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## PAUL PLIANT,

"OR THE MAN WHO COULDN'T SAY NO."

BY THE AUTHOR OF YANKEE NOTIONS.

Two negatives, they say, make an affirmative. Therefore, I think it safe to suppose that Paul Pliant's father and mother must have been as negative a pair as ever came together, for Paul was the most affirmative man that has yet been heard of. He always said 'yes' to every thing that was said, proposed, suggested, insinuated, or hinted to him. He was a true 'administration man' under all governments, never being in the opposition.—He was one of those over polite, over good natured, oh be easy, acquiescent mortals, who seem to be sent into the world for no other purpose than to show how much a man may suffer for want of a little contra mindedness. 'Yes.' 'Certainly.' 'By all means.' 'No doubt of it.' 'With all my heart,' 'Very happy to oblige you.'—'Entirely at your service.' 'Oh yes.' 'Oh yes.' 'Oh yes' Such were Paul's constant replies. As to saying 'no,' it was as impossible to get it out, as Macbeth's 'Amen.' When he had most need of denying, it 'stuck in his throat.' I don't know that he ever sat in the Legislature, but I am sure that if he ever did, when the 'yeas had it,' they had Paul also.—He would not have cried '*Nie poswolam*' in the Polish diet, if the words could have demolished the partition treaty. Though he was not in the opposition, yet I think it hardly correct to call him a Jackson man, for he never vetoed any thing in his life, unless in the style of the honest country representative, 'Mr. Speaker, I shall give my veto in favour of this bill.' In short, Paul was the very pink of assentients—an incapable [illegible] a man to [illegible] a good natured fellow, and as the world commonly pretends to have a high opinion of a good natured fellow, and according to the proverb 'opinion is the queen of the world,' the reader may think Paul must have had a happy time of it No such thing. Paul's good nature brought him into more embarrassments and vexations than if he had been the crossest cur that ever snarled. I speak not of lending umbrellas—'tis the lot of mortality. To lend money is about the same, though money lent *sometimes* comes back. But who would believe that a good natured man merely by reason of his good nature, and for no other fault under the sun, could be led through such a rigmarole dance of adventure by the perversity of fortune, that he fought a duel and almost married a widow!

The widow Wilful was a lady of a certain age she had made the best of time, and time returned the compliment. She had shed many tears for the loss of her good man—so she protested, and I cannot help thinking she spoke the truth, for she tried very hard to get another.—However, this did not prove so easy a matter, for although the widow was not without charms, the men were shy.—What *could* be the reason? She gave splendid parties, and had sparks and danglers without number, but it was never a match. What *could* be the reason? the reader will ask again.

It is not exactly my business to tell, as the story will be plain enough without it, and if the reader cannot guess, it would not much help him to let out the whole mystery.

'This is truly delightful, said Paul, one evening, to the widow as he leaned his arm over the back of the chair, worked his face up to the blandest of all his acquiescent smiles and essayed some flattering compliment concerning the widow's fine entertainment This is truly delightful; so much hilarity and cheerfulness so—many happy faces. I love to look on them.

Paul inadvertently raised his eyes as he uttered these words, and at the close of the speech was looking straight into the widow's face. He meant not the least harm in the world; but the widow pretended to blush. She pursed up her pretty mouth.

'Oh, Mr. Pliant, you are a great flatterer, but we know you are honest. 'You never say one thing and mean another.'

'Certainly, by all means, my dear madam.'

'But really Mr. Pliant, my dear sir, when a gentleman tells a lady that he loves to look on her, you know that really is significant.'

'Oh yes, certainly; you are quite right, that is madam.'

'Well, you are frank, Mr. Pliant, and I shall certainly give you credit for sincerity. Another man might say ten times as much and I should never think of regarding it; but I know I can rely upon the word of so honerable a gentleman as Mr Paul Pliant.'

'Rely upon my word! surely you may, Mrs. Wilful I should be *sorry* if———"

'Oh, don't mention it my dear sir. I never doubted for a moment; certainly you never would have hinted any thing like an attachment unless you had been sincere.

