

From the New York Mirror

THE BIOGRAPHY OF

## A CONTENTED MAN.

Written by Himself.

was so much pleased with the article in the last number of the Mirror, which appeared as the fragment of a letter from a barber, that I resolved, it being extremely laconic, to indulge my literary propensities so far as to send you a little biography of myself, interspersed with some remarks, the results of my long experience upon the subject of my profession. You must know, that being in early boyhood of a weak and sickly turn of body, and a rather contemplative character of mind, my father, a lusty New England farmer, was at a loss what to do with me. Be a farmer I would not, and indeed I am convinced my talents pointed out a higher path. A sailor's life was very much against my inclinations, for I have always had an antipathy to salt junk, and to being turned out of bed at nights. My motto has always been, "enjoy the present, take comfort while you can get it," or, as my father used to say, "make hay while the sun shines." There was some talk of keeping me at school, and bringing me up to a profession.

"Thank you, my good folks," said I, "your kindness exceeds your figure. A profession indeed! I laughed in my sleeve, and almost in my sleep, at this plan; which was, I have since had reason to believe, a freak of my poor, dear foolish mother's. Good soul! she believed there was no one like Bob. I should certainly be a judge or a bishop; or, if the bent of my genius was warlike, who knew what might happen? General Bob Jenkins—Commodore Bob Jenkins. I have no doubt, bless and rest her soul, that if she had been much pressed, she would have been satisfied with a captaincy.—As for me, I always had a dash of good sense in my composition. You have found such people, good reader, sometimes, have you not? Plain fellows, that see at a glance in a plain way what the most refined and sentimental minds, with all the grace of feeling and the advantage of education, fail to discover. Now I had three brothers, you must know, and as different from me as black is from white. Their names were Peter, Jack, and Obadiah. Peter, with a good deal of trouble, got into the navy; Jack went to teaching school, in a little village in Connecticut; and, at the same time, studied law. Obadiah staid on the farm, and worked like a horse. I remember one day we were all assembled in the old house, Peter, with his new uniform coat and flashy buttons, as proud as a peacock; Jack, bent half double from close attention to his books and already beginning to talk pieces of Latin and other nonsense, and Obadiah, in his linsey-woolsey trousers and short sleeves, with a great pair of hands hardened with honest labor, and a face bronzed with constant exercise and exposure. They all went on about their own business. The lawyer was going to make a tremendous noise, one of these days; the sailor thought it so noble to fight and die for one's country; the farmer intended, if ever he had a ny money, to buy the farm adjacent to ours, to cultivate the grape, and supply the country with domestic wine.

"It's all in my eye, my good fellows," thought I, "I have made choice of a profession. None of your stuff about dying for your country, but a decent easy idle, honest calling, guarded from half the troubles of life, safe from the summer's heat and winter's cold, safe from bodily and mental labor, safe from politics and danger, from envy, hatred, and malice. I don't care a farthing about the opinions of other people. I want to enjoy my life myself. Learning?iddle sticks. Look at your students your lawyers, your farmers, your doctors, your soldier. Glory! Die for your country! Have your head shot off, to be put in the newspapers! I was extremely obliged, but had rather be excused."—So I did forthwith reveal to my aspiring friends and relatives that I had discovered which way my genius lay.

My father looked at me, my mother's face brightened, the boys stared at each other, and winked.

"I guess a doctor," said my father.

"A clergyman," said my mother.

"A lawyer," said Jack.

"My friends," said I, with that sort of resolute composure, which one puts on when he knows what he has to say will rather kick up a hobble, "you are wrong. I am going to New York. I am going to be a—barber."

"A what?" burst from every lip. The boys laughed, my father looked surprised, my mother was petrified with horror; but my mind was made up, and so were my arrangements.—I was then sixteen. Every body knows, or every body ought know, how the Yankee families manage these matters. A host of sons grow up to be great, tall, gawky boys, and then disperse, to seek their fortunes. Some of them go to the south, clear forests, buy plantations, without any money, and pay for them out of the profits, open stores and taverns, and all that.—Some, by hook or by crook, heaven only knows how, go to the legislature, and get to be great men, and members of congress. Some turn peddlers, go to Louisiana, and pass themselves for colonels. Whole shoals float down to New York, and teach school. That's regular Yankee. Set one of these raw farm boys down in the midst of a strange city, and he goes to teaching school the first thing. If he does not know how, he learns. Some of the greatest men in

the nation have sprung up so. I know one to particular; always shave him when he comes to town. He commenced by teaching little boys the multiplication table, and now—I should not wonder if he were president before he dies.—So much for Yankee schoolmasters. They are odd, rough creatures at first, but fine men. Do you mind that, my pretty city squash? Such an one may charge the jury yet in a suit in which you are defendant.

