

LITERATURE, &c.

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From the London People's Journal.

THE YANKEE PEDLER.

BY COLONEL JOHNSON.

Most readers have heard of Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, the last survivor of the patriotic signers to the declaration of American Independence.

He left Ireland for America with his father when a child, and was an active patriot during the revolution of 1776. His brother, two years older than himself, remained in Dublin to complete his education at the university, and came to the bar in due course. This elder brother, like Don O'Brien or Don O'Connor, was a lineal descendant from, and heir apparent to, the crumbled throne of some old Irish king, and was known as Don O'Carroll, which said Don and O he doffed on going to Virginia—as he did in 1796, to escape the storm of rebellion which he then foresaw lowering over his ill-fated country. The Don invested considerable money in a large landed estate lying some sixty miles from Richmond, the same being no less than four miles square, and containing 10,240 acres. This estate descended to an only son, Major Carroll, with whose history I am more immediately concerned. This gentleman, like his father before him, was bred to the university and to the bar; but like many of the patriots of Virginia, such as Randolph, Payton, Jefferson, and Madison, he thought it dabbled in dirty water to practise at the courts; and to touch a fee with a brief he had deemed pollution to his fingers. The mansion house on this estate, like most of the mansions of Virginia, stood at least two miles from the main road and the estate being seven miles from any town the major was not in general thronged with company, although his disposition was essentially sociable and companionable.

When I knew him in 1830 a more noble, generous, jovial soul never animated mortal clay; and I see in fancy at this moment, the twinkle of his half ironical, and more than half benevolent eye, as lighted up by anecdote and inspired by hock, though perchance the wayward vicissitudes of twenty years—since elapsed—may have dimmed that eye, as they have mine.

The major had a few peculiarities of character, proper here to be noted for a better understanding of what follows. He was an active sportsman, being out almost daily with his saddle-horse, rifle, pointers and greyhounds. Occasionally a deer fell in his way while pacing through his own forests; or, if the deer were too chary to cross his path, then ducks, pheasants and wild turkeys came not amiss, so the major got a shot from his saddle. Game of some kind always appeared at his table; but whether he killed it all or part of it was procured by his negroes, I never thought proper to inquire, as the major was not a little jealous of his rifle celebrity.

The major had another peculiarity: being ultra democratic in his political views, he abominated slavery in the abstract, though he was the owner of eight hundred slaves, beleaguering his immense plantation; so, compromising with his conscience, he would keep no slave driver, or 'whip' as that functionary is called 'down south.' To supply the place of this flesh bruiser, the major had selected from his live stock, a tall, broad-faced, benevolent, laugh-and-be-fat old negro fiddler, and installed him generalissimo over his curly-headed brethren. This appointment, smacking of humanity in the major, was most acceptable to his stock, inasmuch as Sambo himself, the overseer, being more fond of fun and frolic than of hard work, it was well understood that he would be considerate of kindred flesh and blood placed under him. This was so: feasts of roast pig and homminy, dances upon the green by moonlight, pitching quoits, and such like fun were very frequent; and a more happy squad of jolly souls could nowhere be found than on the major's demesne, and among his colored gentry. Despite all this—tobacco commanded a fair price and the land teeming with maize almost spontaneously—the year was brought round with very little defalcation, not amounting to a greater sum than was sported away by the major at the neighboring race-courses.

Another characteristic appertained to the major: lacking a full supply of polished and polite company, such as his education and former habits qualified him for, he sometimes made shift to supply the vacuum by unique characters falling in his way. Schoolmasters, briefless lawyers, poor scholars, music masters, strolling lecturers, pipers, and even Yankee pedlars, always found a ready welcome at the major's well-stored mansion; and if he found in his guest a genius, an original, or a droll fellow, the host would always contrive to detain the sojourner a few weeks, and even months, to supply the lack of more elite company. Such was the fascination of the major's conversation, and so delicate and considerate was he to anticipate all the wants of his guests, that it was next to impossible to break away from him unless one absolutely ran away.

Whatever the rank or vocation of his guest, the major placed him on a perfect equality with himself.

They must ride out together on equally noble steeds, comparisoned alike; have equally good rifles, a joint and several command over the hounds; and if the dress of the traveller was not adapted to the sport in hand

the lack was instantly supplied from the major's wardrobe.

I have known him thus to ride out, side by side, hand and glove, cheek by jowl with a dancing-master, when the poor artist with scarcely a shirt to his back, was rigged out like a showy squire with the major's best suit on him.

