

STORIES WITH A MORAL

HUMOROUS AND DESCRIPTIVE

OF

Southern Life a Century Ago

BY

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Preface

IT is proper and perhaps of interest to say a few words explanatory, in regard to the following articles and their writer. Augustus B. Longstreet, known throughout the South as Judge Longstreet, flourished as an author from 1835 to 1870.

He was prominent not only as a literary man, but as an educator, having been president of several universities and also prominent in church circles.

He wrote mostly in the spirit of pastime, or from fondness, and his writings are thus scattered in time and place. The following sketches are presented by the compiler after a tedious research in the old literary publications of prominence during the antebellum period, excepting one or two from his book, "Georgia Scenes," that are brought in to complete the series. I have taken the liberty of changing slightly the names of one or two articles, so as to give them more appropriate titles and better appearance. I hope this will be justified by their effect and by the appreciation of those who like to read true delineation of human nature, in which art we think the author was a master.

FITZ R. LONGSTREET.

Gainesville, Ga.

III.

“DARBY, THE POLITICIAN.”

I well remember the first man who, without any qualifications for the place, was elected to the Legislature of Georgia. He was a blacksmith by trade, and Darby Anvil was his name. I would not be understood as saying that none had preceded him but men of profound wisdom or even notable talents (at the time of which I am speaking such men were not to be found in every county of the State), but that none had been deputed to that body who were not vastly superior to Anvil in every moral and intellectual quality.

Darby came hither just at the close of the Revolutionary War; and, if his own report of himself is to be believed, “*he fit*” in that memorable struggle. True, he never distinctly stated on which side “he fit;” but as he spoke freely of the incidents of the revolution, and at a time when Tories were very scarce and very mute, it was taken for granted that he fought on the right side.

Darby established himself upon a lot in the then village of _____, which cost him nothing; for in his day town lots, and even large tracts of land, were

granted to any one who would occupy them for a given time. Two log huts soon rose upon Darby's lot, into one of which he stowed his wife and children, and in the other his blacksmith's tools. He now plied his trade assiduously; and as all trades flourished at that time, he grew rich apace. A year had hardly rolled away before a snug frame house rose in front of his log dwelling, and his shop gave place to one of more taste and convenience from the hands of a carpenter. The brand of horse-shoes upon the shop-door no longer served Darby for a sign; but high over the entrance of the smithery, from a piece of iron-work of crooks and convolutions unutterable, hung a flaming sign-board, decorated on either side with appropriate designs. On one side was Darby in person, shoeing Gen. Washington's horse. I say it was *Washington's* horse because Darby said so, and Billy Spikes, who painted it, said so. Certainly, it was large enough for Washington's horse; for, taking Darby, whose height I knew, for a gauge, the horse could not have been less than five and twenty feet high. On the other side was a plow, with handles nine feet long (by the same measure), studded with hoes and axes, staples and horse-shoes.

Everything around Darby bore the aspect of thrift and comfort—in short, his fortune increased

even faster than his children; and this is no small compliment to his industry and economy, for Mrs. Anvil had not for many years suffered eighteen months to pass without reminding him, with a blush through a smirk, that she would "soon want a little sugar and coffee and sweetened dram for the little stranger." Darby had just received the tenth notice of this -kind when he resolved to turn politician. Whether the notices had any influence upon him in forming this rash resolution, I am 'not prepared to say; but certain it is that he had received them, for several years preceding, with a rapidly declining interest, insomuch that, when the last came, it gave to his countenance an expression better suited to dyspepsia than to such joyous tidings; and he was proceeding to make a most uncourteous response, when the kindling fire of his lady's eye brought him to an anti-climax of passive gentility.

"Why, Nancy, " said he, " Lord 'a' massy on my soul! I don't grudge you the rum and coffee and sugar, but r'aly it does seem to me-that-we're havin' a powerful chance o' childern somehow or 'nother.

I am digressing a little, but I cannot resume my subject without doing Mrs. Anvil the justice to say that she defended her dignity with becoming spirit,

and by a short but pungent syllogism taught Darby that he had more cause for self-condemnation than for grudgings or astonishment.

Darby Anvil, though ignorant in the extreme, had some shrewdness and much low cunning. He knew well the prejudices and weaknesses of the common people of the country, and had no little tact in turning them to his own advantage.

Two attorneys of eminence who had repeatedly served the State in her deliberative assemblies during and after the war were candidates for the popular branch of the Legislature when Darby determined to make a third and supernumerary candidate. He announced his aims in the only way in which he could have announced them without exposing himself to overwhelming ridicule ; for the people of those days pretty generally harbored the superstitious notion that talents were indispensable to wholesome legislation.

There was a great barbecue in the county. It was the wager of a hunting watch, and consequently everybody was invited and everybody attended. During the festival, when Darby and ten or twelve of his own class were collected round the bottle, " Boys, " said he, " how 'bout the 'lection this year? "

" O," says one, " there's no opposition."

