

LETTER LXXXVIII.

CONCERNING INTELLECTUAL GIANTS AND PINS; WITH A FEW WORDS AS TO CERTAIN DRAMATIC STREET-SCENES SUPPOSED TO BE OF DAILY OCCURRENCE; AN AFFECTING WESTERN POEM; AND A BRIEF GLIMPSE OF AN ORDINARY CAVALRY DASH.

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 22d, 1863.

GREATNESS of mind, my boy, like greatness of body, consists no less in a capacity for making good use of small things than in an ability to master vast ones; and the intellect sublime enough to grasp the whole system of the universe, may not disdain to draw a useful lesson in human nature even from so minute an object as the Secretary of the Interior. The elephant, in the full amplitude of his physical greatness, has been briefly and comprehensively characterized as an animal able to knock down a giant and pick up a pin; and how shall the glorious human mind boast its superiority over matter, if it be not also endowed with the power of stooping as well as soaring? I believe, my boy, in the mind that picks up pins intellectual; especially in these days, when there are so few intellectual giants to knock down. Indeed, so important to the general system of intellect is the system of taking no less note of small things than of great ones, that a multitude of writers who deal only in the smallest kind of matters all their lives may themselves be denominated intellectual pins. I hold Mr. Tupper to be an

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intellectual pin, and Mr. Willis has also become somewhat of a pin in these his later years.

To the youthful soul, still steeped in those romantic dreams, of which a supper of pig's feet is the best artificial provocative I know, this war is a vast phantasmagoria of almighty giants struggling together in the clouds. There was a time when I, too, was able to see it to that extent; but time, and some experience in Virginia, have reduced my giants in the clouds to brigadiers in the mud; and from seeing our national banner in the character of a rainbow dipped in stars, I have come to regard it as an ambitious attempt to represent sunrise in muslin, the unexpected scantiness of the material compelling the ingenious artist to use a section of midnight to fill up.

Down in Accomac, the other day, I overheard a sentimental Mackerel chap, to whom I had imparted this flagging idea, inflicting it upon another Mackerel as original; but he was anxious to improve upon the comparison, and says he:

"Our National Standard is so much like a beautiful sunrise, that I could almost wish the full idea of an eternal morning could be further expressed in it by something to represent the dew."

The inferior Mackerel scratched his head, and says he:

"Why, my pay has been due for some time, and I myself am eternally mourning for it."

If we cast pearls before swine, my boy, we must not be surprised to find them taken for the seeds of cabbage-heads. I once told a Wall-street broker that I considered the break of day one of Nature's most glorious sights;

and he said that he didn't mind it himself, if he didn't happen to have any of Day's notes on hand at the time.

But, to return to the giants and the pins; the absence of all giants in the way of events for the past week has induced me to take note of the pins; and close observation of a few of the latter induces me to believe that a strong Union feeling is beginning to be developed amongst the loyal masses of the North. For instance: one of the passengers in one of the street-cars of Paris, the other day, was a venerable man of ninety-three years and seven months, who sat quietly between two lady-passengers, eating roast chestnuts, and permitting the shells to fall upon their laps. Upon his hoary locks rested a white hat, well worn and mashed-in with time; his once light overcoat buttoned close to his throat, represented a drawn battle between grease spots and torn places; his venerable lower members were encased in blue overalls, somewhat shaded about the knees; and the large feet, resting easily upon the cushions of the opposite seat of the car, wore one slipper and one disabled boot. With the exception of a scarcely heard hiccup between every two chestnuts that he ate, not a sound was emitted by this venerable and striking figure as he sat there thus unobtrusively in a public car, like any ordinary passenger.

Presently, a young and boisterous lieutenant, vain of his new regimentals, and full of the airs of a new Jack-in-office, entered the car, and egotistically attempted to make his way to a seat. A faint hiccup saluted his ear, and, looking down, he found his way barred by the aged legs of the venerable stranger, whose feet were upon the opposite cushions.

"Let me pass, old man?" says the vain youngster, with the smart air of one who wishes to get to his seat.

