msa_sc3415_scm3600-0084 ©Maryland State Archives

The Planters' Advocate.

By THOMAS J. TURNER. "TRUTH ALONE IS KNOWLEDGE—KNOWLEDGE IS POWER." TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM.

Vol. 6. UPPER MARLBOROUGH, MARYLAND, WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 20, 1857. No. 39.

A Pleasant Sketch.

A REMINISCENCE.

"To the Hotel Dessin," said I, putting the book in my pocket.

I deny that I am romantic; I deny, unequivocally, that I am influenced by fictitious sympathies. I never was an idealist in my life; I never mean to be one; and yet I told the coachman to drive me to the Hotel Dessin.

The fact was that I had been reading the "Sentimental Journey," all the way from St. Omer; and when I reached Calais, and jumped into a *fiacre*, the name rose to my lips almost before I was aware of it. So away we rattled through a tangle of gloomy little streets, and into the court-yard of "mine inn."

An aristocratic-looking elderly waiter, with a ring and a massive gold watch-chain, sauntered out from a side-office, surveyed me patronizingly, and said, in the blandest tone:

"What is it that Monsieur desires?"

"A private room to begin with. At what hour is your table d'hote?"

"We have no table d'hote at the Hotel Dessin," replied the waiter, languidly; "our visitors are served in their apartments."

"Then let me have a dinner as speedily as possible, and a good one, remember."

He looked at me again, as if implying that my tone was not sufficiently deferential—yawned, rang a feeble little bell, and sank, exhausted, upon a bench beside the door. A pretty chamber-maid attended the summons.

"Marie, conduct Monsieur to one of the vacant rooms on the corridor by the garden. And, Marie, on thy return, my child, bring me a glass of absinthe and water."

Leaving this gentleman extended on the bench in an ostentatious state of ennui, I followed the neat little feet and ankles of my conductress up stairs along a passage full of doors. One of these bore an inscription which at once arrested my attention and my footsteps—STERNE'S ROOM.

"Stay, Mademoiselle!" I exclaimed; "can I have this one?"

Marie smiled and shrugged her shoulders.—"Certainly," she said, unlocking the door. "The chamber is at Monsieur's service. The English adore it. And why? Because somebody or other slept in it many years ago. How droll they are, these English? Comment! is Monsieur English? Ciel! what a mistake I have committed. Monsieur will never forgive me."

It needed, however, no great amount of protestation on my part to convince Mademoiselle Marie that I was not in the least affronted; so she drew up the blinds, dusted the table in a pretty ineffectual sort of way with the corner of her little apron, hoped that Monsieur would ring if he required any thing, and tripped gayly out of the room.

As for me, I threw myself into a chair and surveyed my new quarters. A portrait of Sterne hung over the fire-place. It was painted on panel, oval-shaped, dark with age and varnish, and looked as though it had been taken during his visit to Calais—if one might judge by the cracks and stains of it. The cheek rested on the hand; the eyes were turned full upon me with that expression of keen penetration which charterizes every one of his portraits. I sat for a long time looking at it, till the waiter came and prepared the table.

"And now, garcon," said I, after a considerable interval, during which I had been very satisfactorily employed—"and now garcon, do you really mean to tell me that this is Sterne's room?"

"Upon my honor, Monsieur," replied the waiter, laying his hand upon his heart.

"But how can you be certain after three-quarters of a century, or perhaps more, have gone by?"

"The event, Monsieur," said the waiter, "has been preserved in the archieves of the house.—We pledge ourselves to the veracity of the statement."

I surveyed the man with admiration. He was the grandest waiter I had ever seen in my life, and I had had some little experience, too.

"What wine does Monsieur desire for his dessert?"

I hesitated. Under ordinary circumstances, I should have said port or Champagne; but his sublimity abashed me. I ordered a bottle of Johannisberger.

To my right lay a delicious graden, radiant with beds of verbena and scarlet geranium, and flooded with the evening sunlight. The great trees nodded and whispered, and the windows at the opposite side of the quadrangle shone like burnished gold. I threw open the *jalousies*, wheeled my table up, plucked one of the white roses that clustered out side, and fancied I could smell the sea air.

"And so," said I, complacently peeling my peaches, "this is actually Sterne's room! He once sat beside this casement where I am now seated; looked out into this garden, where—But who knows? Perhaps the opening scenes of the 'Sentimental Journey' were even written in this chamber, and here am I with the book in my pocket. Now, this is really delightful!—Yorick"—and I poured out a glass of the amber Johannisberger, and addressed myself to the portrait over the fire-place—"Yorick, your health!"

I took the volume out, and turning the leaves idly, came to the chapters that treat of the *desobligeante*. I was decidedly in a soloquizing mood.

"Now, if I were beginning, instead of ending my journey," said I, "there's nothing I should have preferred to the *desobligeante*. No doubt, there is one to be had somewhere. What if the identical vehicle be still in the stables! That's nonsense, of course; and yet, I should just like to make the inquiry. Yorick, your health again, and let me tell you, Sir, that it's not every man who, fifty years after his decease, gets toasted in wine at seventeen francs the botte!"

There was a tap at my door.

"A thousand pardons," observed the waiter, looking in. "Monsieur is alone?"

"Go to the mischief!" said I, savagely. Fortunately it was in English, so he did not understand me.

"There are two gentlemen here, Monsieur—two milords, your countrymen, who desire particularly to be permited to see this apartment for a moment."

"'An Englishman poes not travel to see Englishmen,'" I muttered to myself, quoting page nineteen of the "Sentimental Journey."

"Am I honered with Monsieur's permission to show them up?"

I was forced to say Yes—not very graciously, I fear; and he ushered them in accordingly.

The first was a spare, eager-looking man, with keen, quivering nostrils, and a brow furrowed with thought and expressive of immense determination of character. The apearance of the second was still more remarkable. I could not remove my eyes from his face, and yet I could scarcely have told you what it was that so attracted me. His forehead was broad and high; his mouth open and eloquent; his hair black, glossy, and falling in smooth pendulous masses almost to his shoulders. His eyebrows were prominent and bushy, and the eyes beneath them animated by a living radiance, alternately dreamy and tender, wild and energetic. I have since heard them compared to "the rolling of a sea with darkened lustre," and I can think of no words which better express their changefulness and their depth.

He entered last, but stepped before his friend, and stood looking at the portrait. The other bowed and apologized to me in a few brief hesitating words for their intrusion.

Presently the second comer turned round, and without any previous recognition of my presence, said:

"I see that you two have been dining together. Has the worthy pre'bend been an agreeable companion?"

The oddity of the address pleased me.

"I can not say that I have wanted for amusement," I replied, smiling, "since the 'Sentimental Journey' has been lying beside my plate all the time. Will you be seated?"

He needed no second invitation, but dropped indolently into an easy chair, and lay back with his eyes still fixed on the picture; while his companion walked over to the window, and stood there, looking out, with a fidgety uneasy countenance, as if he had seen quite enough of the room, and was more anxious to go than stay.

"I do not admire the 'Sentimental Journey,'" said he in the easy chair. "It is poor, sickly stuff; and the oftener you read Sterne, the more clearly will you perceive its inferiority to Tristram Shandy. There is truth and reality in the one, and little beyond a clever affectation in the other. But Sterne's morals were bad. His heart was bad; his life was bad. He dallied with vice, and called it sentiment, or combined it with wit, drollery, and fancy, and served it up for the amusemet of the fashionable world, whose idol he was. His mind oscillated ever on the confines of evil, and from this dangerous element he drew his "effects," his clap-trap, and his false whimpering sensibility. There is not a page of Sterne's writings undefiled by some hint of impurity; and yet he approaches the subject with a mixture of courage and cowardice, as a man snuffs a candle with his fingers for the first time; or, better still, like that trembling daring with which a child touches a hot tea-urn—only because it has been forbidden. He is a hypocrite, because he affects to be the ally of virtue, and entertains all the while a secret sympathy with the enemy.—At the same time, I don't think his hypocrisy can do much harm, or his morals either, unless to those who are already vicious."

The gentleman at the window faced round, and shook his head.

"You are seldom just to authors for whom you have no liking," he said, in harsh, quick tones; "and it seems to me that in this instance you jump too hastily at conclusions. It does not follow that a man is a hypocrite because his actions give the lie to his words. If he at one time seems to be a saint, and at another a sinner, he possibly is both in reality, as well as in appearance. A person may be fond of vice and of virtue too, and practice one or the other according to the temptation of the moment; a priest may be pious, and at the same time a sot or a bigot; a woman may be modest, and a rake at heart; a poet may admire the beauties of nature, and be envious of those of other writers, a moralist may act contrary to his own precepts, and yet be sincere in recommending them to others. These are indeed, contradictions, but they arise out of the contradictory qualities of our nature. A man is a hypocrite only when he affects to take delight in what he does not feel, and not because he takes a perverse delight in opposite things."

"An admirable piece of metaphysical defense," said the other, whom, for the sake of distinction, I shall call the philosopher, "but one that, after all, does not go far to prove your case. Remember Sterne's neglect of his loving wife, and the heartlessness of his flirtations, and then judge how sincere may have been those tears which he sniveled so plenteously over a dead donkey at Nampont. Pshaw! 'tis the very mockery of virtue!"

"And a compliment to it at the same time," retorted the metaphysician. "Come, you are severe to-day, and misjudge him from an excess of manner here and there. The profoundest wisdom is sometimes combined in his pages with an outward appearance of levity; and many passages which have to bear the charge of coarseness, contain, nevertheless, a sterling view of love and charity. Think of Uncle Toby!"

"Who pitied even the devil!" said the philosopher, extending his hand indolently for the bottle of Johannisberger which I had just pushed toward him.

"Who is one of the finest tributes ever paid to human nature!" exclaimed his friend. "Why, this I will say, that Shakspeare himself never conceived a character so genial, so delicious, so unoffending! Then, again, turn to the story of 'Le Fevre:' it is perhaps the finest in the English language. I cannot conceive how Goldsmith could call Sterne 'a dull fellow.' The author of the 'Vicar' should have known better."

"Perhaps," said I, venturing for the first time to mingle with their conversation, "the tone of Goldsmith's mind was too thoroughly English to appreciate the glancing transitions, the poignant though artificial wit, and the extraordinary variableness of Sterne. It has always appeared to me that, although his style was so racy, so rapid, so idiomatically English, his genious and disposition inclined more toward the characteristics of the French writers."

"You mean Rabelais," said the philosopher; "and Rabelais he was, only born in a happier age, and gifted with sentiment."

