew every particle of my last hope out of her hand!

"Talk of your hard times, gentlemen, you have never experienced the sufferings I have."

"You'll do, Major," said Smilax with a faint chuckle; "I have heard it said that Texas was the Eden of North America. How mistaken people can be sometimes. I move, gentlemen, that we let the "lone star" State slide out of the Southern Confederacy; if we are to believe Major Stretcher's account, she's not worth fighting for."

"I hope you do not doubt my veracity, Captain?" said the Major, bristling up with all his pomposity. "My remarks apply to the coast of Texas; I made no allusion to the interior, which I know to be fertile and rich in natural resources. I, Sam Stretcher, can myself vouch for the wonderfully prolific qualities of the upland soil. The planters do not know what guano or any other fertilizer is. I have heard the corn grow; aye—have *seen* it grow, I have, on my honor, gentlemen. In fact, it is a common thing for a farmer to throw his wheat on the bare ground one morning, and gather it in the next. As for pumpkin vines and, in fact, all other vines, I have heard men of veracity say they have frequently rode around their plantations on a goard vine. The soil in some parts of Texas is so rich that you may plant the cotton seed, and in twenty four hours you can gather in your cotton yarn ready spun."

"But not quite as tough as your *yarn*," Duncan ventured to remark.

"Sir!" exclaimed the Major half rising from his reclining posture, "if you doubt my word, I refer you to the editor of the "Political Frying-pan," who gave me the account, and who resided several years in Texas."

"Oh, I would'nt doubt an editor for the world," replied Duncan, laughing, "nor me either, I hope" said the Major, while he resumed his pipe and subsided.

Ben Muckton now stretched out his long legs and opened his lantern jaws, as a preliminary to a "speechification" as he called it. He seemed in doubts whether to keep his horizontal position or to mount the stump closest to him at once, and "promulgate" an oration on the state of political affairs, or to keep his position and relate a story which required no particular action.

"Have yer ever been down at Snake's Hollow, fellers?" asked he, waiting a moment for a reply, "If yer ain't, yer've lost a treat. It's a cute place, nigh on the sea-board of Georgy, and don't need any o'your splendiferous palaces to make it a city, for natur has done more nor art could do in making it a furst rate jumpin off place for them that's tired of this here world and all its troubles. The folks, too, live like fightin' cocks—and that, too, without doin' any work. All yer have to do is to open yer fly-trap, and manna will drop inter it! I know all about the gals—they are real Buncumb, and no mistake—of a very high descent, some o'their auntsisters havin' been cut down from the gallows.

Snake's Hollow is a place of considerable extent, and will, I have no doubt, become a city of some importance when the streets is laid out—the trees chopped down—the lots fenced—and the old tavern white washed. It has a pretty considerable trade in the hog line—some oysters, and no small trifle o' sweet potatoes and gubers. The boys is furst rate—and the gals, Jehosiphat! they'll make a man's mouth water jist like a green priscimmon, or somethin' o'that sort. The families around are amongst the oldest settlers, and—when their dander's riz, quite 'ristocratic. Being as how it's quite fashionable to give pedigrees—same as they do race nags to make 'em blood horses, I'll strive to give you the breed o'some o'the gals in them diggins.

I shall begin with Sal Smith—she's a scrouger, weighs two hundred and seven gross, and wears what the wimming folks calls a bustle. I know her auntsisters from A to Izzard. John Smith, her great grand daddy, on her daddy's side, came to this country about the time when a ship-load o'convicts cast anchor in Chesapeake bay, with the colors o'John Bull flying. Nobody never got information as to whether there was any Smiths among them transported emigrants—old John never opened his fly-trap about that affair, but went honestly to work at the hog-stealing business, until he made bacon enough to open a store. He also understood the "oyster grab," and kept two canoes and four runaway niggers to work all night on the oyster shoals o'his neighbors. He hitched teams with Barbara Sniggers, the widder o'Squire Sniggers, who sold whiskey and tobacco at Snake's Hollow.