The venerable stranger hardly raised his stern old eyes at the flippant remark, but ate another chestnut, as though no one had spoken.

"Come, my friend," says the conceited stripling, with fresh arrogance, "Be kind enough to move for a moment. I am Colonel P——."

In an instant, the aged frame sprang to his feet, opened all the windows, turned the conductor out of the car, locked the doors, mashed his hat down over his eyes, and frantically tearing open his dilapidated overcoat, displayed *the star of a major-general!*

In an instant, the newly-fledged colonel lost all his knowing braggadocio, and covered before the glorious old veteran, like a cowed cur (female of a bull-dog).

"Wr-r-r-etch!" exclaimed the hoary commander, in tones of thunder, relieved with the vivid lightning of a hiccup, "Do you know *me!*"

The abashed young boaster could only bow his head in shame, and took the first opportunity to dash himself from the vehicle wherein he had been taught such a lesson. And this should teach us all, my boy, that bad clothes are not always a sure sign of the wearer being only a reporter for the *Tribune*; nor do the ordinary symptoms of intoxication always indicate that the possessor lacks high rank in our national army.

Some hours later, on this same car, there transpired a somewhat different scene, but one equally calculated to prove that there is indeed a North. Twenty-three

wealthy secessionists were in the swift vehicle, the only other passenger being a handsome lad of about sixteen, in the uniform of a brigadier. Rendered confident by their numbers, the enemies of our beneficent form of government entered into a venomous discussion of the siege of Vicksburg, asserting that the Yazoo Expedition had not yet captured forty-two steamboats of Confederacies, and that the announcement of the capture of the Mississippi River was premature.

The young soldier of the Republic went on with some candy he was eating, an apparently indifferent spectator of this symposium of treason; but the close spectator could not have failed to observe that his whole form was invisibly convulsed with a patriotic indignation. Presently, however, when one of the more hideous conspirators heartlessly remarked that we had not heard much of our army in Virginia lately, endurance ceased to be a virtue, and the young hero could no longer restrain himself.

In a moment his whole aspect changed; his eyes burst into a devouring blaze, and his cheeks were in flames before aught could be done to check the conflagration. Animated by the strength of a giant, in a cause which he believed to be a noble one, he shot the traitors one by one with his revolver, and buried them in an obscure swamp near the track; he paid the driver and conductor their wages, and induced them to enlist for three years; then, after selling both the horses at auction, he broke the car into kindling-wood for the use of the poor.

And this mere boy, who could make himself equal to an emergency, — what of him? I can fancy him a fond mother's pride, a venerable father's hope, — ay, even a

tender sister's favorite snub. When this record of his glory reaches them, will they remember, in the midst of their proud exultation, the poor scribe whose humble pen relates to them the glories of their house? Will they drop one burning tear to the memory of him who at this moment does not know what on earth to write about next, and heartily wishes that he had been content to earn a respectable living as a reputable wood-sawyer, instead of turning writer? Will they sometimes give one idle thought to the unpretending *littérateur* who has found the glorious reward of literary merit to be an assumption by one-horse country newspapers of the right to talk about him by his family name without troubling themselves to put in the civilized courtesy of "Mr."? Will they mention in their less urgent prayer, occasionally, the modest child of the quill, who would exceed all the horrors of the Inquisition with the foes of his country, by actually forcing them to write a column for a newspaper when they felt mentally incapable of penning a single coherent paragraph? Will they?

Ah! this is no country to appreciate genius; as they wrote upon the tomb of my early friend, the sweet-singing Arkansaw Nightingale, whose last sad manuscript to me described

"A BIG DOG FIT.

"Lige Simmons is as cute a chap
As ever you did see,
And when the feller says a thing,
It's sure as it can be.

