

THE



SUN:

BY M. G. DAVIS:

"THE 'SUN' SINES FOR ALL."

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MISCELLANEOUS.

THE SUNNY SOUTH:

Or, The Southerner at Home.

Embracing five years' Experience of a Northern Governor in the Land of the Sugar and the Cotton. A work Edited by Prof. J. H. Ingraham of Miss. Published by G. G. Evans, of Philadelphia.

"The object of this work is to do justice to the Southern Planter, and, at the same time, afford information of an agreeable form to the Northerner."

We copy at page 59, where the writer says:

I am already getting reconciled to slavery, since I find that it does not, in reality, exhibit the revolting horrors I was taught in the North to discover in it. There are many things to admire and to interest one in the social and domestic condition of the slaves, and I am almost ready to acknowledge that the African is happier in bondage than free. At least one thing is certain; nearly all the free negroes I have ever seen in the North were miserable creatures, poor, ragged, and often criminal. Here they are well clad, moral, nearly all religious, and the temptations that demoralize the free blacks in our Northern cities are unknown to, and cannot approach them.

I have seen a good deal of the African race since I have been here, and I am persuaded that they are far more religiously disposed than the lower and middle class of whites. There are but four negroes on the colonel's plantation, that are not "members" of the church, and who do not try to square their lives with the precepts of the Gospel, so far as they understand them. This is the case, I learn, on all the neighboring plantations, and I am informed by the intelligent persons that it is more or less so throughout the whole South. It would thus seem, that God, in his providence, has permitted slavery to be the instrument of christianizing Africa, by bringing Africa to Christian shores; and colonization by reaction on the shores of Africa, is completing the mysterious dispensation.

In our ride of five miles we met but three persons. One of these was an old African with a head as white as wool, and a face, venerable and lined with age, and a snowy beard. His appearance was striking, and reminded me of a black patriarch, especially as he wore a gray blanket over his shoulder like a mantle. And let me remark, that a blanket completes a negro's winter costume here; sometimes it is made into a coat, but more frequently, for the advantage of having it as a covering at night, wore entire, like a shawl, or a Spanish poncho. The African was leading a tall Congo stripling, half-naked to the waist, who had a hanging countenance, as if he were an offender of some sort.

"That is old Juba with his grandson Tom, tied," said the colonel, as they drew near. "Tom has been playing the runaway in the woods these three weeks. So, uncle Juba," added the colonel in the kind, familiar tone in which masters here, who are gentlemen, address their old slaves; "so you've caught Tom?"

"Yes, massa, me catch de berry bad boy! He neller raise herself for noting good of he get habit ob runnin' way dis way! Old Juba feel berry shame ob him. Me gib him frashun, me git him home. He disgrace to de family!—Come long, you nigger, a'n't you shame yourself, run off in de wood like a dog-tief?"

With this appeal, the old man gave the thong a jerk, and, touching his old hat in respectful homage to his master and to ourselves as "young mississes," dragged his ragamuffin grandson of eighteen years on the way back to the plantation.

"That old negro," said the colonel, as we rode on, "has been in my family seventy-eight years. He was bought by my grandfather before the Revolution from an African trader that came into Jamestown with a load of slaves from the coast of Africa. He was a lad of fourteen, and is of course now ninety-two; yet he is never idle, is active and faithful, and is a sort of patriarch over the rest of the slaves, half of whom are his descendants. He has not yet forgotten his African language, which he still speaks when he still speaks when he is vexed, nor has he dropped his heathenish superstitions. He wears about his neck full half a dozen charms of one sort or another, and is a firm believer in the devil, whom he says he has seen bodily a hundred times. His influence over the negroes is very extraordinary. They stand in awe of him. His grandson, you see, is a tall, stout fellow, and might get away from

him; but he would as soon think of striking the old man as resisting his authority.

We had not ridden more than a mile after parting with Juba and his captive, when we saw a figure standing as motionless as a shadow in the forest ahead of us. The attitude was free and commanding, and a nearer approach showed us that it was an Indian. He was leaning on his rifle. He wore a coronet, made of brass, encircling his crown-black head, and ornamented with eagle's feathers. He was dressed in a blue frock, trimmed with tarnished gold lace, and belted close to his body by a stout leathern cinchuro. Hanging upon his brawny chest were several silver medals. On his left wrist were five hoops or bracelets of brass, close together, and being riveted on the whole, were evidently meant to be worn till his death. He wore deer-skin leggings, the seams fringed, and his feet were encased in once handsomely ornamented moccasins, which had seen. In his belt were a powder horn, a long knife in a sheath of serpent's skin, a pouch for balls, flints, etc., and another large one for miscellaneous articles. His rifle was very long, slender, without any groove-stock for the barrel to rest in, and a flint lock. I had time to observe all these particulars, for we stopped and held some minutes "talk" with the warrior; for warrior he was, having fought under General Jackson long years ago; and two of the medals suspended from his neck were bestowed upon him, the colonel said, by the "hero." The Indian was full sixty years of age, but time had scarcely whited a hair in his lofty head. Proud, stern, dignified as a king, he neither moved or regarded us as we rode up to him.