Seven Smiths, boys and gals, sprung out o'this union—John Smith, Jr., Pheleg, Simon and Bill; Sal, Capsy and Jimima. The gals all either cut stick or got married to some o'their brothers, for, at that time there was none but ingins and niggers in them parts.—Pheleg got shot by a ingin—Simon got nabbed by a shark whilst stealing oysters, and Bill was gored to death by a mad bull. From John Smith, who married his sister Jimima, came a whapping family of Smiths—some on 'em, they do say, was a little tinged with the yaller, which, howsomdever, wore off the next generation, and the breed become real Buncumb, good at a knock down and drag-out. Every rum sucker from other settlements had to gin in, for they was some pumpkins, and each never lost more nor one eye in a regular gouge. Sal—the gal of whom I was jist speaking, is all gal from head to foot; she can go it strong on the double shuffle at a hoedown, whip a nigger, or take a calf by the hind legs and pitch it over the fence. She's a screamer! but won't get married, cause she'll lose the name o'Smith, which, you know is become monstrous scarce.

We had a smacking time o'it one Valentine's day. "Sich a gitting up stairs you never did see" among the love-sick swines. There wa'nt no particular post-office—so the holler o'an old black jack tree was used to deposite the billy-duxes in. Sich writin' and sich love makin'! I got two on 'em, written to kill, and for your benefit, fellers, I'll recite 'em. The furst one piles it on—

I love the poesy when it blooms,
I love the beauteous eglentine;
But more, my Benny, I love you,
My dearest one—my Valentine.

Furst rate, isn't it, fellers? 'Tother one goes this wise

Oh, how yer eyes does pierce me through,
And how yer lips does shine;
Yer are the sweetest man I've see'd,
My smiling one, my Valentine.

There's no mistake about the gals that wrote that poetry—they're genusses, and flowers that were born to blush unseen, and waste their sweets upon the desert air, as the poet says.

Sal Smith guv a ball on Valentine's night; and there was considerable fixin' on the occasion. It was a grand affair, and caused a moughty deal o' excitement all over them diggins. Jehu! didn't the gals rub their cheeks with brick-dust, and fix on the balloon skirts. And the fellers, too! Sam Jirkins turned out with a spank and span new red waistcoat, snuff colored knee breeches and yaller stockings. He had a watch chain as big as the Atlantic cable, but I don't believe he had any other fixins to it. Oceans o' musk was used by the gals on that perticiler occasion, and the room smelt as if ten thousand catamounts had been let loose. After the dance was over, the gals, accordin' to custom, swaller'd the egg and salt, and went to bed backwards; fer, it's well known that when this is done, they are to get the feller they dream on. The men, howsomdever, sot up awhile and took so many pulls at the brown jug, that they didn't exactly go to bed backwards, but kind o' sideways or slantendicular, some on 'em was so perticular how-com'd-you so, that they did as old Dan Tucker did, 'shut the candle and blew out their eyes.' In the mornin' there was some complainin' of headache and all that sort o' thing; but, I reckon that the heart-ache was the common rapidemic, as *unly* four weddins came out o' that Valentine's day.

