Tales of My Grandfather.

Vanderbilt Fifty Years Ago.

From the N. Y. Times.

"My first acquaintance with Vanderbilt dated from about 1826. Steamboating never was in my line, though I had no objection to taking a venture in a sailing craft. It might have been in 1825 that Stephen Girard of Philadelphia had an old brig for sale, which some four of five of us bought. She was of teak, and might have been fifty years old when we purchased her. We owned her for 20 years, then sold her for more than we paid for her, and I remember to have followed her up in the papers with a certain amount of interest, and if my memory serves me rightly, I think I read she came to grief some time in 1856, in the China seas. We were in the habit of sending the old brig to Madeira, and she brought back wine on ship's account, and did quite well. She was so slow that the wine acquired, generally, age on the voyage. Some of you may remember a particular pale Madeira. No you don't! Dear me! I am forgetting myself. If you boys never had a chance at it, very certainly your fathers punished it severely. In was remarkably sound wine, and such as you can't buy to-day. About from $1.50 to $2 a gallon would buy the choicest Madeira in those times. Our best market was in Charleston and Savannah, and the consumption was so large that we would occasionally send a part of a cargo there direct, and bring back rice. Southern planters in those days must have bathed in Madeira."

"But, grandfather, what about Commodore Vanderbilt."

"Oh! I am coming to it straight. You all know that Vanderbilt ran steamers from New York to Amboy. One Spring morning, when there was something of a fog our brig was coming in from Madeira. When just beyond Fort Hamilton one of the steamers ran into the brig and a precious lot of damage was done to their vessel. We brought suit against the boat, depositions were taken and we were prepared to go into court. I never was litigious, and did not want to fight the case, but was overruled by the other owners. One day I had to go to Philadelphia, and took the steam-boat route. Just as we were passing the Kills, I saw an oyster boat in the way of the steamer. I was looking over the side thinking that we would be pretty certain to touch her, when I heard a commotion near me. A rather spare thin man, not over well dressed, but with the eye of a hawk, had with a run and a jump mounted to the upper deck, and was in the pilot's cabin. I was able to hear a few hot words which passed between the man and the pilot. It ended by the pilot being summarily turned out of his position, and as the new comer took the wheel, and we just barely shaved by the oyster-boat, I noticed that the pilot seemed in high dudgeon, and was sullen and cross. When we landed, the new man at the wheel left the cabin, and walked leisurely on the wharf. We were to have taken the stage coach to Brunswick, but it was not quite ready. Presently the pilot put off too, and evidently seeking a quarrel, called the man some opprobrious name. Quick as lightning the hawk-eyed man turned and gave the pilot, who was a big, burly fellow, a blow between the eyes, which knocked him flat. The passengers made a ring, for a good bout at fisticuffs was not considered out of the order in our time. But the Captain of the boat interfered as did some of the agents of the line. I heard the hawk-eyed man say: 'Captain, I hold you responsible for not informing me that this scoundrel here was as often drunk as not. This time last year this pilot ran into a brig and it may take $1,000 to pay damages. Discharge him. Now look sharp yourself or you will have to go, too. I won't have the safety of boats and the reputation of the line injured, or I will turn out every mother's son of you as sure as my name is Vanderbilt!' I give it to you pretty much as Vanderbilt said it, only there was much more pith in it."

"Pith! what do you mean by pith, grandfather?" one of us asked.

"Well, I'm talking about things which happened as much as fifty years ago. In aftertimes, when the Commodore had attained rank and station, he didn't indulge as often, perhaps, as in his younger days, and was less given to ripping it out."

"He swore some then, grandfather?"

"Swore! Well, he was emphatic—quite so. That evening we got safely enough to Brunswick, where Vanderbilt kept a hotel. It was not much of a house, nor was it well kept. A man may have all the cardinal virtues, and be a railway king and so on, but I insist that that hotel at Brunswick was a second-class concern, even in those days, though Vanderbilt did keep it. I know it well enough, for in aftertimes I told the Commodore so once at Saratoga, and he owned it. At the supper table I took a corner away off from the rest of the travelers, and who should sit opposite to me but Vanderbilt himself. I hadn't forgotten, you may be sure, about the drunken pilot, and thought of the collision with our brig. I made up my mind I would talk to Vanderbilt at once while the matter was fresh on my mind. I had to call him by name two or three times before he answered me, which I did not like.

