

Literature, &c.

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THE JUDGE'S STORY.

BY CHAMPION BISSELL.

"Don't mix any for me Luke."

Just the thing, Judge, to warm one this cold night," interrupted a very red-eyed individual, who sat wedged in between the stove and a huge molasses cask.

Come, Judge, you'd better drink this," said the smiling storekeeper, emerging from behind his counter, with a tin tray of tumblers, filled to the brim with a steaming fluid from which there rose a grateful odour of lemon and Monongahela; "pears to me you need it if you're going up the mountain in the teeth of this wind. Why, the teetotal folks haven't got you, have they, Judge? As for myself I don't put much confidence in 'em. Father Cummins says they're wise above what is written, and he ought to know, for he's lived sixty-five years, and has looked into more of these newfangled reforms than any other man in the township. Steady man is Father Cummins; takes his warm sling as regularly as he reads his Bible, and is all the better for both. I never see him unsteady but once.—Now that's what I call temperance."

So do I," answered he of the eyes. "I always make it a pint to take just enough, and it isn't my fault if once in a while I do go a little over the mark, so long as I stick up for good principles. Hand me that nighest tumbler, Luke, and mind you mark it on the slate, for I don't want to go beyond my regular number; there's no security you know, after you pass the rubicund. Come, Judge, think better of it, and jine us. Won't you drink, sir?" he added turning to me.

Certainly," chimed in our social Gany-mede, "who ever knew a well behaved young gentleman refuse when older folks asked him? Here, neighbor West, set this down by him, keep a glass yourself, I'll put one by for the Judge, and we'll draw up nigher the fire, for it's most sarching cold, surely."

A most bitter night it was in reality, but I was hardly sorry that the raw and drizzly morning, which rendered the expediency of travelling so doubtful, had been succeeded by an afternoon so severe and stormy that any further progress had been out of the question. And in the bleak highlands of Essex, reader, a warm corner in a country store, and a prospect of an old fashioned, two feet deep feather-bed, with an unlimited time to enjoy it, are not to be slighted. Perhaps the violence of the storm, as it moaned through the bare ravines, or dashed great masses of snow against the black window panes, caused me to think my situation far from disagreeable, and to look with peculiar approbation upon everything around me. No one who has ever sat in a country store of a winter's night, can forget its many means and appliances of comfort. The worn and hollowed chairs backed by the dull jack-knives of scores of loungers, the sheltered nooks in which the warm air coils lazily down to sleep, the open boxes of nuts so irresistibly tempting to one's wandering fingers, the genial deity—the stove, the object of such universal and devoted worship; and none of these were missing in my host's well kept establishment, the pride of a wide northern township. Gazing about, the eye rested upon rows of burnished cutlery and crockery; upon ranks of fat hogheads of sweets and salts; glancing complacently at the arrays of hams and sacked meats pendant from the ceiling; wondering at the miscellaneous groups of jars, boxes, and patent medicine vials—the latter flanked by hand-bills decorated with philanthropic Indians, and erect figures encircled by halos of perspiration, and offering astounding rewards for the discovery of better specifics or the apprehension of base counterfeiters; and having traversed the glistening counter, pausing at length in suspense on sundry well-hooped barrels, and plethoric bottles lurking in the distant corner. So, having lazily scrutinized the diversified objects around me, I turned my face once more to the fire, and drew up closer to the warmth; my neighbor, a quiet, elderly farmer, did the same; and as if our example had been contagious, the red-eyed hero, stretched himself out till his legs fairly met the glowing iron; the storekeeper disposed himself with the air of one who is willing that others beside himself should be well accommodated; and the grave Judge, laying his feet on the broad hearth, began to play idly with the tumbler which our officious host had placed on the barrel head near him.

Judge," said the latter, "won't you keep us in countenance. If plain whiskey isn't good enough, just say the word, and you shall have as prime brandy as you would find in the country. It's a long time since we've seen you, leastways, to have a quiet set down; and though we reckoned you'd got some pretty stiff notions, down below, we weren't quite prepared to see you refuse to jine an old friend in a social mug."

The judge hasn't drank in a good many years," said the farmer; "never since I've known him."

"We can't excuse him to-night," interrupted the worthy behind the stove, who had already begun to see the bottom of his glass; "we'll toast him, and he must return the compliment. Our excellent Judge Mason, may he never—"

"Sh—h—h!" exclaimed the storekeeper no nonsense! But really, Judge, you;

don't belong among the teetotal folk, do you?"