Thus much have I thought fit to speak of Major Carroll, who, though in fact a major-general in the Virginian militia at the time I knew him, would never answer to the higher title, because he said 'major' was a much more euphonious word to his ear than general.

One word of his family. Madam Carroll was a most accomplished lady of the refined aristocracy of Virginia; and though of high birth, brilliant intellect, and finished education, she, like the patrician ladies of the south generally, was simple as a child in her manners, and as kind and benevolent in her disposition as the love of God filling her heart could make her.

They had but one child—a lovely daughter—Laura I think they called her—who, when I first saw her in 1830, had but just entered her teens; yet, from a sylph-like form, bright intelligent eyes, sylph-like movements, and most engaging countenance, I doubted not that after a few years, when she should come to woman's estate, she would be all that could be desired in a beautiful and accomplished young lady. I afterwards learned that my prophesy was more than realised; Laura Carroll having become the most lovely girl in Virginia. Reader, thou knowest not how much this imports, if thou hast never travelled over Virginia, where the young ladies in general are beautiful as the hours, and as accomplished as the Athenian graces. So much for the family.

Now, kind reader, go with me seven hundred miles from Major Carroll's domains, away 'down East,' and I will introduce you to a Yankee pedler.

Poor widow Brown lived in the suburbs of Boston; and a hard struggle had she with adverse fortune to maintain and rear up six children to the age of fourteen, she having been left penniless by a spendthrift husband. Ralph, her youngest child, was the pet one of the flock (of course a prodigy of genius)—sprightly, naturally shrewd, and handsome as dark blue eyes, red cheeks, and brown curly hair could make him.

Boston is a rare place as to its advantages for education, even to its most humble youths. I believe that Ralph Brown, at the age of fourteen, had more useful knowledge than have many young lordlings, on leaving Oxford, with diplomas in their pockets. He had reaped the advantages of the public schools, and had gone thence to a dry good store in capacity of clerk.

During his stay there he was a fellow of the debating club, and member of the Handel and Haydn Society, so celebrated for its musical proficiency throughout the west. It is common in that country of equality for merchants' clerks to mingle on equal terms with the sons of the most wealthy and elevated; and it is also equally common with those clerks, for the improvement of their fortune and knowledge of the world, to become itinerant pedlars; and it is owing to their early training that these Yankee pedlars become such shrewd fellows, and make so much money out of the rural population.

Ralph Brown was distinguished even among his craft, being more shrewd, more silver-tongued, and withal much more handsome than are Yankee pedlars in general; besides, seven or eight years of sharp practice in his calling had made him positively rich. He had first exchanged his knapsack for a pack-horse, then for a waggon and horse; and very few country dames, old or young, gentle or simple, married or unmarried, could resist the tempting display of brilliant goods, as set off and eulogised by his persuasive eloquence.

Ralph Brown was twenty-five years of age when he first set his foot in Major Carroll's drawing room, when Miss Laura was sitting at her piano; the young lady being some six years younger than the pedler. And here the narrative goes on in the form of a dialogue.

Pedler.—A purty day, miss; the roses bloom around your verandah almost as sweet as your own blushing cheeks—no quite, though. Can I serve you to something particular nice to day?

Laura, rising.—No, I thank you; papa is not in, and mama—ay ma' is just coming in (as the door was on the swing and madame Carroll entering.)

Ped.—Mornin' ma'am; I war just speaking of your splendid flowers in front, to miss here—your darter, I kalkilate, ma'am; and she miffed at it like, because I reckoned the roses next o' kin to her cheeks: meant no offence ma'am. Can I treat you to a few rare delicacies, such as caint be seen every day? I guess, ma'am, your splendid mansion is so far away from the road, that sich goods as these have never found their way this far before.

Mad. C.—O, thank you; don't take the trouble to unfold the packages; Major Carroll is not in, and—

Ped.—I'm not particular to sell, ma'am; it was only just to intimate some superb new fashions, arrived at Boston by express; and I rather guess I'm the only patentee of 'em this side the Potomac. Here is the unrivalled delicacy morning robes, ma'am—the real fine Jackinet muslin, did by fairy fingers in the old country; and to match, the superb Mechlin trimmings, Moravian embroidery, the one did in Paris and the other in Vienna, by the most accomplished of the sex, ma'am. And here is a lace cap, the tip top of the glory—if com-

pletes the morning rig to a tee. I rather suspect if Miss there war rigged out according to Gunter, and brushed the mornin' dew with these here white kid shoes, decorated with these here magnificent robes, the angels would take her for a sister.

L.—O, mama, really here are some very superior delaines, cashmeres, and various coloured silks, suitable for walking dresses; and if we can get them as cheap as—

Ped.—Ah, ha! miss, your eyes begin to see the beauties of natur and art combined! These substantial fabrics are well enough in their way; but let me open up to your astonishment some magnificent things I did'nt mean to show. Ay, they are in a concealed packet, locked up in the waggon at the door, just have the kindness to excuse me a moment ladies.

Saying this, the pedler ran to the covered waggon, brought in an immense packet and threw it on the carpet.

'Now, ladies you shall see what you shall see. I don't know how it is, but from the first moment I set eyes on young miss there, I lost the sack of withholding anything I could reveal to her. This here packet, ladies, was locked up most specially for the president's lady at Washington; and here I am sich a fool as to let you see the inside of it. Ah, here they turn up, rich as China and the East Indies can make 'em, for the crowned heads of Europe: the satins and gauzes, and spangled ornaments for evenin' dresses.'

L.—Ma', are not those gilt bracelets there, those of the filagree work, chaste and beautiful?

Mad. C.—Your goods are very choice; but I fear that you have nothing I want today; I need nothing but some jet ornaments for half mourning.

Ped.—Pardon me, ma'am: allow me to bring in a large sealed box, containing a few rare extravagancies for foreign minister's ladies at Washington city; the jets may turn up among the brilliants. There ma'm confound me if you've not made me break this here seal, contrary to a solemn vow. Ah, ha, here we come at the concealed treasures. Look, ma'am, at these here charming amulets, cameos, ladies' gold watches, chains and earrings. Good, good; here we have 'em, ma'am—pertier jet jewels never adorned the Sultana.

L.—O, ma', ma',! this pearl necklace is splendid; and if pa' were in, I know he would treat me with it.

Ped.—Ladies, there's another cend to this here chest; you better look into it before you strike a bargain. Whea do you expect the major?

Mad. C.—Every minute—he had only walked out for an hour.

Ped.—Palter take it! this here key ought to turn this bolt, and yet it hits against a snag. I reckon, ladies, you would both loose a pertry sight if this here lock and key have dissolved partnership.

L.—(With curiosity.) Can't you unlock it, sir?

Ped.—Ah, now confound my stupidity; I'd forgot I had two strings to my bow. The biggest key dangling to my watch chain will do the job. There, ladies, I guess the superb shops of Paris have been pillaged to get these here fancy head-dresses, artificial flowers, that make natur herself blush at her own inferiority: girdles, all sparkling with gems and amethysts, fans and dressing cases from China, toilet bottles, with vinegarets, and odoriferous perfumes from Persia and Arabia: there, then, smell of that—look for yerselves, ladies.

Mad. C.—Bless me! dear husband, you look surprised; you find our room full of goods.

Maj. C.—Full enough, love; our drawing room is converted into a drapery, a toy shop, a fancy millinery establishment, a jewellers, a watchmaker's shop, and a general bazaar. I think we had better turn the parlor into a bakery, and butcher's shop, and the kitchen into a fish-market.

Ped.—Mornin' Major, most obedient. I heard the hon. Mr Clay inquiring after your health when I was last in Washington; said that he never enjoyed a week of such unmixed pleasure as he did with you tu years ago, while sporting with you over your magnificent grounds. He opinionated to Mr Dan Webster, standin' by, that if he got leisure to visit the south this season, they had better both together select your princely palace as a retreat, knowing by fame and experiment, that your company was most enchanting, your wines above all praise, and your hospitality unbounded.

Maj. C.—You are in a quizzical vein this morning, young man; but I think you have drawn pretty freely on my liberality, to clutter up my drawing room in this manner with goods.

Ped.—Now, then, major, jest look here. I kalkilate from your first rate sense, you would choose to hear before you judge. You see, Major, just getting some rare intelligence from Paris about the latest fashions, I whipped off in a giffin from Boston, all the way here, seven hundred miles, not sparing horse-flesh, to notify my friends in Virginia of the aforesaid, in double quick time; and hearing so good a report of you from the hon. Mr Clay, and seeing your stately mansion away down here tu miles from the road, I felt it a Christian duty like, to tell your females the news; so you see—

Maj. C.—Ah! you are a rare wag. Well, well, friend, we'll not quarrel; and it being my hour, will you have a glass of wine and a lunch with me.

