

The National Tribune

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The Shore of Tennessee.

Move my arm-chair, faithful Pompey
In the sunshine, bright and strong,
For this world is fading Pompey,
Massa won't be with you long;
And I fain would hear the south wind
Bring once more the sound to me
Of the wavelets gently breaking
On the shores of Tennessee.

Mournful though the ripples murmur,
As they still the story tell,
Now no vessels float the banner
That I loved so long and well;
I shall listen to the music
Dreaming that again I see,
STARS AND STRIPES on sloop and shallow
Sailing up the Tennessee.

And Pomp, while Massa's waiting
For death's last dispatch to come
If that EXILED STARRY BANNER
Should come proudly sailing home,
You shall greet it, slave no longer,
Voice and hand shall both be free
That point and shout to UNION COLORS,
On the waves of Tennessee.

Massa's berry kind to Pompey
But old darkey's happy here
Where he's tended corn and cotton
For 'ese many a long gone year.
Over yonder Missis' sleeping—
No one tends her grave like me;
Mebbe she would miss the flowers
She used to love in Tennessee.

'Pears like she was, watching Massa
If Pomp, besid' him stay,
Mebbie she'd remember better
How for him she used to pray,
Telling him that way up yonder,
White as snow his soul should be
If he served the Lord of Heaven,
While he lived in Tennessee.

Silently the tears were rolling
Down the poor old dusky face
As he stepped beside his master
In his long accustomed place;
Then a silence fell around them
As they gazed on rock and tree
Pictured in the placid waters
On the rolling Tennessee.

Master, dreaming of the battle,
When he fought by Marion's side;
When he bid the naughty Tarleton
Stoop his lordly crest of pride,
Man, remembering how you sleeper
Once he held upon his knee
Ere she loved the gallant soldier—
Ralph Vernair, of Tennessee.

Still the south-wind fondly lingers
Mid the veteran's silver hair,
Still the bondman close beside him
Stands behind the old arm-chair,
While the dark-hued hand uplifted
Shading eyes, he bends to see
Where the woodland, boldly jutting
Turns aside the Tennessee.

Thus he watches cloud-born shadows
Glide from tree to mountain crest,
Softly creeping, eye and ear
To the lover's yielding breast;
Ha! above the foliage yonder
Something flutters wild and free,
MASSA! MASSA! HALLELUJAH!
THE FLAG'S COME BACK TO TENNESSEE.

Pompey hold me on your shoulder,
Help me stand on foot once more
That I may SALUTE THE COLORS
As they pass my cottage door.
Here's the papers signed that frees you
Give a freedman's shout with me—
GOD AND UNION be our watch-word
Evermore in Tennessee.

Then the trembling voice grew fainter
And the limbs refused to stand,
One prayer to Jesus—and the soldier
Gilded to that better land,
WHEN THE FLAG WENT UP THE RIVER
Man and master both were free
While the ring-dove's note was mingled
With the rippling Tennessee.

"Up To Snuff."

An exchange says: A genial observer of public men in the United States is amused at the public dexterity of those anxious to serve as presidential candidates. If he is a veteran, as well as a genial observer, he smiles as he compares these 'prentice hands with the master of political adroitness, Martin Van Buren.

Looking upon politics as a game, Mr. Van Buren, played it with forecast and sagacity, and with the utmost good-nature. No excitement quickened his moderation. Even the most biting of personal sarcasms failed to ruffle a temper that seemed incapable of being disturbed.

Once while Mr. Van Buren, being the Vice-President, was presiding over the Senate, Henry Clay attacked him in a speech freighted with sarcasm and invective.

Mr. Van Buren sat in the chair, with a quiet smile upon his face, as placidly as though he was listening to the complimentary remarks of a friend.

The moment Mr. Clay resumed his seat, a page handed him Mr. Van Buren's snuff-box, with the remark:

"The Vice-President sends his compliments to you, sir."

The Senate laughed at the coolness of the man who was

"up to snuff." The great orator, seeing that his efforts

had been in vain, shook his finger good-naturedly at his

imperturbable opponent, and taking a large pinch of snuff

returned the box to the boy, saying:

"Give my compliments to the Vice-President, and say

that I like his snuff much better than his politics."