- "He owns a dog — and sich a brutè
For smellin' round a chap,
I never see in all my life,
You'd better bet your cap.
- "Now Lige is proud of this here dog,
And says the critter'll whip
As many wild-cats in an hour
As go to load a ship.
- "'But, law,' says Lige, 'that animilo
Is awful in a row,
And other pups 'longside of him
An't no account, nohow.'
- "In fact, one day, I saw the same
Contemporaneous pup
Pitch into a Newfounlander
And chaw him slightly up.
- "He's such a plaguy little cuss,
You'd laugh to see him come;
But when there's chawin' up to do,
I tell you, boss, he's some!
- "One day, a pedler came to town
With ginger-beer and things,
And patent clocks, and pious books,
And fancy finger-rings.
- "And underneath his cart was tied
A bull-dog of the kind
That tears your musn't-mention-'ems,
In angry frame of mind.
- "Now, Lige's dog was smellin' round,
And when he see this here,
He cocked his eye in agony,
And acted awful queer.

- "The bull-dog gin a rousin' shout,
As Lige's dog went by,
And gev him such a sassy nip
That fur began to fly.
- "Then Lige's dog unfurled his tail
And gev the wound a lick,
And then pitched into that ere dog
A way that *wasn't* sick.
- "The critters had it nip and tuck,
And made such awful noise,
That Lige himself came up to see,
With all the other boys.
- "The pedler see him, and says he,
Like one to fits insured:
'I'm sorry, strannger; but I hope
Your yaller dog's insured.'
- "I tell you, boys, 'twas fun to see
The grin that Lige put on,
As in his cheek he put a chaw
And winked his eye at one.
- "'Oh, let the varmints fit,' says Lige,
'My pup is awful thin,
And this here row will make him look
Jist like himself ag'in.'
- "And all this while the fit went on,
With such a mess of dust
We couldn't tell the upper dog,
If all our eyes should bust.
- "'Twas yell and yowl, and shout and growl,
And stompin' awful hard,
And sometimes they'd a tail stick out
From where the dust was bar'd.

- "Bye-by the noise began to die,
And as it fainter grew,
The dust began to settle down,
And you could just see through.
- "At last it cleared away entire,
But all that we could see
Was Lige's dog a squattin' down
Beneath the axletree.
- "Law!" says the pedler, lookin' blue,
'What's happened to my pup?'
Says Lige: 'It's my opinion, boss,
My pup has eat him up.'
- "But where's the chain I tied him with?
The pedler loud did call.
And would you b'lieve me — Lige's dog
Had swallowed chain and all!
- "One end was hangin' from his mouth
And gev him such a cough,
We had to fetch a chisel out
And cut some inches off.
- "Then that ere brute, to show the joy
That's nat'ral to dum brutes,
Insulted that sad pedler there,
By smellin' round his boots.
- "The pedler dropped a tear, and then
Says he to Lige, says he:
'I'd like to buy that yaller pup
And take him home with me."
- "But 'no,' says Lige, with proud disdain
And sot down on a log,
'That pup is plural now, you know —
A dog within a dog.'

- "He's twice as strong to fit,' says Lige;
'For if he's killed outside,
I'll turn the critter inside out,
And let *your* critter slide.'
- "Well,' says the pedler, with a sigh,
'The pup's a trump, I think;
But let us change the subject now;
Say, stranger! — do you drink?'"

But let me not indulge in sentiment, my boy, while it is still before me to describe the recent successful reconnoissance of the Anatomical Cavalry, whose horses remind me of the celebrated war-horse described by Job, inasmuch as it is believed that the far-famed patience of that scriptural patriarch would have stood a very poor chance with them.

The Grim Old Fighting Cox, the new General of the Mackerel Brigade, having learned from the New York daily papers, of the week previous, that a few hundred thousand freshly-drafted Confederacies were massing themselves on his right, resolved to order a triumphant reconnoissance by the Anatomical Cavalry and the Orange County Howitzers, for the purpose of discovering whether the war was actually going on yet. As the steeds of the cavalry were widely dispersed through the various gravel meadows around the Mackerel camp, my boy, and had grown somewhat wild from long disuse, I was somewhat puzzled to know how they could all be caught quickly enough, and says I to Captain Villiam Brown, who was to command the combined expedition:

"Tell me, my Pylades, how will you manage to organ-

ize the equestrian bone-works without losing too many hours?"