"I was not alluding particularly to Rabelais," I rejoined. "I believe I was thinking more of the modern French school—of the Balzacs, Karrs, and Paul de Kocks, who can scarcely be supposed to have imitated a half-forgotten English writer of the last century." Both of my visitors looked interested, and I went on. "It is in his abrupt variations of feeling that this resemblance forces itself upon me. I find in the writers I have named, and in fifty others who are their pupils and contemporaries, the same antithetical propensity which delights in giving a comic turn to a serious passage—the same implied satire and half-expressed double-entenders—the same unfinished sentences, and the same hysterical mingling of smiles and tears. Compare, for instance, Tristram Shandy and L'Amoureux Fiancé. A Hindoo would swear that the soul of Laurence Sterne had taken up its present abode in the body of Paul de Kock. Again, let us consider his power of turning trifles to account, and evolving from the least promising incidents the most exquisite combinations of feeling and fancy. Apropos of a pin, he fills a page with wisdom on humanities; and from his barber's recommendation of a wig-buckle, deduces an admirable analysis of the French national character. Is not this one of the leading traits of modern French authorship? Place in the way of one of these witty and imaginative *feuilletonists* the most barren and uninteresting of objects, and he will enrich it with all the embroideries of art, clothe it in the rainbow hues of his own fancy, and though it were but an old pair of ruffles or a market-barrow, end by making you laugh or cry, according to his pleasure. In this manner, an ingenious French writer has elaborated a charming volume on no more extensive a subject than a journey round his room; and from so simple an incident as a flower springing up accidentally within the confines of a prison, another has contributed to our modern European literature the most touching, the most humanizing, the most philosophical of moral stories. Thus, in his gayety and his gravity alike, in his treatment of minutiæ and his natural temperament, I find myself irresistably reminded of the French style whenever I open a volume of Sterne. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly," replied the philosopher; "and I admit the justice of your remarks. He has all the volatility, as well as all the seriousness of the French character—that seriousness which he was the first as well as the last traveler to discern.—'If the French have a fault, Monsieur le Comte,' he says in the chapters on the pasport, 'it is that they are too serious.'"

The metaphysician smiled. "Not the last traveler," he said; "for in those notes that I made on my late journey through France and Italy, I particularly observed this exception to their generally fluttering and thoughtless disposition. These last are the qualities that strike us most by contrast to ourselves, and that come most into play in the intercourse of common life; and therefore we are generally disposed to set them down as an altogether frivilous and superficial people. It is a mistake which we shall do well to correct on further acquaintance with them; or, if we persist in it, we must call to our aid an extraordinary degree of our native blindness and obstinacy. Why, the expression of a Frenchman's face is often as melancholy when he is by himself as it is lively in conversation. The instant he ceases to talk, he becomes 'quite chopfallen.'"

"It is strange," observed the philosopher, "how little this contradiction in their character has been noticed. They have never had the credit of it, though it stares one in the face everywhere. You can't go into one of their theatres without being struck by the silence and decorum that reign throughout the audience, from the scholar in the stalls to the workman in the galleries."

"This results in part, perhaps, from their studious inclinations," said the other. "The French are fond of reading as well as of talking. You may constantly see girls tending an apple-stall in the coldest day in winter, and reading Voltaire or Racine. Such a thing was never known in London as a barrow-woman reading Shakspeare. Yet we talk of our wide-spread civilization and ample provisions for the education of the poor!"

"To be read thus by the lowliest as well as the loftiest should be the highest ambition of the poet," exclaimed the philosopher, enthusiastically. "Do you not remember, William, during that pedestrian excursion which you, Wordsworth, John Chester, and I once made from Nether Stowey to Linton, we staid at an old-fashioned inn near the Valley of Rocks, breakfasted deliciously on tea, toast, eggs and honey, and found a little worn-out copy of the 'Seasons' lying in the window-seat? I took it up, and with a feeling that I cannot describe to you, exclaimed aloud: '*That* is true fame!'"

"Yes," replied the metaphysician, with a sigh; "I remember it perfectly. I was but a lad at the time, and I listened as if in a dream to every syllable that fell from the lips of either Wordsworth or yourself. Fame, thought I, with a sinking heart—alas! to me it is but a word: I shall never possess it; yet will never cease to worship and pursue it. At that time, I thought to be painter; and while I lost myself in admiration of a fairy Claude, or hung enraptured over a Titian dark with beauty, I despaired of the perfection I worshiped. And I was right: I should never have made a painter."

His friend smiled, and shook his head. "And yet," said he, "you are content, I should think, with the share of renown that has fallen to your lot. Do you still hold that fame is but a word?"

"I hold it to be a glorious reality," replied the metaphysician; "but one which, least of all others, should be defaced by the petty considerations of our wordly vanities and selfish personalities. Fame is the inheritance not of the dead, but of the living. It is we who look back with lofty pride to the great names of antiquity—who drink of that flood of glory as of a river, and refresh our wings in it for future flight. Fame, to my thinking, means Shakspeare, Homer, Bacon, Rapheal. Fame can attach itself only to the past. Reputation is the property of the present."

"A subtle distinction," said the philosopher, emptying the last glass of my Johannisberger; "but one which—"

The door of the chamber opened.

"Your carriage, gentlemen, is ready," said the waiter.

We all rose simultaneously.

"I am sure," said the philosopher, with an air of high-bred courtesy—"I am sure we must have fatigued and interrupted you, sir, in a most unpardonable manner. I am ashamed"—and here he glanced regretfully toward the empty bottle and the comfortable *fauteuil*—"to have intruded so long upon your patience and your hospitality; but if you should ever chance to wander in the neighborhood of Nether Stowey, Somersetshire, I will endeavor to atone for my present thoughtlessness, by making you acquainted with our green and hilly country, and our wild sea-shore. Do not suppose that I say this through a forced politeness. I invite few visitors, and those whom I do ask, I welcome most heartily. I am but a hermit in a cottage, however, and cannot promise to give you such vintages as this!"

He took a card from his waistcoat pocket, and advancing with an undulating step, laid it down beside me on the table.

"Samuel Taylor Coleridge!" I exclaimed, involuntarily, as my eyes fell on the superscription.

The philosopher extended his hand to me.

"You will not forget to come and see me," he said, "if you visit my country; and I trust you will forgive me for introducing myself. It is a bad habit that one acquires abroad—above all, when one meets a fellow-Englishman."