'What is it, sir?' he asked gruffly at last.

'This is an awful tough beefsteak,' I said.

'Well, then don't eat it,' was the reply.

'Mr. Vanderbilt,' said I, 'if you hadn't taken the wheel in hand we would have run into the oyster smack.'

'Quite likely.'

'Drunken pilot.'

'I don't admit it.'

'You must, because you said so yourself.'

'Then I was a —— fool.'

'You even made reference to that very pilot in connection with a collision last Spring.'

'There was a thick fog then. I have looked into the matter, and there was no one to blame. Are you a lawyer."

'No; I am not, but part owner of the brig your boat ran into. If you employ incapable people, which I can prove by your own words, you will be sure to lose your case. I can bring every passenger here to affirm your statement. I have three or four acquaintances among them.'

'You haven't said a word to them! You ain't a lawyer! Now, you show me plainly who you are. Come into my office, and we will talk it over. The coach and the passengers may have to wait ten minutes.'

I went into a sanded office, when Vanderbilt gave me a cigar. I showed him some letters on my person, which answered for an identification. He was polite enough now. 'The damage done us by that collision cost the boat $800. Now, what did it cost you to repair the brig?'

'I have not the exact amount. We have laid our damage at $2,000.'

'Well, you never could get half of that.'

'Yes, we could. The repairs cost $1,500, and the time lost in getting the brig ready we put down at $500 more."

'That ain't so. She was fixed upon the wharf where she was discharging cargo. Now I will make you an offer—set off our loss against your own bills for repairs and I will settle on that.'

'Well,' said I, 'I know I am not far out of the way when I say $1 500.'

'Good. I will pay for our people $700 in quit of all claims. Here, you make out an agreement to that effect, and sign it for yourself and owners, and that will be the end of it. I will send you a check for the money. If you are not willing, say so, and I will fight the case for the next ten years. That is my way.' I considered for a moment. As the lawyer's fees and annoyances would have been considerable, I accepted the proposition. Two or three days afterward came the check, and with it a pass over the road to Philadelphia, for the year, which pass I returned, for I never was what you boys call 'dead-headed.' We sent, however, to Vanderbilt, on the part of the owners of the brig, a cask of choice Maderia, and so the matter ended.

It might have been in 1865 when I met the Commodore at Saratoga. I am fond of whist, so was the Commodore. There used to be, ten or fifteen years ago, a set of players in Philadelphia who were the best whist players in the United States. I have seen some famous games in the English club houses, played by leading whist players but think the Philadelphia game was quite as good. I remember that one of these Philadelphia players, for mischief's sake, was in the habit of rattling about all sorts of things during the game, against all the rules, but who had such a knowledge of the game, that with good players he could almost invariably name the nine last cards in the other people's hands. At Saratoga the Commodore who never liked anything better than to tackle with strong opponents, was in the habit of playing his rubber with these gentlemen from Philadelphia. Now, the Commodore never was a strong player, and never got beyond an apprentice game. I don't mean to advance the idea that now I am equal to cope with those Philadelphia whist players—but they do say that in my time I could hold my own with the best of them. I don't think any of you or your fathers will ever play whist decently. None of you have the genius of the game. I never lose my temper at whist—"

"Oh, grandfather!"

"Except when people are dreadfully stupid and wanting in the simplest principles of the game. The Commodore was my partner often, and his luck more than his play used to carry us through. If he had stuck to whist entirely, he might have done pretty well, but playing Boston spoiled his game. Well, once we were playing together and every game it seemed to me he might have saved the Commodore lost by his bad play. When we were through—I think we must have lost some five games straight, the Philadelphians winning—and the Commodore and I were at a table alone, I said: Commodore, you can't play whist with these gentlemen; they are too strong for you. You can't play cards, Sir, better than you kept a hotel.' I said it pleasantly, and the Commodore did not take it amiss.