"I have never joined them," said the Judge. "True temperance," broke in our zealous friend. "Our excellent Judge Mason, may he—"

"Is it possible," I interrupted, "that although you have signed no pledge, and associated yourself with no temperance organization you have not tasted ardent spirits for many years; and that too in this severe and thinly peopled region, where so much latitude is allowed to the best citizens. I can imagine," I continued, warming with the theme, "how one who lives in a city, where the vice of drunkenness is of hourly occurrence, and where drunkards, seize on the example of moderate indulgence as a pretext for gratifying their ruinous passion, may on principle and for the sake of his influence abstain from all that intoxicates; but total abstinence in the back woods, where stimulants seem often a necessity, and are looked on as a harmless luxury—why, such a thing seems an impossibility. Upon my word, sir, I cannot conceive of it."

"For all that," he replied, "it is even so. It is twenty five years since I have tasted spirit, although some of my old neighbors will tell you that Dick Mason was once the hardest drinker in Essex. I boasted a strong head, and could easily carry two pints to any other man's one. Everywhere, at raisings, musters, town meetings, I was foremost among my rollicking companions. Poor fellows, most of them are gone; killed off by hard work and exposure, and partly perhaps, by too free use of the bottle: and to judge from the prophecies which one or two of the most cautious of my friends gave out, you would never have thought that I should become such a steady old dog as I am at this day. Indeed but for one circumstance, the memory of which is as vivid as if it had happened yesterday, I very believe I should have become all that their worst fears predicted."

You don't mean that affair of Nat Jephson, do you?" inquired the farmer.

"Nat Jephson?" said the storekeeper, musingly.

"Seems to me," interposed red eye, who was busily engaged in clicking the rim of his empty tumbler upon the stove, "seems to me I once heard of such a character. Dead and gone, years ago, wasn't he Judge?"

"Poor Nat!" replied the Judge; "very few of us remember him. I have been little more than a stranger in Essex for twenty years, and long before I sold the Mason homestead, and hung up my shingle in Saratoga, he had been pretty much forgotten."

"I remember him well," said the farmer; "and without any offence to you, Judge, for you and I have lived too long to get angry at trifles, he was called the likeliest young man in Essex. But we have travelled most our long journey, and he, poor fellow—Well, well—it was a terrible day to some of us when you came back alone, when we were looking for both of you."

Why, Judge I never heard of all this," said the storekeeper.

"Look you," replied the red-eyed; "it wouldn't be a bad idea for the Judge to tell us the particulars—and before he begins we'll fill up and start fair. Luke, fill neighbor West's mug and mine. Don't forget to add something to your own; it's of no use to ask the Judge, and—hallo! begging your pardon, sir, but your tumbler's cold, and you haven't drank a drop from it."

Excuse me," I answered. "I must hear the Judge's story first."

"You will hear but little," said Mr. Mason, smilingly; "but I don't know what I can do better than comply with your wishes. It's a short story, but short as it is, I haven't told it in a dozen years, and may never tell it again; and with this he cast his eyes to the ceiling; "for," remarked the Judge, "I am far from being off hand either at a story or an argument."

The storekeeper filled the empty glasses, and there was a pause of a moment. The red-eyed stretched his legs, and hitched his chair audibly.

"I beg pardon," said the Judge, "I must have been dreaming."

Nat Jephson was my early and almost my only companion, in the days when rough, woody old Essex was covered with many more rocks and forests than now. Our families were near neighbors when there was no other house within a mile of us. We were nearly of an age, our dispositions uncommonly similar. You can judge what close friends we were, and how apt we were to follow each other's example in everything.

We grew up strong active untamed, young men. With that love of adventure, which you must now go very far northward or westward to find, we would often venture out for weeks in succession into the forests and mountains, following up streams to their sources away in the unbroken woods, shooting deer on the shores of those numberless lakes that lie at the base of the Adirondack, and often accompanying Indians in their long rambling hunts at the north; in summer in pursuit of deer, and in the winter tracking the giant moose to their yards, and shooting the huge animals by the score. It was a part of our creed never to turn home empty handed, whether we were gone a day or a month, so that from our expeditions we uniformly came staggering home under the weight of tongues and haunches, or strings of stout, with which we satisfied ourselves when wilder and nobler game were wanting.