"I consider," said I, "that I am indebted to Yorick for this piece of good-fortune;" and I pointed to the portrait over the mantle-piece.

Coleridge plucked his companion by the sleeve. "Come, Hazlitt," he said, "we have no time to lose."

"How!" I exclaimed—"is it possible that—that your friend is"—

"William Hazlitt," replied the poet, making the metaphysician known to me with a serio-comic gesture—"William Hazlitt, the dreaded critic—the redoubtable reviewer—the terrible essayist!"

I endeavored to stammer out something appropriate as they took leave of me; but at that time I was little used to society, and I believe I had never seen a real live author in my life before, so I fear I was not very successful.

Coleridge hurried his friend from the room, and went out last. Just as he reached the door, he turned back.

"Have you read my translation of 'The Visit of the Gods?'"

I replied eagerly in the affirmative.

"Then you will remember the opening lines," he said, gaily:

"Never, believe me,
Appear the Immortals,
Never alone!"

The door closed directly, and he was gone.—Then I heard his genial laugh upon the stairs, and presently the rattling of the wheels that bore them away. I never visited Nether Stowey, and never saw either of my guests again. Both have since passed away, and left only their fame and their undying thoughts behind them; but I shall never forget the brief acquaintanceship which began and ended one autumnal afternoon in Sterne's Room, at the Hotel Dessin.

Strange Effects of Verdi's Music.

At the last performance of the French version of *Il Trovatore* in Paris, there was, says one of our French papers, an accident at once lamentable and extraordinary. A certain gentleman, who was so deaf that the roar of the cannon of the Invalides was no more to him than the ordinary shutting of a door, having tried nearly all remedies, went with his ear-trumpt to his physician and said to him, "Well, doctor, must I give up all hope of a cure?"

"There may yet be one method of curing you," answered the doctor, "but it is a very violent one."

"No matter. What is it?"

"You only chance of a cure is to go the opera and hear *Il Trovatore*."

The patient recoiled in terror.

"If you refuse," said the physician, "you are a lost man."

The victim was silent for a moment, but then he murmured, in broken accents, "Very well; be it so. I shall go and hear *Il Trovatore;* but will you not go with me, my dear doctor? Do not leave me for a second, for something dreadful might happen."

"Be calm," was the answer, "I will go with you."

That evening the two friends went to the opera, and sat down together in the ochestra stalls.—The opera began. The physician watched his patient's face anxiously. The first act made no impression: the second none. At last, in the third act there was a sound in the deaf man's head like a drum bursting—bang! The patient jumped up and shouted with joy to his physician, "I can hear, my dear fellow! I can hear!" The physician took no notice of him. He had himself become deaf!

Selected Poetry.

GOD IN SPRING.

BY REV. T. HEMPSTEAD.

Hosannas to Thy Deity for this,
Giver of bursting leaves and song and bloom,
And the gold opulence of flowers, which is
A type of man's sure triumph o'er the tomb!
O, goodly are these ranks of sunny days
Which the warm breath of budding woodlands bring;
We fling our care away one hour to gaze
'Neath the soft eyelids of Thy angel, Spring,
And lift his silver wing.

We will bow down before his face as one
Who comes with tidings from the only King—
Yea, he is Thine; Thy hands did weave this crown,
These golden garlands round his temples fling;
All mute things knows his presence and give praise,
The woodbine years around his arms to cling,
Morn weaves his palace from ber inmost rays,
And sweet birds nestle in his hair and sing,
"God of the purple Spring!"

We thank Thee for the morning's vestal blaze,
And evening with her locks of sober brown;
We thank Thee for the emerald Summer days
And Autumn with her nights of weary moan;
We thank Thee for the quiet Sabbath hours,
Which speak for man a fairer blossoming;
We thank Thee for the sunset's burnished towers,
But more, more than for these, with all they bring,
We thank Thee for the Spring!

Angel, thy splendors never could have shone
Upon the Orient Uz as here they shine,
Else her immortal bard from thee had known
A softer music for his glorious line;
He would have seen the bursting of the graves,
He would have heard their mouldy silence ring
With peans like the noise of many waves,
And ocean's oozy charnels throb and sing
Through the green gates of Spring.

What is so sweet as clover by the way,
So fresh as violets lifting the dead leaves?
What is so downy as a beechen spray,
So musical as swallows round the eaves?
What is so queenly as the jasmine bells
Between whose walls the bee forgets his sting?
Yet these are thine, all these, the spicy dells,
The balm, the glorious tints, the caroling,
O, rosy-footed Spring!

Lover of mossy banks, we welcome thee
Back to the orchard paths and yearning hills—
Come, hang thy mantle on the crownless tree;
And scatter dappled pinks and daffadils;
And we will wreathe thy brow and clasp thy knees
With blooms prefer our fresh thank-offering
Of gentle moods, new hopes, while glossy bees
Hum through the delicate urns that roll and swing
Around thy limbs, O Spring!

The royal blue-bird whose soft vest was dipped
Long in the August firmament's rich wave,
And the fine robin of thy dews have sipped,
And league to sing the blossoms from their grave;
All spirits of the amber-budded boughs
Call the sweet names, Bridegroom of Flowers and King;
The distant valleys and the near hedge-rows,
The silvery vault and glimmeiing mountains sing
Io, delicious Spring!

[illegible]at Pan reclined in odorous shades and woke
The echoes of the hills, long, long ago,
And white-armed Dryads danced beneath the oak
Nor marked the rapid seasons o'er them flow;
The Oreads tripped along the mountain ways:
But all the past gone is the Satyr king,
A purer breath the grove and the woodland sways,
And with a better Name the flute-notes ring
Of lily-bosomed Spring.