Did yer ever see a generroine Georgy hoe-down, fellers? Wall, if yer didn't yer've got no education, and yer mought as well scratch-gravel for furrin parts in Yankeedom. Talk about yer minerets—yer cowtillions—yer gallops, pokers, and merzerkers, they can't hold a candle to a Georgy set-to when the steam's up. Well, we had a scrougin one at Snake's Hollow one Christmas week. The niggers all went to work at the huskin', and sung so loud that the folks at Skunk's hole thought there was an airthquake. The white folks conglomerated in the house and squatted round a log fire, the gals a-eating gubers, and the men a-chawing tobacco and, at decent periods a-takin a pull at the old rye in the closet. Jemima Smith looked as killin' as a stingeree fish, and Cassey seemed to be suckin' a green prescimmon.—Them gals was pumpkins all over, and didn't want to git married, 'cause there's none o' the pure blood in them diggins that's fit to mix with the blood of old John Smith. Wall, old Joe, the fiddler took his seat in the corner, and, after having come the ole Bull over the cat-gut, with a grand flourish, let her rip on "Coony in a holler." The room was cleared in a streak o' lightnin'; and, Jehosaphat! how the gals and boys did streak it—down in the middle and up again—right and left—turn your partner—pigeon-wing and double-shuffle. The pine floor suffered some, and the steam riz until it went out at the chimbly top like an engin's whistle. After a smashin set-to the gals squatted, and the fellers took another pull at the critter.—Then came the cut-out—two on 'em starting it. Sal and I came *vis-a-vis*, as the French say, and then *dozy-do*, until Ned Coot snaked in and I skedaddled. Sal turned up her nose at Ned, and I heard her say, "Yer can't come it like Ben Muckton!" So Ned Coot spotted me and we concluded the evening's entertainment with a splendiferous drag-out. I made him whistle Hail Columbia the wrong side of his mouth.—Jemima screamed, and Sal screamed, and Cassey swoun'd and nearly all the gals went into *highstrikes*. Sich a muss! ole Joe, the fiddler, made tracks for quarters and I scratched gravel for my critter, which was hitched to the fence, and the way I streaked it over the road was a sin to Bull Run!"

Here Ben replenished his mouth with a new quid, and shut himself up like a jack-knife or a bull-frog about taking a plunge.

Communicated.

[For the Spectator.]

MR. EDITOR.—Below are the views of a prominent gentleman of Eastern Virginia on a subject of deep interest to our people. I may be transcending my right to make use of a private letter, but the writer I am sure would appreciate the motive. K.

"I agree with you that the prospect ahead is gloomy. We feel the galling yoke which subjugation imposes. I recognize, however, the manly and wise efforts of the Northern Conservatives to arrest the mad folly of the Radical Congressmen, and have some faint hopes that a change may be effected. It would be certain, but for the efforts of those who live among us, and are more vindictive than the Northern Radicals. The worst oppression upon us is to be done in the name of Justice to Southern loyalists.

I have no hesitation in concurring in your views about the old debts. Is there any justice in the claims of creditors for a full guaranty of their property, when all other property is destroyed or impoverished. When the creditor trusted the debtor, it was not because he was a citizen, but because he was a property-owner. He invested in his debtor's property. The Government sweeps off the property in which both are interested, and is now to impose the whole loss on one party. A long stay-law and a reduction of interest would enable the debtor to pay off, and would apportion the loss fairly. Suppose for instance old debts bear 3 per cent. interest, and the debtor be required to pay up 5 per cent. of the principal each year for five years, and then about 12 per cent. until the whole is paid off. All that the creditors would lose, would be the difference between 6 and 3 per cent. interest for some years. Yet the debtor assured of his property for 10 or 12 years, would go earnestly to work to save himself and creditors both. I think that the old debts ought to be allowed to bear only 2 or 3 per cent. interest, and the collector of the principal, except in moderate instalments, ought to be stayed for a long term. Eight per cent. on account of principal and interest both is full as much as the debtor could safely bear for the first five years. If the creditor would not accept such a proposition, I would withhold all process of law to collect his debt. Repeal all laws making judgment *liens* on real estate and stay all executions, and the creditor may hold his paper if he refuses a just settlement. If the debtor, on the other hand, will not secure the payment required of him, turn the sheriff loose upon him.

If a permanent system were adopted, the two classes would now come to an adjustment, and thus great burthens will be lifted from the property and enterprise of an oppressed country.

I am amazed that the sense of the country holds off from action. The creditor class ought to come forward and get legislation at once on a liberal basis which will secure them. If the issue were made to-day, between early payment and entire repudiation, I am told by men conversant with public opinion in this part of the State, that the majority for repudiation would be overwhelming. If the subject is not systematized *at once*, this issue will come and an agitation will ensue which will cost the creditor every dollar of debt that he holds, and at the same time do mischief in various ways. A subversion of the present property-owners of Virginia, I regard as a great social and political calamity. An enforcement of debts will operate this effect as completely as any confiscation law which Thad. Stevens could devise.