"Good morning, Captain John," said the colonel; "a fine day for the deer! You seem to be on the chase as well as we!"

The Indian chief smiled at hearing the courteous and bland words of the colonel, and answered in a deep barytone, that completely came up to my idea of a "manly voice."

"Ya, white chief! Good morn! Deer not much plenty! God day hunt, but deer not much plenty! White man leave no more deer for Indian rifle!" and he slowly shook his head, cast his eyes sadly to the earth and remained silent.

"Why do you and your people not remove west, chief?" asked the colonel. "You will find vast hunting grounds there—no white man will intrude upon you—you can there be happy and powerful!"

"Indian never more be great, white chief!" responded the old warrior, with a heavy cloud darkening the noble outline of his Washington like features.

As he spoke, he turned and strode away with the air and bearing of Forrest as Metamora, save that the one is imitation, and the other nature.

"Who is that noble looking chief?" I inquired of the colonel, for his sullen pride and solitary condition had inspired me with a curiosity to know his history.

"That is the celebrated Creek chief Nelastora, was his reply as we resumed our ride, while the chief disappeared in the depths of the woodland. "He was an ally of Jackson's in the Indian wars, and was of great assistance to the cause. The encroachments of civilization upon his hunting grounds, which were once a hundred miles in extent through this region, have compelled most of his tribe to remove to the west of the Mississippi. But he and a few of his friends refuse to go. He has sworn, I am told, upon the graves of his fathers, that he will never desert them, but remain to protect and die upon them! And he will keep his word. Sometimes he is seen a hundred miles south of this, but he is never long absent from the central seat of his tribe, which is a beautiful valley thirty miles to the east and south of us."

Before met him in the forest, he crossed the threshold of go white, and Rockett and this chief were like brothers, yet he never sat at the American hunters board. Three years ago, Nelastora was seen standing by General Jackson's grave at the Hermitage, regarding it in silence; but when he was approached, he haughtily retired.

I was witness, yesterday afternoon, to a scene that afforded me infinite amusement. The negroes had presents all round at Christmas and Newyears; but, on Washington's birth-day, old George, a favorite and venerable slave, whose father once belonged to Washington, argued that he ought to have a special present! The Colonel therefore sent to Nashville and bought him a new violin. A more acceptable gift could hardly have been made to him, as he has a fine ear for music,

and is the Orpheus and "Ole Bull" of the plantation. It has been his custom of evenings, after the day's work is over, to seat himself on a bench beneath a large elm that grows in the centre of the African village or Quartier. Here, at the sound of his fiddle, would gather the whole ebon population to dance. At such times he gives regular lessons to the young negroes in dancing to the banjo, and teaches their juvenile voices the classic airs of Mondango and Guinea; hereditary tunes, that have been brought from Africa, and which are now spread over the land to such words as "Julian Johnson, don't you cry," "Old Dan Tucker," "Long Time Ago," etc.

We had just risen from the tea-table, last evening when old George made his appearance at the steps of the gallery, and, baring his bald head, he bowed with a politeness of Lord Chesterfield would have envied, and made us his speech:

"Young Mississes and Massa colonel; old George take de liberty to v'ite you to come to de dance out door by de ol' elm, Massa hab giv' me new fiddle, and I take pleasure to giv' de white folks a concert, and show de young ladies how my scholars dance."

We accepted George's polite invitation, and as the moon was full we went over to the village. We were guided to the tree by the bright light shed from half a dozen pine torches, held in the hands of as many Africans animated statues, whom George had conspicuously stationed to throw light upon the scene.

As I approached the spot, I was struck with its novelty, for I have not yet been long enough here to become familiar with all plantation customs. I have told you that the negro village of the estate is picturesquely disposed on the borders of a pretty mere, a few hundred yards from the house. We crossed the water, by a wicker bridge, and had most of the dwellings of the slaves in full view, occupying two streets and three sides of a square. The lights of pine-wood flung a red and wild glare upon their fronts, and upon the lake, and upon a group of more than a hundred Africans of both sexes, who were assembled about the tree. It revealed, also, here and there an old man or woman, helpless through age, seated in their hut-doors, in order to enjoy as much of what was going on as they could.

We already found the dignified George seated upon his bench, fiddle in hand. On his right stood a short, fat negro, holding a banjo, on his left was another slave, with eyes like the bottoms of China cups, holding two bellow sticks in his hands. Behind George was a toothless negro, having before her a section of a hollow tree, shaped like a drum, with a dried deer-skin, drawn tightly over it; in her shining fist she grasped a sort of mallet. Chairs, assiduously provided were placed for us, and the buzzing of pleasure, occasioned by the numerous company of Ham's posterity, having subsided, at a majestic wave of George's fiddle bow, the concert began! The first tune was a solo, and new to me, and so beautiful and simple that I made old George play it for me today in the house, and I copied the music as he did so. He says his father taught it to him. Certainly the negroes have striking native airs, characterized by delightful surprises and touching simplicity. The chief peculiarity is cheerfulness.

George having first played a soft strain, the banjo struck in a second; then came the hollow sticks, like castanets, but five times as large, hollow, and more musical; and, lastly, the old negro thumped in a bass on her hollow drum. The perfect time, the sweet harmony, the novelty of the strange sounds, the singular combination enchanted me. I must confess, that I never heard true music before; but then I should acknowledge I have not heard any operatic music in an opera-house.—But do not smile if I say that I believe George and his three aiders and abettors would be listened to with pleasurable surprise, if they should play as I heard them play, by a Walnut street audience. Real African concert singers are not however, in fashion. White men blacked are only come it faut. Is it not odd that a city audience will listen to imitation negroes, and yet despise a concerto composed of the Simon pures? After George had played several pieces, one of which was "Lucy Long," as I had never heard it before, and had received our praises, he said, always speaking with the dignity of an oracle:

"Now, if massa and de young ladies please, we hab de show demselves. Come, and out here you litty niggers! Show de white folks how you dance de corn dance!"

Thereon a score of little darkies, from five years of age to a dozen years, girls, and boys together, sprang from the crowd, and placed themselves in the space in front of us. Half of them were demi-clad, those that had shirts not being troubled with any superfluous apparel, and those that had trousers being shirtless: in a word, not a black

skin was covered with but one species of garment, and this was generally a very short and very dirty, coarse *camisa*.

"Now make the dirt fly!" shouted George, as he struck up a brisk air alone—banjo, hollow sticks, and drum being silent.

The younglings obeyed the command to the letter. They danced like mad! The short skirt flaps flew up and down, the black legs were as thickly mixed up as those of a centipede waltzing; woolly heads, white eyes, glittering teeth, yells and whoops, yah-yahs, and wou-wous, all united, created a scene that my shocked pen refuses to describe. The little negroes did full credit to old George's skill, and he evidently felt it. He sawed away desperately till the sweat rained from his furrowed brow. He writhed, and rose, and bent over, and stood up, and did everything but lie down, playing all the while without cessation, and in a sort of rapturous ecstasy. Banjo caught the inspiration, and hollow sticks started after, while drum pounded away like young thunder, yelling a chant all the while, that had her grandmother sung it to Mungo Park, would have driven him from the shelter of her hut to the less horrible howls of the desert. The little Africans danced harder and harder. Their parents caught the spirit of the moment, and this one, dashing his old cap down, sprang into the arena, and that one, uttering a whoop, followed till full fifty were engaged at once. I never enjoyed anything so much! I could fancy myself witnessing some heathen incantation dance in the groves of Africa! The moonlight shined through the trees, the red glare of the torches upon them, their wild movements, their strange and not unmusical cries, as they kept time with their voices to their quick tramping feet, their dark forms, their contortions, and perfect abandon, constituted a tout ensemble that must be witnessed to be appreciated.

Suddenly, in the height of their diversion the plantation bell began to strike eight o'clock. When the first stroke was heard from the turret of the overseer's house, there was a burst of mingled surprise and regret. They shouted to each other to do their best; and between the first and eighth stroke, take my word for it, Mr.—, more dancing was done, and harder, and faster, and noisier, than was ever done before in so small a limitation of time. It seemed they were all determined to heap as much pleasure into this fleeting space as it could contain. With the last stroke, every man, woman and youngling uttered a yell, gave a final leap into the air, and with the dying vibration of the bell's sound all was quiet. George even was arrested with his bow in the air, and in an attitude of expiring delight, as if

"Dying of a tune in Orphean pain."

"Good night, boys," said the colonel, in the cordial frank way he has when he speaks to his people; "you have enjoyed yourselves, and so have we. George, your pupils, young and old, do you credit."

"Tankee, Massa Colonel; I know'd you'd be berry much gratify. I hope de young ladieses be ekally charmed."