'Certainly, ma'am,' replied Paul in great amazement, with the conjecture how he had been so unlucky as to say more than he meant; for Paul would as soon have thought of jumping out of a steeple as of telling widow Wilful he felt an attachment for *her*. Certainly, by all means he continued to repeat, mechanically, Oh yes, certainly.'

'Pray, Mr Pliant, be so good as to hand me a glass of water; really, the room is so warm—just reach your hand.'

'Certainly, madam; my hand is entirely at your service,' Paul was in such a flutter that he was not aware what he was uttering till the words were past recall. 'Bless me! what have I said!' thought he to himself. But it was too late.

'Oh, Mr. Pliant!' said she, blushing up to the ears,'you are too generous. I mean you areal most too precifitate, 'Now, were it any other man, I should suspect him of trifling. But such a man as Mr. Pliant.

'Confound the jade!' quoth Paul to himself, 'how shall I get out of the scrape? I hope she isn't going to faint. Mrs. Wilful—madam— you know I say a thousand things of this sort. I cant help it, you know'

'That's just as I always supposed, Mr. Pliant; a man of your sincerity and frankness, can't help uttering his true sentiments. Ah! I like the honest man of all things! Oh, Mr. Pliant, you are an honest man.'

'Now this is too bad,' thought Paul, in great tribulation. 'What shall I say?'—My dear madam, I certainly wish to be honest. Compliments you know, *are* compliments; but when a man means nothing—you know.'

'Certainly Mr. Pliant, you are quite right. When a man means nothing he should say nothing. I knew those were your sentiments. Wasn't I right!'

'Oh yes, by all means; quite right,' returned Paul in deeper embarrassment than ever. He found himself fairly caught, the widow's eyes [illegible] He snatched a cup of whipped cream and pretended to eat it.

The widow saw his embarrassment, and whether she suspected his determination to resist all further attempts to entangle him or not, we do not exactly know; but she was resolved not to let him escape. A silence of some moments followed till Paul finding he could not decently hold his tongue any longer, cast about for something innocent to say. After some hesitation upon a variety of topics, he judged it safe to admire the carpet—from the carpet a natural transition was made to the pictures, and from the pictures to the window curtains—the window curtains led to the arm chair, the arm chair to the sofa, and the sofa to a pair of little babies in alabaster on the chimney-place.

'Charming! Delightful!' exclaimed Paul—not exactly knowing whether he meant to be understood of the arm chair, or some other article of furniture.

'An't they?' said the widow.

'What *have* I said again?' quoth Paul to himself beginning to tremble with apprehension. 'The furniture is in good taste, Mrs. Wilful—very elegant—very fine.'

'All vanity, Mr. Pliant,' said the widow, affecting a very solemn look—'these things are all vanity.'

'Oh yes- you are quite right—all vanity,' replied Paul, taking a spoonful of whipped cream, and finding he had got nothing in his mouth.

'Ah! Mr. Pliant!' said the widow languishingly

'Yes, exactly so,' returned Paul.

'Exactly now; Mr. Pliant, pardon me: I didn't perceive the drift of your observation.

'Beg pardon, ma'am—I was only saying—as you remarked, that every thing was remarkably fine in this house of yours, and that all is vanity or rather I should say, 'that one thing is needful.'

'Ah, Mr. Pliant, I understand you—you mean the furniture is complete except one article.'

'Exactly so. Yes—that is—if you think any thing is wanting, replied Paul in considerable perturbation, and glad to escape the appearance of finding fault, by any sort of equivoque.

The widow clapped her handkerchief to her face, and exhibited or pretended to exhibit, a slight emotion. 'My dear Mr. Pliant,' said she in a tender voice, it is impossible not to understand you. You mean a hus—husband?'

'A husband!' exclaimed Paul startled by the audacious boldness of the suggestion.

'I knew you meant so,' returned the widow, sinking into the chair. 'Oh my dear sir, I feel quite over embarrassed.'—Paul's intellects were in such a cloudy state this moment that he thought she was about to faint He caught her hand, and was just going to call for hartshorn, when she opened her eyes with an appearance of greater langour.