I entertain these views from a regard to others and to the general interest. I do not owe any money which I could not easily discharge by a sale of property, and what I owe is to my family connexions or personal friends. But if it were different and there was no stay-law, am I sure that my real estate, which would command $30,000 to-day, would sell for $5,000 if *forced* to sale along with that of nearly all my neighbors at the same time, who would be left to buy? Can any one say that justice would be promoted by such a condition of law? Would the iniquity of repudiation be half as bad as the iniquity of this *rapine* of property? If the property of the country is to be destroyed, or debts destroyed, which class ought to be regarded?"

[For the Spectator.]

MESSRS. EDITORS.—Whilst we are watching the movements of the Radical Congress, would it not be well to look a little at home in these days of trial and affliction? What is the condition of things?

Are we exercising towards one another a spirit of kindness, forbearance, charity, sympathy and benevolence? Is not the very reverse the truth? We seem to have entered into a sort of race of devil take the hindmost; so that I swim, don't care who sinks. It is all right enough that people should honestly and fairly work to repair their injured fortunes and improve their condition, but at the same time they should take care of the rights and feelings of their neighbors. Perhaps all this is somewhat brought about by what we call hard times. This leads us to inquire, what has brought about hard times?

The first that I will mention is, our taxes are heavy. It requires a great deal to pay them. This is a necessary evil. Secondly, our pride. We are too fond of dress and show. We have not, as we should have done, withstood the temptation put before us after our downfall.—Our women, mighty good if kept within proper bounds, have been fruitful in bringing about pecuniary troubles. We have exhausted our money, what we had, and run on credit upon the merchant, notwithstanding his pasteboard written thereon, "positively no credit," in large letters.

The next that I will mention is, after the break down, there came into existence, as if by magic, two institutions in our town with all the paraphernalia of banks. Whether these institutions rest upon credit, money or the representative of money, we shall not stop to enquire.—Perhaps the remains of the defunct Confederacy was made to help up in some way. They spread themselves out and have had many a poor fellow dancing attendance upon them, holding themselves out as great blessings to the community. Negotiables passed round freely. Some were so fortunate—fortunate, did I say?—unfortunate as to get their notes through; renewals and curtails came, no notices being given of the time of maturity. Neglect and overlooking them comes protests, then comes a meeting of the Directors; they gravely and formally refer all protesed paper to a committee to select such as must be sued upon, then comes from the Valley National, or National Valley, I don't now recollect, some 14 or 15 suits in one day in one of the courts—pretty well for one day.—Why all this?

Some are shrewdly guessing that we have in service, in Richmond, a body of men called the Legislature of Virginia, who are hammering away at the repeal of the usury laws—the wires being pulled in certain quarters to have it done, and our banking gentry are getting ready for that great event in Virginia, call in the money, get rid of all six per cent. paper, then come in with your negotiables, then we can select from the highest premiums and best endorsed paper. Who doubts our religion or respectability, since the taking of all we can get has been legalized?

What is the Legislature doing, Messrs. Editors? In my judgment they are expressing themselves to the imputation of holding on for the sake of the per diem, gobbling up the hard earnings of the people, and playing into the hands of the favored few, booted and spurred, ready to ride legitimately by their action.

In conclusion, Messrs. Editors, let me here, as one over whose head a good many years have passed, who has had his fingers burnt once at six per cent., caution all against debt, especially against putting their hands to negotiable paper. The devil is under it. OBSERVER.

[For the Spectator.]

Letters.