'How not better than a hotel?" asked the Commodore.

'That was a mighty poor house of entertainment you used to keep at Brunswick just fifty years ago?'

'How poor?'

'The toughest beef-steaks!'

'Wasn't the fare good? The beds were clean, though; I am positive about that. See here, didn't we have a settlement once about some confounded collision? I remember all about it now. It taught me a lesson. I suppose I have got in a thousand passions since then, and learned, even when my temper was hottest, to hold my tongue. But if the house at Brunswick was so bad, why didn't you go somewhere else.

'Because it was the only one there, almost. You had the monopoly, as usual.'

'That was my way. But, really, was it now so very, bad?"

'Yes, it was.'

'Well, honestly, it was the only venture of that kind that I never did carry through to my perfect satisfaction. Perhaps if Mrs. Vanderbilt in those times had been allowed full control, she would have managed matters better. Those days were the pleasant ones—the happiest of my life. I could work then twenty hours on a stretch, never tire. Ha! here are enough gentlemen to cut in again. I would like another rubber before my drive. Come will you cut in? I am not too old to learn whist yet.'"

"Did he lose that rubber, grandfather."

"Of coourse he did, for I was his partner. He blundered worse than ever, and seemed to enjoy-losing. Vanderbilt really was a remarkable man, but he never could acquire the first principles of whist."

Scenes on Russian Railroads.

North or South there is scarcely any difference between the aspect of a Russian station. For hundreds of versts you have been jolting through a flat or slightly undulating series of enormous snow-clad plain. Stunted birch, fir and larch are all the flora you perceive. You never set eyes upon a town—one, I mean, with smoke curling from the chimneys, with women peeping from the casements, with children playing on the doorsteps, with dogs or poultry at the street ends.

For strategic reasons the railway has been made to run as straight as an arrow from a Tartar's bow from one great point to another of military vantage. They say that when the Czar Nicholas was deferentially consulted as to the direction which the St. Petersburg and Moscow Railway should follow, his Majesty simply took a pencil and a ruler and struck a straight line on the map from the new to the old metropolis of his empire; and the consequence of this inflexible militarism as applied to civil engineering is that the majority of Russian towns are two or three miles distant from the railway stations which bear their names.

The platform and its appurtenances are isolated in the midst of a snowy waste. Roundabout you are gathered a few sheds and wooden cabins, together with vast piles of roughly-hewn logs for fuel. That is all, save the signal-boxes, which look either like gibbets with packing-cases instead of corpses suspended from them, or packing-cases without gibbets.

Women are often employed in signaling, and wretchedly unwomanly they appear, bundled up in hoods and gaberdines of sheepskin reaching no lower than the knee, with their legs swathed and muffled to almost elephantine proportions in canvas bandages, cross gartered with strings of untanned leather. These, with heavy clogs of wood, complete the costume of the anomalous creature, who mechanically waves a tattered black or a ragged yellow flag as the train passes, and makes us wonder whether Mother Eve could ever have realized the possibility of her daughters being put to such base uses as these.

A Question of Fire.

From Harper's Drawer.

A husband and wife were having one of those arguments which occasionally interrupt the harmony of married life. He grumbled because there was not a better fire in the room, and declared that she always was just so stingy in regard to the use of fuel. She rather admitted her general partiality for economy in the direction referred to, but at the same time she asserted that she was the subject of a great improvement in the specific point then under discussion. For proof on her part, she went on to state that when her first husband was very sick (he did not recover) she really felt some reluctance to having a fire of sufficient capacity to make things entirely comfortable. "But," said she, "when my second dear departed was in his last sickness, I had such a fire as no reasonable man could find any fault with. And," she continued, "when your time comes to lie in that bed, with no hope of ever rising from it, I shall have a first-rate fire, as hot as—why, so hot that you will hardly know the difference when you're dead."

A Mother-in-Law.

She had succeeded in marrying her son, and naturally undertook the management of his household.

Presently the son died, but she continued to advise, direct, and worry generally her daughter-in-law.

Then the daughter-in-law married again, but still the old lady insisted on bossing things.

