

The National Tribune

A Monthly Journal devoted to the interests of the Soldiers and Sailors of the late war, and all Pensioners of the United States.

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The Picket Guard.

By MRS. HOWLAND.

"All quiet along the Potomac," they say,
Except now and then a stray picket
Is shot, as he walks on his beat to and fro,
By a rifleman hid in the thicket.

'Tis nothing—a private or two now and then,
Will not count in the news of the battle,
Not an officer lost—only one of the men
Moaning out all alone, the death-rattle.

"All quiet along the Potomac," to-night
Where the soldiers lie peacefully dreaming;
Their tents in the rays of the clear autumn moon
Or the light of the watchfires are gleaming.

A tremulous sigh, as the gentle night wind
Through the forest leaves softly is creeping
While stars up above, with their glittering eyes
Keep guard for the army is sleeping.

There's only the sound of the lone sentry's tread,
As he tramps from the rock to the fountain,
And he thinks of the two in the low trundle bed,
Far away in the cot on the mountain.

The musket falls slack; his face dark and grim
Grows gentle, with memories tender
As he mutters a prayer for the children asleep,
And their mother—may Heaven defend her.

The moon seems to shine just as brightly as then
That night, when the love yet unspoken
Leaped up from his lips—when low, murmuring vows
Were pledged to be ever unbroken.

Then drawing his sleeve roughly over his eyes,
He dashes off tears, that are welling
And gathers his gun closer up to its place,
As if to keep down the heart-swelling.

He passes the fountain, the blasted pine tree,
His footstep is lagging and weary
Yet onward he goes, through the broad belt of light,
Toward the shades of the forest so dreary.

Hark! was it the night wind, that rustled the leaves,
Was it moon light so wondrously flashing?
It looked like a rifle: "Ha! Mary, Good Bye!"
And the life blood is ebbing and plashing.

"All quiet along the Potomac" to-night,
No sound save the rush of the river,
While soft falls the dew, on the face of the dead
The picket's off duty forever.

*We publish this most exquisite and touching poem, written during the earlier part of the war, believing its beauties will be appreciated by our thousands of readers.

The Homestead Saved.

Written for THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE.

Thanks be to Heaven, Sarah Jane, for the news I've got to tell!
I came from town in warmest haste, your sorrows to dispel;
And Charley, flecked with foam, bore me, like any gallant steed,
Who knew his master's faithful wife, of comfort stood in need.
Oh, how my heart did swell with joy as o'er the hills I came,
"Till, wife, my heart rose in my throat, and I sobbed, my loving dame!
You want to know? Of course you do! Now try just once to guess
What news this day did surely bring, to make your burdens less.
Why should you turn so white, Sarah? Here, lean against my breast!
And with me thank the blessed Lord, who has sent us peace and rest;
For, Jane, we need not leave the home, so precious we have made;
Forever gone is the cruel dread, that on our hearts has preyed
Yes, yes, dear wife! the fearful clouds have rolled away at last!
Those dense black clouds that have so long, their shadow o'er us cast.

I went to town this morning, Jane, with a heavy load to bear,
For you know our stern, hard creditor was waiting for me there;
And I, without a cent to pay, wife, upon that mortgage due,
Rode slowly on, half crazed with care, and grieving sore for you.
The sun shone brightly, and the fields were rich with spring-time green,
But I'd no heart for nature's charms, I dwelt on what had been.
Our happiness until this load of debt unto us came,
And if I shed some scalding tears, they were not those of shame.
I thought, too, of those lonely graves cut there upon the hill,
Where little Bess and Charlie lie, and then my eyes did fill
With burning tears, it seemed so hard to go and leave them there,
For I knew, dear wife, no stranger hands for the lonely graves would care.

Well, Jane, I reached the town at last! Who should I meet but Will!
Will Jones, you know, who was sick with me down at Andersonville.
"Halt!" he cried. "Have you heard the news? No! Well, it is so grand,
And the people talk about it to-day, old lad, all over our land!
They have passed a bill at Washington, and it's signed by the President, too,
That will bring five hundred to me, my boy, and a thousand, Charley, to you.
It's the pension arrears they'r goin' to pay—why, Charley, what ails you, boy!"
And he lifted me down from my name-sake here, for I'd fainted from sudden joy.

Hamontown, Atlantic Co., N. J.

WM. H. HOPPING.