Letters, says Ike Marvel, "are the only true heart-talkers, and are worth all the lip-talk in the world." Whether or not we are prepared to admit quite as much, we yet do know that letters are our good monitors, they are, also, our great comforters, and from our hearts we say, blessed be letters. Oh! the glory, the freedom, the passion of a letter. I have a little packet, not very large, now soiled with frequent handling, which often I take out from its hiding-place in my writing desk, and open and read over with such sorrow and such joy, such tears and such smiles as I am sure make my heart kinder and holier, and send me forth stronger for the battles of life. There are in this little packet letters in the familiar hand of a sister.—What tender affection! What repeated assurances that there is a vacancy in the home circle! I pity those who have outlived the tears that such letters call up to the eye. There are others in the budget in the trembling and unsteady hand of an invalid. I could almost thank heaven for a sick sister. She is so gentle; she gains a mastery over our sterner nature by very contrast. She is kind, shedding her kindness as heaven sheds dew. She is good, her hopes "live where the angels live." Her kindness and gentleness are sweetly tempered with that meekness and forbearance which are born of faith. Trust comes into her heart as rivers come to the sea. But to return to the letters. There are still others in the packet, with sometimes a scrawling postscript at the bottom with its gigantic t's so carefully crossed and extra p's so heavily marked by the careless hand of a dear brother, written when his heart was full of glee, and the hopeful joy of buoyant youthfulness. And there are still other letters in my packet of some of which I may not write. But the contents of all are stored far away in the inner chambers of the heart. So now I will gather up my letters carefully, to be read again when the heart is faint and sick of all there is unreal and selfish in the world, when it is weary of strange faces and new voices, and longs for the old familiar sounds of the home loved ones, and the friends of other days. May God bless all the writers of my letters, and in the dark hour of doubt and foreboding, may we trust confidingly to His sustaining Grace, and lean confidently upon His strong arm, begging that He will lead us away from the vanities of this world to the fullness of that joy which the good inherit.

January 1, 1867. LOCK HAVEN.

For the Spectator.

LIMA, OHIO, Jan. 2, 1867.

Messrs. Editors:—Your toady Governor not only undertakes to get you to disfranchise yourselves and to enfranchise the negroes by threats of greater exactions from his masters, whose satrap he is, but, in addition, he undertakes to call the conservative men of the North rabble, or what is equivalent to that. I wish him to know that he is as wide of the mark as the toad that undertook to enlarge itself to the dimensions of the ox. If he will come here he will find that the hardfisted yeomanry of the country are those in opposition to the despotism that he and other demagogues in and out of Congress are wishing to fasten on the country in the place of the government, State and Federal, made by Washington and his fellow-patriots.

This is the third Judicial district of the State and is a farming community and has a conservative majority of over 3,000, and in our Congressional district, we have a commanding majority and send a conservative man to Congress, but, on account of the demagogism around him he is powerless for good.

The Fall elections, doubtless, surprised the friends of civil liberty throughout the world.—It is, however, a matter of easy solution: We have here a corrupt political clergy (with an occasional exception), who have made their dupes believe that they are the special messengers of Heaven sent to punish outside barbarians, such as their opponents North and the white men South. What a corrupt clergy in all ages has done for the world, I need not tell your readers—here they are the power behind the throne greater than the throne itself, and to which the demagogues in and out of Congress are pandering. Such being the case, the contest will be stubborn, but with their imitations of Barebones Parliament, I hope they will ultimately disgust even their own dupes. Our conservative vote was in round numbers 214,000, but with negro votes, in violation of the State constitution and other appliances, equally disreputable, they out voted us 42,000. My best wishes to all my old acquaintances. JOHN IRVIN.

"Love on the Brain."

The sprightly "Local" of the Atlanta (Ga.) Era thus discourses on this subject. We omit the exordium and peroration, and give only the body of the dissertation:

Ordinarily, the patient, while laboring under this disease, is unfit for business. There is a sort of a will-o-the-wisp figuring between him and his daily labor, unfitting him for a sober computation of units and making a Balaam of him generally. He suffers a loss of appetite—to the intense gratification of his landlady. He looks upon bacon and cheese with ultra contempt, and wants something more ethereal. He thinks about the honeydew of Hybla, and wishes some of the drugstores in the town had a supply. He studies Byron and Moore, and quotes from each with remarkable facility. Lala Rookh becomes a favorite, especially a certain portion of the fire-worshipers.

