

a violent fit of coughing that farther argument was impracticable; and it is not decided to this day whether it would be in keeping with the eternal fitness of things to tax the miners to pay the majors.

ORPHEUS C. KERR.

LETTER CI.

EXPLAINING THE WELL-MEANT DUPLICITY OF THE JOURNALS OF THE OPPOSITION; AFFORDING ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF THE IRREPRESSIBLE CONSERVATIVE SENTIMENT; AND SHOWING HOW THANKSGIVING DAY WAS KEPT BY THE MACKERELS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 10th, 1864.

THANKSGIVING Day, my boy, is an able-bodied national festival which has dwelt unctuously in all my less spiritual annual reminiscences, since that poetical and beautiful time of life when the touching innocence of childhood tempted me to surreptitiously pick a chicken-leg while my good grandfather was asking a blessing; and to receive therefor that wholesome box of the ears, which not unfrequently imparts a temporary and excessive warmth to the brain of virtuous boyhood. 'Tis sweet to remember that old-fashioned Thanksgiving Eve, my boy, when the venerable and widowed Mrs. McShane, our cook, would renew her annual custom of inveigling us children into the kitchen on pretence of admiring our new shoes; and then proceed, by divers artful and melancholy phrases, to darken our little souls with a heart-sickening conviction of her utter failure to procure, in her recent trip to market, that long-anticipated Turkey! 'Tis pleasant to recollect how entirely we were cast down thereat, and how rigidly we refrained from so much as a single glance toward the old "Dresser," whereon stood the well-known market-basket

of Mrs. McShane, with the plump legs of the choicest of gobblers protruding very obviously therefrom! 'Tis joyous to recall how we stared mercilessly at every possible thing in the kitchen except that "Dresser;" and how desolately we received certain sadly-philosophical remarks from Mrs. McShane, as to the unspeakable admiration assuredly merited by those "rale good childers," who could, for one Thanksgiving Day, endure starvation without tears.

The little deception was most tenderly and kindly meant, my boy; it was the artless roguery of a dear old heart — the gentlest of cheats — the fondest of frauds; and the very remembrance of it, at this remote moment, not only fills my manly bosom with the softest charity, but endows me with a nicer mental perception of actual good in seeming wickedness, than any yet disclosed by my more obtuse fellow-countrymen.

Thus, my boy, when I note how some of our excellent Democratic daily journals attempt to prove, with great sadness of manner and profound sincerity of reluctant reasoning, that all the celebrated advances, conquests, and flankings of our remarkable national armies are really so many heart-breaking defeats in deep disguise; and that the well-known Southern Confederacy is actually quite intoxicated with its continued remorseless successes over us; when I note this, my boy, I am moved to pleasant tears over that inherent and ineradicable goodness of human nature, which instinctively inspires the nobler of our species to first delude their fellow-beings to despondency with the most innocent of falsehoods, only that their consummate bliss may be the greater when the glorious truth can no

longer be thus fondly concealed. Join with me, my boy, in a noble tribute of affection to the humble but tender Editors of these excellent Democratic daily journals, who would lovingly make us, children of the nation, believe, that the Turkey of Victory is not to be had at any price, though none of us need look very far to see the plump legs of that very same turkey sticking out of the family-basket. Thanks to thee, thou dear old Mrs. McShane, with thy perpetual atmosphere of roast-beef gravy, and eternal rims of crusted flour about thy finger-nails — thanks be to thee for that humanizing remembrance of thy loving fraud, which thus enables me to rescue our excellent Democratic daily journals from the unseemly imputations of degenerate Black Republicans.

My long absence with our somewhat tedious national troops, my boy, — troops now constituting a flaming neck-tie about the throat of this exciting Rebellion; — my long absence, I say, has given this Capital City of our distracted country an opportunity to thrive apace in the development of those public and private virtues, which so thoroughly unpopularize Vice in this chaste locality, that even the Vice President is never heard of. True it is, that one misses those pleasant and gorgeous chaps of much watch-chain and an observable extent of diamond breastpin, who were wont, in the days of genial Southern preponderance, to lend lustre to the hall-ways of the more majestic hotels, and occasionally induce the inebriated son of Chivalry to join them at Faro his table. We miss these light and airy chaps, each of whom is now an unblushing Confederacy without hope of Reconstruction; we miss the high and lofty Carolina chap of much hat-