A friend essayed to convince her that she could have no possible right to intefere, that the new husband was nothing to her.

"Nothing!" she cried, "he nothing to me! Why, am I not his step-mother-in-law on his wife's side!"

A Danbury beau sent a telegram to his girl who was in New York, wishing her a "Merry Christmas," but omitted to pay the charge. It cost her 25 cts. to find that she was remembered, and in her gratitude she expressed him a a package containing several coal chunks, which cost him 55 cents to get. He is carrying his confectionery to a new place.

A Story For the Little Folks.

There was no help for it. Daisy must be drowned—little, gentle, two-months-old Daisy, that was always so good and quiet, and yet so full of life and frolic! Little Katie's heart was quite broken thinking about it. But mamma, who knew best, had said so, and there was no help for it. Three cats took so much milk. And there were so many human mouths to feed And milk at ten cents a quart. Poor little Katie! She saw it was best, but it brought grief to her heart.

"If some one would only buy Daisy," she said, clinging to her mother's dress.

"People don't buy kitties," said her mother, stooping to kiss the little flushed, tearful face lifted to hers; "but I wish some one would take her as a gift. You wouldn't mind giving Daisy away, would you, Katie! That would be better than drowning her."

"Yes, indeed; a hundred times better!" answered the child, her face lighting up.

That night a little, tear-wet face pressed Katie's pillow. The child was offering up her evening prayer. "Dear Father," she said, "please send some one 'long who wants a kittie. It is so awful to have Daisy drowned, and it hurts so! Please, dear Father, be good to Daisy, and don't let her be drowned." And here the little voice grew choked, and great tears fell on the white pillowslip. Soon, however, she fell a asleep; her prayer had quieted her.

"Good-by, Daisy. Oh! I wish God had thought it best. But he didn't, and you must go.', And Katie turned from her brother Reuben, who held Daisy in his strong arms.

"Don't cry, Katie," said the boy, pausing a moment. "I'll do it real quick; she won't suffer a minute. I'll tie a big stone to the bag, and it'll be all over in a jiffy."

Poor, blundering Reuben! He meant to comfort Katie, but his words only made her cry the harder.

Reuben walked along far from comfortable. There was the bag in his pocket and Daisy in his arms, looking up in his face confidingly as though he were the best friend she had in the world. In a few minutes poor Daisy would be struggling in the water, and he should have to go back and face Katie and tell her it was all over.

"I declare I can't do it!" he exclaimed half aloud. "I'm going in here to Bill Watson's. Perhaps his folks would like a kitten. Anyway, I'll see."

A little litl girl stood in the doorway.

"Halloo, Jenny! want a kitty? I've brought you a beauty—look!"

Jenny's pretty face flushed with delight.

'O mother!" she exclaimed, running back into the room, "may I have this kitty? Reuben has brought it on purpose for me!"

Reuben had to tell his story—how they had two cats at home, how there wasn't milk enough for them all, and how Katie had cried when mother said Daisy must be drowned.

"Don't say another word," interrupted Mrs. Watson. "Leave puss here. I'm right glad of her."

So Reuben put Daisy into Jenny's arms, and with a heart-felt "Thank you, ma'am, Katie will be so glad," he hurried home to tell his sister the good news.

Oh, how happy Katie was that evening! "God did hear me; didn't He, mamma? Dear little Daisy! I think God must love kitties almost as much as He does little girls; don't you mamma?"

"'His tender mercies are over all His works,'" murmured Katie's mother to herself, then she turned to her little girl and said:

"God loves and cares for everything that he has made, dear child. I thank Him that my Katie has a tender, loving heart toward His creatures; and I am glad, too, that Daisy has found so good a home."

How to Treat Mischievous Children.