"I am almost seventy-one," said Mrs. Myra Clark Gaines to a Washington correspondent the other day, "and I expect to live till I am a hundred and fifty. I come of a long-lived race. One of my aunts lived to a hundred and fifteen." And seeing the correspondent scrutinizing her hair, "It isn't dyed," she said, "and it is very abundant, falling below my waist."

FOR THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE

Congressional Prayers.

BY AN OLD WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT.

I see by a local paper that the pastor of one of the colored churches of Washington, on the Sunday before Congress convened, offered a prayer for its benefit, in which occurred the following:

"Oh Lord! Don seest all dese Congressmen flockin' to dis city like de fishes in de 'postles net. Oh Lord! have mercy on dem, for dey are poor sinners. Make dem genuine men, and presarve dem from conciliatin' wid de debble."

This caused considerable amusement, and suggests a number of interesting reminiscences of prayers in Congress and some political conventions I have attended. As everybody knows, each House of Congress has a chaplain, who receives \$900 a year for offering a prayer each morning of the session. They are generally selected from among the pastors of the city, and the present incumbents are Dr. Sunderland, of the First Presbyterian church, who officiates in the Senate, and Rev. Mr. Harrison, a Methodist, who officiates in the House. Dr. Sunderland has long been the Senate chaplain, and takes great interest in politics, being, of course, republican in his sympathies, with the majority of the Senate; and when the democrats get control of the body in March next, they will, no doubt, elect some democratic clergyman as his successor. Dr. Sunderland is so earnest in his political sentiments that he sometimes asks the Almighty to take one side of a disputed question that may be pending, and has offended sensitive democrats once in a while, who have, perhaps, feared a literal answer to his application for Divine assistance on the part of the majority.

Charles Sumner was quite outspoken in his dislike to political prayers, and during the San Domingo agitation in 1872, when Sumner, Schurz, Fenton and Trumbull were fighting President Grant, Dr. Sunderland frequently used to take advantage of his opportunity to administer to the Senators named a sly dig in the course of his daily devotions in the Senate. One day, however, he merely recited the Lord's Prayer to open the proceedings, and as he came down from the Vice President's desk Mr. Sumner met him, took by the hand, and remarked:

"Dr. Sunderland, that was a very eloquent prayer you just offered; a very beautiful prayer; a very appropriate prayer—the most appropriate I ever heard you utter." And the great Senator returned to his seat.

Once, during the first session of the Forty-fourth Congress, Dr. Sunderland invited a very distinguished New England divine to officiate in his stead, and "the learned pundit," flattered by the honor, made a very long prayer, in which he took occasion to notify the Almighty that the Senate was "weak and unworthy, and full of infirmities," and asked that they might be "endowed with more wisdom, grace, and strength." There was a smile in response to this suggestion of what might have been truth, whether intentional or accidental, and Senator McCree, of Kentucky, who is noted for his jokes, wrote an irreverent resolution, which he sent up to the Clerk's desk. Major McDonald, who is now dead, received it, and, glancing over the manuscript before commencing to read, saw the contents and handed it to Senator Ferry, who was acting as Presiding Officer. Senator Ferry saw the joke, but prevented it from being a part of the records of the Senate by declaring it out of order. The resolution was, however, passed around among the Senators, and created much amusement. It was as follows:

"Whereas the person who has just left the floor did not address his remarks to the Presiding Officer of this body, but to a Divine Being entirely unknown to the Senate; and,

"Whereas the statements contained in his remarks, in allusion to the weakness, unworthiness and infirmities of this body are entirely unparliamentary, and a reflection upon the Senators of the United States and the people represented by them; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Committee on Privileges and Elections be, and the same is hereby, authorized and directed to inquire into the truths of such statements, with power to send for persons and papers, and to report by bill or otherwise."

Dr. Sunderland was a strong silver advocate, and when the bill to remonetize silver was pending in the Senate he offered what the Senators called a "bi-metallic prayer," as follows:

"Oh God! the silver is Thine, the Gold is Thine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. We beseech Thee, oh Lord, the God of our fathers, with the wealth and richness of Thy bounty, suffer not Thy people to languish."

This prayer attracted marked attention, and reminds me of one I heard offered some years ago, at the Legislature of a Western State. Said the chaplain there:

"Bless this assembly, Oh Lord! and the people they represent. Give them pure hearts, an honest currency, and sound political principles."