brim, whose playful moments after the bottle were now and then illustrated with a lively shot from a revolver at a waiter, or cheerful pass with a bowie-knife at his opponent in conversation. And oh! we miss those languishing magnolia belles, whose eyes always reminded me of fresh drops of ink on tinted paper, and whose beautiful belief in the utter vulgarity of all Northern ladies it was really quite delightful to hear. Yes, my boy, all, all are gone; but we have in their places such representatives of genuine-republican simplicity as you shall not see again in a circuit of the globe. Our hotel-halls are brightened by youthful forms in the self-sacrificing uniform of our national army; and these youthful forms, being mostly from the country, confine their innocent gaming, almost exclusively, to the athletic game of "checkers." The prominent walking-gentlemen of Willard's wear black velvet vests all the year round, and, so far from shooting waiters, are always on the most familiar terms with that oppressed race; joking freely with them and recognizing them as intimate equals, as all genuine citizens of a true Republic should do. And as for our present Washington ladies, — wearing Lisle-thread gloves at the dinner-table and putting almonds and raisins into their pockets before leaving it, God bless 'em! — why they know no more of anything vulgar, than a maniac does of insanity.

Reflecting upon these things, on Monday last, my boy, I strolled abstractedly into an establishment where they sell army stores, such as lemons by the slice, sugar by the half-ounce, etc. I strolled dreamily in, when who should I see at the crockery-counter but the Conservative Kentucky chap, whose hat was very far down over his eyes,

like one who has just come through a severe election. He appeared to be taking Richmond at the moment, my boy, with a spoon in it; and as quickly as I entered, he let the hand grasping it fall suddenly down on his obverse side, and gave his entire and most unremitting attention to the picture of a flesh-colored young lady on the farthest wall. I slapped him on the shoulder, and says I:

"Well, my ancient Talleyrand, how are we?"

The Conservative Kentucky chap gloomily placed his tumbler upon the stomach of a gentleman in checked pants, who was calmly sleeping on three chairs near the stove, and says he: "Kentucky can no longer blind herself to the fact that we are on the brink of a monikky. Yes!" exclaimed the Conservative chap, — wildly tearing off his hat, and then putting it on again so that it entirely covered his left eye, — "Yes, sir, a monikky with a Yankee for its Austrian tyrant!"

Here the Conservative Kentucky chap deliberately buttoned his coat to the very neck, turned up his collar, and gazed sternly at a bowl of cloves near by. I called his attention to the Ten of Spades, which was edging itself down between his hat and his right ear, and says I, —

"Hast proof of this, Horatio?"

"Proof?" says the Conservative Kentucky chap, with such a start that the gentleman in the checked pants vibrated as though sleeping on springs, — "Proof? You know Smith, — John Smith, — that little apothecary from Connecticut? Well, sir, he voted in this here last election for the Austrian usurper, and now he's knighted! Yes, sir, by A. Lincoln's recommendation he's now SIR

JOHN SMITH!! I've heard him called so myself. And this — this — is Kentucky's reward!"

At this crisis the Conservative Kentucky chap shut the stove-door with great violence, and seemed for a moment to meditate personal outrage on the young assistant oysterer, who had just arrived with the coal-skuttle.

Before I could make rejoinder, my boy, there approached us a middle-aged gentleman in a shocking bad hat and an overcoat very shiny about the seams, who had cordially invited himself to take a little something that morning, and had accepted the invitation with pleasure. Straightening himself suddenly, with a violent start, to restrain an unruly hiccup, or make me believe that he made the noise with his feet, he eyed the Conservative chap with a benignant smile, and says he:

"You're mistaken there, sir, — muchly, sir, hem! Mr. Smith is my friend, sir; my bosom friend, till time shall end. — Beautiful idea, that. — My friend, I say; and he's only been appointed to the medical department by recommendation of the President. — Let nature do her best, and then your doctors are of use to men. — Byron. — Yes, sir, Mr. Smith is now a military doctor; and that's how you've made the mistake. You thought it was 'Sir John' Smith they said, when it was '*Sur-geon*' Smith!"

As he said this, the middle-aged gentleman became aware that one of his toes was sticking very much through his boot, and retired to confidentially ask the assistant-oysterer if any one had yet found that valuable diamond scarf-pin which he (the middle-aged gentleman) had recently lost.

I looked at the Conservative Kentucky chap, my boy, and his chin had sunk down upon his breast. He felt that his mistake was also the mistake of Kentucky, and his heart was too full for further conversation.

'Twas on Thursday morn, — Thanksgiving Day, — that I blithely scaled the heights of my faithful Gothic steed, the architectural Pegasus, and softly urged that ruined temple of a horse to trot me a lively reminiscence of his youth. Forward we went with a unique, chopping motion, with now and then a stumble to keep the blood in circulation, interspersed with occasional plunges at stumps and shyings at fluttering withered leaves. When you have mounted a beloved horse, on a fine, bracing autumnal morning, my boy, did you ever feel like a kind of new and superior being; as though you and your steed were one consummate individual, inspired by one bounding, uncontrollable impulse, and impatiently regarding the line of the horizon as a tyrannical limit to a ride that should else tear gallantly and recklessly forth into illimitable space? Did you ever feel thus, my boy?

Because, if you did, your feelings were not at all like mine.

Onward we go, like a wrecked centaur before the wind, and soon these eager eyes behold once more the camp of the aged and thrice-valiant Mackerel Brigade. Far and near, the spectacles of the decrepit veterans are flashing in the sun; whilst before them is the much-besieged City of Paris, and behind them (in consequence of recent rains) the storied waters of Duck Lake. The veterans are clustered around Paris, my boy, like so many exceedingly

thirsty chaps around the tall and well-spiked fence inclosing a cherished pump, and if ever they get at it, they will at least drink it dry. Scarcely had I reined-in, near the edge of Duck Lake, where certain members of Rear Admiral Head's iron-plated mackerel squadron were discharging cases and barrels by the score, — scarcely had I dismounted from the Gothic Pegasus and hitched him to the body of a slumbering Mackerel chap, who had already overdone his Thanksgiving, when I beheld Captain Villiam Brown approaching, on his geometrical steed, the angular Euclid. Following him, but on foot, was Captain Bob Shorty in command of the famous Conic Section of the Mackerel Brigade.

“Ha!” says Villiam, leaping down to meet me in dreadful entanglement with his sword, and hastily plunging into his bosom a small black bottle of regulation cough-drops, “have you flown hither like an narrer from a bow, to view the sublime spectacle of the troops at their feed? Ah!” says Villiam, quickly clasping his hands to save the bottle from slipping out of his breast-pocket, “the beautiful pageant of a nation feasting these martial beings on turkey, is something for besotted Europe to tremble at. Next to serving up ice-cream to the sailors in a gale of wind at sea, this” —

Here a venerable Mackerel tottered from the ranks, and says he: “Is them the birds in them ere cases and barrels, Capting?”

Villiam attempted to rattle his sword threateningly at this interruption; but observing that the hilt of his weapon had got around to his spine, he rattled the keys in his pockets instead, and says he:

“How now, Sarah!”

(He meant to say “sirrah,” my boy, — he meant to say “sirrah;” having recently learned, from the perusal of a moral tale in one of our excellent weekly journals of exciting romance, that said aristocratic term is of frequent occurrence in all the conversations of the great.)

“Why,” says the aged Mackerel, coughing into his hand, “if them's the turkeys the people have sent us for Thanksgiving, we're ready for 'em.”

“You're right, Sarah,” says Villiam, magnanimously, “and we'll open this first case at once. The trade-mark of this case,” says Villiam, learnedly, “is ‘50 Turkeys with Care.’”

They were prying the lid off, my boy, with bayonets, and the eyes of the surrounding Mackerels had commenced to glisten fierily through their spectacles, when I saw Villiam and Captain Bob Shorty exchange looks of deep meaning, and shake their heads like a couple of melancholy mandarins.

“Robert S.,” says Villiam, with a look of deep perplexity, “this is indeed a strange oversight.”

Captain Bob Shorty shook his head sadly.

“And yet,” says Villiam, sternly, “we must tell these beings about it.”

“There's no avoiding it, by all that's Federal!” murmured Captain Bob Shorty.

Captain Villiam Brown sighed deeply, and says he:

“Soldiers, the people of the United States of America meant well in sending such beautiful birds for our Thanksgiving bankwick; but they've made a strange mistake. Really,” says Villiam, toying with the cork of the bottle

of cough-drops, as it protruded from his ruffles, — “really I find, that *not one of these Turkeys is stamped!*”

At this juncture the same old Mackerel again stepped forward, and asked if the turkeys came by mail?