“ No opposition!” cried Darby, “ by zounds, that’ll never do. We’ll have no fun. I’ll be ding’d if I don’t offer myself if I can’t git a smarter man to offer, rather than have no fun at all. What do you say, Bill Rucker? Won’t you go in for the old blacksmith ag’inst the lawyers?” smiling and winking to the by-standers.

“ O yes,” said Bill carelessly, “ I’ll go in for you to a red heat. ”

“Well, thar’s one vote for the old blacksmith, anyhow. ”

“Johnny, you’ll stick to Uncle Darby ag’n the lawyers, I know; won’t you, Johnny? ”

“Yes, ” said Johnny Fields, “ I’ll stick to you like grim death to a dead nigger. ”

“Jimmy Johns ‘ll go—O no! I’ve no chance of Jimmy’s vote; bein’ as how he’s a mighty takin’ to lawyers since his brother Bob’s case was try’n. How ‘bout that, Jimmy?” with a dry, equivocal laugh.

“ Blast their infernal souls! ” said Jim, “ I’d vote for the devil ‘fore I’d vote for either of ‘em. They made out my evidence was nothin’ ‘t all but swearin’ lies for brother Bob from one end to t ‘other. ”

“Well, Jimmy, ” pursued Darby, “you mustn’t mind Uncle Darby’s laughin’, my son, I can’t help every time I think how mad you was when

you come to my shop that day; but you know I told you you'd git over it and vote for the 'squires at last, didn't I? "

"Yes, and you told a lie, too; didn't you, Uncle Darby? "

Here Darby roared immoderately and then, becoming suddenly very grave, he proceeded: "But, boys, puttin' all jokin' away, it's wrong, mighty wrong, for anybody to be puttin' upon anybody's charicter after that sort, I don't care who they is. And if I was in the Legislater the fust thing I'd do would be to stop it. "

"Well, Uncle Darby, why don't you offer? " said Johns. "I'll go for you, and there's plenty more'11 go for you if you'll come out."

"Yes, that there is, " said Job Snatch (another sufferer in court). "I'll go for you. "

"And so will I, " said Seth Weed.

"Why, boys, " interrupted Darby, "if you don't hush, you'll make me come out sure enough. And what would I do in the 'sembly? "

"I'll tell you what you'd do, " said Sam Flat crustily, "you'd set up in one corner of the room like poor folks at a frolic and never open your mouth. And I'll tell you another thing—my opinion is, you want to offer, too; and you're only fishin' for an excuse to do it now."

Darby burst into a loud laugh; but there was enough chagrin mingled with it to show plainly that he felt the truth of Sam's remark. It was near a minute before he could reply: " O no, Sammy, I've no notion of offerin', unless it mout be just to have a little fun. And if I was to offer what harm would it do? I couldn't be 'lected; and if I wasn't I wouldn't care, for it wouldn't be no disgrace for a poor blacksmith to be beat by the great folks that's beat everybody. "

"Well, " said Jimmy Johns, "may I say you's a cand'date? "

"Jimmy, you is a free man and has a right to say what you please. "

"And I'm a free man, and I'll say what I please, too," said Job Snatch.

" And so am I, " said Seth Weed.

"Why, what's got into these boys? " chuckled out Darby ; " I b'lieve they're gwine to make me a cand'date whether I will or no. I didn't know I had so much pop'larity. Let me git away from here or I'll be made a great man in spite of myself. But I must take a drink before I go. Come, boys, le's take a drink, and I'll give you a toast:

"Here's wishin' that honest men who's 'blige to go to court
to swear
May not be 'lowed to be made game of by lawyers of the
bare."

This sentiment, like many electioneering harangues of equal merit in the present day, was received "with unbounded applause;" and amidst laughter and entreaties for a repetition of the toast, Darby hastened away to a small party of marksmen who had made up a match and were trying their skill apart from the throng. To these he made himself obsequious, while his friends spread the news of his candidacy. It soon pervaded the whole assembly, and many went to him to know the truth of the report. His answers to such were regulated by the tone and manner with which they put their questions. If they exhibited no astonishment, he told them that "he had tried to git off, but his friends kept plaguin' him so to offer that he was 'bliged to give up or make 'em all mad; and therefore, he told 'em they mout do as they pleased." If the inquirer exhibited signs of wonder and incredulity, Darby gave him an affirmative with all the tokens of irony. Amongst the rest came Smith and Jones, the two candidates. They happened to meet him just as he was returning to the crowd from the shooting-match and when no person was with him.

"Darby," inquired Smith, "is it possible that you are a candidate for the Legislature?"

"Why not?" returned Anvil, with a blush.

“Why, you are utterly unqualified; *you* will disgrace yourself.”

“I know,” rejoined Anvil, “that I’d make a mighty poor spout of speakin’ ag’in lawyers, but I reckon as how I could *vote* as good as them.”