Of course, like all backwoodsmen then, and most backwoodsmen now, we drank deeply. My father would as soon have

thought of dispensing with his flour as with his whiskey barrel; and in our expeditions a large bottle of spirit seemed as necessary as a knife. And when we came in contact with our rude fellows, particularly on great occasions when we assembled in noisy groups at the court-house town, our revels were unstinted. Our grave fathers said, "Never fear, young men will be young men; and so when with our own unruly appetites, and parental sanction, we always drank ourselves by night into stormy quarrels, or senseless jollity, or stupid oblivion. If we felt a little ashamed of all this the next day, no one regarded either the crime or the shame. Our elders cracked their jokes upon us; our mothers simply threatened displeasure at any similar transgressions—and our next meeting was our next carousal. Nay, there was a pride in our recklessness; for I fancy that our backwood maidens thought it no harm in a young man that he could outdrink a dozen of his roystering companions, or could exhibit the same daring in swallowing the fiery draught, as in overcoming the dangers of the forest."

Now, it was the misfortune of Nat Jephson that, with a relish for strong drink fully equal to mine—and mine as keen as can well be imagined—he possessed a head so constituted that a few glasses were sufficient to scatter his senses to the four winds of heaven. When free from the influence of liquor he was much the coolest and most judicious of us all. In every knotty question of woodcraft or farmercraft his clear, correct advice was asked and rarely contradicted. His mechanical talent was superior to that of any of us, trained as we were by nature and necessity to be our own carpenters. He had constructed a bridge over a large stream which, you will remember, flows some miles to the north of us, the Boreas, which we, in our backwoods' wisdom, thought a model of architectural skill. Somehow, too, he had picked up a wonderfully large amount of general knowledge, extending even to history and politics, and but a few days after he was twenty-one he made a stump speech at a party meeting at the court town, which fairly astonished friends and opponents by its strength and depth of information. I had been more abstemious than usual that day, and had been separated from Jephson, and it was with a feeling before unknown, but experienced since then too often—a strange grief and shame—that I saw the young man who had distinguished himself so honorably in the morning, raving from intoxication by the middle of the afternoon. The seat in my stout waggon had been occupied by two on our journey to the meeting, but as I drove homeward in the evening I sat alone, and the joltings of the wheels over the rough road shook the senseless and dumb form that lay in the straw at my feet.

Heartily ashamed was Jephson the next morning of his overnight's weakness, and numberless were the good resolutions he made for the future. I even ventured to remonstrate with him, but what I said was of very little use, since it formed no part of my own purpose to dispense with the luxury which I could enjoy with so much impunity.

"No," said Nat, "it's of no use for you to talk of being moderate; I'm too fond of the stuff to leave off when once I've tasted it, and I'm mightily afraid I can never let it alone, and what's more, so long as I hanker after it, and keep on thinking I want it, I doubt not all my promises, and all your advice will be but flax in the fire."

Well, Nat's resolution, sure enough, didn't hold out long, and things went on in the old way; both of us first in noisy bouts, and spending what time was unoccupied in farm work, in hunting excursions far up the mountains; our absences having gradually become so long, that it was thought nothing unusual if we were not seen for an entire month.

At length, for half a year, Nat seemed to have lost his rambling and drinking inclinations together. During the former part of this time he had been engaged in building a snug house, within a stone throw of his father's, in which, in due time, and with much neighbourly rejoicing, he installed his newly married wife—a very pretty girl whom he had found some miles down the valley, and who had been quickly and completely won by his open, frank manners, and really engaging disposition. Everybody now hoped that his 'steady fit' would continue, and it seemed as if their wishes would be gratified. Nat worked constantly at the land which his father had set off for him—early and late he was at it.

Every Sunday who so proud and happy as Nat Jephson's pretty wife, following her husband up the rude aisle of our meeting house. Prudent mothers, who had somewhat doubted Lizzy Jenkins's ability to tame so reckless a disposition as Nat's, lavished commendation upon her unsparingly, and pointed out Nat himself to their sons as a worthy model for their imitation.

(To be continued.)

YANKEE DOODLE ON BACKBITING.

SLANDER, soft soap, and sweet-apples are things that I do not deal in. Slandering is a mean practice, and is followed only by mean, miserable mud-heads. A man or woman that has a heart in 'em don't never follow or favour the practice, but the low-browed and the low bred will from 'everlastin' to 'everlastin' make known their broughten up. A slanderer the town is worse than the mea-

sles, mumps, small pok, or scratches. A slanderer is a walking Upas, a travelling ulcer, a moral leper, that breathes out firebrands, arrows, and devilry.