Hosannas for the birds and flowers, O God!
I see Thee in the bloom and mellow beams,
Yet I am sad even where so lately trod
Thy radiant feet and woke the sleeping streams;
Our bosoms for a purer region yearn
We feel the flutter of the *immortal wing*
'Gainst its clay walls: unsatisfied we turn
From Summer's crown and the fresh tints that fling
A glory round the Spring.

Selected Miscellany.

The Comet and its "Ten Billion Leagues of Tail."

"On th' other side
Incensed with indignation, Satan stood
Unterrified, and like a comet burned,
That fires the length of Ophiucus huge
In th' Arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war."

The recent appearance of two telescopic comets adds new zest to the prediction of a millennium comet, which a distinguished popular lecturer of France has used, on the authority of some obscure German dreamer, to tickle the fancies of his wonder-loving countrymen. It is certain that no data exist on which the predicted collision of a comet with our earth can be founded, and no intimation of such an event has appeared in any responsible scientific periodical.

Our scientific lecturers and popular writers seem quite as much given to the invention of fables as the older bards of mythic stories, and find quite as willing an ear in the undying love of wonder of a credulous people. Instead of summoning the gods to fight men's battles and destroy cities, they predict deluges and judgment-days at the hands of those celestial will-o'-the-wisps, the comets.

Science makes strange compromises with credulity, and popular lectures dwell more on what is uncertain or purely fabulous in science than on well-established facts. We hear a great deal from the lyceum about the nebulous origin of the solar system, the existence of a central sun in the group of the Pleiades, and the malignant disposition of the comets. These vague and unfounded speculations are set by the side of the best established certainties of science in borrowed light, and are thus accredited precisely as the Homeric tales were through the traditions of popular religions.

But have we nothing to fear from the wandering comets? Most certainly we have. "The thing in the world," says Montaigue, "I am most afraid of, is fear;" and this, we think, is the direst calamity comets have ever brought in their trains. Men are mightily given to the worship of occult causes, and when anything does appear new under the sun, it is invested with an omnipotence of evil painful to contemplate.

The facts in regard to these wanderers are few and simple—the conjectures many and miraculous. In the first place, comets are much more numerous than angel's visits, about five a year having been observed during the period when the prize of a comet-medal, offered by the King of Denmark, stimulated the zeal of amateur astronomers.

It is probable that all the comets visible in the northern hemisphere, with the optical means of the amateurs, were seen during this period, for there was scarcely a comet which had not several independent discoverers. Since the comet-medals have been withdrawn, the annuel average of discoveries has sensibly diminished, and it may not be out of place here to suggest to our American princes, what indeed was urged before the "American Association for the Advancement of Science" last summer, that a renewal of these prize-medals in this country might be of signal service to American astronomy.

The comets already discovered are unquestionably but a very small part of the swarm which are flitting like great celestial musquitoes round the sun.

While modern observations have thus established the gregarious habits of these long-tailed monsters, the minutest observations and the exactest calculations have failed to detect the slightest disturbing effect from them in the motions of the planets, though the comets themselves have suffered great disturbances.

The remarkable case of Lexell's comet deserves special mention. This comet passed in 1770 very near the earth, after having made a similar approach to Jupiter. Its orbit was determined and its return predicted from observations then made; but it never came back, and subsequent calculations showed that its return was prevented by the action of Jupiter during a second and still nearer approach of the comet, even within the jovial circle of the old fellow's retainers. The comet entirely changed its course after this interview, and was never recognized again, yet the circum-jovial satellites kept steadily in their old courses.

It is highly probable that comets make a great show with very little material, and the chance of the earth's being hit by the little solid matter there is in any of them, is very small. The prediction of a collision is beyond the power of mathematics, for the position of a comet's orbit, and the comet's position at any time in its orbit, cannot be determined with sufficient precision; and even if the data were sufficiently exact to predict a collision of the earth and comet in their undisturbed orbits, it would be impossible to determine with precision the modifying effect of their mutual action. In all probability a comet, even coming within the dominant influence of the earth's attraction, would pass by and be whisked off into another orbit. The earth's body is a small mark for a comet to aim at.

The comet's tail is, to be sure, sometimes of very inconvenient length, but it gives so many indications of a ghostly nature, is so transparent and unsubstantial, that our atmosphere is as adamant to it. Yet it is possible, in a collision where no actual contusion may occur, that the malignant influences and dire calamities may soak in, and so there is unfortunately a chance of convicting these heavenly vagabonds of the charges which superstition and ignorance have in past ages made against them.

Meteors, dark days and diseases are still to be accounted for, and until they are traced to their causes, men will stand, as Lord Kenyon used to say, *super antiquas vias*,—on their old superstitions.

The large number of the comets, their ever varying appearance, and the great purturbations of their orbits, make the identification of any but those of short periods, extremely difficult; and, as yet, little or nothing is known about their nature and constitution. Cometic astronomy is still in its infancy. All that is unknown is common ground, and so we and the physicians and chemists storing away malarias and sublimated poisons in their pernicious tails, eager apparently to be in at the judgment, and have a hand with the astronomers and preachers in the destruction of the world.

Various hypotheses have been advanced about the nature of the comets' tails. Some have supposed that they are vaporous exhalations from the nucleus driven off by heat, by their own elasticity, and by a supposed repellent force of the sun. These forces must be very vigorous to account for the rapid formation of the trains in some recorded cases. Others suppose that the apparent tails are only the reflections of light from portions of a much more extended substance, somewhat as a long line of the ruffled surface of the sea is illuminated by the sun or moon. Others again resort to that prince of occult causes, *electricity*, and thus concentrate all their ignorance in a single word.

An Abolitionist Quizzed.