My Midnight Peril.

A THRILLING SKETCH OF BACKWOODS LIFE.

The night of the 17th of October—shall I ever forget its pitchy darkness, the roar of the autumnal wind through the lonely forests, and the incessant downpour of rain?

"This comes of short cuts," I muttered to myself, as I plodded along, keeping close to the trunks of the trees to avoid the ravine, through which I could hear the roar of the turbulent stream forty or fifty feet below. My blood ran cold as I thought what might be the possible consequence of a misstep or a move in the wrong direction. Why had I not been contented to keep in the right road?

Hold on! Was that a light, or are my eyes playing me false?

I stopped, holding on to the low, resinous boughs of a hemlock that grew on the edge of the bank, for it actually seemed that the wind would seize me bodily and hurl me down the precipitous descent.

It was a light, thank Providence! it was a light, and no *ignis fatuus* to lure me on to destruction and death.

"Hallo-o-o!"

My voice rang through the woods like a clarion.

I plunged on through the tangled vines, dense briars, and rocky banks, until, gradually nearing, I could perceive a figure wrapped in an oil-cloth cloak, or cape, carrying a lantern. As the dim light fell upon his face I almost recoiled. Would not solitude in the woods be preferable to the companionship of this withered, wrinkled old man? But it was too late to recede now.

"What's wanting?" he snarled, with a peculiar motion of the lips, that seemed to leave his yellow teeth all bare.

"I am almost lost in the woods; can you direct me to R—station?"

"Yes; R—station is twelve miles from here."

"Twelve miles!"

I stood aghast.

"Yes."

"Can you tell me of any shelter I could obtain for the night?"

"No."

"Where are you going?"

"To Drew's, down by the Maple swamp."

"Is it a tavern?"

"No."

"Would they take me for the night? I could pay them well."

His eyes gleamed; the yellow stumps stood revealed once more.

"I guess so; folks don't stop there."

"It is not far from here?"

"Not very; about half a mile."

"Then make haste and let us reach it. I am drenched to the skin."

We plodded on, my companion more than keeping pace with me. Presently we left the edge of the ravine, entering what seemed like a trackless woods, and keeping straight on until the lights gleamed fitfully through the wet foliage.

It was a ruinous old place, with the windows all drawn to one side, as if the foundation had settled, and the pillars of a rude porch nearly rotted away.

A woman answered my fellow-traveler's knock. My companion whispered a word or two to her, and she turned to me with smooth, voluble words of welcome.

She regretted the poverty of her accommodations; but I was welcome to them, such as they were.

"Where is Isaac?" demanded my guide.

"He is not come in yet."

I sat down on a wooden bench beside the fire and ate a few mouthfuls of bread.

"I should like to retire as soon as possible," I said, for my weariness was excessive.

"Certainly." The woman started up with alacrity.

"Where are you going to put him?" asked the guide.

"Up chamber."

"Put him in Isaac's room."

"No."

"It's the most comfortable."

"I tell you 'no.'"

But here I interrupted the whispered colloquy.

"I am not particular—I don't care where you lodge me only make haste."

So I was conducted up a steep ladder that stood in the corner of the room into an apartment, ceiled with sloped beams and ventilated by one small window, where a cot-bedstead, crowded close against the board partition, and a pine table, with two or three chairs, formed the sole attempts at furniture.

The woman set the light—an old oil lamp—on the table.

"Anything more that I can give, sir?"

"Nothing, thank you."

"At four o'clock in the morning, if you please, I must walk over to R—station in time for the seven o'clock express."

"I'll be sure to call you, sir."

She withdrew, leaving me alone in the gloomy little apartment. I sat down with no very agreeable sensation.

"I will sit down and write to Alice," I thought; "that will soothe my nerves and quiet me, perhaps."

I descended the ladder; the fire still glowed redly on the hearth beneath; my companion and the woman sat beside it talking in a low tone, and a third person sat at the table eating—a short, stout, villainous-looking man, in red flannel shirt and muddy trousers.

I asked for writing materials, and returned to my room to write my wife.

"My dear Alice"—

I paused and laid down my pen as I concluded the words, half smiling to think what she would say could she know of my strange quarters.

