S. Catroup

EASTON GAZETTE.

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ORIGINAL TALE.

"A truth" observes one man, is much more acceptable, than fiction, however so agreeable the latter may be." "But" says another, the imageries of the mind, serve to show, how we would possibly act, if we were placed, in the situations and circumstances described." "Aye says the former, "if the moon did not shine, we should not have her light." "True" the latter rejoined "yet, I do speak in favour of fiction—truth is certainly truth!" "Oh! by all means, truth is truth," responded the former "and fiction is fiction—but which will last the longer:" my friend of the imagery was silent.

I was not born, but I was bred and brought up in the Town of —— Md: this place, then of all others, is most dear to my recollection: and as I propose to relate, some circumstances, which actually occurred within canon shot of its suburbs. I may first crave the readers attention, and the leave of the only remaining personage, of whom I am to speak, who makes so conspicuous a character in the relation of the story, and proceed.

Now, I would not tain be charged with exaggeration or extenuation, and as I am, one among many, of the hospitable hearts, that the Town of —— Md. has sent upon the world, I beg them to compare what I here shall relate, to the prevailing and well known facts, than which a more general known one, perhaps the goodly folks of —— Md. never enjoyed.

In truth many a good joke, has been founded on this known adventure and often have I listened to many of them; but I promise purely to tell of the conspicuous facts—the essence of the joking, and all who may read, shall be at their own pleasure to add, or wholly forget it.

I do here record, that in no Village, Hamlet or Township, within the boundary (and there be many) whose inmates cherish more true and genuine feelings of friendship and hospitality than abides in —— Md. and the county it is situated in: there be some reprehensible faults however, in the good inhabitants, which only to mention, is enough to emanate from so humble a pen as mine. If a man, rides out, there's not one who does not note it: if he sees him not his neighbor tells it him: and so of many and divers other things, much more important than that mentioned: to call the passion they indulge of knowing as much as possible of every ones business, an inquisitiveness would be unjust and ungrateful. I do not imply all, remember, good reader, tush! there be those directly opposite in their nature, and as long as you did not pull their noses, they would be quiet, and yet, with all this backwardness and reserve, appeal to their feelings on an emergency, they will unloose the tightly drawn strings of the purse, that contains their generosity and benevolence, & it will flow, like the congealed waters, on the mountain's declivity, when the radiant sun sheds his powerful beams on its bosom.

I could name several that would come under this remark, for there's not a man in the goodly Township, but I know him. Yet I could employ thrice the space I have written over, to exemplify the characters and dispositions of a number too numerous to specify even numerically now, whose charity and goodness of heart, I could love to madness, though I were not a citizen of the place, that contains them:

It must be known to the reader, that the scene of my operations is a part of the country where slavery abounds, consequently there are many blacks in and adjacent to the Village of —— Md. both slaves and freemen.

The former of which class of our people, are the most numerous and I must testify to the greater share of happiness and contentment which they enjoy over their free brethren. Nevertheless the latter enjoy their Liberty, and what they do not possess in comfort and convenience, a consciousness of their denizonship, atones for every misery they suffer.

Now there being so many of the latter class and yet withall less than their trammelled brethren, no wonder if in all the group there should exist one, worthy of some notice. I take pleasure in introducing to my reader an acquaintance of mine (though he be not so fair as thee, I'll vouch for the honesty of his heart) generally called and well known, far and near, as Jack the barber; now properly to do him justice this familiar name arose from that of John Nicols and his profession.

But I never knew a man, white or otherwise, who would so much insult his feelings, as to yelep him other than Jack the barber. I verily believe, and can affirm to my belief, that honest Jack was a little vain of this distinction, particularly as he was the elder of the two barbers in the Town of —— Md. I have heard him swear (but when he swore he thought it no sin.) "Afore my God, I can shave a man, equal to any Philadelphia barber." Now Jack was a man of truth and I perforce believed him; however as Heaven never sent me sufficient stubble to employ his implement, I cannot vouch he shaved better than his brother barber, the pious Bishop, for whom mine honest Jack entertained no very favourable opinion, although they belonged to the same church, into whose portals he and his sable horde, not unfrequently entered.