'Oh, Mr. Pliant! the sincerity of this avowel—you are sincere, Mr Pliant'

Certainly—yes, exclaimed Paul, for he could say nothing else: he was a lost man. The widow kept fast hold of his hand—Paul struggled to say something—he felt how desperately he was situated—'Mrs. Wilful,' said he in great agitation, 'I do not wish you to be deceived—the fact is, I must speak plainly.

'My dear Mr. Pliant, I never thought you a deceiver. Oh! there are some men who are so deceiving!'

Paul was at his last gasp as the widow uttered this pathetic exclamation. 'I must see the matter right this moment,' thought he, 'or it will be all over with me!' He threw himself into an attitude of earnest entreaty. Listen to me one moment madam,' said he, with as much firmness of voice as he was master of—but luckless man! His foot catching in the hearth rug, tossed him upon his knees in an instant, and the attention of the whole company being aroused by the fall, every body looked around, and beheld Paul in supplication at the widow's feet. He remained transfixed with horror and vexation, for two thirds of a minute, and then, without uttering a word, made a leap for the door, and bolted out of the house.

The next day, Paul's adventure was the talk of the town, and the congratulations and condolence which he received from his friends on his engagement to the widow Wilful, almost drove him stark mad. 'Paul my dear fellow I give you joy—but who would have thought you had the courage to do it?' 'Paul, how could you do such a thing?' 'Paul I wish you much happiness—but widows *are* such cunning things!' 'Paul, its all over with you, then! &c. Such were the salutations to which he was subjected for a week, ay, for nine days; for so long must a wonder be allowed to last, especially when it gives people a privilege to remind a man of his misfortunes. As to denying the thing, that, of course, was out of the question with Paul; besides had not a whole house-full of people seen him on his knees before the widow? and did not the whole town affirm that it was certainly a match? Paul gave up in dispair all thoughts of gainsaying or denial, and only hoped that some lucky [illegible] conquering hero, when is to be the happy day?' asked his friend Tom Sly, with a look compounded of roguish sarcasm and good natured concern.

'O yes, a very happy day it will be certainly,' returned Paul, shrugging up his shoulders.

'Pretty soon, I suppose.'

'Oh yes—soon enough, no doubt of that, eh!'

'Left it all pretty much to her, eh? Well, thats quite right—woman love to have their way, hey, Paul?'

'Exactly so, as you say,' replied Paul, with a half suppressed groan.

The widow is certainly a fine woman, said Tom, with an almost malicious look of condolence.

Paul made a very low bow, and a very desperate attempt to look smiling at the compliment.

'Had a husband three years ago—died one day, poor man!'

'What ailed him?' said Paul wishing to turn the conversation, but feeling at the same time an awkward sort of interest in the topic.

'They say she pinched him to death.'

'Horrid! exclaimed Paul, with an involuntary shudder.

'Though I dont altogether believe it,' returned Tom, in a tone as if he only said it to comfort his friend Paul. It was a great deal worse than if he had said nothing at all; but probably this was just the thing he meant

'Thank ye,' said Paul, with an air of dolorous resignation.

Here they were interrupted by the entrance of Col. Strut. More friendly congratulations, I suppose, thought Paul to himself, in heroic resignation.

'I believe I have the honor to address Mr. Paul Pliant,' said the Colonel marching with stately port, and in double common time up to Paul, and planting himself bolt upright before his face.

'At your service, entirely,' said Paul, with meek and measured civility.

'And Mr. Pliant, I presume,' continued the Colonel, making half a bow, and screwing up his martial features into an apology for a civil smile, 'is to marry the widow Wilful?'

'Oh yes, certainly—that is—so they say.'

'Then, sir, I have only to say,' said the Colonel, lifting himself up as high as possible, and twisting his fore finger into one of his formidable black whiskers, that considering myself supplanted, beguiled, and circumvented by you, I apprehend you are ready to give me such satisfaction as the laws of honor require?'

'Certainly, sir, with great pleasure replied Paul.

'Then, sir, I shall desire the pleasure of your company on the other side of the State line,' returned the Colonel, in the civilest tone possible. 'Pistols, I suppose, would be your preference.'

'Pistols!' said Paul, in a tone which he meant for an ejaculation of surprise.

