

You will perceive, my boy, that a great piece of geometrical strategy had been thus achieved; but it now turned out that the General of the Mackerel Brigade had made a mistake, and a most serious one. While taking his observations with his ingenious glass instrument, he had seen just double the number of triangles (2) that might be formed by certain great strategical evolutions, as he had seen just double the number of the Confederacies; but, in his haste, he had neglected to divide the ascertained number of triangles by two, as he should have done; and now he discovered that only one triangle was formed, and that by the unseemly and chuckling Confederacies. Such a nice thing is strategy, and so easily is it deranged!

Owing to this error, of course nothing more could be done, and on Tuesday evening the Mackerel Brigade returned, full of enthusiasm, to their original side of Duck Lake. The affair had been merely a reconnoissance.

Last evening, at dusk, I was talking to the Mackerel Chaplain about this singular strategical affair, and says he:

"God help us! The skeleton regiments we have left standing are scarcely more than the skeleton regiments we have left sleeping; and only the sleeping ones can look upward."

Let gentle charity, my boy, silence our tongues to the dread mistake that is past; for he who made it lost by it the glorious immortality his meanest soldier slain has won.

Yours, gently,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.

LETTER XCIV.

AFFORDING AN INSTANCE OF IMPERCEPTIBLE PATRIOTISM; PRESENTING THE PROFOUND COMMENTARY OF AN EMINENT FOREIGN MILITARY CRITIC; AND REPORTING THE LAST EFFUSION OF THE GENERAL OF THE MACKEREL BRIGADE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 17th, 1863.

WHEN great interests are at stake, my boy, and strong passions are excited, and when it becomes necessary that a whole nation shall be unanimous for its own preservation from destruction, we occasionally meet with chaps of severe countenance and much shirt-ruffles, whose patriotism is purely that of descent, and not at all of assent. Since this great strategic war commenced, I have encountered divers iron-faced and brass-mounted conservative fellow-beings, whose sentiments in action have seemed to establish as an inevitable postulate in logic, that a man sired by a hero of '76, must naturally be damn'd by the heroes of '63; and that a man with Revolutionary blood in his veins is entirely exempted from all legitimacy to a propensity for spilling the least drop of that sacred liquid in behalf of a cause not Revolutionary. It was on Tuesday, my boy, that I met the Honorable Fernando Fuel, the member-elect from the Sixth Ward, who had come hither for the express purpose of getting up for himself an entirely new coat of arms, according to New York Heraldry, and of procuring from some scholar a recondite

couplet that should at once serve, in motto form, to denote his Revolutionary descent, and express his high moral patriotism as apart from any partisan desire to see injuries inflicted upon the Wayward Sisters of his distracted country. He came to me, and says he:

"Learning, sir, that you are qualified to cull from your extensive poetical readings some unique couplet appropriate for my approaching coat-of-arms, I desire you to furnish me with the same, and present your bill to our Excellent Democratic Organization, of which I am Chief Indian near — In short, a Sachem local. My patriotism," says he, shading a slight cough with a black cotton-glove, — "My patriotism is doubted by none but those imbecile despots who defeated our Excellent Democratic Organization in the last Presidential election, and are now waging a bloody and unnatural war for the sake of the Demon of Africa. But my patriotism hurls back the epithet of 'traitor,' and is clearly established by the fact that I had an ancestor in the Revolution. It is my wish," says this plausibly-spoken chap, nodding to a Faro-banker as he happened to pass at that moment, — "it is my wish that the couplet should express, neatly and figuratively as it were, the exact degree of my present patriotism, and its derivation from my Revolutionary ancestor. Let it represent me clothed in patriotism, as it were."

I thought upon his words for a while, my boy, and then says I:

"For such unspeakable patriotism as yours, good Fuel, there can be no finer couplet than this:

*"A painted vest Prince Vortiger had on,
That from a naked Pict his grandsire won."*

The Honorable Fuel turned very crimson in the face with intense gratification, and says he: "Ha! ha! — ahem! Yes, that's not bad. Ha! ha! very good — you infernal Black Republican you!"

He left me, as a cloud might leave the sun with which it had vainly attempted to cut up shines, and I felt for a moment, like one lost in the Wood. With the best intentions in the world, I had only succeeded in adding Fuel to the flames of treason.

It pleases me to say that Herr Suvchork, one of those eminent foreign strategists of war who have visited our distracted country for the truly benignant purpose of teaching us how we may win battles only recently lost, has honored me with a great metaphysical criticism upon the recent reconnoissance and triangular proceeding of the New General of the Mackerel Brigade against the well-known Southern Confederacies on the other side of Duck Lake. We may all learn a valuable lesson, my boy, from this able *critique*, which reads thus:

"SOMEDINGS ABOUT ODDERDINGS.