Here is a little child, who is a great tease and trouble. He is always asking to do this or that impossible or unpermissible action. He bursts in abruptly upon the conversation of his seniors. He destroys all peace in the house by shouts and screams, imperious demands on the time and attention of every one's affairs. He is an imp of mischief, breaking furniture, overturning inkstands on the carpet, setting fire to valuable papers, driving nails into the furniture. How shall you abate this nuisance? You may try to destroy all these bad habits by scolding him, by rebukes, by lectures, by punishment. That is one way but not the best. These bad habits often spring from an instinct of activity, an intense desire to do something, which the Creator has given the child as a means of mental and moral growth. In trying to pull up the tares, you are in great danger of rooting out the wheat, also. If you succeed by force in changing his disagreeable torment of perpetual activity into a dull quiet, you have changed a bright boy into a dull one. A better way than destroying this tendency is to fulfill it by giving him plenty of occupation of an innocent kind. Give him a heap of sand to dig, blocks of wood to build houses with, a box of tools and boards to saw. Set him at some work useful or interesting, or, at least harmless. He will like all this better than he likes mischief. All his irregular activity was a cry for something to do.

A Wisconsin lumberman offers $30 in cash for "a rattling good wife—one who is not too high nosed to grow fat on bean soup."

House, Farm and Garden.

Profits of Farming in England.

Our farmers are complaining of the unprofitableness of farming, and while the same causes may not be at work here as in England, still the following sketch from the Agricultural Gazette may throw some light upon the subject, as it is a very truthful picture, drawn by an artist who seems to know whereof he speaks:

Having studied farming from a boy of 15 years, up to the present time, (I am not thirty yet), I am rather surprised to see it so often put down as a very poor paying game. I am willing to admit that farmers, as a rule do not make so much profits as they did some years ago, and what is the reason? Well, there are a good many things to cause this falling off in the profits; one thing is, rents have risen considerably, another, labor has risen. But the wages I consider a mere nothing; the only thing that I find fault with is, laborers are not so obliging as formerly.

Now I am coming to the third reason, and I think the most important one—where are the farmers and their wives half of their time? There is not the least doubt I am asking a question which can soon be answered. The farmer is most likely gone to see how the men are getting on, for an hour or so. "But stop," says the farmer, "the hounds meet at half-past 10; I must go and have a spin with them to-day." Of course they say it don't cost much to keep one horse; but with keeping the horse, a man to look after it is needed—and then, what are the men doing while our hunting farmer is away after the hounds? Why, curled up under some hedge having their dinners, of course. How long they stay there it is impossible to say; and then, of course, he must go to market one day a week, at least, and as soon as his time arrives to depart, off go the men and have another fire. Some, when reading these remarks, may ask, how do you know this? My answer is, I worked for a gentleman in Oxfordshire who farmed nearly 1,000 acres of good land, and had many opportunities of seeing how they managed it. I don't say I have not done the same myself; of course, when the others went I was compelled to go, otherwise I would have been disliked by all the men, and probably soon should have been compelled to leave. Now, the hunting horse was the cause of all this, so there would be a large bill for him to pay.

The farmers' wives, years ago, used to make cheese, and at the same time superintend the rearing of the calves; but, O, dear me! where is there a farmer's wife that makes cheese now? Why, of course they must have a dairy-maid—yes, and pay from £30 to £40 a year for a trustworthy person to come and do what they ought to do themselves; and then there are the boarding and lodging, and, perhaps, after all, make a bad lot of cheese. Now, these last two things are the principal causes of the farmer's downfall. There is too much expense incurred. I do not mean to say that there is too much labor employed; I mean to say there is not enough work done for the money, and that if the farmer will stick to his business and look round his men, he will have enough done; and then, again, if the good housewife will make the cheese herself, and be up in the morning and see that the calves are seen after properly, her husband won't be going to liquidation.

Some may ask, why not the master see after the calves? Well, I consider he has sufficient to do to look after the wagoner and shepherd, and setting his men off to work, and seeing that they get at it quickly, for sometimes they won't be off as soon as they ought, pretending that they can't find the tool they want. Now, Mr. editor, I have only a few words to say more, and they are simply these. Even with wet seasons, bad seasons, etc., if a man cannot make a percentage on a moderate outlay on a good farm, after paying rent, he wants a lesson out of another's book; and as this is a commencement of the new year, I would advise him to look over his accounts and see how matters stand.

Raising Calves.