The disease is confined to no particular age or station. We had an attack of it when about fifteen. It was so severe that our mother wanted to give us paregoric. We told her that the pain wasn't that low down. We recovered in course of time. Once it broke out fully in the shape of a certain question to a certain lady. She answered in a monosyllable of two letters. It brought us to our senses. It swept the mist from our eyes like fog before a hurricane. We hadn't expected anything of the kind, and was sure it had thundered. We looked for the cloud, and saw a large white bird sailing on a pond. Thought we were much the same kind of a bird with our wings clipped. A few days after we told our chum that we didn't see anything in that flaunting Dorothy Diddle to admire. And we didn't.

The disease develops most singularly in those who are advanced in years. Any one who has seen an old man in love has seen Nature's harlequin. The old dame gets up another more ludicrous, or more inconsistent. Every one feels like laughing at the poor old fellow's infirmities. We once saw an old man who was suffering from an attack of it. He was well enough advanced in life to have half a dozen grandchildren. We knew him well. He was a playmate of our illustrious grandsire, who wasn't a quartermaster in the revolutionary war. If he had been we would have been better off than we are now. We had noticed for some time a singularity in his conduct. We saw him several times with roses stuck in his button's hole. We caught him once reading Burns' Highland Mary. We were out with him once looking at his stock, and we asked him which was his favorite heifer. He said "Widow Wilkins." The cat was out. We knew what was the matter; but when, several months after, we saw him washing the dishes, while the widow—that was—nursed the baby, we thought he was cured permanently.

A dispatch from Rome says: "The Catholic population in the United States has reached such proportions that his Holiness the Pope has decided that four additional episcopal seats would be created in that country. In consequence, the United States which, fifty years ago, had only one bishop—that of Baltimore—will have now twenty-two.

The Richmond Examiner proposes that the elections in Virginia, usually taking place in the Spring, be put off until next Fall. No body would have much objection, we suppose, one way or the other. The people of Virginia care very little about elections just now.

Moral and Religious.

Mater Christi.

THE MOTHER OF CHRIST.

"Daily beneath his mother's eyes,
Her lamp matured his lowliness;
'Twas her's the lovely sacrifice
With fillet and with flower to dress.

Beside his little cross he knelt,
With human heavenly lips he prayed,
His will within her will she felt,
And yet his will her will obeyed.

He willed to lack; he willed to bear;
He willed by suffering to be schooled,
He willed the chains of flesh to wear;
Yet from the world her arms he ruled.

As tapers 'mid the noontide glow
With merged yet separate radiance burn,
With human taste and touch, even so,
The things he knew he willed to learn.

He sat beside the lowly door;
His homely eyes appeared to trace
In evening skies remembered lore,
And shadows of his Father's face.

One only knew him. She alone
Who nightly to his cradle crept,
And lying like the moonbeam prone
Worshipped her Maker as he slept."

A Sermon on Newspapers.

The following is an extract from a sermon on newspapers by Rev. Brooke Herford, of Manchester, England:

"I cannot go (Mr. Herford begins) with that celebrated saying of Richard Cobden, that there is more to be learned from a sheet of the *Times* than from all the histories of Thucydides. Yet, for all that, I hold their reading—their earnest and intelligent reading, mark you—as one of the essentials of life. Newspapers deal primarily with the realms of humanity, and they tell us what is going on in the realm of the present time. Is not this the primary requisite for a well-instructed life? Surely it concerns us more closely to know about the world of man than to know about the world of matter—to learn what is doing in human history now than what has been done in former times. Of course there must be a great deal of triviality mixed up with the story of human life of to day. This is simply inevitable. Time sifts out the petty details and leaves the larger features more conspicuous; yet he is not a wise man who is impatient of all these details and sneers at newspapers because of them. It does not seem to me to be a true and healthy culture which draws all a man's thoughts to abstract science and recondite learning and leaves him ignorant of the great conflicts in the world passing around him, and impatient of the things which concern the practical welfare of the society in which he lives. The worst of it is, that this contempt for newspapers is too often only a sympton of a deeper defect—a carelessness of the world and of man. I do not think this need be so. There is nothing necessarily incompatible between deep study in one special direction and a warm interest in what is going on in the living world. From this, as the centre, stretch out your thought and interest and learning as far as you like, back to the childhood of our race, back into old geologic periods if you will, or away to the tiniest star that the telescope reveals, just glistening on the farthest verge of space. But first, and underlying all, are man and the world around you and—the newspaper.