Not till both sheets were covered did I lay aside my pen and prepare for slumber. As I folded my paper I happened to glance toward the couch.

Was it the gleam of a human eye observing me through the board partition, or was it my own fancy? There was a crack there, but only black darkness beyond, yet I could have sworn that something had sparkled balefully at me.

I took out my watch. It was one o'clock. It was scarcely worth while for me to undress for three hours' sleep. I would lie down in my clothes and snatch what slumber I could. So, placing my valise at the head of my bed, and barricading the lockless door with two chairs, I extinguished the light and lay down.

At first I was wakeful, but gradually a soft drowsiness seemed to steal over me like a misty mantle, until all of a sudden some startling electric thrill coursed through my veins, and I sat up, excited and trembling.

A luminous softness seemed to glow through the room—no light of the moon or the stars was ever so penetrating—and by the little window I saw Alice, my wife, dressed in floating garments of white, with her long, golden hair knotted back by a blue ribbon. Apparently she was coming to me with outstretched hands and eyes full of wild, anxious tenderness.

I sprang to my feet and rushed towards her; but as I reached the window the fair apparition seemed to vanish into the stormy darkness, and I was left alone. At the same instant the report of a pistol sounded; I could see the jagged stream of fire above the pillow, straight through the very spot where, ten seconds since, my head had lain.

With an instantaneous realization of my danger, I swung myself over the edge of the window, jumping some eight or ten feet into tangled bushes below, and as I crouched there, recovering my breath I heard the tramp of footsteps into my room.

"Is he dead?" cried a voice up the ladder—the smooth, deceitful voice of the woman with the half-closed eyes.

"Of course he is," growled a voice back; that charge would have killed ten men. A light there, quick? and tell Tom to be ready."

A cold, agonizing shudder ran through me. What a den of midnight murderers had I fallen into! And how fearfully narrow had been my escape!

With the speed that only mortal terror can give I rushed through the wood, now illuminated by a faint glimmer of starlight. I know not what impulse guided my footsteps. I never shall know how many times I crossed my own track, or how close I stood to the ravine; but a merciful Providence encompassed me with a guiding and protecting care, for when the morning dawned, with faint, red bars of orient light against the stormy eastern sky, I was close to the high road, some seven miles from R—

Once at the town, I told my story to the police, and a detachment was sent with me to the spot.

After much searching and many false alarms we succeeded in finding the ruinous old house, but it was empty, our birds had flown; nor did I recover my valise and watch and chain, which latter I had left under my pillow.

"It's Drew's gang," said the leader of the police, "and they've troubled us these two years. I don't think, though, they'll come back here just at present."

Nor did they.

But the strangest part of my story is yet to come. Some three weeks subsequently I received a letter from my sister, who was with Alice in her English home—a letter whose intelligence filled me with surprise.

"I must tell you something very strange," wrote my sister, that happened on the night of the 17th of October. Alice had not been well for some time; in fact, she had been confined to her bed for nearly a week, and I was sitting beside her reading. It was late; the clock had struck one, when all at once she seemed to faint away, growing white and rigid as a corpse. I hastened to call assistance; but all our efforts to restore animation were in vain. I was just about sending for the doctor, when her senses returned as suddenly as they had left her, and she sat up in bed, pushing up her hair and looking wildly around her.

"Alice," I exclaimed, "how you have terrified us all! Are you ill?"

"Not ill," she answered, "but I feel so strange. Gracie, I have been with my husband!"

"And all of our reasonings failed to convince her of the impossibility of her assertions. She persists to this moment that she saw you and was with you on the morning of the 18th of October. Where and how she cannot tell, but we think it must have been in a dream. She is better now and I wish you could see how fast she is improving."

This is my plain, unvarnished tale. I do not pretend to explain or account for its mysteries. I simply relate facts. Let psychologists unravel the labyrinthical skein. I am not superstitious, neither do I believe in ghosts, wraiths or apparitions, but this thing I do know—that although my wife was in England in body, on the morning of the 18th of October, her spirit surely stood before me in New York in the moment of the deadly peril that menaced me. It may be that to the subtle instinct and strength of a wife's holy love all things are possible; but Alice surely saved my life.