Under this caption, a Holly Springs, Miss., correspondent of the Memphis *Eagle and Enquirer* relates the subjoined anecdote:

The following amusing scene actually occurred last summer between a citizen of our town and a Yankee on board one of the Northern steamboats, perhaps upon the Hudson.

Our Southern friend discovered a disposition in a very genteel-looking man on board the boat to open a chat with him, and nothing loth to hear what his friend wished to say, he indicated by his manner that he was approachable; whereupon the following dialogue ensued—

Yankee—Well, sir, I wish to ask you one question; I hope it will be no offence.

Southerner—Certainly not; I will hear you with pleasure.

Yankee—Well, sir, is it true that they work negroes in the plow at the South?

Southerner—I will answer you in the favorite metod of your own countrymen, by asking you a question or two.

Yankee—I admit the right, sir.

Southerner—How many negro men do you suppose it would require to draw a good large one-horse plow?

Yankee—Well I suppose six or seven—say seven.

Southerner—What are they worth per head?

Yankee—Well, I suppose $800.

Southerner—That would be $5,600. Now, what would one large, strong horse cost?

Yankee—I guess about $100.

Upon this the Southerner looked a little quizzically at his neighbor, who, without waiting to hear the conclusion, started and stammered—

Well, I—I—I knew it was a lie!

A Novel Way to Effect Sales.

The Baltimore *Weekly Dispatch* says some of the clothing dealers on Centre Market Space have a way of securing sales occasionally, which savors strongly of rascality and the drop game. They place in the coat pocket an old portmonnaie stuffed with paper; a customer comes along inquiring for such a vestment. The dealer, if he judges his customer to be of the right stripe, after essaying several coats, at last says: Here is a coat we made for a gentleman, he wore it one day and sent it back; it was too small for him—try it on. Ah! it fits first rate—like it was made for you. It is well made, buttons sewed on strong, with strong pockets." The customer puts his hand into the pockets to try them, when his fingers come in contact with the pocket book. His imagination is kindled with the idea of appropriating the supposed treasure. "How much did you say the coat was?" he eagerly asks.—The dealer names a good round price. "It suits me—I'll take it," is the quick reply. The money is paid, the self-duped customer walks off hurriedly with his supposed prize, not stopping to hear the suppressed chuckle of the dealer as he looks after him out of the corner of his eye. The issue can be guessed—the covetous buyer finds out there is a difference between paper and paper money, and is both enraged and mortified to find that his own dishonest avarice has led him to pay an extravagant price for a worthless article that fits him so badly that he is ashamed to wear it. Unless, however, his greenness is of a deeper shade than ordinary, he is careful not to mention it, even to his most intimate friends.

Highly Important to the Ladies!!!—Paris Fashions!!!!

The Paris correspondent of the New York *Journal of Commerce*, under date of April 16, says:

"Ball dresses for the spring and summer are composed of the lightest materials. Madame Fauvet, 4 *Rue du Menars*, is preparing charming fancies for the festivities of the Whitsuntide week. There are robes of tulle and gauze striped with silver, having three, four or five skirts. Tunics of white tulle, zebraed with velvet. In silks, the large watered patterns are prefered, either plain or with colored boquets; silks of light colors with flounces, others of striped or sprigged patterns. These dresses are trimmed in the apron-style, or up the sides, with lace, ruches, bows of riband or flowers. For young ladies, tarlatans and plain silks, crape or tulle with two skirts, having a broad satin riband put on the edge of each like a hem, are the most appropriate. The skirts of all robes are made very full, and very long behind; double skirts are in great favor both for evening and walking toilette. The newest sleeve is styled the *beret*, the upper part sits very close to the shoulder; but becomes very wide towards the elbow; all the width is thrown behind, for the seam of the sleeve lies almost flat on the arm in front. The fullness of the elbow is gathered into a deep band, eight inches wide, which sits close to the arm down to the wrist.—The fulness above the elbow is what gives to the sleeve the name of *beret*, from its resemblance to the cap worn by the peasants of the Basque provinces. A deep flounce or cloche falls over the top of the arm and covers the scant part of the sleeve."

An advertisement says: "For sale, an excellent young horse; would suit any timid lady or gentleman with a long silver tail."

Broad Rock Races.

THIRD DAY—THURSDAY, MAY 7.—Proprietor's purse, $150, mile heats; best three in five, resulted as follows:

Thomas Doswell's b. g. Spider Legs, 4 years old, by Tally-Ho, dam Seven Up	1	2	5	1	1
David McDaniel's b. h. 4 years old, by Nicholas, dam by Priam	5	5	4	4	2
O. P. Hare's b. h. Toler, 4 years old, by Childe Harrold, dam Marchioness, by imp Routoun	3	1	1	3	3
James Talley's ch. h. Shokoe, 4 years old, by Tally-Ho, dam Betsy White	4	4	2	2	4
C. Green's b. h. Fillibuster, 5 years old, by Tally-Ho, dam by Priam	2	3	3	5	ds.

Time—1:50—1:52—1:52—1:48¾.

The Richmond *Dispatch* thus notices the run in detail:

First Heat.—After two false starts they got off, and, after going about one hundred yards Fillibuster drew in front and maintained the lead until getting on the back stretch, when Spider Legs, who was under a hard pull, put in his best licks, dashed by Shockoe and Toler and collaring the leader, cut him down at the head of the stretch, moved to the front, and won the heat with apparent ease in 1:50.

Second Heat.—Another false start was made, and then the crowd got off in a lump, in which position they ran about two hundred yards.—Spider once more marched to the front, the others being within striking distance, and made play for home; but on getting to the head of the stretch, Toler took up the running, collared his leader, passed him at the distance stand, and led home a winner in 1.52, to the great delight of those who had backed him.