“You are mistaken, Darby,” said Jones; it requires a better head to vote right than to speak well. The business of law-making is a very delicate business, which should be managed with the nicest care, especially in this country. It is true that it has been much simplified in the several States by our admirable form of government. A vast variety of subjects, and those, too, which the people at large are generally best acquainted with have been withdrawn from the State Legislature: But still the States are sovereign, and possess all power not specially delegated to the general government-”

“YOU should have said,” interrupted Smith “that the State legislation has been *diminished* rather than that it has been *simplified*. In truth it has been rendered more intricate by our novel form of government. In other countries the law-giver has only to study the interests of the people and legislate accordingly ; but here, in addition to the ordinary duties of a legislator, he has others of infinite difficulty and infinite importance to dis-

charge. He is one of the guardians of a State which is both sovereign and subject—sovereign by Constitution, subject by concession. He must consider well, therefore, the powers which she has ceded, and yield implicit obedience to them; he must study well the powers which she has reserved, and fearlessly maintain them. An error on the one hand is a step toward anarchy; an error on the other is a step toward slavery— "

" Why," interrupted Darby, "I don't understand head nor tail of all this *sarment*."

"I was not addressing myself to you," said Smith, "though I confess that what I was saying was meant for your improvement. I was in hopes you would understand enough of it to discover your unfitness for the Legislature."

" I think," said Jones, "I can convince ,Darby of that in a more intelligent way."

" Darby, what does a man go to the Legislature for? "

" Why, to make laws, " said Darby.

"True; and to amend such as have been made. Now, do you know what laws have been made?"

" No. "

" Do you know how those have operated which have been made? "

" Operated? "

“ I mean do you know whether they have proved good or bad ? ”

“ No, I tell you; I don't know nothin' 't all about 'em. ”

“ Well, now suppose a man should come to your shop and offer to work for you a month—at plow-making we will suppose—and when you asked him if he understood making such plows as are used in Georgia he should reply that he knew nothing at all about plows, his whole life had been spent in shoe-making; but that if you would lay two plows before him he could tell you which he thought best; and that whenever you wanted his opinion or vote upon shop matters he could give it as good as any one. What would you think of him? ”

“ Then, 'cordin' to your chat, nobody ought to go to 'sembly but lawyers, ” said Darby.

“ I do not say so; but that no one should go there who has not some little knowledge of the business which he has to do. If he possess this knowledge, it matters not whether he be lawyer, farmer, merchant, or mechanic.

By this time quite a crowd, mostly unlettered persons, had collected round the candidates, and though it was impossible for Darby to hide his chagrin while he and his companions were alone, it became less and less visible with every accession

to the group, so that by the time Mr. Jones concluded his remarks it was entirely dissipated, and Darby stood before the company decidedly the most self-confident of the three.

“Well,” said he, planting himself astraddle and placing his arms akimbo, “now I’ve heard you all through, let me see how the old blacksmith can *argify with two lawyers at a time*. I know I’m nothin’ but a poor, ign’ant blacksmith that don’t know nothin’ nohow; and furthermore, I don’t think nobody ought to go to the ‘sembly but *lawyers* nether, bein’ as how they’re the smartest people in the world. But howsomedever, that’s n’ither here nor thar. Now, Mr. Smith, you say I’d disgrace myself to go to the ‘sembly, and I reckon it’s so, for I’m like my neighbors here, hard-workin’ people, who ha’n’t got no business doin’ nothin’ but workin’ for great folks and rich folks, nohow. But howsomedever, that’s n’ither here nor thar, as the fellow said. Now, I want to ax you a few questions, and you mus’n’t git mad with me, for I only want to git a little l’arnin’. And firstly of the first place, to begin at the beginnin’, as the fellow said, an’t a poor man as free as a rich man?” winking, with a smirk to the approving by-standers.

“Certainly, said Smith.

“And didn’t they fight for libity as well as rich ones?”

“ Yes. ”

“ Well—hem!—an’t they as honest as rich men? ”

“No doubt of it. ”

“Well, if a poor man is as free as a rich man (*now you mus’n’t git mad with me*), and they fit for libity as well as them, and is as honest, how comes it that some people that’s the smartest in the world votes for nobody havin’ votes but them that’s got land? ” Here several of the by-standers who had been interchanging winks and smiles in token that they foresaw the dilemma into which Darby was leading his antagonist, burst into a loud laugh.

“ Now, an’t he the devil? ” whispered one.

“ I tell you what it is, ” said a second, “the lawyers an’t gwine to git nothin’ out o’ him. ”

“Mighty smart man, ” said a third, gravely, “ powerful smart for his opportunities. ”

“ I advocated freehold suffrage, ” returned Smith, “in the convention that framed the Constitution, not because I thought the rich man entitled to higher privileges than the poor man, but because I thought him less exposed to temptation. Indeed, my proposition made no distinction between the poor and the rich, for there is not a farmer in

the State who has not more land than would have entitled him to a vote under it. But I apprehend the time will come when our State will be inundated with strangers and sojourners amongst us—mere floating adventurers—who have no common interest, feeling, or sympathy with us, who will prostitute the right of suffrage to private gain, and set up their votes to the highest bidder. I would, therefore, have confined this right to those who have a fixed and permanent interest in the State, who must share the honors or suffer the penalties of wise or corrupt legislation.”