"And let me especially urge the reading of a newspaper as a distinct means of self culture, upon women. It may sound strange at first, but I think it almost more important to women than to men, and for this reason: men, going out into the world from day to day, are pretty sure to be kept up to the level of what is passing in it, whether they read the paper or not; but it is not so with women. They, in their quiet household life, may go on for weeks, hardly hearing a word of what is passing in the great world outside, and the little that they do hear conveying no living meaning to them. I think this is a great evil. It not only narrows the range of woman's life, but she loses a great deal of the happiness which would come of intellectual companionship and community of interest with men—with a father, brother, or a husband. Is it not too often the case that the wife and husband live, to some extent, in different worlds of thought and interest? Part of this may be attributed to man's incommunicativeness, but part of the cause lies deeper. It is because women are so seldom educated to take an interest in what is going on in the world around them, and so are unable without tedious explanations to enter into the news which each week brings from every quarter of the globe. I would put it to women not to depend on the explanations and comments of men, generally given, when at all, in brief phrases, but to read the newspaper as a distinct, and, to them especially, an important, part of the select culture. And read it aright, not by voting politics and foreign news a bore, but by keeping an open eye and an understanding mind for the passing history of nations and the great interests which are stirring the heart of the world. There are, on the other hand, things in the world, and they are related in newspapers, which are not calculated to enlarge the mind, but minister, instead, to gossipping, morbid curiosity, and sometimes, indeed, to arouse depraved feelings. But newspapers reflect alike the world's light and its shade. To the pure all things are pure, while the impure will find everywhere things which will make him more impure. There are some who go through the world like vultures, looking out for garbage and corruption; they will find it in newspapers, as they will find it everywhere."

A beautiful Prayer.

Father! Oh let my cry be heard, and answered for the eternal safety of father, mother, sisters and brothers. Oh! that the last day may not be a day of wrath and vengeance to any of us, that I may not hear one of those beloved voices calling on the rocks to fall and hide them from a slighted and despised Creator. I will not take back my prayer; it shall lie before Thy Throne, my Heavenly Father, offered with a strong crying of the heart. Thou canst not deny to hear me, for I plead the sufferings and death of a Savior. Oh! Jesus, be a Savior—a precious, prized Savior to these. By Thine agony, by Thine hour of desolation, I plead with Thee. I know that thou lovest to save the souls of men; they are more valuable to Thee than to their blinded owners, for Thou canst see unveiled the "eternity" unrealized by them. Oh, hear me, Jesus! I will not take back my prayer. It shall lie before Thy Thine, and Thou wilt hear me, I know Thou wilt, but until the answer comes, and I may not live to see it, I will not cease to cry; and I would have more, I would have these dear ones give up all for Christ; I would have them so realize the unspeakable value of things unseen, in comparison with the present, that they may earnestly desire and strive to give up time, talents, influence, means, life, to glorify God while on earth, knowing that a reward is laid up for the faithful servants of God.

This, oh my Savior, is the intense cry of my soul. I ask this for them, and if they must be sanctified by affliction, I ask it for them; yes, in the depth of my love for them, *I ask it for them*, if by this means only they could be made to see Thy face. Men think it strange that God sends affliction to bring hearts to know Him, but it is their own fault. Men have no time to think of their souls, they are so busy with earth's trials. But in affliction how do these all stand back and leave the soul face to face with its Maker. Yes, if by means of deep sorrow only can those I love be saved, I ask Thee, I pray Thee, O my God, to give them that anguish, for well I know that an eternal weight of glory can repay abundantly for any earth pain; and Oh! if their sanctification and consecration to God can be promoted by Thine infinite will, by anything that I can suffer, I freely offer myself. As Thou wilt; but Oh! let this be a prayer accepted and put by to be answered in Thine own good time. Amen.

Each of a thousand acts of love costs very little of itself, and yet when viewed together, who can estimate their value?