Third Heat.—Shockoe got a fine send off, dashed to the front, and cut out in gallant style, his pursuers being close on his trail, and all running at their ease. On reaching the back stretch, Toler, who was then fourth, quickened his pace, passed Fillibuster, gave Spider the go-by, and on swinging into the head of the stretch made at his leader, who, not feeling disposed to change place, made a desperate struggle from there to the distance stand, where Toler lapped him and gave him the go-by, beating him to the score by half a length, and winning the heat in 1.52.—[Toler's backers sanguine and very much excited.]

Fourth Heat.—The Nicholas horse was the first to show in front and continued the lead for a quarter of a mile, at which time Shockoe cut him down, took his place and began to open a gap. As a matter of course his friends gave vent to their pent up feelings in loud huzzas, and many of them were shouting "he has them," "he'll win," when to their utter astonishment Spider made a tremendous brush, locked the leader at the half-mile pole, ran with him from there to the head of the stretch, then shaking him off led home at a killing pace in 1.50—thus showing that he had not only speed, but could hang on when necessary to do so.

The "sharpers" were now off their feet completly, and all hands and the cook seemed entirely at sea. The horse least dreaded had won the two fastest heats.

Fifth Heat.—At the word Shokoe again went off with the lead, cutting out the work in earnest, the other four being well up, and thus they ran till reaching the back stretch, when the rider of Spider tickled his siddes and he went at his leader with the speed of the wind. On reaching the half-mile pole Spider and Shockoe were yoked together, and thus placed, flew along for an hundred yards, when Spider moved to the front and made for home. Getting near the head of the stretch, the Nicholas horse made a beutiful burst, cut down Shockoe, and put out his best licks in pursuit of Spider, who fairly flew down the stretch and passed the stand one length ahead in 1.48¾, Toler being third, Shockoe fourth and Fillibuster catching the flag in his face.

We venture to say that a better heat for the fifth one, than that made by Spider, will not be run again over Broad Rock for many years; nor will a result more unexpected, occur during lifetime.

A Singular Case.

A letter from Cleves, Hamilton County, Ohio, says: Wat. Eckman, a wealthy citizen of this place, was taken violently ill on the morning of the 15th, and by having the prompt and kind services of two erudite Esculapiuses, received his "quietus" about five o'clock same day. Next morning the defunct Eckman was kindly stowed away in his coffin, and jolted in a market wagon to the Berea Church, a distance of two miles, where a funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Wm. Lee. The solemn thing was about concluded, the last hymn was read, and the choir was about to "strike up," when they were suddenly annoyed by discordant and very unmusical sounds and kicks, which it seemed obvious were going on inside the coffin.

You may possibly imagine there was some consternation in that meeting-house about that time. Well, there was nothing else for a few minutes. At least half of the congregation broke for the door, and the balance were about to follow suit, when the Rev. Mr. Lee descended from the pulpit, and in a loud voice ordered the coffin to be speedily opened, which was done, when it was found that Wat, who was not only alive and kicking, but was struggling manfully to free himself from his—to him—mysterious confinement. The blood was flowing freely from his mouth and nose, but in a very few minutes he was able to speak. He was carried to the house of Abram Patterson, Esq., about two hundred yards from the church, and a physician sent for, who remained with him until the next morning, when he was able to walk about the room.

It is said that Tom Corwin, as he is familiarly called, was once trying a case in which he was opposed to the late Mr. Wirt, when the latter tried a somewhat novel mode of discrediting the evidence of Mr. Corwin's chief witness, on whose accuracy and discrimination everything turned, by showing that he was a person of astonishing credulity.

Wirt—"Have you read Robinson Crusoe?"

Witness—"Yes."

Wirt—"Do you believe it all?"

Witness—"Well, yes, Squire, I don't know but what I do."

The same answer was returned as to Gulliver's Travels, and several other works of fiction, Corwin all the while fidgetting and getting hot.—Presently Mr. Wirt, considering the man entirely flattened out, resigned him with a bland smile.

Mr. Corwin said he had only one question to ask, and put it:

Mr. Corwin—"Have you read Wirt's life of Patrick Henry?"

Witness—"Yes."

Corwin—"Do you believe it all?

Witness—"Why, no, Squire, I can't go that."

HOW TO JUMP OFF THE CARS.—Unless you intend suicide don't jump from the cars when in motion; but if you think you must, and wont be persuaded to behave like a sensible man, this is probably the way to do it: jump sidewise, as high as you can, and when in the air screw your legs up and bend the head forward you will strike the ground with that part of the body that is or should be cushioned by nature for the purpose, and you will roll away from the train in the manner of a wheel. Hands to avoid the scratches, had better be in the trousers' pockets. If you survive the operation you will feel better, it is quite likely than if you had blundered off without regard to the rules of science, and broken your neck or cracked the dome of thought. One experiment will probably satisfy you as to the convenience and comfort of this method of getting off the cars.—*Springfield Republican.*

GOOD.—A little girl nine years old having attended a soiree, being asked by her mother, on returning, how she enjoyed herself, answered: "I am *full* of happiness. I couldn't be any happier, unless I could grow."

Incitement to Noble Deeds.

There hangs before me a photograph of the arch of Titus, famous and venerable as presenting among the the processional spoils our only probable portraiture of the Golden Candlestick. It reminds me of a saying of this Roman emperor which has become proverbial. On a certain evening, when he looked back over the long hours, he remembered no good action, and exclaimed, "I have lost a day!" or more briefly in Latin, *perdidi diam.* According to some reports, it was the absence of any *beneficent* action that he regretted; and thus the saying has been understood by most.

