

LETTER XCVII.

INTRODUCING THE GREAT MORAL EXHIBITION OF THE "EFFIGYNIA,"
GLANCING AT A FOURTH NEW MACKEREL GENERAL, AND SHOWING
HOW THE PRESIDENT'S DRAFT ON ACCOMAC WAS PROTESTED AT
SIGHT.

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 10th, 1863.

As I wax numerous in exciting years, my boy, and observe more and more of the long-headed and strategic manner in which our wealthy but distracted country prosecutes the Restoration of the Union, the stronger grows my belief that, inasmuch as the way of the transgressor is hard, the way of the well-doer is inexpressibly "soft." Each day of the present national crisis brings fresh evidence of the exceedingly soft character of the policy by which our upright government would turn to nought the wrathful devices of its enemies, and further demonstrates the vast difference existing between everything upright and anything downright. We discomfit the well-known Southern Confederacy, at every turn, my boy, — we discomfit it at every turn; but, the trouble is, we keep turning all the time, like a Thomas Cat after his tail, constantly believing that we are approaching the end, but never quite reaching it.

Fearing lest I should become metaphysical if I pursued this train of thought any farther, — thereby encroaching upon the bottomless province of the Awful and Unfathom-

(164)

able German mind, which rejoices gloomily in the solemn investigation of all that verges upon muddled abstraction; — fearing lest I should become thus erudite, profound, and snuffily unintelligible, my boy, I repress my morbid inclination to take a funereal canter into abstruse speculation on the elephants of thought, and digress from theory to fact.

This city, which is destined to become in time another Waterloo in the sense of offering everything drinkable in lieu of water, presents but very little except bar-rooms in the way of entertainment just now. Hence, my boy, we can properly appreciate the "Effigynia," as it is classically called, which a thoughtful yellow-vested chap of much breastpin, from Pequog, has just opened on Pennsylvania Avenue. According to advertisement, "this chaste and plastic exhibition consists of wax effigies of the five successive Generals of the Mackerel Brigade, with the peculiar personalities of each one, and the superiority of each over the other, unmistakably stamped on the forms and features of each!" Being a moral man, my boy, and much addicted to entertainments which differ from the prevailing drama of the day in obviating the necessity for steadily blushing, I repaired to the Effigynia the other evening and was much edified by the spectacle presented. Five mirrors standing at different angles with a wax figure of the first General of the Mackerel Brigade, were made each to reflect said figure; and I could not help feeling, my boy, that the likenesses were correct. I saw before me the counterfeit presentments of the five soldiers who had successively arisen to the highest Mackerel Command, and I found myself wondering how many more

mirrors the exhibition would need before the war came to a head — containing brains.

It was on Tuesday morning that I ascended majestically to the slanting roof of my Gothic steed, the sagacious Pegasus, and moved perceptibly across Long Bridge once more, toward the camp of the Mackerel Brigade. It is worthy of note, my boy, that the architectural animal in question has greatly improved of late upon a diet of condemned straw hats, and now trots an hour in sixty minutes with the greatest ease of manner. An occasional cough but adds to the melancholy interest of his funereal cast of countenance; and as his head grows more and more vivid in its resemblance to an infant's coffin, his whole effect deepens in its churchliness and sepulchral solemnity.

As I neared the national head-quarters, the Mackerel Surgeon-General saluted me, and I observed that he kept his glance dreamily fixed upon the Gothic Pegasus.

"As I gaze upon that bony fabric," says he, biting a piece of calamus in soft professional abstraction, — "as I gaze upon that fleet skeleton you bestride, I cannot help thinking that Rule Britannia is frequently right in speaking of a horse as an 'oss'; though she may use a superfluous 's' in the word. You see," says the surgeon, pausing to take a gray powder, and to try his lancet on his left thumb-nail, — "you see, the classical term 'os' signifies bone; and as bone is the prevailing aspect of your present charger, he might be termed an 'os' without violence to the lingual proprieties."

I have always suspected this surgeon, my boy, of being an accursed secessionist in disguise, and now I feel confi-

dent that he would not hesitate, if opportunity offered, to carry his fiendish affection for the well-known Southern Confederacy to the extent of actually differing with me upon some point in conversation. In such times as these, my boy, there can be no middle ground for a man; he must either be heart and soul with his country's murderous foes, or ready to agree entirely with me in anything I may say or think. God save the Republic!

Upon arriving at a locality, which I refrain from naming, lest I should thereby betray my beloved country or make a mistake in spelling, I found the venerable and spectacled veterans of the thrice-valorous Mackerel Brigade just returned from a spirited pursuit of certain regiments of disreputable Confederacies who were stealing farms on the outskirts of Paris. These Confederacies had even penetrated into storied Accomac, and removed everything they found upon the farms there except the mortgages. Hence the demand upon the aged and unconquerable Mackerel Brigade for an immediate walk in that direction, and there they had gone by the most circuitous and profoundly strategic route afforded by the county maps. General John Smith, the latest edition of Mackerel Commander, gave leadership of his advance guard to Captain Villiam Brown, and immediately five-and-twenty inflamed reporters frantically telegraphed to as many excellent and reliable morning journals, that all the thieving Confederacies were about to be bagged, and that all the revolting details would be given in our next issue. It was toward evening, my boy, when Captain Villiam Brown, mounted upon his geometrical steed, Euclid, came riding up to the advanced head-quarters of the new general to report results.