"Ah!" says Villiam, briskly replacing the cork in his canteen, and startling his geometrical steed, Euclid, from a soft doze, "we must make use of our knowledge of natural history, which is the animal kingdom. Observe the device used in such cases by the scientific United States of America."

I looked, my boy, and beheld a select company of joyous Mackerels hoisting a huge board to the top of a lofty pole, which must have been visible for a mile distant. The board simply bore, in large letters, the simple words:

"THE OATS HAVE COME."

and scarcely had it reached the top of the pole, when the anatomical steeds came pouring into the camp with frantic speed, and from every direction.

"Ah!" says Villiam, thoughtfully, "how powerful is instink, even in a dumb animal. I once had a dog," says Villiam, reflectively, "whose instink was so powerful, that to stop his vocal barking it was only necessary to show him a good-sized piece of bark. He felt," says Villiam, explainingly, "that it was a larger bark than his, and it made him silent."

Truly, my boy, there is often a marvellous similarity between instinct and reason, the former serving as the foundation of the latter, and not unfrequently being entirely destitute of a superstructure in military men.

The Cavalry and Howitzers having been arranged in such order that each supported the other, and a prospect of some carnage supported them both, the word was given

to advance, and the warlike pageant swept onward very much as we read in the reliable morning journals. I was proceeding at the head of the cavalcade, with Villiam, pleasantly discussing with him the propriety of digging a canal to Richmond, and using the Cavalry on the tow-path, when there rode forth from the cover of a wood near at hand a horseman, whose stately bearing and dishevelled hat announced Captain Munchausen, of the celebrated Southern Confederacy. He waved his sword courteously to Villiam, and says he:

"You bring your hordes to measure sabres with us, I presume?"

Villiam rattled his good sword Escalibar* in its scabbard, and says he, grimly, "We are met together for that purpose."

Captain Munchausen smiled superciliously, and says he, "Is this intended by your vandals to be what you call a brilliant cavalry dash?"

Villiam waved his hand majestically, and says he:

"That is the exciting phrase."

"Then," says Munchausen, with unseemly levity of tone, "I can tell you, before you go any farther, that you are out of ammunition."

Here Captain Samyule Sa-mith, of the Howitzers, who had come up while the talking was going on, suddenly slapped his knee, and says he:

"That's so. I knew I had forgotten something in this here expedition, and it's the ammunition."

* It is hardly necessary to state that this sword, "Escalibar," is probably identical with the invincible blade, of the same name, presented to King Arthur by the Lady of the Lake.

So we all went back to camp, Captain Munchausen being too much demoralized by the bad example to pursue us.

Our latest cavalry dashes, my boy, being reduced to their simplest meaning, signify devised charges of cavalry, which are based upon charges of artillery, which have forgotten to bring any charges with them.

Yours, retreatingly,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.

LETTER LXXXIX.

SHOWING HOW THE GREAT CITY OF ROME HAS BEEN RUINED BY THE WAR; CITING A NOTABLE INSTANCE OF CONTEMPT OF COURT; DESCRIBING REAR ADMIRAL HEAD'S WONDERFUL IMPROVEMENT IN SWIVEL GUNS; AND PROVING THAT ALL IS NOW READY FOR THE REDUCTION OF FORT PIANO.

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 29th, 1863.

AFTER due consideration of the different points of the Compass, and a fair estimate of the claims of each to superiority, I am inclined to give the preference to the Great North-west. It is to the Great North-west that we are indebted for our best facilities of sunset; some of the greatest hogs of the day come from Cincinnati; the principal smells of the age belong to Chicago, and the whiskey of Louisville has almost entirely superseded the pump of our forefathers. Hence, my boy, it was with a feeling akin to reverence that I witnessed the arrival in Accomac of a delegation of high moral Democratic chaps from the Great North-west, the other day; their mission being, to protest against all further continuation of a war which has degenerated into a mere bloodshed for the sake of New England; and to suggest that a convention of all the States be at once held in Kentucky, to arrange a peace that shall be acceptable to the Great North-west. I was asking the thoughtful chairman of the delegation what were his particular grievances, and says he: