

ent Mackerel reserve on the edge of the Lake. Villiam having heard of Jeff. Davis's experiment with his regiment in Mexico, when he formed it into a V shape to receive a cavalry charge, resolved to give his regiment that shape for the purpose of a roundabout sally upon Fort Piano from the rear, or land side.

"Comrades," says Villiam, impressively, "V stands for Victory, Vengeance and Vashington, and I desire yot to take its shape."

The Mackerels formed themselves into a V, my boy; but when Villiam gallantly retired behind a tree to be out of the way, and gave the order "Forward—double-quick,—march!" Sergeant O'Pake modestly stood out of the ranks, and says he:

"Of course *you* will go ahead of us, Captain?"

"Ha!" says Villiam, haughtily, "why?"

"Oh!" says the sergeant, "V., you know, always follows U."

Villiam was lost in thought for a moment, my boy, and then says he: "That's true, Sergeant; and as U never comes until after T, we'll defer that ere charge for the present."

Incidents of this kind are but common in this war between brethren, which is so abhorrent to Democrats and the high-moral members of the church.

Hoping, my boy, that, by relating the success of Rear Admiral Head and Captain Samyule Sa-mith in my next, I may add two more illustrious names to the list of candidates for the Presidency in 1865, I remain,

Yours, electorally,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.

LETTER XCIX.

IN WHICH OUR CORRESPONDENT IS BETRAYED INTO ARGUMENT; BUT RECOVERS IN TIME TO GIVE US THE USUAL CHRISTMAS SONG AND STORY OF THE RENOWNED BRIGADE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 27th, 1863.

ANOTHER Christmas finds our great stragetic country in the toils of war, my boy, and the chiming of the bells is lost in the roar of ingenious artillery. Where blazes the yule log that misses not at least one manly form from its genial ring of quivering Christmas light; and where hangs the mistletoe bough beneath which at least one gentle, womanly heart beats not the quicker with fond thoughts of the lad whose first kiss upon her half-reluctant lips was destined to burn in future there as her keepsake from a hero? Dear old Christmas! rich to memory in all the simple joys and fond, familiar sanctities of home, thou comest sadly upon me in my exile with the iron men of war, the waxen men of politics; and though I hail thee merry for thy cheery evergreens, God knows it is thy snow that presses nearest to my heart. But a truce to sentiment, my boy, when the most sentimental object I have seen for a week is the Conservative Kentucky Chap, whose imbibing method of celebrating the approach of Christmas invariably leads him into disquisitions upon the wrongs of the heroic White Man. On Tuesday, as we took Richmond together,

with the least bit of sugar in the world, he leaned heavily upon me, and says he :

“ The ancient State of Kentucky, of which I am a part, is growing sick at the stomach to see how the Black Man is continually being raised above the White Man ; and Kentucky demands to be immediately informed whether or no this war is to be prosecuted in future for the White Man ? ”

“ For the White Man,” my boy, he said ; “ for the White Man ! ”

And was he not right ? The noble being to whom he alluded is certainly richly justified in a very high pitch of pride over the gratifying fact, that his natural complexion is considerably whiter than anything at all darker. In the abstract, my boy, it is not a positive white, and its general hue, if characteristic of a napkin would hardly enable that napkin to pass muster at the feast of an Apicius or a Lamia ; but, as compared with other complexions, it is properly colorless, and strikes the eye very pleasantly when regarded by a single person in a mirror. So highly, indeed, do many possessors of this complexion admire its prevailing whiteness, that they perform their ablutions with an artistic design to leave here and there certain picturesque streaks of delicate shading, thereby causing the whiteness of the intervening spots to appear all the more dazzling. Others, again, religiously refrain from water outwardly as well as inwardly, for the apparent purpose of incrusting the purity of their valuable complexion in a protecting coat ; thus preserving it from any possible bad effect of the sun. Still others, my boy, continue to practise the thorough ablution of the ancients, but signally

succeed in throwing out the whiteness of the level of their faces in excellent relief, by adopting measures to implant a contrasting red on the tips of their noses. And a fourth class, having an eye to beauties of a White background for the exhibition of chaste neutral tints, incur the frequent freckle and the graceful pimple with great judgment and taste.

Considering the character of the White face with due profundity of thought, my boy, I am led to regard it as a canvas, expressly intended by nature to receive quick and vivid paintings of all the virtues ; and so nicely adapted to the least of humanity's desires, that the woman who has no virtues to limn themselves thereon, may yet paint it to suit herself.

This cannot be said of the Black skin, my boy. Upon that the beautiful virtue of Modesty cannot paint itself in a blush when its owner is detected in the act of taking a bribe ; nor is it susceptible of that beautiful sunset-tint which the genial merit of being able to punish four bottles at a sitting delights to leave upon a face of Caucasian extraction. It is even incapable of receiving those exquisite sub-ocular shades which adorn a White face after an evening's innocent enjoyment at the Club, and it fails signally to absorb the delicate tint of yellow not unfrequently perceptible near the outer corners of the busy dental department of the tobacconizing White man's physiognomy.

Taking all these facts into calculation, my boy, it is plainly evident that the variously-ornamented White skin is an article much superior to the Black, and certainly designates its wearers as beings intended to move in nothing but the highest natural circles.

Such being the case, we cannot blame the White Man for entertaining a wholesome contempt and loathing for the Black Man; and the truly hearty manner in which many of our more pallid fellow-countrymen breathe ingenious execrations whenever the latter is mentioned, may be accepted as a beautiful and touching proof that they appreciate God's benignity in giving them a superiority of skin; even though He may have seen best, in His infinite wisdom, to leave them occasionally without brains.

Having been informed that the ancient and spectacled Mackerel Brigade had returned from its monthly walk toward the well-known and starving Southern Confederacy, I ascended to the roof of my architectural steed, the Gothic Pegasus, on Thursday morn, my boy, and galloped slowly to the stamping ground of the unconquerable veterans. Let me pass over the events of the day in camp, when the sedentary warriors, whom it is my glory to celebrate, were reviewed after the manner of Napoleon's Old Guard. Let me pass over this, and come directly to Christmas Eve, and the literary entertainment in the Mackerel Chaplain's tent. Captains Villiam Brown, Bob Shorty, Samyule Sa-mith, a young reporter from Olympus, the Chaplain, and myself, were the members of the party, and we sat round a camp-table with two lanterns swinging right over the bottles.

Rear Admiral Head shortly came in; and when the Olympian reporter was requested to open the intellectual festival with a song, he complimented the iron-plated branch of the service with

"THE BOATSWAIN'S CALL.

I.

"THE lights upon the river's brink
In constellation bright,
Are winking down upon the tide
That twinkles through the night;
When in a gayly dancing skiff
The boatswain leaves his ship,
And as his oars a moment cease
Within the flood to dip,
He winds his call,
The boatswain's cheery call.

II.

"A maiden stands upon the shore,
Where land and ocean meet,
And breakers cast their pearly gifts
In homage at her feet;
While through the causeway of the night
She gazes o'er the sea,
To where a stately frigate rides
In lonely majesty,
And waits the call,
The gallant boatswain's call.

III.

"Oh! tarry not, my boatswain bold,
Her parted lips would say;
But when the heart is vexed with doubt,
The soul can only pray;
And sorely doubtful is the maid,
Till on her ear there falls
The music of the merriest,
The clearest, best of calls —
A winding call,
Her faithful boatswain's call.

IV.

“A shining keel is on the sand,
 The oars are laid aside,
 And to the shore the sailor leaps
 To greet his chosen bride;
 His arms about her waist are thrown,
 And through her rosy lips
 He breathes a dainty boatswain's call,
 Though not the call of ships;
 But Cupid's call,
 The boatswain Cupid's call.

V.

“And when the moon has drawn a path
 Of light upon the sea,
 A skiff is floating o'er the deep,
 To where a frigate free
 Is nestled in the ocean's breast,
 With all her canvas furled;
 Though ere the morn makes Hesper blush
 Upon a waking world,
 ‘Make sail, men, all!’
 Will round the boatswain's call.

VI.

“A shadow follows in her wake,
 And, through its depths is seen
 The figure of a widowed wife
 Upon the shore of green;
 And ever as the tempest moans
 Above the mocking wave,
 A sound is wafted to her ears
 From out a moving grave,—
 A boatswain's call,
 A ghostly boatswain's call.”

At the termination of the last stave, Captain Villiam Brown cleared his throat, and says he, —

“As our friend has commenced the services with melody, I will proceed to keep the feeble intellecks of this assemblage excited with a terrifying moral ghost tale which the Dickens himself might grow pale under. It was sent to me,” says Villiam, majestically, “by a former writer for the Track Society, and reflects much credit upon the literary resources of the United States of America.”

Whereupon, Villiam took some sheets of paper from his breast-pocket, my boy, and introduced

“MR. PEPPER'S GHOST.

“In the heart of a great city, whose corruption and wickedness in continually growing larger and richer, were evident to every smaller, and, consequently, more pious, town on the globe, dwelt a shamefully rich banker, named Pursimmons, who, notwithstanding his vile and enormous wealth, had refused to give it all to the virtuous poor. That it was utterly impossible for such a man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven need not be told; since we all know that honest poverty, alone, can hope for such entrance; and as poverty covers at least three-fourths of the human race, and is invariably honest, according to its own touching account, there is likely to be enough of it to fill up all the standing room in Paradise, leaving no space for even the repentant wretch of a millionaire. Hence, it naturally follows, that old Pursimmons was miserable, with all his wealth. In fact, a slim, black-dressed gentleman of

much spectacles and severe countenance, who had vainly solicited him to subscribe for ten thousand extra-gilt copies of his new work on 'The Relation of Sunday Schools with the Moral Organism of Normal Creation,' to be sent to the starving heathen of the Choctaw Nation, was heard to remark, emphatically, that he would rather be 'a ignorant but religious slave in the desert of Sahara, my brethren, than that godless man with all his filthy lucre.' Therefore, old Pursimmons *must* have been a continual prey to the most horrible twinges of guilty conscience that any one man, in the abundant excess of his own spiritual serenity, ever attributed to another of different views. All the year did this unhappy but fleshy old man sin against everything that is poor and pious by accepting all — ay, all! — the profits his business was iniquitous enough to produce; and even rode in a carriage; though hundreds of noble-hearted Irishmen in the honest brick and mortar business had to walk, — ay, walk! — becoming so terribly exhausted thereby as to be invariably compelled to pause for rest, on their way home, at some humble liquor establishment. When Christmas Eve came round, it found this enemy of his race meanly retiring to bed, instead of scouring the highways and byways in search of reduced private families who might at that very moment be despairingly praying to have his last cent at their disposal. A man so thoroughly bad could not fail to be a pitiable coward, and it is not at all surprising that he was somewhat startled to suddenly perceive, between himself and his scandalously-comfortable bed, Mr. Pepper's Ghost! — the very same ghost once in full blow at all our moral temples of the drama. 'Unreal Novelty!' ex-

claimed old Pursimmons, chewing the strings of his night-cap, 'hie thee away to thy native footlights; or, if thou must keep somebody awake all night, betake thee to some great tragedian when Shakspeare's murder lies heavy on his soul.' Mr. Pepper's Ghost winked with great archness as it replied: "Ghosts have no terrors for the sons of Thespis, who are even merry with a ghost — of a chance to get their salaries. My mission is to you, to whom I must a wholesome lesson teach. Behold!"

"The spirit waved its hand, and lo! one whole side of the vile banker's chamber fell magically away, disclosing to view a room entirely destitute of velvet carpet and pictures by the Old Masters. On a sofa reclined a middle-aged young girl, whose poor dress of braidless merino was so inclemently low in the neck as to suggest for its down-trodden wearer a purse too scanty to procure a sufficiency of material. The daughter of penury had just reached the hundred and fifty-second exciting page of the cheap but excellent work of fiction she was reading, when a door opened and her crushed husband entered, smoking his meerschaum.

"'Old boy,' said the Ghost, 'do you remember that man?'

"'Yes,' responded the banker, sadly; 'he came to me yesterday for some money to keep him from starvation; and as he would not take 'greenbacks,' I did not help him.'

"'Listen,' said the Ghost.

"The crushed husband threw himself into a chair which was not covered with Solferino satin, and ate a peanut.

"'Well, what luck?' asked the daughter of penury.

“‘Old Pursimmons has refused, and I’ —

“‘And you!!’ —

“‘Must’ —

“‘Must?’ —

“‘*Support myself!!!*’

“It was too much. The daughter of penury fainted, the crushed husband sniffed aloud, and the landlady knocked at the door for the week’s board.

“As this agonizing picture of human misery faded away, old Pursimmons turned with an inaudible groan to Mr. Pepper’s Ghost:

“‘And I,’ said he, — ‘and I am the cause of this woe?’

“The spectre silently and solemnly nodded an awful affirmative, and waved its hand for another scene.