Jack was a man who took much delight in being crossed in any of his many and divers experiments, that he might have the infinite pleasure of falling into a terrible passion: nevertheless was he a quiet man, none more so.—And he would talk with the best of them: to do him justice, none refused to colloquise with honest Jack: not that man or child was afraid of him, for Heaven doth know his innocence and inoffensiveness, were very conspicuous: and besides if he flew into a passion, 'twas but a moment's lasting: were he disposed to chastise the man, who would ruffle his quick temper, his small proportions, would render a "stand to"—as he termed it—totally abortive, or if on the other hand, a child fretted him, with the unpleasant and grating epithet of Bishop, he could not run three steps, cause of an unnatural—yet natural—turn up of his toes: they were eternally looking him in the face to the no small annoyance of his frequent perambulations, from house to shop—whose furniture and fixtures let me picture as nearly correct, as my memory will serve.

Being a barber, he was quite become a naturalist and took much delight in all kinds of curiosities—the case with most country barbers, to a small degree: but with Jack I verily believe he devoted more attention to this part of his business—so he called it—than any of his brethren of the soap and lather! His shop was situated on the main or principal street—who shall doubt its publicity? it was built of plank, and I should judge somewhat more stricken in years, than mine honest hero, Jack the barber; though he was a man of family! and his was no small family—tush! man, he'd number with the best 'o them!!

In winter, he kept his shop door closed, like his neighbors—whom however, he studiously avoided copying—no inexperienced mechanic furnished the pannels for his door, besides a little above the centre, there were four panes of light, that were intended to afford his customers an opportunity to see, whether he was employed, for Jack would not serve but one man at a time, though he were an actual subscriber to his tenets and aphorisms, which were always quaint and rare, of course original?

He scorned to copy mortal breathing, he was himself alone: Now as fate would have it, or whether Jack's cunning suggested the substitute, or whether that invader of all men's possessions, levelling Time, caused it to be so—I never could elicit from him, but so it was, these four panes of light, were so thickly covered with any thing, but transparent stuff, that no man could see if he swayed the emblem of his profession, or sat by his stove, with hot sand on its top, whose absence he thought ominous of ill luck; for he was a little superstitious. Preponderating in his mind the value of this shrub or the goodness of that: my honest friend had much faith in the virtue of plants and believed all diseases susceptible of a cure, by their influence, if properly and scientifically administered, of which he himself was capable, at least he always said so, & confidentially told me once, gentle reader, that he knew a great deal more about the cure of a certain shaking distemper, very prevalent there, than many of his contemporaries, even those of the pestle and mortar. The walls of his shop, were by no means made of mortar, he scorned to have any thing so approximate to his learned brethren; but the solid board gave him a durable good wall: His ingenuity so shone, that he covered its whole extent, with rare and choice pictures. Here was Proctor and the Indians burning and destroying American property—there hung a paper, thereon pencilled and colored, a flying horse—next was John Bull stung with wasps and hornets, in a horrible fix—opposite hung a painting, of a man wheeling his flatulency in a barrow—& a thousand other specimens of the enviable art, he took so much delight in, and where his sketches were not, suspended with a string, hung the jaw bone of the largest swine ever killed in the county—the largest tusk—or cows horn—most curiously crooked and turned.

The first object that invariably struck my eye—fancy some would say—was an enormous black squirril, stuffed and nailed to the wooden wall. This squirrel was the rarest of squirrels wherefore Jack had it: he actually told me, that he purchased it at an extraordinary large sum of money, from his friend Zebulon, famed for bringing squirrels from the highest oak in the woods: besides he added, twas the only black squirrel that was ever seen or known to exist at least that he had heard of, and as many persons had seen it, admired its beauty and rarity, none had ever denied its self existence: he took especial care to inform all on this point, so it resolved itself into a certain and undeniable truth, that no squirrel was like his squirrel on *Earth*. Curious shells—oval stones of rare colours and magnitude occupied a shelf, he had erected for the gratification of this department of his exquisite taste, Turtle shells too found especial favour in his eyes, suspended over his stove were four bear's feet, the delight & amusement of all, I mean the curious of the Town.—Over and above his chair, adjacent to the stove, were many and various bottles. Now these were filled some with snakes, he called them Doctor Snakes and green snakes: others had various windings of silk, marvelously cut wood, representing rare figures—and withal 'twas a rare sight! He had much reverence for the Indian character and had they only been of some other colour, than red, he could have worshipped their God! his scruples moreover were not trivial in his eyes, therefore not to be laid aside; but instead of assuming the whole, to manifest to the world his regard for them, he thought by partially acknowledging his taste, would serve as "confirmation of holy writ," of his willingness to love the sons of the Forest. Therefore to this end, he had adopted as a part of the fixtures of his incomparable shop, Indian stone axes, hewn wonderfully smooth—stone Tomahawks—arrow points, and I verily believe he had a thumb bracelet, which he stoutly affirmed shewed signs of antiquity, from its rusty external. Jack was a good husbandman and if an article, however so precious—served to two purposes, no man's keen discovery, found it out sooner than his: He made whet stones and razor hones of his axes and Tomahawks, and declared their grain was tantamount to any Turkey stone, he had ever drawn a razor over, and to be sure those were many. Jack was an honest and a veritable man!

