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APPLETONS' JOURNAL.

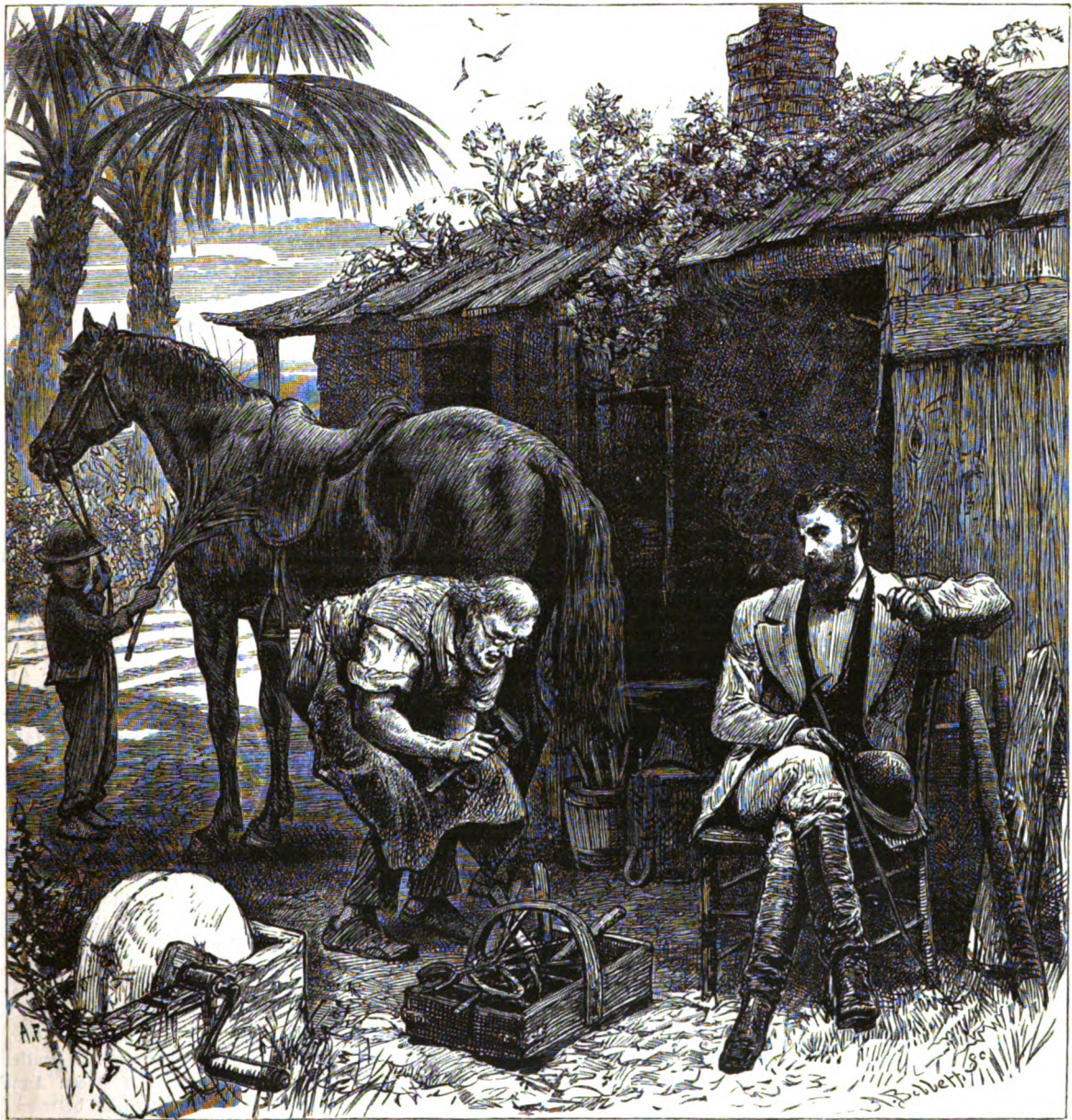
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[VOL. XII.