Well, as others did, so did we. Jack became a lawyer, Peter spent his youth tost about over every ocean, and Obadiah worked the farm after the old folks died. They happened to be all in my shop—office (as Jack called it) yesterday. I shaved them all round for nothing, and in mine own opinion, they all thought six pence saved was as good as a shilling gained; at least they talked so. Jack's law business did not agree with him much; he was not so successful as he might have been. He said the profession was excessively crooked; he could scarcely get along.

Peter had gained some credit abroad on board of the United States ships, but then he had lost an arm in an encounter with a piratical vessel, and had received a gash over his face, which twisted his right optic down, like a wall-eyed horse. Honor is a capital fine thing, but then to arm? an eye! Only think of it. As for Obadiah, he was, I think, rather more fortunate than either of the others. To be sure, he had a world of trouble with the farm, and had a touch of fever and ague, which being prevalent in the neighborhood, not only kept him sick, but prevented his selling the farm. He had, therefore, nothing to do but to remain, ague or no ague, for he was too poor to let it at a loss; but then he had neither lost his eyes nor his limbs, and seemed, on the whole, tolerably satisfied. His aspirations had never been very brilliant. My own adventures were of a very different cast. I had roved about nearly all over the states. There is scarcely to be found a pretty town within a hundred miles that has not, for some time at least, been ornamented with my pole. I have shaved high and low, far and wide. I have had under my close inspection human faces till I am as learned in the art of physiognomy as Lavater himself; and as for happiness, believe me, if you want to find it, pass by your palaces and temples, keep away from courts and country seats, follow not the wealthy, the wise, the great, poets, orators, nor authors, but come into my shop, and you have the man. I have heard cries from all quarters, that human nature is depraved, that the world is wretched. A addstick for such stuff! I am a right merry walking contradiction; not but that I have met with the reverses, but when they came I snapped my fingers at them, boxed my razors, pulled up my pole, and started off in search of some more auspicious abode. To say the truth, I have been driven to this very often. I have been ruined twenty times, but what is ruin to me? I have always laughed at it. I was expelled from one country village because I kept my shop open on Sunday morning, and from another because I kept it shut on Saturday. I have roamed and travelled, always light hearted. I have shaved in steamboats and hotels, and as for this city, there is not a face of any note about town, that I don't know as well as I do my own. Not only am I acquainted with a vast variety of faces, but I have studied the geography of each one with care, and know every line mark and wrinkle thereon, well enough to draw a chart of them. I flatter myself I am not altogether undistinguished in my profession. I appreciate fully the important duties I have so frequently to perform. When a man takes off his coat, and sits down to be shaved, I have noticed that he undergoes a singular revolution of character. He vows insensibly that for the time being he will disentangle himself from every care. It is something like a warm bath. He is about to enjoy a luxury. He is going to be waited on. He lulls himself with pleasant reveries. He does not care two farthings for any body in the world, except such as he can remember with satisfaction. He is a lord, an emperor. I have often had occasion to remark this species of transformation. I have sometimes shaved the merest vagabond, a fellow absolutely out at the elbows, with a beard an inch long, and like a shoe brush, and the whole exterior of one who was a wretch without being (as the man in the play says) proud of wretchedness, and who I knew, moreover, the moment he quitted my presence, would sneak off with the unquival humblity of a dog lying from a broomstick handle! yet, in my chair he would betry that lurking consciousness that rises secretly in the heart of humblest individual undergoing the agreeable operation of shaving, which under the direction of a good artist, I fearlessly assert is one of the most delightful to which an intelligent individual can be subjected. It furnishes an excitement without any consequent depression of spirits; and the languid inanimation into which every one falls while surrendering himself thus to the discretion and taste of the barber, is the best evidence thereof. Yet, gentle reader, there be people who look down on my virtuous, useful, and simple business with contempt. A lawyer, forsooth—and what is a lawyer? one whose trade it is to make right wrong, and wrong right; and a soldier? one who kills for pay; and all your host of great and proud men? What are they better than I? Nay, are they so good? Is there not in every other business a dash of temptation to do evil, which even the best inclined cannot always entirely

resist? Not so in mine; for while it is humble and honest, it is easy and free from care, and in your ear) as for wealth, the profits of my last year exceeded the income of the chancellor of this state.

A few days since I was in company with a very respectable mechanic of this place when the conversation happened to turn upon dreams, he observed to me, "you knew Col. Sittler, who was killed by a fall from his horse in Nashville, didn't you?" I answered in the affirmative, and stated that I believed it happened in 1832.—He then observed that he had a remarkable dream about it, and which he related substantially as follows:

"We were doing some work for Col. Sittler; one evening he came to the shop and remained for some time chatting with the hands. Before he took his leave, he observed he would start in the morning for Fayetteville, or Pulaski, I have forgotten which. On that morning, three of us had assembled in a piazza, for the purpose of washing. I had just dried my face and hands, and handed the towel to the one standing nearest me, observing at the moment I dreamt last night, that Col. Sittler's horse threw him near the female Academy, and killed him on the spot; and that I saw the horse, as plain as ever I saw any thing in my life, run by here, with the saddle bags on. The words were scarcely out of my mouth, when one of the two, looking down the street, exclaimed, 'by—here comes Col. Sittler's horse, sure enough—and the saddle bags are on him too!' The sight made a startling impression on me for the moment. It was the same horse, (a large roan) and the saddle bags were flapping about him as he ran, just as I had witnessed in the dream. In a few moments, a negro came running along after the horse and told us he had just thrown his rider opposite to parson Lanier's, and killed him.—We immediately went to the spot, which I recognized to be the same presented in the vision. It was fifty or sixty yards from the Academy. The body, the clothes, the spot all looked as familiar to me, as if I had witnessed the accident. That I did witness it is certain; but how, I shall leave to be settled by those who are more learned in such matters; and why the warning (if such it was intended) was given to me, and not to the deceased, I refer to the same tribunal." The gentlemen to whom the dream was told in the piazza, are now living in Nashville, and will testify to the correctness of this statement.

We believe the custom of sending Valentines is nearly exploded. Some there are, however, who still cling to it as a valuable relic of by-gone days; and one calculated to establish kindly feelings. So such as these we recommend the following, not only for the ingenious simplicity of the contrivance, but the exquisite perfection of the orthography.—*Saturday Cour.*

ORIGINAL SPECIMEN OF A VALENTINE.

Dear Mr. Editor—I was yesterday very much surprised, on putting on a pair of lambs' wool stockings, to find a small hole in the heel of one of them darned with brown silk; I, of course, wondered much at this phenomenon; and for the whole day, and the greater part of last night, I was racking my brains to discover what my landress could mean by such a freak. The enclosed Valentine, which I received this morning, explained the mystery; and as it may perhaps amuse some of your readers, I have taken the liberty of sending you the original, as received.

I am yours, &c. G. N. BOURNE.

my dear friend, I have been a long time a tacked too u but never dust disavow the tender pinching, as the french call it, in my breast for u—however this is lip yare and the lad dies may say what they lick, I am detarmined no longer to keep the sickrat in my buz-zum, for when I am allone I mourn my fat as the tender turkeydove dug her lost Mat and whips myself at such a rat that I fair my grif will bring me to my graf before my Tim—My murther his Now out! and farther is not near so I seize the hoppersnuten to teach my Pin to scratch these fue lines to you, and O! my Deer, my Hart Doe jump as i dug so—I Get on slowly as I have only a Still pin which sleeps threw the paper every minuet—I Hav no other pin but a quill and no pin-nise sept farther's racer which is locked up in the Thickbaddy.

U may wonder hoo your Crossponder is like, I ham a tal gal my fetters are good tho pitted with the smal poghckes, I ham also considered a sharp gal for my Edge which is nintin i Ham also A very good skoldhard at buck nolog and i Ham very fond of Reading Bucks sept that cant get not none to read sept the Tims noozpepper witch Bob the pot boy brings actionally with the Bear sept when we get Hale at the Hintermidyat shops i doz love to se men lick u with grate wis-curs Hit gives them the grand marital luck of han Off the Sir Hand hoo! if you wood cut mee hof a bite of you ear!! Wood put it in a Loweat and keep Hit for your sack Hi Ro i size wen i Thinks you pose not hoo i Ham and Hit doz not biccum a modest Gal ro speck out too plainlie But praps u Will find Mee howt wen I tel u *Sint yore Lam's ool stockings No. 3 od a little ole in the tle last Wick witch is now mended with brown silk!!* Now gess me Howt if you can hopping fat will Won day bring bug tu geither I must konklude this Hapistol but be fore it goes Hoff I will dush with a speech

with I urd at the Theeheter last nit made by the Hairone of the play her to Bo

When wee shall be united at the rly Hatter in the Bonds of Hihmen New Flowers o' weeded Loov Will about up Bell w hear feet evry day And we shall see nothing but, a pye nest before us.