'Very well,' said the Colonel, without giving time for any further explanation. 'Here are the terms of the meeting which I trust you will find perfectly agreeable.' So saying, he handed a paper to Paul, who received it, and ran it over with his eyes, without having self possession enough to gather the meaning of a particle of its contents.

'Perfectly agreeable, certainly,' said Paul, in his usual assenting way. The Colonel turned upon his heel, and stalked off.

Paul's good friend Tom snatched up the document, and read—'Pistol—ten A. M.—thirty paces, seconds to mark out the ground—no interference till third shot—surgeons for two, mortally wounded, &c.'

'Why, Paul, do you know you are to fight a duel?'

'Am I?' said Paul, 'then Heaven be praised, there is still a hope left; for if I am shot to death, I shall escape marrying the widow!'

When Paul arrived at the field of action on that eventful day, he found his spirits a great deal firmer than he had expected. In fact, he felt inspired by the greatness of the occasion, and very naturally too, when a man knows he must be either shot or married, he must be aware that the crisis requires all his fortitude. He took his station, with the most bloodless intention that ever prompted a man to battle. 'I had much rather be killed than kill,' thought he.

'One—two—three' said the seconds, as Paul raised his pistol to about forty seven degrees of elevation 'Fire! bang! The colonel's bullet whistled by Paul's left ear, and Paul's hit the steeple of a martin box on the top of an adjoining barn.

Twice more were the pistols tried, when the seconds interfered; the colonel declared he was satisfied, and they shook hands, thereby showing that Paul Pliant by shooting three times in the face of the blessed sun, had proved that he 'never supplanted beguiled, and circumvented,' the aforesaid Colonel Strut; for so it is laid down in the 'code of honor.'

It seemed now to be all over with Paul, 'I *must* be married then,'—said he to himself—'killing won't save me. The day was fixed, and his fate appeared inevitable. [illegible]

'Doctor, [illegible] how *shall* I escape?'

'Marriage,' said the Doctor, in his most solemn argumentative way, 'is considered by all authorities ecclesiastical, political, ethical, legal and judicial as a bond or covenant, entered into by the mutual consent and agreement of the two parties. Therefore, I am decidedly of opinion, that when the ceremony is to take place, and I propound the regular question, 'Will you take this woman for your wife?'—You reply, 'No'—it is not a marriage by no manner of means.

'I can't do it,' said Paul, mournfully, 'I have tried it a hundred times, but the word always stuck in my throat. There is a spell upon me in matters of denying; I must assent to everything. I was born without the capacity to do otherwise. Ask me if I have got three heads, I believe I should say 'yes.'

'Then you always say 'yes.'

'Yes, always, certainly.'

'Good bye, friend Paul,' said the Doctor, civilly touching his hat.

'Mercy on me!' exclaimed Paul Pliant.

There was *such* a turn out among the belles the next day! I wish I had been there to see it. Trinity church was thronged for everybody knew Paul Pliant, and the acquaintance of widow Wilful comprised nearly the whole of that circle which calls itself 'good society.' I wish, moreover, I had the talent of the immortal author of Clarissa Harlowe at describing feathers and lutestring; then would I tell how magnificently the widow was decked out. But this cannot be done. Everything was as it should be—in the judgment of the world. The 'happy pair' drove to church, a long string of coaches followed them; the widow blushed and 'smiled,' and all the world was gay.' Was ever a bridegroom in a state of more inexplicable awkwardness? He debated with himself for a moment, whether he should not make a desperate effort, take to his heels and run—but it was too late.

Paul cast a longing, lingering look behind him as he entered the church door. 'Farewell! blessed light of heaven! said he to himself, 'tis the last time I shall ever see you a free man! The widow held him fast by the arm.

'My dear Paul,' said she, 'here we are at last.'

'Yes,' replied Paul, with a groan.

'We are all ready,' said the bride-maids.

'Dearly beloved,' began Doctor Bindemtight: Paul felt his heart beat terribly. 'One minute more, and there will be no remedy,' thought he. He looked most imploringly at the doctor, as much as to say, 'can you be so cruel?' The doctor made an awful pause before the great question. Paul's heart beat faster than ever. 'Now for the catastrophe?' said he. The doctor gave Paul a keen look; everybody was breathless. At length he spoke.