“No,” says Villiam, with much sympathy of manner. “I don’t mean postage-stamps, but the Internal Revenue Turkeys,” says Villiam, reasoningly, “come under the head of ‘Unnecessary Luxuries,’ and are not legal unless stamped. But,” says Villiam, with sudden benignity, “your officers possess the necessary stamps, and will sell them to you at twenty-five cents apiece.”

It was a beautiful proof of the untiring vigilance and energy of our national regimental officers, my boy, that they happened to have the stamps on hand just as they did; though, if there happened to be stamps required on geese, I am afraid that every Mackerel who paid his twenty-five cents would come in for one of those chaste little pictures on himself.

And now, the stamps being purchased and the New England eagles distributed, there commenced such a scene of martial revelry and good-nature as the world never saw before. In every direction — at the openings of tents — around open-air fires — everywhere, the jolly festival went on.

Strolling to the outer picket-line, I saw a Mackerel chap lay aside his gun, seat himself upon the ground, and commence handling a nice little turkey which had just been brought to him by a comrade. He smacked his lips audibly, my boy, and was just in the act of tearing off a “drumstick” when I saw him suddenly look up to a point ahead of him, and instantly cease all motion. Curi

ous to know what had thus fascinated him, as it were, and so abruptly checked his feast, I also looked in that direction.

Right across the little field in front of us, seated on the last remaining post of a ruined fence, was a ragged Confederacy, in a perfect whirlpool of tatters, who had rested his musket upon the ground, and was alternately gnawing an army biscuit and casting longing looks toward his happier enemy. He was a dreadfully thin, hollow-eyed chap, my boy, and shivered in the cold. The Mackerel stared at him without motion for some minutes, and then commenced to handle his turkey again. Then he stared again, dropped his turkey, picked it up, and finally rose to his feet impatiently — looked toward his nearest comrade — and then seated himself with his back toward the Confederacy. Still the latter gnawed and looked longingly. The Mackerel said, “damme!” quite distinctly and stoutly, and vigorously grasped at a “drumstick” again. He gave it a twist, paused, wavered, and *looked over his shoulder*.

In another instant, my boy, that Mackerel sprang to his feet, faced about, shouted:

“I’ll do it, by G—d! if I swing for it” — dashed across the field like a stark madman, and, before the astonished Confederacy could budge an inch, had hurled the turkey into his arms and was tearing back to his own post.

There is a chivalry, my boy, that makes a man a hero with the sword of a patriot, or bears him triumphantly through perils and obstacles to the arms of the bride he has won. There is a chivalry that inspires a man to

spurn with contempt the fortune not fraught with all honor, and gives him the graces of a gentleman through all the glooms and burdens of honest poverty. But in that grander Chivalry native to the soul, which raises the tenderness of our best humanity far above the highest point all enmity can reach, and lets it fall, like God's own dew, upon the other side, none, none more fairly ever won a knighthood, than that poor Mackerel picket-guard on last Thanksgiving Day.

Yours, gently,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.

LETTER CII.

SHOWING THE INGENIOUS FINANCIAL ENERGY OF A GREATLY-REDUCED POLITICIAN; AND DESCRIBING A COMBAT, ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONTENTMENT OF THE WELL-KNOWN SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY UNDER ALL REVERSES.

WASHINGTON D. C., Dec. 17th, 1864.

It is a sublime thing, my boy, — a high moral and exciting thing, — to note a wealthy nation's outburst of gratitude to Providence and our national military organization, for a succession of Mackerel triumphs without parallel either in history or her story. As I look abroad upon the exulting hosts of our distracted fellow-countrymen from an upper front window of Willard's, — having first wafted a fascinating salute to the pleasing young woman of much back hair at a window across the avenue, — as I look abroad, my boy, upon this whole remarkable people, I am deeply impressed with a sense of that beautiful, national characteristic which makes us all buoyant over Mackerel victories only as they bring us nearer to virtuous peace and universal brotherhood, and am convinced that our otherwise inexpressible thankfulness to Heaven may be divided into two equal parts:

- I. An ardent desire to destroy combined Europe.
- II. A disposition to set fire to combined Europe, bringing off the women and children in small boats.

Hah, hah! does combined Europe tremble? Does C. E. offer a certain sum to be let off?