JULIA  
if you wish to send a hand saw to this letter if you put it in the toe off one off yore stockings goin to the wash, your julia will get it

*The Cat and the air-pump.*—The following anecdote of the cat is related by De la Croix, as having fallen within his own observation. "I once saw," says he, "a lecturer upon experimental philosophy place a cat under the glass receiver of an air pump, for the purpose of demonstrating that very certain fact, that life cannot be supported without air and respiration. The lecturer had already made several strokes upon the piston, in order to exhaust the receiver of air, when the animal, who began to feel herself very uncomfortable in the rarified atmosphere, was fortunate enough to discover the source from whence her uneasiness proceeded. She placed her paw upon the hole through which the air escaped, and thus prevented any more from passing out of the receiver. All the exertions of the philosopher were now unavailing—in vain he drew the piston—the cat's paw effectually prevented its operation. Hoping to effect his purpose, he let air again into the receiver, which, as soon as the cat perceived, she withdrew her paw from the aperture; but whenever he attempted to exhaust the receiver, she applied her paw as before. All the spectators clapped their hands in admiration of the wonderful sagacity of the animal; and the lecturer found himself under the necessity of liberating her, and substituting in her place another that possessed less penetration, and enabled him to repeat the cruel experiment."

*Pleasant travelling.*—In Edinburg resides Mr. C—, who is as huge, though not as witty, as Falstaff. It is his custom when he travels to book two places, and thus secure half the inside of the coach to himself. He sent his servant the other day to book him for Glasgow. The man returned with the following pleasing intelligence: "I've book'd you, sir; there weren't two inside places left so I booked you one in and one out."

*Worshipping the Sun.*—Noticing the late fogs in London we find the observation of a writer that they put him in mind of Persian ambassador's witty retort on the old Scotch lady, who annoyed him with questions, and at last enquired—"They worship the sun in your country, sir?" "Yes, madam, and so would they in yours—if they had ever seen him."

Lord Dormer and Mr. Edward Monckton both stuttered dreadfully. Once upon the occasion of their meeting in London, Mr. Monckton, seeing Lord Dormer making a vain attempt to give utterance to his words, said to him, "My dear lo—or—ord, wh—y do—'nt you go to the man that cu—cu—cer—cured me?"

*A wet pair.* On a very rainy day, a man entered his house and was accosted by his wife in the following manner: "Now my dear while you are wet, go and fetch me a bucket of water." He obeyed, brought the water and threw it all over her, saying at the same time, "Now my dear, while you are wet go fetch another."

A Comic Magazine is announced for publication in London. People would always rather laugh than cry—so we give them the very latest good un. A sleepy hat.—Why, Bob, what a sleepy hat you've got!" "Sleepy hat! What do you mean by that?" "Why it must be sleepy; it's so long since it had a nap!"

Another.—I never will marry a woman who can't carve, said M— Why? Because she would not be a help meat to me.

*Use of Notoriety.*—The pamphlet of the rev. Dr. Wilson, who, on account of it, was expelled from acting as chaplain to the New York legislature, sells so rapidly that in one day, says a New York paper, a single bookseller sold enough to pay for publishing another edition, which will immediately succeed the first edition of 10,000.

*Law anecdote.*—A wealthy farmer in the State of New York, having been sued by Mr. Haveus, wrote the following classical epistle to his attorney:

"Esq.—Srr if that state Heaven's goes a gin me I want to carry it up to a higher corte for God goes I dont owe him one cent."

*A present.*—The keeper of the Menagerie in South fifth street was very unexpectedly greeted the other morning when he opened the shop, by an addition to his stock in trade, in the person of a young camel, whose mother had thus endured the pains of a double confinement.

It is said that Pennsylvania, since adoption of her constitution has invested the sum of thirty seven millions of dollars in internal improvements. She has besides her numerous other public works thirty-seven rail roads within the limits of the state.