AT THE SMITHY.

(PICKENS COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1874.)



AT THE SMITHY.

SHOE your horse? Well, yes, sir, I reckon I can.
Here, Johnny, come brush off the flies like a man.
Fine scenery? Yes; but, if you were to try To plough up that hill-side, you'd understand why

I'm tired of these mountains; the fields, now, are rare
And smooth about Charleston—perhaps you've been there?

I am old for my trade? I am just sixty-four;
But some years are long as a lifetime, nay, more;

Ten lifetimes have passed since—but never mind that.

Here, Joë, bring a chair—take the gentleman's hat.

And, Susie, my blossom, run quickly and bring A nice cup of water from grandpa's cold spring.

Yes, grandchildren; orphans, sir; three little ones;
They are all we have left now, for all our four sons
Are dead; James and Harry, and brave little Gray,
Who, worn out with marching, dropped dead by the way,
With his drum at his back; a mere boy, sir, the pride
Of his mother, who never has smiled since he died.

By the cold Rappahannock our eldest son fell—
They were starving, poor fellows—half naked as well;
But they charged in their rags, and were mown down like grass,
Left dying and dead in the frozen morass.
Have you ever been hungry, sir, day after day?
You don't know how it takes a man's spirit away.

But they charged in their rags! They rushed with a cheer
On the enemy's ranks as they slowly drew near—
The blue-coated Yankees, well clothed and well fed,
Who, wondering, looked at our poor famished dead,
When, the struggle so hopeless, so weak-handed, o'er,
Gaunt, shoeless, and ragged, they lay on the shore.

Into the Wilderness, Harry and James—
They never came out. We saw their two names
Reported as "missing;" and Harry's young wife
Just pined away—pined away—out of this life.
Then we rode to join Lee, old horse Dobbin and I—
As his four boys had died, so the father could die!

The thin ranks were swelled by old men with gray hair,
And boys under age—those last days of despair
Had drained from the South every man, and the farms
And the fields were unploughed save by women's weak arms.
How we marched on our rag-covered, frozen old feet!
How the poor lads paraded, with nothing to eat!

I don't know what makes me run on in this way—
There—the shoe is quite fast, sir—I bid you good-day.
A quarter? Yes; thank you. That road to your right—
Five Forks, did you say? Was I in that fight?
I was; and this bony hand fired the last gun
Of our last haggard rally ere victory was won

By Sheridan's men, full of beef and hard-tack,
With miles of fat wagon-trains safe at their back;
While the ragged Confederate tightened his belt
To hold in the sickening hunger he felt.
Then came Appomattox, the contest was done,
The long struggle over, you Yankees had won!

And is not peace better? you ask. Can I tell?
My thoughts are away where my four strong boys fell.
To argue the question I never was good—
Carolina went out, and we all understood

We must go with our State—and I can't make it plain

To my mind that my four boys have died all in vain.

Perhaps you are right—you talk like a book—I'm old and tired out, and so I can't look away back to "principles;" all I can do is plough up that hill-side and set a horseshoe, To feed those poor children; but sometimes I dream

Of the old days in Charleston—how far off they seem!

Oh! proud was old Charleston, down there by the sea—

And bright were those days; but they're over for me

Forever. Yes—Time; but he never can give My boys, who had only their one life to live. I don't understand, and it's no use to try; But the Lord understands, and He'll tell me why

Some day when, at last, my four lost boys will come

To call their old father, and carry him home.— There's a horse wants a shoe—yes, they're turning this way;

It's Judge Brown, of this district. (Eh, what's that you say?

He's colored! Of course; we're used to that here.)

Let me hold your horse, judge. Run, Joe, bring a chair.

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON.

AUNT PENURIOUS.

"THERE goes Aunt Penurious," said a blithesome girl, as an elderly, faded figure crept down the main street of Cranberry Centre.

"I don't like to hear you call her by that name," said Dr. Scott, who was at once, in his capacity of physician and father confessor, loved and feared in Cranberry.

Dr. Scott knew everybody's secrets and everybody's history.

Alas! we had no opera-house in Cranberry; no healthy amusement took our active minds off that most perilous of all studies—each other's weaknesses!

There was that perpetual opera going on, made up of the discords of poor human nature, varied here and there by a noble strain, but the life was too monotonous, too introspective. That unhealthy dearth of amusement which has made so many morbid, queer, half-crazed persons in the highly-rarefied air of the Northern States, prevailed in Cranberry, and gave "Aunt Penurious" a lamentable prominence.

For she was our sample miser.

Not that we were any of us very rich or very lavish. We had no superfluities with which to contrast vividly Aunt Penurious and her economies. The bread-fruit tree did not grow in Cranberry, nor did we lie in its shadow metaphorically to let ready-made hot cakes drop into our mouths. Perhaps we lost the corresponding tropical grace which would have accompanied such a transaction. We were the true descendants of the five kernels of corn, and knew what it was to crack open a piece of granite, which we called soil (in the hope of propitiating our stern divinities), and

to put in a hard-fisted grain that, in its turn, must await the benign influence of a climate which was nine months winter, and the rest of the year pretty cold. We turned our old dresses, and had our Leghorn bonnets "pressed over," until the poor Italian straws must have deemed themselves back in sunny Italy, if heat could reassure the exiles; but still we were not misers all, and poor Miss Penelope was one.

It was bred in her bone. Her father, old Peter Masterton, had been the proverbial Midas of Cranberry, and then its vampire. He grew rich on the blood of other men. He began, by the generous and manly work of a blacksmith, to honestly pound his daily bread out of iron, when, in some mysterious manner, he grew rich. Perhaps he found the philosopher's stone in the luck-bringing horseshoe; at any rate, he grew rich. Then he bought every man's farm and every poor man's house, at a ruinous sacrifice to them; then he invested well, starved himself and his family, trod lightly on the flinty soil lest he should wear out his shoes, and became the village scarecrow as to clothes.

But there was one yielding substance which he did not tread lightly on, and that was his wife's heart. He had married a lady, by some miserable mistake of Fortune, and she was at once his pride and his victim. She had born one little girl, to Peter's infinite disgust, and no son. Penelope was ten years old when Peter bought the great house, moved his family into it, and, as if the Fates loved their obsequious servitor, Mrs. Masterton soon after presented Peter with a son, and herself quietly died. Verdict of the jury, said the village wit, "Froze to death."

So, in the melancholy spaciousness of a grand old room, with a picture of a gallant of Queen Anne's time looking down on her, sat poor little beak-faced Penelope, her nose and chin already approaching each other as if the forlorn features felt that they each needed a friend, holding in her little lap a baby boy, and trying to keep the life in him by such scanty fire as the miser allowed.

Her mother had been carried to the graveyard the day before, and, although Penelope was a regular dry little New-England girl, with the ingrained thrift, activity, and industry of the Yankee character, which is ready to face responsibility as soon as the pap-spoon is out of the mouth, even she could not keep back a few tears at the forlornness of her situation. They fell on the baby's forehead, and, as she wiped them off with her lean brown hand, the great love was born in her heart for this brother, the grand passion of her life. She brushed them out of her eyes, and looked up at the picture. It seemed to her that the gay and gracious gentleman, the kind-hearted gallant of Queen Anne's time, smiled down upon her from between his love-locks.

For Peter Masterton had bought the great house, our Cranberry-Centre attraction, and single point of romance and luxury. The old story of the heir of Linn goes on forever: the miser succeeds the spendthrift, the spendthrift the miser. Peter had had the great good luck to succeed two spendthrifts, for what should we have done for legends in Cranberry