“ If Smith is to be blamed, ” said Jones, “ for his course in the convention, so am I. I differed from him, to be sure, in measure, but agreed with him in principle. I would have had a small property qualification without confining it to land, but his answer to this was decisive. If the amount of property required were large, it would disqualify many honest voters who are permanent residents of the State; if it were small, every stranger who brought with him money enough to bear his traveling expenses would be qualified to vote. But we were both overruled. ”

“ Gentlemen, ” said Darby, “ you talk too much dictionary for me; I wasn’t raised to much book larnin’ nor dictionary larnin’. But, howsomever,

I think, 'Squire Smith, you said anybody that didn't own land would sell their votes to the highest bidder; and I reckon it's so, for you great folks knows more than me; but 'the proof of the puddin's in chawin' the bag,' as the fellow said, therefore let's see how the thing'll work. Jimmy Johns, you don't own no land, and, therefore, 'cordin' to the 'Squire's narration, you'll sell your vote to the highest bidder. What'll you take for it?"

"Nobody better not tell me, " said Jim, "that I'll sell my vote, or I'll be dad seized if I don't fling a handful o' fingers right in his face in short metcher, I don't care who he is."

"I did not say, " resumed Smith, " that any man now in the State would sell his vote, nor do I believe that any true Georgian, by birth or adoption, ever will; but the time will come when idle, worthless vagabonds will come amongst us, who will sell their votes for a pint of rum if they can get no more.' "

"Well, 'Squire, now it seems to me—but I don't know, but it seems to me—somehow or 'nother that it'll be time enough to have land votin' when that time comes, and not to begin upon poor folks now to stop mean folks when we are all dead and gone. Them folks, I reckon, can take care o' themselves. "

“Then it will be too late,” interposed Jones. “Men who have a marketable article will never give it away, or allow it to be taken from them. Should they be willing to renounce it, there will be factious demagogues enough to prevent them from so doing. No, Darby, if you would establish a good government, you must do it at its organization; thenceforward there is a ceaseless war between the governors and the governed. The rulers are ever usurping the rights of the people, or the people are ever resuming the rights of the”—

“Stop a little thar,” interrupted Darby; “you say thar’s a war ‘tween the Governor and the gov’ment. Now, what’s the reason I never hearn of that war? I’ve hearn of the old French War and the Rev’lution War and the Injun War, but I never hearn of that war before.”

“I don’t say,” continued Jones, impatiently, “that there is a war, a fight”—

“O, well, if you take that back, why we’ll start ag’in. But, howsomedever, when I’m gwine to a place I always try to take the right road at first, and then thar’s no ‘casion for turnin’ back.”

“Well, Darby,” said Jones, “you are certainly a bigger fool than I took you to be, and that is not your worst fault.’’

“Well, now, you see,” said Darby (bristling),

wife and children too often when they've been sick for me to stand by and see him imposed on, right or wrong; that's the racket."

"Well, Johnny, " said Darby (re-adjusting his coat), " I always liked the 'Squire myself, and always voted for him—don't you, know I did, Johnny?—but then you know yourself that it's mighty hard for a man to be called a fool to his face, now an't it, Johnny?"

"Why, it's a thing that don't go down easy, I know, but then look at tother side a little. Now you made out the 'Squire eat his words about the war, and that's mighty hard to swallow, too. Now he told you he didn't mean they fit, and you know anybody's liable to make mistakes anyhow; and you kept makin' out that he had to back out from "what he said, and"—

" Yes, Darby, " said Jimmy Johns, "that's a fact, Johnny's right. You brushed the 'Squire a little too close there, Darby, and I can't blame him for gittin' mad. I'll stick by you when you're on the right side, but I can't go with you there. I couldn't ha' stood it myself."

" Yes, Darby, " said Fields, " you must confess yourself that you begun it, and, therefore, you oughtn't to got mad. That was wrong, Darby, and I can't go with you them lengths."

“How was it?” said Snatch, as if he were not at the beginning of the affray. “How was it?”

“Why,” said Johns, “Darby made out the ‘Squire eat his words, and then the ‘Squire called Darby a fool.’”

“O, chuch!” said Snatch, “was that the way of it? Darby’s wrong. If I’d o’ knowed that, I wouldn’t a’ opened my mouth.”

“Well,” said Darby, “I believe I was wrong there, Johnny; and if my friends say so, I know I was. And, therefore, I am willin’ to drop it. I always looked upon the ‘Squire as a mighty good, kind-hearted man.”

“O yes!” exclaimed three or four at once, “drop it.”

“I was just waitin’ to see a row,” said Sam Flat (bully number two), “and I’d a’ kept up all sorts o’ rollin’ and tumblin’ over this barbecue ground before I’d a’ seen the ‘Squire hurt.”