“This time, the presentment was the interior of a shop, around which were shelves full of boxes containing all sorts of delicious little gaiters, ties, slippers, bootees and kid pumps, whilst the same kind of articles hung suspended from various hooks and pegs on the wall. On a bench in one corner of this shop, busily working upon a dainty pink satin gaiter-boot, was a narrow young man of pensive countenance, weak eyes, pink nose and an intellectual head of hair, in a workman’s paper cap manufactured from an admirable weekly journal of romance.

“As the deeply-affected banker gazed upon this figure, he sorrowfully murmured: ‘Ah! that is the deep-voiced youth who last week desired of me five hundred dollars to insure the publication of his new novel of Fashionable Life, which was destined to instantly sweep Dickens, Victor Hugo, Thackeray, and other demoralizing writers from the field of literature.’

“‘Yes!’ said Mr. Pepper’s Ghost, severely; ‘and your miserly refusal to aid struggling genius with your miserable wealth has driven a giant intellect into the ladies’ shoemaking business. In which,’ added the spectre, ‘I am bound to say, that he is doing tolerably well.’

“The guilty old banker buried his face in his trembling hands; and when he looked up again, the vision had changed, and he saw before him the inside of a soldier’s tent on the banks of the Rapidan, with two gentle Zouaves arraying themselves in their new uniforms, which had just arrived. Owing to some trifling mental aberration, accompanied by hiccups, which often attacks the members of an army confined to damp localities, these two troops had somehow mistaken their jackets for their pants, and were struggling with Herculean strength to thrust their dainty nether limbs into the sleeves of the first-named garments. After an animated struggle of about a quarter of an hour, something was heard to tear; whereupon, one of the Zouaves tore his fractured jacket from his limbs, and dashed it furiously to the ground, hurling imprecations upon all hard-hearted wretches who coined money by making clothing out of rotten rags for the glorious defenders of their homes and firesides.

“‘Old boy,’ thundered Mr. Pepper’s Ghost, reproachfully, ‘did you not have an interest with your brother, the — street tailor, in that Government contract for uniforms?’

“‘I did,’ replied the mournful banker.

“‘Then behold,’ said the spirit, ‘how you have earned the eternal hate of your country’s gallant volunteers, and will be handed down to future scorn and infamy as a

member of the 'Shoddy Aristocracy.' 'And now, continued Mr. Pepper's Ghost, 'that I have shown you these illustrations of your wickedness as a rich man, how do you feel?'

"'Well,' responded old Pursimmons, 'to tell the truth, I feel greatly bored and very sleepy.'

"'And you wont bestow all your wealth upon the next poor widow with six small children?'

"'Not exactly.'

"'Nor at least one half of it upon the Mission for the Regeneration of the starving Choctaw Nation?'

"'I'd rather be excused.'

"'Well, then,' exclaimed Mr. Pepper's Ghost, plaintively, 'wont you — *wont* you, oblige *me* with — a loan of five dollars?'

"'Yes — if you will take greenbacks.'

"At the word, Mr. Pepper's Ghost uttered a scream of despair, smote its breast frantically, and gave the chair upon which old Pursimmons had just seated himself such a vicious kick that the flinty-hearted banker suddenly awoke, found it all a dream, and, — went outrageously to sleep again; thereby giving convincing proof of that utter callousness of soul which all worthy poor men know to be the sure accompaniment of riches!"

As Villiam ceased reading, we all retired silently from the tent, greatly improved by what we had heard. And now, my boy, let me conclude with a little story of my own:

Some months ago, a certain western General gave an order to an Eastern contractor for a couple of peculiarly

made gunboats for his service; but, happening to pass the White House, shortly after, saw what he took to be the models of two just such gunboats protruding out of one of the windows. Thinking that the President had concluded to attend to the matter himself, he immediately telegraphed to the contractor not to go on with the job.

Quite recently, the contractor came here again, and says he to the General, —

"I'd like to see the model of those White-House gunboats."

The General conducted him toward the White House, my boy, and the two stood admiring the models, which protruded from the window as usual.

Pretty soon a Western Congressman came along, and says the contractor to him:

"Can you tell me, sir, whether those models of gunboats up there are on exhibition?"

"Gunboats!" says the Western chap, looking. "Do you take those things for gunboats?"

"Of course," says the contractor.

"Why, you fool!" says the Congressman, "those are the Secretary's boots. The Secretary always sits with his feet out of the window when he is at home, and those are the ends of his boots!"

Without another word, my boy, the General and the contractor turned gloomily from the spot, convinced that they had witnessed the most terrific feat of the campaign.

Yours, merrily,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.