"Well, young man," says the General, with Spartan equanimity, "have we bagged the enemies of human freedom?"

Villiam looked up from the demijohn under the table, upon which he had been earnestly gazing, and says he, "No, sire; but the very next thing to bagging them has occurred."

"Relate the tale," says the General, with dignity.

"Why," says Villiam, "instead of our bagging them, they have been sacking us."

It is a remarkable and beautiful peculiarity of our flexible language, my boy, that its semi-synonymical effects permit the transmission of trying intelligence in terms of soothing similarity to those which might have been employed had the news been more felicitous. Thus are we let down easily from pride to humiliation, and spared much intervening agony of soul.

So the Mackerel Brigade turned their gleaming old spectacles once more in the direction of our National Capital, and are again a characteristic of the landscape enclosing Washington. Further consummate strategy is postponed for a time on account of the weather, which has become villanously hot through the fanatical machinations of the insidious Black Republicans. Thus are Greeley, Beecher, Wendell Phillips, and their deluded followers weakening the military arm of the government and endeavoring to obtain fat contracts for worthless fans!

Methinks I hear you ask, "Has the new general of the Mackerel Brigade made a failure, after all the credit the public have given him for superiority over his predecessors?"

Far be it from me to judge hastily, but I may be permitted to say, my boy, — I may be permitted to say, that men in the military line have this point in common with men in a mercantile business; by obtaining too much on credit at the start, they are very apt to make bad failures, leaving nothing but their lie-abilities for the consolation of those who trusted them.

Upon reaching the Mackerel camp, and exchanging festive salutations with Captain Bob Shorty, who was trying to purchase the dressed skin of a handsome copperhead snake from Corporal Veller, of the California Reserve, to use as a sword-belt, — after exchanging salutations, I repaired to the tent of the chaplain, to witness the marriage of one of the younger Mackerels to a pretty Shenandoah belle. As the happy pair stood before the drum to be made wife and man, I noticed that the bride's rosy cheeks paled like a sunset under the twilight, until the languishing stars of her eyes shone only upon snow.

And now, my boy, let me say a few words respecting the recent attempted draft of Abe L. bodied men in thrice-famous Accomac, and the freedom-loving spirit in which it was met by the Sovereign People. With a prescient view to being amply prepared for an overwhelming assault upon combined Europe, which is shortly to be made by Secretary Seward and the muscular United States of America, our Uncle Abe ordered a draft of Accomackians to be made at once. Hereupon the Accomac "Morning Dog," an excellent daily journal, indulged in a high-minded editorial on the fiendish proclivities of the Governor of Accomac, and the general wildness of all the Accomackians to be drafted if he would let them. With

great promptness, that admirable palladium of human freedom, the "Evening Cat," avowed that it spit upon the gubernatorial scurrility of its growling contemporary; that it deprecated mob violence and trusted that no mob would resist the draft; but could not help believing that the Sovereign People might possibly arise in their majesty and occasion a speedy funeral in the family of the editor-in-chief of the venomous and intolerable "Morning Dog."

It was at 10 o'clock A. M., my boy, when the drafting commenced in Accomac, and in half an hour thereafter the Sovereign People, consisting of several gentlemen from Ireland, were asserting the dignity of a free community in a manner worthy of the sacred cause of Emigration. It is a touching fact, my boy, — a touching and æsthetical fact, that the American people are ever so able to find foreign champions to protect their freedom from governmental infringement that they seldom have occasion to do any fighting for it themselves.

The Sovereign People of Accomac, being fully aroused and slightly inebriated, proceeded to vindicate the majesty of our excellent national Democratic Organization by relieving a bloated aristocracy of their watches and loose change, ransacking sundry private residences on account of the great draft of their chimneys, and performing other awe-inspiring acts of rude majesty, equally well calculated to evince a freeborn people's distaste for despotism. Furthermore, the Sovereign People fearlessly attacked a large and aristocratic Hospital, beating many of the patients to death; for, by some corrupt chicanery, these patients were barefacedly exempted from the Conscription which bore so heavily upon the down-trodden and

healthy poor man. The "Evening Cat," in a special edition, was genial enough to express a hope that "the outraged people now muttering ominously in the air," would not burst upon the office and editor of the "Morning Dog" with *too* much just fury; whereupon the incensed Sovereign People said that, be jabers, they'd come mighty near forgetting that entirely; and forthwith proceeded to stone the office of the "Dog" until the hasty discharge of an inkstand from one of the upper windows thereof induced them to make a hasty change of base.

Without indulging in farther details, suffice it to say that the Sovereign People finally desisted from their struggle for liberty upon being satisfied that no more watches, purses, nor sick despots were to be got at conveniently, and the "Evening Cat" came out in a spirited article in favor of an immediate war with France.

How grateful should it be to our national pride, my boy, that even the stranger that is within our gates feels inspired by the very atmosphere with a jealous, a fighting love for perfect freedom, — especially if said gates be those of a State prison.

Yours, exuberantly,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.