“O, but Sammy, ” said Johns, Fields, and Snatch eagerly and in one voice, “it’s all over now. Drop it; we all see Darby was wrong.”

“O yes, ” said John White, reeling under a pint of rum, “drop it; it’s all got—in a wrong—fix by not knowin’-nothin’ ‘bout it. I heard it every bit. ‘Squire didn’t say what Darby said—and Darby—didn’t say what ‘Squire said—and

none of you didn't say what all of you said-and that's the way-you all got to quar'lin' an' fightin'. We're all friends—let's go 'n' take a drink—which whipped?"

Before White concluded this very luminous and satisfactory explanation the attorneys and their friends had retired, and Darby proceeded: "Gentlemen, when I fust talked 'bout bein' a cand'date, I had no notion o' bein' one. I jest said it in fun, as all the boys here knows. But now, you see, sence they go to puttin' on me after this sort, I'll be blamed if I don't be a cand'date, even if I git beat, This is a free country, in which every man has a right to do as he pleases, and 'cordin' to their chat nobody ha'nt got no right to be cand'dates but lawyers. If that's the chat, I don't know what our Rev'lution was for, and I fit in it too. Gentlemen, you see how I've been persecuted.

Darby's resolution was applauded by some, and his insulted dignity soothed by others. He now surrendered himself unreservedly to electioneering. His first object was to secure the favor of John Reynolds, for the bully of a county was then a very desirable auxiliary in a canvass. This was easily effected by a little kindness and a little hypocrisy, and Darby wanted neither when his interest was at stake. He soon persuaded John that

all he had said to Mr. Jones was a joke, or (what was the same thing to John) an error in Darby; and as the bully of the county is too much occupied in seeking glory to attend much to his trade or his farm, and is therefore constantly in need of some little assistance from his more industrious neighbors, Darby had opportunities enough of conciliating John by kind offices. These he improved so handsomely that John was soon won by gratitude, and came out his open supporter.

Marvelous was now the "change" which "came over the spirit of Darby's dream." His shop was committed to the entire management of Sambo and Cuffy, and his "little strangers" to Nancy. He rode night and day, attended every gathering in the county, treated liberally,aped dignity here, cracked obscene jokes there, sung vulgar songs in one place, talked gravely in another, told long, dry stories, gave short, mean toasts, jested with the women and played with the children, grew liberal in suretyships, paid promptly and dunned nobody, and asked everybody to vote for him.

By these means Darby's popularity increased wonderfully. Three months lay between the barbecue and the election, and before the expiration of the first the wise began to fear and the foolish to boast that Darby Anvil would be elected. An-

other month placed the matter beyond dispute and left to either of the other candidates the alternative of making common cause with Darby or staying at home. The temptation was too strong for Smith's integrity. He formed a secret alliance with Darby. It was effected with great care and much cunning, but it was soon exposed by his conduct and its results. It was the first instance of such self-abasement that I ever witnessed in Georgia (would that it had been the last!), and it was received with becoming indignation by the virtuous and intelligent of the country. They took the field, almost to a man, in behalf of Jones, and but for his magnanimity they would have succeeded at last in giving Smith the just reward of his treachery. But Jones implored them by their regard for the future welfare of the State to level all their forces against Anvil and not against Smith. "If Smith," said he, "is returned to the Legislature, he will serve you with profit, if not with honor; but if Darby be elected, he will be worthless as a member and ruinous as an example. Encouraged by his success, hundreds of stupid asses like himself will make their way into the General Assembly; and the consequences will be that our government will become a despotism of fools and a disgrace to republicanism." By these

and many other more forcible arguments, which I have not time to repeat, Jones prevailed upon his friends to sacrifice their private prejudices to the public good, and to bend all their exertions to the exclusion of Anvil. They did so, and for a time wonderful were the effects of their efforts. So commanding was their position that even the common people were attracted by it, and many came over to them from the ranks of the coalition. Smith was cowed by the noble bearing of his old friend toward him, and remorse greatly paralyzed his exertions. Darby, too, grew so much alarmed that he became serious, and by as much as he grew serious by so much did he lose his influence. In short, there is every reason to believe that after all Darby would have been beaten had not a little incident occurred which secured his election in spite of opposition. It was a strange incident to be followed by such an effect. There is an old Scotch song which says:

Be a lassie e'er so black
An she hae the name o'siller,
Set her upo' Tintock top,
The wind will blaw a man till her.

The winds are not more propitious to the siller'd lassie than unpropitious to a candidate. If ever ghe has committed a fault, no matter when or where

the wind will blow a babbler to him. It was so with Darby, though *unfortunate* only in a moral, not in a political sense.