"I have notice in der bapers thac der Genral Fighting Cok cross Dook Lake in two parts, the odder day, when he assaulted the Rebel Army von Lee, which was strongly post in entrenchment built especial for dees purpose. Das was vare wrong, and oppose to all the princeples von der Great Napoleon. Das vas der great troubles with Fritz Magnus von Prussia, at Kunersdorf, where he had dirty dousand pick troops, and lost seventeen dousand, in sooch way. Genral Fighting Cok was adopting der princeple of der Duke von Cumberland at Fonte-

noy, when he should adopt sooch plan as that of Marechal Saxe, und keep his troops all togedder, und not cross Dook Lake in two parts. To attack sooch Rebel Army in entrenchment built especial for dees purpose, it was necessaire as he should do everydings togedder; keep his troops altogedder, und fight them altogedder.

"I have not known Genral Fighting Cok in Germany, and I knows not as he is as good Genral as Sigel; so I cannot say as he is sooch goot Genral as Sigel und me. But *merk auf!*—*es ist ein hohes wort*—he has not so large militaire mind as
A. P. SUVCHORK."

While you will join with me, my boy, in acknowledging the soundness of this criticism from our able German critic, I am sure that we must both perceive something like cruelty to animals in the very common practice of giving the exact directions for gaining a victory so soon after the battle has terminated in defeat. It is like telling a patient who has just taken a dose of salts, how he might have cured himself by a course of *patés de foie gras*.

And now let me direct your most intense attention to the Mackerel Camp on this side of Duck Lake, where the spectacled veterans are all repairing their umbrellas for another reconnoissance toward the first point of the compass that seems most vulnerable. They are all full of enthusiasm, my boy, over the loss of some of their comrades and arms in the recent triangular geometrical proceedings against the unseemly Confederacy, and unanimously demand to be led against the enemies of human freedom that presume to show the freedom of human enemies.

You may remember that, just previous to the recent crossing of Duck Lake, Captain Samyule Sa-mith was despatched with the Anatomical Cavalry to dig a canal in the immediate rear of the Southern Confederacy, in order that the legions of the enemies of human freedom about to be captured by surprise, might be at once set to hard labor on the tow-path. It was not more than four days after all the fighting was over that Samyule came back with his equestrian warriors, and says the General to him:

"Well, boy, is the canal finished?"

Samyule scratched his head, and says he: "Not quite, sire; but we have torn up a Confederate railroad."

It was this circumstance, my boy, that gave rise to the recent reports of the capture of Richmond, as considerable of the Rebel capital is known to be invested in railroad iron.

Shortly after Samyule's return, the Grim Old Fighting Cox took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, ordered a couple of spies to be executed, and discharged the following

"CONGRATULATORY ORDER.

"HEAD QUARTERS MACKEREL BRIGADE.

"The General commanding tenders to the aged Mackerels his congratulations on their achievements of the last seven days, which were week.

"If they have not accomplished all that was expected, the reason is, that more was expected than has been accomplished.

"It is sufficient to say that they were of a character not to be foreseen without foresight, nor prevented without human sagacity and attainable resources.

"In withdrawing from the other side of Duck Lake without delivering a general battle to our adversaries, the Mackerels have proved their renewed diffidence in themselves, and their fidelity to a high standard of retiring modesty.

"In fighting at a disadvantage, instead of at the enemy, we would have been recreant to our trust in our pontoons.

"Profoundly loyal, and conscious of its strength, the Mackerel Brigade will give or decline battle whenever it considers the weather sufficiently pleasant and the newspapers sufficiently snubbed.

"It will also be the dictator of its own history and the vindicator of its own legs.

"By our celerity and secrecy of movement, both in crossing and re-crossing Duck Lake, we neither pursued, nor were pursued by, a Rebel.

"The events of the last week may swell with pride the feet of every officer and soldier in this Brigade.

"We have made long marches and countermarches, crossed and re-crossed lakes, surprised the enemy by our advance, brought back seven pieces of our artillery, and given heavier blows than the wind.

"We have nothing to regret, save the loss of our brave companions, and in this we may be consoled by the conviction that they fell in the holiest cause ever left so exclusively to the care of Providence, that very little human intelligence was deemed necessary to direct its arbitrament in battle.

"(Blue Seal.)

"THE GENERAL OF THE MACKEREL BRIGADE."

As we consider the vast world of animated nature, my boy, and mark what apparent simplicity there is in the structure of beast, bird, and reptile, does it not seem exceedingly strange, that all of man's vaunted ingenuity has thus far succeeded in making imitative approximation only to the insect kingdom, — the apparently least difficult of all, — and to *that* only by such a spurious kind of a bug as Humbug?

Yours, wonderingly,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.