'*Do you refuse this woman for your wife?*'

'*Yes!*' exclaimed Paul, in the loudest tone he was ever known to utter. In an instant the idea flashed upon his mind that he was free. He sprang into the broad aisle with the quickness of lightning, knocking down an old gentleman in spectacles, burst thro' the crowd, and bolted into the street. He ran home without stopping, and it was not till he had locked himself within his own chamber, that he felt certain that he was not married to widow Wilful.

There was a terrible scene at the church, with fainting and so forth; but the widow is alive to this day & when she finds another man who can't say 'no' she may play again the game which had nearly entrapped poor Paul Pliant.

[*From the American Farmer.*]

## PAGE'S SAWING MILL.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Agricultural Society for the Eastern Shore, held at the residence of Gov Samuel Stevens, on Thursday, the 27th of April, 1843, Mr. Tilghman Golsborough presented and read the following paper descriptive of the Steam Saw Mill, lately erected on Tilghman's island, by Gen. T. Tilghman and Mr. George Page.

On motion, the said paper was ordered to be published.

(Signed)
SAMUEL HAMBLETON, Chair'n.

In the latter part of February last I visited Tilghman's island, and observed for several days the operation of the lumber sawing establishment lately erected there by Gen. Tench Tilghman & Mr. George Page, and as this establishment may be classed among the mechanical wonders of the present age, and is likely to become interesting and important to agriculturalists, I deem it an appropriate subject of consideration for our Board, and therefore beg leave to submit the following:

It is known to the Board and to the country generally, that about two years ago, Mr. G. Page, of Baltimore, invented and patented a mode of sawing logs into lumber of all dimensions, by means of a circular saw—and I will here remark, [illegible] who doubted [illegible] knows [illegible] skilful mechanics [illegible] and in Europe, had for very many years, been vainly exerted in endeavoring to remedy the heating of circular saws when cutting long and deep lines, and that the difficulty of avoiding this had appeared to the mechanical world, to be insurmountable. But Mr. Page has overcome this difficulty by a very simple, & hence the more admirable, contrivance; and a visit to any of the mills he has constructed will convince the most skeptical, that his circular saw may be driven through a log at any attainable velocity, without becoming in the least hot, provided the saw is in decent order and adjustment—The chief object of this communication is, however, to give a general idea of the particular establishment mentioned above.

Some time in December last, Mr. Page landed with his machinery on Tilghman's island, and temporarily fixed up in the woods, his patent portable Steam Engine of ten horse power, and the Saw Mill, and proceeded to saw the lumber for the houses requisite to cover himself, the hands and the mill, and he had erected when I was there, a building forty three by sixty five feet, to cover the mill, and five small buildings used as shantees, kitchen, stable, &c. &c. and having constructed a pile driver, which had, as a make shift, a large hickory log as a hammer, he had built a wharf about 200 feet out, into Black Walnut cove. Measuring from the extremity of the wharf through and beyond the mill, there was an extent of flooring of about 500 feet, on which they moved, and piled their lumber as it was cut. The amount of work which had been done by a dozen hands, to fix up and equip such an establishment in so short a space of time, and at such an inclement season, appeared wonderful; and could only have been effected by a master mechanical mind, directing the labor of men and of labor saving machines and implements.

In the north west corner of the mill house stands the portable ten horse engine, which drives all the machinery.—In the roof is a line of iron shaft 40 feet in length, which is put in motion by the engine, & from the pulleys on this shaft, belts are led to drive the mills and other machines. The saw mills are placed about the middle of the house, and the log carriages travel north and south in the direction of the wharf. The rail ways on which the log carriages travel, extend out about 100 feet from the house towards the woods, and where the teams deposit the logs along the sides of those rail ways, so that two men can push the carriage out and roll the log on, (which they do with facility, as the carriage is upon a level with the long poles, or skids, on which the logs are deposited by the teams) and then push the carriage with the log upon it, back to the mill. As each piece of lumber is cut from a log, it is laid upon a small two wheeled car, having eight cast iron wheels and an iron axle, and two men will draw to the wharf, or river bank (the way being floored and on a gradual descent) all the lumber cut from a large log.