L.—O, pa' just look at this pearl necklace.

Ma' must have the jet jewels, and I should be so pleased—

Maj. C.—Tut, tut, child, you know my purse is at low ebb just now; Sambo's fiddle is all the rage among the niggers; and tobacco will not be much more than half a crop this season.

Ped.—Never mind, major, about the backer. I never touch a shilling of money from the great planters until I come round next year; and then if they ax for a longer run, I jest take their I. O. U. at seven per cent. interest, and the trifle will budge another year, more or less.

Maj. C.—Well, well, that is liberal enough; the ladies will make their own selections, while we refresh a little. Your good health Mr. —

Ped.—Brown is my name, at your service, Major; but excuse me from the wine. A slice of your cold boiled ham, so glorious in Virginia, with your sweet corn bread, are luxuries with me, major.

Maj. C.—What, do you not drink wine? I had given you credit for more sense, Mr Brown.

Ped.—Let's have no soft sawder, Major. We go the whole hog for teetotalism down east; and as you and I are both democrats, using our own liberty, in this freest country on the face of the airth, 'twould be a tarnation pity should you coax me to break my pledge.

Maj. C.—Heaven forbid, Mr Brown. Use your own liberty. My house is your home while you stay.

While the Major and his guest were discussing the lunch, the ladies having heard the liberal terms of credit, made equally liberal selections; and besides jet jewels, pearl necklaces, and a few such trifles, they treated themselves to morning robes, walking dresses, evening dresses, caps, fans, bracelets, &c.; and when the men joined them they were admiring the gold-cased patent levers and splendid chains, to which their attention had been previously called.

'There, major,' exclaimed the pedler, 'if ever fine taste was displayed by the fair sex, it has been so in piling up these beauties, and laying them out to make up this trifling bill; but you see they've jest come to the substantial: them there diamond watches, Major, are a touch above the vulgar; the most genteel crownings to ladies' rigging known at the courts of Europe. I got them jewelled timepieces from a friend of mine in Liverpool, at half price, and can can jest save myself by selling at one hundred and twenty dollars a piece, and the chains at thirty dollars, so you see that both mother and daughter can be fixed out at three hundred dollars, not half the price of one of your blacks, major. Jest look at the watches yourself.'

The Major looked as well at the watches as at the pleading eyes of his pet child: took the goods, watches, chains and all, by just signing his name at the foot of the account, which was cast up to the sum of six hundred dollars.

The day was far spent, so the pedler was persuaded by the host to have his horse put up, and he to stay for the night. I must omit the anecdotes and stories with which the travelled guest amused the host during dinner and tea; suffice it to say, Major Carroll was delighted with the company of Mr Brown, humble as his occupation might be considered in this country.

And now Laura is at the pianoforte, set down for a song and accompaniment. Laura did her best; but she never had been drilled in the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston.

[To be concluded.]

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

ANECDOTE OF A SINGER.

SIGNORA GRASSINI, the great Italian singer, died a few months since at Milan. She was distinguished not only for her musical talents, but also for her beauty and powers of theatrical expression. One evening in 1810, she and Signor Crescentini performed together at the Tuileries, and sang in 'Romeo and Juliet.' At the admirable scene, in act third, the Emperor Napoleon applauded vociferously, and Talma, the great tragedian, who was among the audience, wept with emotion. After the performance was ended, the Emperor conferred the decoration of a high order on Crescentini, and sent Grassini a scrap of paper on which was written, 'Good for 20,000 livres.—NAPOLEON.'

'Twenty thousand francs!' said one of her friends; 'the sum is a large one.'

'It will serve as a dowry for one of my little nieces,' replied Grassini quietly.

Indeed, few persons were ever more generous, tender, and considerate towards their family than this great singer.

Many years afterwards, when the Empire had crumbled into dust, carrying with it in its fall, among other things, the rich pension of Signora Grassini, she happened to be at Bologna. There another of her nieces was for the first time presented to her, with a request that she would do something for her young relative. The little girl was extremely pretty, but not, her friends thought, fitted for the stage, as her voice was a feeble contralto. Her aunt asked her to sing; and when the timid voice had sounded a few notes, 'Dear child,' said Grassini, embracing her, 'you will not want me to assist you. Those who called your voice a contralto were ignorant of music. You have one of the finest sopranos in the world, and will far excel me as a singer. Take courage, and work hard, my love: your throat will win a shower of gold.' The young girl did not disappoint her aunt's prediction. She still lives, and her name is Giulia Grisi.