This was certainly a beautiful trait in a heathen, a Roman emperor, and one whom we have to compare with bloody tyrants, such as preceded and followed him. But perhaps too much has been made of the benevolence of Titus; and perhaps we have allowed a sentence, happily worded and proceeding from one in imperial purple, to eclipse the greater and more diffused excellencies which the Christian religion has introduced.

It was something, indeed, for a sovereign of absolute power, innumerable subjects, and bundless means to pass twelve hours without one act of beneficence. We naturally inquire why he might not have made ten thousand persons happy: it would have taken less than a day. On the other hand, one act of clemency, charity or compassion has its glory, even though the only one in the aforesaid term. A day thus signalized is brighter than certain days of Nero and Domitian. And in this view Titus Vespasianus justly lamented the day as lost which could not show this single bright redeeming spot. It was not a day, *creta notandus*, to be "marked with a white stone."

In the dominions of the emperor there was, at that very time, a class of people not clad in purple or fine linen, and often confounded with the despised Jews. They were widely spread and had rules touching this very point. They have not yet ceased to exist nor to practice according to these rules. They used to exhort one another thus: "To do good and to communicate, forget not." They were, indeed, a peculiar people, "zealous of good works." They went so far as to adopt the maxim, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Let us do justice to Titus, the "delight of human kind." He was mild and comparatively forbearing in Judea, and seemed to use harshness with reluctance. He offered terms to the resisting Jews rather than pollute their temple, and looked with admiration and pity on the holy pile when it was stormed by his batteries and burning up. He allowed Josephus to save the sacred book from that conflagration. Hence it is that we look to the Arch of Titus, at Rome, with a measure of complacency. But we are not willing to take the clement Titus for our model as to spending a day.

To pass a whole day without an endeavor to make one happier is indeed to lose a day; it is dreadful, it is heathenish; and a heathen emperor may rebuke us. Yet the Christian standard is higher than this; and it were a meagre account of a Christian day to reckon its acts of beneficence at a unit. God has given a wider rule, and Providence opens more numerous opportunities. If good acts were confined to what in the world's esteem are great acts only a few could do them, and only once in awhile. But the business which Mrs. Hannah Moore was said to take for her life's task—*faire des heureux*, to make others happy—is a business at which every man, woman, and child may work in every place, every day, and every hour of the day. A stone cutter or a joiner might say with truth of a given day, "I have lost it, for I have let it go without one stroke from my chisel;" but we would not frame a rule conversely, and ordain one stroke of the chisel as a noticeable affair.

We err by omitting cheap acts of beneficence in our daily walk and among our hourly companionship. The web of a merciful life is made up of these slender threads. This is a secret oftener learnt by woman than by man.

The husband is used to a wholesale business. By the utterance of a few syllables on 'Change he finds himself richer by thousands. He writes ten letters on a slip of paper, and goes home heavier by a complete fortune. He has done a day's work. He can make a long interval. So in his charities; he takes a tithe of the tithe of half his nett income and builds an orphan house. His soul is refreshsd; he has done a great work.

The wife sits at home. She is employed in a series of continually repeated acts, any one of which is almost inappreciable. Her steps are many, up and down flights of stairs. Her sphere of housewifery comprises multiform particulars. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. Who can keep the tally of all those quick passes of her nimble needle? Her aggregate of human activity is the sum of small increments. She acquires a habit of thinking that innumerable littles will in time amount to something great. She generalizes her law and gives it a moral turn, holding that a thousand minute kindnesses go for something in the sum total of benefaction. If she cannot rear an asylum, she can wipe away a tear. If her lord comes home to dinner weary and pettish, after some exhausting deed of love, she can bear his glance with a meek and quiet spirit, which he will remember by-and-by. "In her tonge is the law of kindness." Great men may learn philosophy from good women. Our days would be sad indeed if every one was lost which did not contain some signal action, fit to be written down in the book of Chronicles or honored by a presentation of plate with letters and dinner speeches. It is a remarkable point in the awards of the judgment-day that those who are to enter into the joy of their Lord seem never to have kept any diary of their good works, or digested any statistical table of their visits, or held any anniversories whereon to ennumerate their works of mercy. "Lord, *when* saw we thee an hungered or athirst?" Yet they had not lost their days. God remembers what they forget, even to the minutest good deed.

"'Tis a little thing
To give a cup of water; yet its draught
Of cool refreshment, drain'd by fever'd lips,
May give a shock of pleasure to the frame
More exquisite than when nectarean juice
Renews the life of joy in happiest hours.
It is a little thing to epeak a phrase
Of common comfort which by daily use
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear
Of him who thought to die unmourn'd 'twill fall
Like choicest music."

WINNING A BET.—A Georgia negro was riding a mule along, and came to a bridge, when the mule stopped.

"I'll bet you a quarter," said Jack, "I'll make you go ober dis bridge," and with that struck the mule over the ears, which made him nod his head suddenly. "You take de bet den," said the negro, and contrived to get the stubborn mule over the bridge. "I won dat quarter, anyhow," said Jack.

"But how will you get your money," said a man close by, unperceived.

"To-morrow," said Jack, "massa gib a dollah to get corn, and I take de quarter out."

SIMPLICITY OF DRESS.—We have seen Hon. J. Q. Adams, years ago, on a summer Sunday, in the long sessions, going to church at the Capitol wearing a linen roundabout. In the winter with yarn mits on knit by his wife. This was an *example of republican simplicity and economy worthy of imitation.*

Why is a watch dog larger at night than he is in the morning? Because he is let out at night and taken in in the morning.

Why is a lady sweetest when she is just out of bed in the morning? Because she is a rose.

"Capital punishment," as the boy said when the Schoolmistress seated him with the girls.