About three weeks before the election a traveler stopped at a public house in the county where several persons had collected, and amongst the rest was Your Uncle *Nicky Bugg*. This was a title which he assumed himself and which was accorded to him by universal consent. The company were all supporters of Jones, and their conversation turning upon the approaching election, they denounced Darby Anvil in unmeasured terms. The stranger, probably emboldened by their sentiments, after putting a few questions as to Darby's personal identity, stated that Darby had left Virginia *between two days* in order to avoid a prosecution for perjury. The stranger said he was not himself personally acquainted with the facts, but referred to a number of persons in Virginia who would confirm his statement by certificates. The certificates were' immediately written for, and to make their effect the more decisive it was resolved by the company that they would not whisper the important discovery until the certificates arrived. Fortunately for Darby, they did not arrive the evening before the election.

At an early hour of the succeeding day Darby

made his appearance at the court-house at the head of about thirty men, some in wagons, some on horseback (single and double), and some on foot. They all had their tickets in their hats, with the names of Smith and Anvil written on them in large characters. As they proceeded to the polls they made the village ring with shouts of “ Hurrah for Smith !” “ Hurrah for Anvil !” “ Hurrah for the blacksmith and the people’s candidate !” Darby had provided a table and a dozen bottles of rum, to which he led his friends and told them to drink freely and vote boldly. He was reminded that if he should be elected he would have to swear that he had not gained his election by treating, canvassing, etc., to which he replied that he “could swaller that oath mighty easy, for he reckoned nobody wa’n’t so mean as to vote for him just because he treated ‘em. ”

Owing to some misunderstanding of the magistrates who were to preside at the. election, or from some other cause unknown, the polls were not opened until an hour or two after the usual time. The delay was extremely annoying to Darby; for in the interim his friends paid such profound respect to his first injunction above mentioned that several of them were fast becoming hors de suffrage if I may be allowed the expression.

length came the magistrates, however; and no sooner had they entered the court-yard, where was collected an immense throng, than "Your Uncle Nicky" took the topmost step at the door of the court-house, and demanded the attention of every gentleman present. The demand had to be repeated several times before it was heeded, but it finally succeeded in gathering around him every voter on the campus. They were soon reduced to silence, and Bugg commenced reading, in a slow and audible voice, the cruel certificates. In the meantime Darby, as one very truly observed, "looked powerful bad." He stared like an owl at noonday, and trembled like the shoe of a grist-mill. He changed feet as rapidly as if he had been upon hot embers; and as for his hands, suffered them to do as they pleased, and they pleased to go through evolutions that no pen can describe. I can only say of them that they seemed to be in frantic search for the mind that had deserted them, for they wandered all over his body and all through his apparel, giving occasional hints to the materialists that the mind may at last be seated where none of them have ever yet placed it. To add, if possible, to Darby's embarrassment, "Your Uncle Nicky" was one of those men to whom a fight was an accommodation. Darby

could not, therefore, with safety, resort to the usual expedient in such cases: a quarrel with the author of his mortification. He received a consolation, however, the most grateful that could have been offered to his tortured feelings, even before Bugg had disposed of the certificates. It was from the cry of "Persecution!" which issued from a number of voices, accompanied by other consolatory expressions, which increased as soon as Bugg had concluded.

"It's too bad!" exclaimed one, "to attack a man so right on the 'lection day to his face, when he ha'n't got no chance o' defendin' himself."

"Ah, well, now," said a second, "if they go to takin' these in-turns on a fellow they an't gwine to git no good of it, and you'll see it. The clean thing's the clean thing, but this whopping a fellow up all at once when he's no chance is no sort o' doin's."

"Walk, ticket!" exclaimed a third (tearing up *a ticket on which was Jones's name*), "and come over to the old blacksmith; into my hand *flitter!* Fair play's a jewel, and that's what I go for in 'lectioneering as well as everything else."

"Never mind, Darby," added a fourth, "you an't dead yet if you are down and kickin'. There's enough here'll stand by you yet. Keep a stiff upper lip, and you'll come through yet."

“I swear,” added a fifth, “it’s too bad! It’s enough to hurt any man’s feelin’s to be so put upon *unbeknowns*.”

These, and many other expressions of a like kind, so far restored Darby’s equanimity that he was able to take the step in his defense as soon as Bugg descended from it. When he mounted the rostrum, his appearance was quite unparliamentary. He was dressed in a full suit of mud-colored home-spun, the workmanship of Nancy’s own hands, from the carding to the weaving. His pantaloons were supported only by his hips, for suspenders were not then worn; and even with this advantage at the one extremity, they were full five inches too short at the other. They reached his socks only when he stood firm on both legs—that is, when they were suffered to hang in a right line—but as Darby rarely used both limbs at the same time, there was an alternate flashing of naked skin from either limb, of the most agreeable and bewitching novelty. His vest was more uncourteous to his pantaloons than were his socks, for no position of Darby’s body could induce it to come within an inch of them. His under garment, however, acted as a mediator between them, and gracefully rolled out into the vacant space, seemingly to encircle the orator with a sash of coarse