Like everything else pertaining to a farm, raising calves requires good judgment and experience. It is best always to leave the calf with the cow several days, until the fever is out of the bag and the milk good for family use, and with proper management the calf can be easily taught to drink milk when four of five days old. It is important that the calf should take its first sustenance from the cow, to enable it to discharge the fœtal nutriment in its stomach and bowels, and to give it strength for its future development. If a calf is of no value to rear, or if the milk is worth more than the cost of feeding four or five weeks for the butcher, it should be killed as soon as the milk becomes good, but if it is to be raised, it should have pure milk for about ten days, when a little skimmed milk may be added to the unskimmed by degrees, till it may be fed entirely on skimmed milk. It has been shown by abundant tests that calves will thrive as well on the poorest butter-producing milk as on the best; consequently, if a farmer has any cows which give poor milk, that should be fed to calves, because it is not the cream that nourishes them so much as other properties of the milk. When four or five weeks old they may be fed on buttermilk.

It is good management to feed calves, in connection with their milk, when about ten days old, a little cooked meal. At first, take nearly a tablespoonful of Indian, oat, or barley meal, and cook it with a little water; then mix it with the milk, and increase the quantity of meal as the calves grow older. Flax-seed boiled to a jelly and mixed with milk, when the calves are 10 days old, is good for them. It is poor policy to stint calves which are worth rasing, as their future development as good cows depends in a great degree on the manner in which they are treated when calves. Let them be fed three times a day at regular hours, and as much as will satisfy them, and in the end their owners will never be losers by so doing. Look at the poor unsightly animals in the yards of farmers who half starve their calves to save a few cents, and you have ocular demonstration of what stinting calves in their feed will do.

When calves are old enough to begin to eat hay or grass, if confined to a stable or yard, a little fine, sweet hay, or grass, should be placed within their reach. It may be tied with a cord, and suspended where they can nibble at it, and in a few weeks, when about four months old, they may be turned out to pasture, still giving them a little meal and water once a day for a week or two. They should have fresh water in their pasture, which should produce an abundance of good grass, and they will go into winter quarters in fine condition. Then, let them be fed on good, fine sweet hay, with fodder corn (sweet) cut and cured as soon as it begins to tassel; and a little meal of any kind; and when they are two or three years old, you will have stock that you will not be ashamed to have your neighbors see. Even the milk that such cows will give, will be much more than if they were poorly fed when calves. There is no use in a farmer expecting to raise fine stock of any kind, unless he attends thoroughly to their wants through all the stages of their growth. If he grows a good crop of corn, it must be fed, and the weeds exterminated—no half-way work; and the same rule applies to his live stock.

Raising And Feeding Swine.

If one thing needs reforming more than another it is the manner of raising and feeding swine. From the day they are large enough to eat they are offered all manner of refuse about the place, such as rank weeds, filthy slops, spoiled vegetables and meats, dead fowl, etc. They are allowed to rummage the dungyard and glean the refuse of food in the faces of cattle and horses, on the ground of economy. But we imagine that the quantity of food saved in this way is very insignificant not to exceed the value of a bushel of shelled corn a year among the whole stock of an ordinary-sized farm. The objections to the practice of keeping swine in this way are so serious, however, that the reasons in favor of it have no force at all. The origin of the trichinosis in swine may be always traced to the consumption of vile stuffs in the food, or being housed and yarded amid filth and foul air. Interests as dear as health and life require a thorough reform in keeping swine. Let their food be as pure as that which other animals consume; let them be kept in clean quarters and have pure air, let diseased or unthrifty animals be separated from those in health, and we may have no fears of trichinosis among either swine or human beings.

The merry jingle of the sleigh-bells, the sparkle of the crystal snow in the lambent light of the moon, and the confiding creature that nestles closely to him beneath the buffalo robes, tenderly clasping his left hand in hers while his right holds the reins, constitute the winter night's poem that is floating through the doting lover's soul, and leave him in doubt whether to let go enough to get his handkerchief out, or to draw his coat-sleeve across his nose.

A dilapidated tramp was heard recenty inveighing against people who do not clean off their sidewalks. "I expect every minute," he said, "to fall down and break my watch."