It is human natur for mankind to war on mankind, and womankind to war on all kinds. Woman slanderers are meaa things. A good looking, black-haired, wicked-eyed woman never was a slanderer; but red-haired, red nosed, hide bound, hen-heeled, hess-mouthed, ngly, lean, lank gals, allers are! How is this? You see in the first place, the critters are as ugly as sin in a hen coop, and they dont have to look in the glass to know it; they feel it, and fret over it, and the more they fret the yellrer they get.—Poor silly things, they forget that God made 'em, and his work is always finished and cant be mended. But he it remembered that something more than fair feeters are required to make a fair gal. The red cheeked apples are oftener wormy than the ruff crusty-coats. By ugly gals I mean ugly tempered, sour-souled heifers! Do you want to try an experemet? The first time it is your bad luck to get into a room where two or three ugly gals are gathered together, you start talking about the prettiest, and the purest gal in town; speak well of her, say she's all killin' good looking, good natered, and rael nice in general, and then stop and listen, if you want to hear the news! The ugliest gal in the pack will clear her throat, and set her dough shovels to work, in something like the following strain:

Well, for her part, she could never see where there was so much beauty in Miss Swampe, there's no accounting for tastes to be sure, but for her part she allers did think her a nasty, disdainful stuck up creature, that was fit for northin' but the parlor and pianny forty, and couldn't do a hand's turn for herself, and she's sure never could for others. People might talk as they liked about her sweet, amiable temper, and soft pleasing manners, but it aint all gold that glitters, and if people know as much about Miss Swampe as she did, they'd change their minds; it isn't right to be speakin' behind people's backs, but she had no patience with such proud disdainful creatures, she hadn't."

Now, there's a specimen of what I should call slander. The praise of that which we love, only makes us love it the more, and the praise of that which we hate only makes us hate it more hellishly. Ugly tempered gals hate sweet tempered gals, and when we speak well of the latter we stir up the bile-pools of the former, and out comes sin and slander by the jugful. Aint it so, galls?

Slander is a slimy sin, and none but slimy sinners make slander. Just as blue flies love to buzz over a dead horse, so do slander-castic sinners love to crow over the fallen and forlorn. Let a man make a misdeal, or a gal make a miscalculation, how soon the lizards-human are croaking at them. Why should mankind forget all that is good in humanity, and put on magnifying glasses to find out the little fly-specks of folly. The fairer a man or woman's general character is the more are they croaked at and crawled up to by human crows and buzzard-bellied blackguards if they chance to make a slip.

A slanderer cannot stay long in my company, without being called by his right name. I allers make it my business to contradict the cussed critters, out of an eternal hatred of the viper tribe of vermin.

A well-bred person allers makes it a point to take the part of an absent person. At the same time, if folks want to defy slanderers they must walk circumspectly, and do business on the fair and square and fair principle.

Be honest, be industrious, be frugal, and allers earn your dimes afore you spend 'em.—Go regularly to church, love your wife, and pay the parson, the printer, and the pedagog. Keep out of debt, and troubles will be like my visits to the gigshop—few and far between.

You know tongues were made for talkin', and you might as well attempt to stop the sun from risin' and a hen from settin', as to stop the human tongue from waggin'.

Remember that a slanderer is the meanest thing that crawls, and is only fit for 'treacle, straddlebugs, and spawn,' as Spokesheer says.

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CONTENTMENT.

BY J. H. BIXBY.

Give me content, and little will suffice;
Give me my books and pen—those faithful friends,

Who make no sound, yet utter deep discourse,
And give a quiet corner from the world,
And you may take its pomp and wealth, and make

Them idols for your worship, if you will.

The real happiness, the true enjoyment, of life on earth depends more than upon anything else, upon the spirit with which we meet our changeful lot—upon the cheerfulness with which we endure its ills, and the satisfaction with which we look upon its blessings, be they small or great, upon our contentment with the ordering of the way in which God, by the hand of his providences, shall direct our footsteps.

It takes but few things to give real happiness, if all within is right. It is the eye with which we view our situation in life which makes it one of pleasantness or gloom. It is the feeling with which we regard the world around us that tints the scene, making the picture bright to us with sunshine, or dark with clouds and storm. It is the heart that influences us which renders our intercourse with our fellow beings pleasant to