but clean, white cloth. Darby wore no cravat, and from accident or design (the former, I suppose), his shirt-collar was thrown entirely open leaving exposed a most unsightly *Adam's apple* that gave to his neck the appearance of a little dromedary. Upon his coat Nancy had obviously "*spread herself*," as we say in Georgia. She seemed to have taken the pattern of it from the wings of a horse-fly. From a point about seven inches above the *os coccygis*, it *debouched* to the right and the left, with daring encroachments upon his calves. Two large plano-convex covered buttons marked the salient points of the skirts, and as many (on either skirt, one) their nether limits. The molds of these gorgeous ornaments were cut by the measure of a half-dollar, from a dried gourd; of course, therefore, it was in the covering that they took the shape which I have given to them. Five buttons more (*ejusdem generis*) stood in open order upon each lapel; and from every button advanced, in marvelous length, a button-hole worked with "indigo blue, so that they looked like two little detachments of artillery drawn up in battle array against each other. Coarse, sharp-pointed shoes and a low-crowned broad-brimmed white hat completed the costume of the first orator that I ever had the pleasure of

hearing address the electors of a county in Georgia. Indeed, he was the last also; for, though it is not now an unusual thing for candidates "to respond in strains of glowing eloquence" (see gazettes, *passim*) at dinner parties and barbecues, it is a very rare thing for them to address "the sovereignty" when assembled to exercise the elective franchise. Rut Darby had no alternative. The greetings which he met with from the crowd when he ascended the tribune were such as would have confounded any one who did not understand the spirit with which they were uttered. Strange as it may seem to the reader, they were meant for encouragement, and were so understood by Darby.

"Hey, Darb!" vociferated one, "you're too strong for your runners; you've pushed your legs too far through your breeches."

"Never mind that, Darby," cried another. "Tuck in your shirt-tail, and *norate* away the best you can; we'll see you out."

"Why, Darby," cried the third, "what makes you swaller so? Stand up to your fodder like a man. You've got plenty of friends here yet."

"Why, gentlemen," proceeded Darby, "its enough to make anybody *swaller* and feel bad too, to be put upon after this sort, all

when he ha'n't got no chance o' defendin' himself —no manner o' chance. Gentlemen, I fit in the Revolution; and if I'm now to lose my charricter because I'm took all unawar's, I shall think it the hardest case I ever hearn of in all my born days. Gentlemen, my charricter's as much to me and any hardworkin' man as any man's charricter is to him if he's a lawyer, or a doctor, or a store-keeper, or I don't care what he is. For what's a man worth that an't got no charricter? He's like a pair o' belloweses that ha'n't got no nose, or a saw that ha'n't got no handle: they an't no manner o' 'count; you can't use 'em at all. [That's the truth, Darby, ' interposed a voice gravely]. Gentlemen, I've lived a long time with you: did any of you ever hear of my usin' perj'ry? I reckon if I had time I could git ce'tif'cates, too, but you all see I an't got no time at all. Gentlemen I don't think I ever seed any one that was so persecuted in all my born days; and if I'm beat now, I shall think I'm beat by persecution.' And there's my wife and ten children, and they must all lose their charricters, too, just by bein' taken unawar's. I never knowed nobody to git nothin' by persecution; but if me and my wife and children's all to lose our charricters by it, why I s'pose it must be so, but I shall think it mighty hard. Gentlemen,

you can do as you please with me; and whatever you do, I can't help it."

The cry of "Hurrah for Anvil!" from many voices as Darby descended from the steps plainly testified that he had the sympathies and support of the majority. In vain did Jones and his friends reason with them upon the difference between exposing vice and persecuting innocence. It was in vain that they argued against the injustice of visiting Bugg's fault (if fault it was) upon the head of his friend Jones. The time and the severity of the attack were sufficient to change Darby into an object of persecution in their eyes. To make matters worse, if possible, for Jones, "Your Uncle Nicky" undertook to reason with the malcontents. This was a very unfortunate step, for though he was fully competent to reason, and reason well, with reasonable beings, he was the last man on earth who, in this way, should have undertaken to reclaim those who were won to Darby's support by what we have seen. He was easily excited and utterly intolerant of folly. Irritable as he was, however, he rarely gave signs of anger either in voice or countenance. So far from it, his composure was always greatest when just at the fighting point.

The first that "Your Uncle Nicky" undertook to correct was Jimmy Johns, who had pretended to

have a great friendship for him for reasons to be found in Jimmy's deportment toward John Reynolds.

"Jimmy," said Bugg, "you surely are not going to vote for that fool, Darby Anvil."

"Yes, I is," said Jimmy "and the more and the better of it is, I mean to give him a plumper, too."

"What to such a despicable character?"

"Yes; despical or no despical character, I can't go ag'in a persecuted man with a wife and ten childern—Miss Anvil is"—

"But it's no persecution to tell the truth on a man, especially when the truth goes to show that he is unfit for an office to which he is aspiring. Your way of reasoning will make rascality a passport to office,"

"O, I don't blame *you*, Uncle Nicky, I know what you did was for the best, but now you'll confess yourself—now won't you, Uncle Nicky?—that if he was 'spirin' and passport, you oughtn't to come down on him as you did, right at the 'lection. That was rubbin' him too hard, now wa'n't it, Uncle Nicky? 'Twas enough to make anybody feel sorry for him ; and Miss Anvil—"

"What difference does it make when or where you expose a villain? And what has Miss Anvil to do with it? Is she a candidate?"