It will thus be seen with what facility and consequent cheapness lumber can be sawed and handled at these mills.

At the south end of the building is placed a mill with a cross cut circular saw four feet in diameter, for cutting cord wood, or for cutting off scantling in lenghts suitable for garden pales, laths, &c. &c. The log carriage of this mill is placed parallel with those of the other mill, but its saw being a cross cut, or cut off saw, is of course placed differently from the other saws, and cuts transversely of the carriage. This saw is placed in a frame, which is suspended from an axis fixed over head, and the saw with its frame swings to and fro transversely of the stuff to be cut. The saw being driven by a belt from a pulley on the said axis, the tightness of the belt is not affected by the different positions of the saw. The bed of the carriage, on which is placed the stuff to be cut, is concave, and is the arc of a circle whose centre is the aforesaid axis. The carriage being filled with slabs, or logs, to a depth of 22 inches or less, is moved forward until the ends of the stuff to be cut have passed the saw any desired distance, (four feet if for cord wood) when the saw is pressed in geer and speedily cuts through the pile; the saw is then pulled back by a weight attached to it by a cord, which passes over a pulley—the carriage is movod forward as before; a similar distance—the saw is pressed in geer again, and cuts off another length, and so on until the whole of the stuff in the carriage is cut up. As the slabs are cut from the logs by the other mills, they are laid upon the carriage of the cross cut mill, which, if not occupied in cutting logs into cord wood, remains at rest until it is filled with slabs as above described, when they are speedily converted into cord wood; and thus it will be seen, the proprietors of this establishment turn to profitable account even the slabs, which at other mills accumulate in huge unsightly piles, for which there is no market and the labor and cost of their removal is therefore dead loss. I would here remark that as the cord wood cut at this mill is precisely of the intended length, and the ends of the sticks are square, the consumer will get full measure. [illegible] markets, [illegible] into lengths for ordinary fire places and for locomotive engines, which would save the trouble and cost commonly incurred in chopping or sawing cord wood.

In the north end of the house is situated the machine for morticing fence posts. They furnish white oak posts morticed for five plank, and yellow pine plank six inches wide and an inch and a quarter thick, all ready to be put up without the aid of a carpenter, at fifty cents per pannel, five planks high and nine feet long.

They furnish garden pales at seven dollars per thousand. The garden pale and lath mill is placed in the roof of the building.

All these different mills are placed on the same north and south line through the house, and the saw dust falls into a trough which is placed just under ground, and extends from one end of the house to the other. In this trough is placed a large wooden screw, which being kept in constant motion by the engine, draws the saw dust into a pit at the north end of the house, from which it is dipped up by sheet iron buckets fastened to a belt, and is carried upwards and tumbled into a car, which will hold about 35 or 40 bushels. When the car is filled with saw dust, a lad draws it away on two parallel lines of plank (answering as a rail way) and tilts it into the river.—Beautiful are the contrivances by which labor is saved in all the operations at this establishment—those contrivances struck me as being more admirable and wonderful than the operation of sawing.

Of the regular speed of the mills in cutting lumber, I had no full and fair opportunity to judge, for whilst I was there, the hands were partly withdrawn and engaged in the construction of the bridge to connect the island with the main, & which was soon after completed But for the prevalence of low tides and high winds, this bridge, 300 feet in length, would have been completed in about two days. I saw, however, one of the mills cutting plank 12 feet long and 14 inches wide, at the rate of one such plank in three fourths of a minute; at which rate, both mills would cut 8 such plank in 3 minutes. I saw also 5 pales cut per minute, 20 laths cut per minute, & 1 post morticed per minute. But this, I presume, was faster than the ordinary work of the mill. I saw enough to be satisfied that the mills would perform all Mr. Page claimed for them in his advertisements—and having been for three years, somewhat familiar with, perhaps, the finest steam saw mills in this country, those at Wilmington, North Carolina, I am now convinced that lumber of all sorts can be manufactured cheaper at Tilghman's Island than at any other place in the country. They have great advantage from the mills being located in the heart of a forest, situated on the navigable waters of the Chesapeake, and hence a large portion of the costs ordinarily incurred in bringing logs to the mill and in the shipment and transportation of the lumber, is saved.