

## MISCELLANECUS.

## JOHN BRISBEN, NOBLEMAN.

Colonel George W. Symonds, in the "Detroit Free Press," says the Governor pardoned John Brisben, a Penitentiary convict, to-day. He was sent up from Bourbon for fifteen years for forgery, and had ten years yet to serve. Our readers are familiar with the history of this case, and the humane action of his Excellency will be generally commended. — *Frankfort (Ky) Yoman*

I read this little paragraph, and my mind went back six years. I knew John Brisben, and I also knew his twin brother Joseph. I was familiar with the details of the action that placed John Brisben in a felon's cell, and now when the sad affair is brought back to my mind so vividly I must write it out, for never before have I met, in prose or poetry, in real life or in romance, a greater hero than plain, matter-of-fact John Brisben.

The Brisbens came of good stock. I think the great grandfather of my hero emigrated to Kentucky when Kenton's station, between the present city of Maysville and the historic old town of Washington, was the principal settlement on the "dark and blow" ground. He came from Upper Pennsylvania and located about five miles from the Ohio River, on Limestone Creek. He was an industrious, strong-limbed, iron-hearted old fellow, and in a few years his surroundings were of the most comfortable description. One of his sons, Edwin Brisben, once represented Kentucky in the Federal Congress. I think he was the grandfather of John and Joseph Brisben. Their father's name was Samuel, and he died when they were little children, leaving his widow an excellent blue-grass farm and a snug little fortune in stocks, bonds, and mortgages. The widow remained unmarried until her death. Mrs. Samuel Brisben was a good woman, and she idolized her twin boys. Like most twins, the brothers resembled each other in a striking manner, and even intimate acquaintances could not tell them apart. But although the physical resemblance was so strong there was great dissimilarity in the disposition of the twins. Joseph Brisben was very surly and morose, sometimes cunning and revengeful. He was withal a dreamer and enthusiast; a man well learned in books, a brilliant, frothy talker when he chose to be sociable (which was seldom), a splendid horseman, and a most excellent shot. John Brisben, on the contrary, was cheerful and bright, honourable and forgiving. He was a man of high moral principle, intensely practical and methodical, cared little for books and although he said but little, was a splendid companion. He was a poor horseman, and I don't think he ever shot a gun in his life. He saw nothing of the poetry of life, and as for sport, he enjoyed himself only when hard at work. He loved his brother, and when they were boys together suffered punishment many times, and uncomplainingly, that "Jodie" might go scot free. His life was therefore a constant sacrifice, but the object of this loving adoration made but shabby returns for this unselfish devotion.

They were twenty years old when their mother died very suddenly. Joseph made a great pretence of grief, and was so hysterical at the grave that he had to be led away.

John, on the contrary, never demonstrative, took the great affliction with his customary coolness. He said but little, and shed no tears.

The property left to the boys was considerable. The day they were twenty-one years old, the trustees met and made settlement. There was the blue-grass farm, valued at \$50,000, and \$100,000 in well-invested securities, which could be turned into money. Joseph demanded a division.

"You can take the farm, Jack," he said. "I was never cut out for a farmer. Give me \$75,000 in money for my share."

So this sort of division was made. John continued on at the homestead, working in his plain, methodical way, and slowly adding to his share of the money what he could raise out of the profits of the farm. Joseph, with his newly acquired wealth, set up an establishment at the nearest town, and began a life of pleasure of the grosser sort. His brother gave him no advice, for he knew it was useless. Joseph spent his money with great prodigality, and before he knew it he was a beggar. In the meantime, John's \$25,000 had doubled itself. One day Joseph came to him with a full confession of his pecuniary troubles.

"Jack," he said, "I am not only a beggar, but I am heavily in debt. Help me out, like a good fellow, and I will settle down and begin life in sober earnest. With my capacity for business, I can soon make money enough to repay you. I have sown my wild oats, and with a little help I can soon recover all that I have squandered so foolishly."

For an answer, John Brisben placed his name to an order for the \$25,000 he had earned so laboriously.

"Will that be enough, Jodie," he asked, "because I have as much more, which you can have if it is necessary."

"This will be sufficient, old fellow," was the reply. "In two years I will pay it back."