His industry will not bear scrutiny: he was one of those kind souls who loved to wander about, with a comfortable green cloak thrown across his narrow rounded shoulders, and talk to every person who happened to stop, within the distance of the compass of his lusty voice.—Jack the barber was a regular attendant at the market, and often gave his opinion, unasked, of certain vegetables &c. exclaiming at the same time "Afore my God, I like the turnips, well enough, but do you think to get full price for such trash?" then smiling very complacently he would add "I dont mean to tell you, fore my God! they are not good turnips, but they are so small, for so much money."

I remember to have left my bed, one cold wintry morning, very early, for the purpose of skating: as I passed the market house I distinctly heard Jack's voice, at least an hundred yards, I was willing to relinquish a part of the time, I was about devoting to my favorite amusement, before school hour, to hear the result of the loud imprecations of Jack—he could vociferate with any man, when in a passion, and he as soft as the Syrian too. There was a gentleness of delivery in his conversation, which all who knew him must have noticed—these two extremes in one of his colour, distinguished him from the common African.

On approaching I found him "*hitched*" with Dorrel, the old Butcher of ——, Md. (perhaps the oldest resident of the town.) Dorrel was a little brighter in the face than honest Jack—but whether his wit was as keen I have my doubts. The first exclamation that rang in my ear, was from Jack, "'Fore my Jesus, Dorrel you shant have this leg o' mutton—Bless my God! I'll pay you as Heaven's my judge!"—Dorrell, who, it seems, had trusted Jack on a former occasion, and having no money that morning, refused to let Jack have any meat unless he "planked down" the cash. However Jack had the mutton under his famous green cloak and every now and then reiterating, "My God, Dorrel, I'll pay you, as Heaven's my judge, I'll pay you." and backing out of the market place all the while, from under the shadow of the enormous figure of Dorrel, who at the least calculation, measured six and a half feet, whilst poor Jack came not to his shoulders—nevertheless, Jack was in a passion and he feared not his Goliah! but seemed sore aggrieved at this manifest depreciation of his credit, to establish which Heaven only knows how many chins he had scraped! I waited to see the result of this rencontre, the which I would not have missed, for all the skating, I could have had during the whole day.