“ No, but she’s a mighty good ‘oman; and you know yourself, Uncle Nicky, *she* an’t to blame. And wouldn’t it be wrong to hurt her charricter? Now I leave it to yourself, Uncle Nicky. Jist take it to yourself—s’pose you’d been guilty o’ parj’ry, and Miss Bugg—”

“ Stop a little, Jimmy, ” said Bugg very calmly, “ until ‘Your Uncle Nicky’ tries another argument better suited to your capacity, and which I think will brighten your ideas. ” So saying, he “ fetched Jimmy a sentimental jolt ” (as one afterward described it) in the butt of the ear that laid him out in short order.

Jimmy “ holl’d ” in time to arrest Uncle Nicky’s experimental philosophy at the first blow and the second kick. He would have fought longer with another man, but with Uncle Nicky he knew that the longer he fought the worse he would be flogged; so he acted wisely for once, at least.

In this way did “ Your Uncle Nicky ” proceed to dispense light amongst the *plebs* until he raised a battle-royal in the court-yard. At one time I observed not less than eight couples who were engaged in interchanging Uncle Nicky’s ethics.

The day rolled away, and at ten o’clock at night the state of the polls was announced. Darby and Smith were elected. They were both hoisted and

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borne about on the shoulders of their friends with huzzas of triumph. They then invited all who lingered about the court-yard at that late hour to a supper at one of the public houses of the village. Here they ate, drank, sung vulgar songs, and told more vulgar stories until about one o'clock, when they, or some of them, sallied forth and with drum and fife and yells drove sleep from the village until the dawn.

An inveterate hostility between Smith and Jones followed this election, the traces of which may be seen in their descendants to this day. Darby was elected again and again; and though he did nothing in the Legislature but vote as Smith voted, and drink grog in the recess of the sessions, he always returned to his constituents with wonderful stories of what "we did and what we tried to do."

In the meantime, things about home began to run rapidly to decay. Sambo and Cuffy worked up immense quantities of iron, for they both worked a great deal harder, as they said themselves, when "massa" was away than when he was there, "jist dat white folks might see dat nigger didn't. want no watchin', and dat massa might know how to trust 'em." But then they had little or nothing to show for it. A number of

good customers deserted the shop some from political hostility to the owner, and others because Sambo and Cuffy were always too busy to attend to them. Mrs. Anvil grew dissatisfied with politics as soon as Darby returned the first time from the Legislature with no money in his pockets; for she had taken up the idea that all who stepped into the Assembly stepped into a fortune. She therefore advised Darby to "quit it as not bein' the thing it was cracked up to be," and to "come home and mind his own business." But Darby had become too much enamored of the public service to take her counsel. He told her it would never do in the world for him to take his name down—his party would never forgive him. This logic was unsatisfactory to Nancy at it, and it became still more so as troubles thickened about the house. She therefore became crusty, petulant and boisterous by turns, greatly to the disturbance of Darby's domestic peace and tranquillity. He had anticipated this emergency, and took to drink privately beforehand; but he now began to come home drunk out of spite, and Nancy gave him spite for spite. Still, however, wife-like, she struggled hard to keep things together and to save her family from ruin; and her increased industry and economy would probably have balanced Darby's

waste from drink and kept a support in hand until he burned out, but alas! tickets began to pour in upon them by the peck from the courts of conscience and other more unconscionable courts, inviting Darby to appear here and appear there to answer for countless debts of his constituents. Then came the officers of justice and reduced them to beggary. A little before matters reached this crisis Darby was beaten for the Legislature, and it distressed him beyond measure. The friends for whom he had done the most were the first to desert him, alleging as a reason his want of qualification, and their thorough conviction, after three years' reflection, that the Virginia certificates were true.

Thus ended Darby's nomothetic career, but here ended not the consequences of it. Encouraged by his success, worthless candidates sprung up in every county. If their presumption was rebuked, they silenced the reprover and repressed their own shame with "I know that I am better qualified than Darby Anvil." Under this plea and by such artifices as Anvil had used, they made their way to the councils of the State, where they became the worthy progenitors of a series of acts extending through many years, which for extravagance and folly have no parallel in the codes of enlightened

nations. The penalties of these acts are now upon our heads, and upon our children's children will they descend with unmitigated rigor. I forbear to follow the consequences further—in charity to my native' land I forbear. And yet, I am not so sure but that such charity is treason to the State and allegiance to her most deadly foes. Presumptuous ignorance should be reprimanded with a fearless tongue, its sins should be proclaimed abroad in warning to the people, and all good men should unite their efforts to redeem a State entirely from such influence.