I remember a prayer I heard offered in a Republican State Convention in Iowa, several years ago. A clergyman in the city in which it was being held had been invited to officiate, but for some reason failed to keep the engagement, and one of the delegates who was a Baptist clergyman, was asked to open the proceedings. He recognized the importance of the occasion, as well as the value of time, and offered the following brief, emphatic, direct, and comprehensive prayer:

"Thou King of hosts! God of the freeman, God of the bondman, God of liberty, God of justice, God of grace, descend upon us at this time with Thy divine blessing. Govern this convention with Thine omnipotent will, fill our hearts with Thy rich grace, and sanctify the proceedings of this day with Thy sacred presence. Grant us wisdom to nominate a good ticket, and make a good platform. Give us our usual 40,000 majority, and double it, if in Thine infinite wisdom it shall seem to Thee good. Amen."

The Early Coinage of Michigan.

In the good old day of Michigan there wasn't any money to speak of floating around from hand to hand. When a householder wanted meal, he scraped half dozen coon skins together and made a trade. If he wanted meat, he killed it; and if there was need of whisky, it was a very poor man who couldn't find a wildcat bill or a bogus half dollar down in his pockets.

One day a circuit preacher, hunting for a place in which to speak to the dozen or twenty settlers in Oakland county, halted at a forlorn-looking cabin beside the trail and asked for dinner. The squatter's wife extended a very cordial welcome, and said:

"It's lucky you come along to-day, as I have got a new bag of meal, lots of sassafras for coffee, and some of the best coon mutton you ever tasted of. Go down to the ditch and wash up, and I'll have the dinner ready in ten minutes."

When the preacher returned he began lamenting the hard times, and the fact that he hadn't seen the sight of money for several weeks. He was cheerfully trying to do good, but he frankly confessed that he could do much better if he could now and then hear the jingle of money in his trousers' pocket. The woman looked wise, but made no reply, and by and by the good man resumed his journey. His horse was picking his way along the trail, about three miles from the cabin, when a native, six feet high and attired in coon-skin cap, hickory shirt, and Indian leggings, came after him on the run, yelling out:

"You thar! whoa! hold on, you!"

When he came up he asked:

"Are you the traveling Bible who halted back there for dinner and eat up a whole coon?"

"I am a circuit rider, and halted back there, and eat more or less of a big hunk of delicious meat," answered the good man.

"And didn't you tell my wife you were dead broke for cash?"

"I intimated, as I now recollect, that I was not burdened with any great amount of cash."

"Well, my wife is the most infernal old hard blow in the territory, and I'm the meanest liar in the diggins, but yet we must keep religion b'iling. I got home just as you left, and when she told me about your being hard up, I went to work on the jump and molded you these six half-dollar pieces. There's a leetle too much lead in 'em, but if you are careful to wipe 'em on your coat-tail now and then, they will pass on anybody except a land-broker!"

Some legends say that the preacher didn't take them; but legends are not always reliable.

Dumas' Pedigree.

A person more remarkable for inquisitiveness than good-breeding—one of those who, devoid of delicacy and reckless of rebuff, pry into everything—took the liberty to question Alexander Dumas, rather closely concerning his genealogical tree. "You are a quadroon, Mr. Dumas?" he began. "I am, sir," replied Mr. Dumas, who had seen enough not to be ashamed of a decent he could not conceal. "And your father?" "Was a mulatto." "And your grandfather?" "A negro," hastily answered the dramatist, whose patience was waning. "And may I inquire what your great grandfather was?" "An ape, Sir!" thundered Dumas, with a fierceness that made his impertinent interrogator shrink into the smallest possible compass, "an ape, Sir! My pedigree commences where yours terminates."

An Iowa clergyman boasts that he can marry twenty couples in an hour. Twenty knots an hour is pretty good speed for a clergyman to make.

When Prayers Avail.

An old darkey who was asked, if, in his experience, prayer was ever answered, replied: "Well, sah, some prayers is ansud and some isn't—'pends on w'at you axes fo'; jest arter de wah, we'en it was mighty hard scratchin' fo' de culled bredden, I 'bsarved dat w'en ebbber I pway de Lo'd to send one o' Marse Peyton's fat turkeys fo' de ole man, dere was no notice took o' de partition; but we'en I pway dat he would sen' de ole man fo' de turkey, de matter was 'tended to befo' sun up nex' mornin', dead sartin."

An honest Hibernian, in recommending a cow, said she would give milk year after year without having calves. "Because," said he, "it runs in the brade; for she came of a cow that never had a calf."

"See here," said an eccentric old man to an office-boy who had brought a doctor's bill to him—"see here: tell your master that I'll pay him for the items of medicine charged in this bill, but as for the visits, why—I'll return them."