Dorrel, fearing to trust honest Jack, with so much money as two legs of mutton would naturally come to, lest he should set his custom, (a frequent occurrence in this same Town) irreverently unclasped, Jack the barber's cloak, threw it off his shoulders and seized greedily laid a giant's hold of the shearer. Now as fortune would have it, Jack had a Son, who beheld his father's credit and person thus abused, all the while: and sharing some little of the impetuosity of his sable sire, he seized the enormous butcher by the throat and commanded him to release the hold he so firmly had, of his father's mutton "Heaven protects the injured" was my friend's own maxim. The butcher of —— Md. as other butchers do, kept a large bull dog, for sundry purposes best known to Dorrell himself. Now no sooner had the generous and filial impulse, given the son possession of Dorrel's throat, than the faithful bull-catcher, laid hold on his leg, whose sharp teeth were no sooner imbedded in his flesh, than he turned on his canine enemy, letting go of the hold he had of his sire's. Whereupon the butcher & Jack, held each tightly on the mutton—the former however, soon pulled little Jack—for the little barber, could not resist the ox-strength laid against him, clean into the market house and even to the stall of his traffic, as all butchers keep blocks, and their own implements, so did Dorrell; so he, by his superior strength, drew the mutton leg right across the block, used for its purposes. Dorrel on one side and Jack on the opposite, finding that he stuck "like grim death to a dead negro," a a favourite aphorism of Jack's, he very cooly characteristic of Dorrel, lifted his cleaver to the no small annoyance of Jack, & the indignation of the by standers, whose curiosities were now at the pitch. But our Goliah did not intend to harm his David, 'twas but a threat.—Jack was in a passion and threats to him were as naught, so he held firmly to the mutton, notwithstanding a butcher's cleaver was elevated above the member that held the object of the strife. Now Dorrel began to know the enemy he had to deal with, whereupon he laid aside the cleaver (the mutton still on the block) and took up his saw, and began most furiously to saw, first on one side of the leg of mutton and then to the other, most approximate to Jack's hand, and truly one of the teeth, there might have been more, which was harder than Jack's flesh, tore it from under its sable covering, and a stream of blood followed. Though his courage was redoubtable as any of his countrymen, he, as is the case with most of them, could not stand the sight of his own blood thus exposed & flying from him. I verily believe Dorrel's ire, for he too could be wrought to a passion,—did not spill enough of his foes blood to incarnardine a gill of good pump water—nevertheless Jack roared out, "afore my God! I'm butchered, as Heaven's my Judge," instantly he relinquished the hold he had on the mutton, crying again "afore my God, I'm butchered!—I'm butchered"!!

He generally tore passion to tatters, when he was at the height of his ire, and if ever a man used his lungs, to their disparagement, my honest Jack, was he. Now although the air was very cold it served not to cool his excited wrath, nor did it keep away lookerson, whose numbers by this time were very great, some had cloaks, some none, others had hats, others in the hurry of the moment forgot that covering, and one and all I could discern had their hands crammed in their pockets—every man's nose was as red as the mutton flesh, the two combatants had turned up, from under its nice and skilfully covered surface with fat.

I protest the unmannerly grin of laughter that issued from the throng, served to increase the "din and clash of arms." Now Jack's offspring was put to the test of his prowess, whose valor no man questioned, being as he most certainly was, of the loins of Jack the redoubtable! So soon as the dog had fairly sunk his teeth in the youngster's leg, he began to jirk and pull back, no doubt following the example of his master, for he pulled directly opposite to him and could see and discover all his operations; he quickly brought the young barber to face his mother earth and laid him sprawling; the dog pulled and tugged most lustily.

There was not a man present, but laughed outright, not one though, took the least compassion, they enjoyed the sight so much, no thought of rescue entered their minds. But as the Corporation of the Town of ——, Md. were not willing to allow its Citizens to go unprotected, they had generously, (and some years before too, 'twas the custom) elected or appointed a bailiff, whose power extended even to the suburbs of the Town. This personage's duty was arduous, often very humiliating; for I have seen the time, when he, by law enforced, was compelled to take up a hog, and he would chase it provided it was near the Court house green, decidedly a misnomer, 'twas a surface of yellow clay only, where a commissioner might see his duty discharged, even from his own door. He would take up the Hog by the two hinder legs and sell it for whatever it would bring. I solemnly believe his share of the proceeds of the sale, was one half, of course if a quantity of swine were seen grazing, on cobs and peach parings and where within the limits of the Town, his authority was quickly enforced.

As fortune, who is but a woman, sometimes favours the vanquished as well as the vanquisher, would have it. The Bailiff just merging from a warm fireside, seeing "a dust" and doubting if peace was preserved, mended his pace and being "a limb of the Law," commanded Peace! his canine rioter listened not to this absolute order, but continued to pull back, with more violence. The bailiff supported by the mace of the law, saw how his commands were utterly disregarded, applied the butt end of his stick, the constant companion of both his weal and woe, to the dog's head! it served only to increase the flame of the dog's anger and he bit even fiercer than before: he began to growl and shake his tail, every one noticed these signs. A bucket of water was now brought and no man could venture to throw it on the dog, for fear of drowning the prostrate youth, whose yells were not at all inconsiderable; but by dint of much subtlety and conning, exhibited on the part of the bailiff who capered with the dog's dodging, for the dog feared water as all other dogs do, he separated them, after a full quarter of an hour's manœvering. I know not how many times they each, the other dodged, but twas a grotesque sight, worthy the eye of an artist.