"We are charmed, George," I answered; at which he made me a superb bow, when we took our departure. The slaves also retired each to his own cabin, the torches were extinguished, and before we reached the house, stillness reigned in the green moonlit square of the African quarter.

Anecdote of the Late Col. Preston.—Many of our readers remember the stately presence, the dignified bearing and imposing manner of Colonel Wm. C. Preston, of South Carolina. It was when these qualities were in their prime, and Preston represented his State in the Senate of the United States, that business or pleasure called him to the West, and to take passage down the Mississippi river. In those "flush times" the steamers were swarmed with hoosiers, greenhorns and gamblers, the latter politely designated "sporting gentlemen," the term "gambler" or "blackleg," entailing on the speaker a pistol shot or a wipe from a bowie-knife.

The boat was on the eve of departure, and our Senator standing on the deck and holding a small mahogany box, was observing with great interest and pleasure the busy scene on the wharf, when an individual, luxuriating in a rather ornate style of dress, approached him, and in subdued tones, demanded:

"I say, old feller, when are you going to commence?"

"Commence what, sir?" asked the astonished Senator.

"Pshaw; none of that gammon with me! The fact is, a few of us boys on board want a little fun, and we won't pile it on too strong for you; so come and open at once."

"Really, sir," replied Preston, "I am totally at a loss to guess your meaning; open what?"

"Open what! why, the bank, of course. Maybe you think that our pile isn't large enough to make it an object. But we're not so poor as all that, any how."

The Senator meditated gloomily, but all was dark to him; he was plunged in a sea of doubt, and he never met any problem, not even a political one, so hard to solve.

"Perhaps," broke in his pertinacious friend, again, after a considerable pause, "perhaps you will say directly that you are not a sporting man."

"I certainly am nothing of the kind, sir," rejoined Preston, rather angrily, "and I can't imagine what put the idea into your head."

"Not a sporting man! Whew-w! I never heard of such impudence. Well, if you are not a sporting man, will you please to tell me why you carry the tools about with you?" and he pointed to the mahogany box which he still carried.

A light broke on Preston's mind. "The mahogany box!" he cried. "Ah, yes; ha! ha! ha! Very natural mistake, indeed, my good sir, very natural, indeed! my good sir; very natural indeed! Well, I will show you the contents." And laughing heartily, he opened the box in question which, was in fact, his dressing case, and displayed the usual parade of brushes, combs, razors, soap, etc., which usually fill that article of traveling comfort.

Our friend looked at the case, then at Preston again. Then he heaved a long sigh, and then pondered.

"Well," he broke out at length, "I did take you to be a sporting gentleman—I did; but I see you are a barber, but if I'd known it, hang me if I'd spoken to you!" And so saying, "he vanooosed."

Fancy the feelings of our honorable Senator, as he assumed these various characters in the eyes of an anxious stranger.

Have You Got Any Nails?—A tall, gawky-looking countryman, during the height of business season last fall, walked into one of the largest wholesale dry goods houses in —, and entirely disregarding the invitations of the numerous salesmen to inspect their latest patterns, he strode into the counting-room, where the heads of the establishment were sitting in solemn conclave. After taking a cursory glance of the room, and surveying attentively the faces of its occupants, he asked with an unctious Yankee twang:

"Say, yee—got any nails?"

"Nails, sir! nails!" repeated the most dignified Dombey of the lot, "no, sir; what should we do with nails?"

"Wall, I dunno—though may be you might. Haint got no nails, eh?"

"No, sir," replied Dombey again with an emphasis, and pointing to the door.

The individual in search of the nails took his time, but left the counting room.

In turn he asked every clerk the same question, and received the information from all that nails formed no part of the stock of the establishment.

"Well," said he, going towards the door, "don't keep nails here nohow?"

The principal salesman, whose dignity was hurt by the idea that any one should suppose that an establishment where he held a prominent place should keep nails, headed the countryman off as he was proceeding towards the entrance, and asked him abruptly, what he wanted there.

"Want," said the countryman, as cool as a cucumber, "I want to know if you've got any nails?"

"Nails, no, sir. You've been told again and again that we've no nails—so you'd better go."

"Yaas—but you really ain't got no nails."

"No, sir, I've got no nails," thundered the principal salesman.

"Ain't got no nails, eh? Well, then, jist look w' here, Mister, if you aint got no nails, an awful fix you'd be in if you'd happen to have the itch."

Two Irishmen were in prison, one for stealing a watch, and the other for stealing a cow:

"Mike," said the cow-stealer, one day, "what o'clock is it?"

"Och, Pat, I haven't my watch handy, but I think it's about milkin' time."

Why is a young lady just from boarding school like a building committee? Because she is ready to receive proposals.