The bailiff would prepare to "douse" the dog and making the regular swing to that effect, ever and anon, was obliged to relinquish the effort because the dog would shut his eyes bite harder and make the young barber scream louder, which of course excited compassion in the bailiff's bosom, for the sufferings he endured and was not willing to add more to them, already too severe.

As soon as the dog was enforced "by law" to unloose his hold, he ran off much unlike the vanquished young barber, who stood his ground, but only on one leg he rested. The sport was now over, every tradesman went with cheerful heart to his avocation, after so delectable a sight. But strange to tell, I could hear every man complain of the raw morning, when the battles were done; not one, to my knowledge, even shivered or quaked whilst they lasted.—Jack the barber, threw his green cloak across his narrow ribbed shoulders, clasped it as before, and with his son repaired homeward; as for myself, having always taken an interest in Jack's affairs, I felt much compassion stirred in my young bosom for his misfortunes. However "a better day is coming" said I, and wheeling round on my heel bent my steps towards home, without having buckled a strap on my foot.

Now as Heaven would have it, Jack was concerned in another emprise, which to know, the reader must follow the tracings of my pen. If he finds not jest therein why I can only say his risible faculty hath wondrously deserted him and left him a sad being!

In this same Town, there lived a couple of youngsters as much inclined to mirth and a good joke, as their determination to play a trick on Jack the barber! These two youths, my reader shall know, (inquire no further into their respective titles, I beseech ye;) by the familiar and endearing epithets or names of Robertson and Richmond. Both were esteemed in the aforesaid Town for their amiable qualities, and duly condemned for every unpardonable act; if the two respectives were placed in a balance, which of them would turn it, the good citizens of ——, Md. must in their better judgment determine. I have done as much as my authority will sanction, the beam is on either side, held in its place by the scales—yours good citizens, it is to award either of the extremes.

It is in my province to say, that they were not unfrequently at the "head and front" of some of the "Frog Eye" entertainments, that were served to the good inhabitants, with a liberal hand, I may not now, speak of the origin or character of the "Frog Eyes," digression has already made too formidable an appearance, throughout this paper; much more would merit the frown of a liberal reader. What may emanate, from so well known a company, in the way of an essay the womb of time must discover; much however will depend upon the reception of this.

None there were, of the town, who knew not Robertson and Richmond: being young clerks and withall very agreeable behind the counter, the Ladies, took particular delight to teaze and torment them with "pulling and hauling" over the newest pattern calicoes, just from the markets of importation, to find a piece to sample an old dress, of favourite colours, probably worn two burning summers. But they minded not these inflictions; they were as common as Tuesdays and Saturdays, the public days of the town; when every man, rib and offspring thought it a duty imposed from custom, I judge, to collect together, within the compass of something less than half a dozen miles. I would not fain be understood as an enemy to strict examination of goods by the Ladies. But fair ones, permit me to remark, were I a clerk in a store of the town of ——, Md. I should most undeniably, crave your leave for a few observations on this material point, whilst now engaged in it; even here would I give vent to a feeling, which from the character of this essay must be for the present controlled.

Now as it regards the exact hour and scene of their plot, 'tis neither here nor there; I am sufficiently acquainted with the old haunts of our young heroes, to show the reader, a probable place of identity, where this plot might have been arranged. Above the Store-room wherein Robertson was wont to be employed, lay an unfinished room, and truly all above and around it were similarly situated; but in this identical room of large dimentions, they were frequently seen, mysteriously engaged in some interesting conversation, about the time, which one would suppose might require, to form so bold a scheme, as shortly afterwards they put in execution; after having matured their plans and arranged every thing, so as to combine and produce the greatest effect. Richmond proposed that Robertson should secure the belief of Jack the barber, to what he should reveal.

(*To be concluded in our next.*)

From the Diary of a Physician.

THE BOXER.

The patient who thus abruptly, and under circumstances inopportunely required my services proved to be one Bill——, a notorious boxer, who, in returning that evening from a great prize-fight, had been thrown out of his gig, the horse being frightened by the lightning, and the rider besides much the worse for liquor, had his ancle dreadfully dislocated. He had been taken up by some passengers, and conveyed with great difficulty to his own residence, a public house not three minutes walk from where I lived. The moment I entered the tap-room which I had to pass on my way to the stair-case, I heard his groans, or rather howls, overhead. The excitement of intoxication, added to the agonies occasioned by the accident, had driven him I was told, nearly mad. He was uttering the most revolting execrations as I entered his room. He dammed himself—his ill luck—(for it seems he had lost considerable sums on the fight)—the combattants—the horse that threw him—the thunder and lightning—every thing, in short, and every body about him. The sound of the thunder was sublime music to me, and the more welcome, because it drowned the blasphemous bellowing of the monster I was visiting. Yes—there lay the burly boxer stretched upon the bed, with none of his dress removed except the boot from the limb that was injured—his new blue coat with glaring yellow buttons, and drab-knee-breeches, soiled with the street mud into which he had been precipitated—his huge limbs writhing in restless agony over the bed—his fists clenched, and his flat, iron-featured face swollen and distorted with pain and rage.

"But, my good woman;" said I, pausing at the door, addressing myself to the boxer's wife, who, wringing her hands, had conducted me up stairs; "I assure you, I am not the person you should have sent to. It's a surgeon's, not a physician's case; I fear I can't do much for him—quite out of my way."

"Oh for God's sake—for the love of God don't say so!" gasped the poor creature, with affrighted emphasis—Oh do *something* for him or he'll drive us all out of our senses—he'll be killing us!"

"Do something!" roared out my patient, who overheard the last words of his wife, turning his bloated face towards me—"do something indeed? ay, and be —— to you! Here, here—look ye Doctor—look ye, here!" he continued pointing to the wounded foot, which all crushed and displaced, and the stocking soaked with blood, presented a shocking appearance—"look here, indeed!—ah, that —— horse! that —— horse!" his teeth gnashed, and his right hand was lifted up, clenched with fury—"If I don't break every bone in his —— body, as soon as ever I can stir this cursed leg again!"

I felt, for a moment as though I had entered the very pit and presence of Satan, for the lightning was gleaming over his ruffianly figure incessantly, and the thunder rolling close overhead, while he was speaking.

"Hush! hush! you'll drive the doctor away! For pity's sake, hold your tongue, or Doctor ——— won't come into the room to you!" gasped his wife, dropping on her knees beside him.

"Ha! ha! Let him go! Only let him stir a step, and lame as I am, —— me, if I don't jump out of bed, and teach him civility! *Here* you Doctor, as you call yourself, what's to be done?" Really I was too much shocked at the moment, to know. I was half inclined to leave the room immediately—and had a fair plea for doing so, in the *surgical* nature of the case—but the agony of the fellow's wife induced me to do violence to my own feelings and stay. After directing a person to be sent off, in my name, for the nearest surgeon, I addressed myself to my task and proceeded to remove the stocking. His whole body quivered with the anguish it occasioned; and I saw such fury gathering in his features, that I began to dread lest he might rise up in a sudden phrenzy, and strike me.

"Oh! oh! oh!—Curse your clumsy hands—You dont know no more nor a child," he groaned, "what you're about. Leave it—leave it alone. Give over with ye! Doctor ———, I say, be off."

"Mercy, mercy, Doctor," sobbed his wife in a whisper, fearing from my momentary pause, that I was going to take her husband at his word—"Don't go away! Oh go on! It must be done, you know.—Never mind what he says, he is only little worse for liquor now—and—and—then the *pain!* Go on doctor—He'll thank you the more for it to-morrow."

"Wife, here!" shouted her husband. The woman instantly stepped up to him. He stretched out his Herculean arm, and grasped her by the shoulder.

"So—you ———l, I'm drunk, am I? I'm *drunk*, eh—you lying ——" he exclaimed, and jerked her violently away, right across the room to the door, where the poor creature fell down, but presently rose crying bitterly.

"Get away! Get off—get down stairs—if you don't want me to serve you the same again!—Say I'm drunk—you beast?"—With frantic gestures she obeyed—rushed down stairs—and

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