He went back to town, drew his money, paid his debts, sold some of his horses, and discharged several of his servants. Twenty thousand dollars was left out of the loan. He invested this in business, and for a while seemed to have really reformed. John was encouraged to say:

"Jodie will come out all right. He is smarter than I, and in five years he will be worth more money than I could make in a life-time."

In less than three years Joseph Brisben's affairs were in the hands of his creditors, and sheriff's officers closed out his business. Again he turned to his brother for help and sympathy.

"I own that I managed a trifle carelessly," he said, by way of explanation. "Experience is a dear teacher, and the lesson I have learned I shall never forget. If you come to my assistance now I can soon recover myself."

Once more John Brisben placed his name to a cheque payable to the order of his brother, and Joseph entered into business again. In two years he was a bankrupt.

"I shall never succeed in business, Jack," he said. "Help me out of this trouble, and I will live with you on the farm. I shall succeed as a farmer."

It took all of John Brisben's hoard to pay his brother's debts, but he made no complaint, uttered no reproach. He said:

"I am glad you are coming back to the farm, Jodie. You need do no work, and we shall be very happy together."

So Joseph took up his residence at the farm, and remembering his brother's words, devoted his time principally to hunting, fishing, and riding about the country.

In the meantime, John Brisben had fallen in love, and the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, Compton by name, was his promised wife. Being a man of strict honour himself, and having full confidence in his brother, he did not object when Joseph began to pay his affianced very marked attention.

"I am glad he likes her," he thought. "I am so busy on the farm that I have little time for pleasure, and Alice is so fond of amusement."

One night Joseph came to him as the shadows of the evening were beginning to fall. There was a triumphant ring in his voice as he spoke.

"Jack, old boy," he said, holding out his hand, "congratulate me. I think that from to-day I can date the beginning of a new life. Alice Compton has promised to be my wife."

He was too much engrossed with his new happiness to see the effect of this announcement as portrayed on John's face. He did not notice how the strong man's hand trembled in his own.

"Is this true?" faltered John at last.

"Why, of course it is. Are you not glad? We love each other, and shall be very happy."

"We love each other and shall be very happy," repeated John mechanically, and all the sunshine of his life sunk behind the heavy clouds of despair. "Yes, Jodie, I am glad, and I wish you long years of happiness."

He turned away, and staggered, rather than walked to his own room. He did not stir all night. Once a deep, sobbing groan struggled to his lips, and the moonbeams struggling through the window, fell full upon his face, and surprised two great tears stealing down his pale cheeks. He brushed away this evidence of weakness and sorrow, and when the morrow came, no one looking into his calm, serene eyes would have guessed how hard was the battle that had been fought and won in that lonely chamber.

They were married, and the man rejected by the bride and supplanted by the groom was the first to congratulate the newly married pair. A vacant house on the farm was fitted up for their reception and John Brisben's money paid for the furnishing.

"Hereafter, Jodie," he said, "we will divide the profits of the farm. I don't need much, and you shall have the larger share."

Ten years passed away, and John Brisben, an old man before his time, still worked from dawn till dark that his brother might play the gentleman and keep in comfort the large family which the years had drawn around him. It had been necessary to mortgage the old homestead to raise money to pay Joseph's gambling debts, for of late years he had played heavily, and had invariably lost.

One day—it was in the summer of 1871—a forged check was presented at one of the banks of the shire town, by Joseph Brisben, and the money for which it called was unhesitatingly paid over to him. He was under the influence of liquor at the time, and deeply interested in a game of cards for high stakes, which was in progress. The check was for \$2,500 I think. Before daylight the next morning Joseph Brisben had lost every dollar of it. To drown his chagrin he became beastly drunk, and while in this condition an officer arrived and apprehended him for forgery and uttering a forged check. The prisoner was confined to gaol, and word of his disgrace was sent to John Brisben. The latter read the message and a mist came over his eyes. He groaned audibly, and but for a strong effort of the will would have fallen to the floor, so weakened was he by the shock.

"She must not know it," he said to himself, and he made instant preparations to visit his brother. When he reached the gaol he was admitted to the cell of the wretched criminal. The brothers remained together several hours. What passed during the interview will never be known. When John Brisben emerged from the gaol he went straight to the magistrate who had issued the warrant for the apprehension of Joseph Brisben.

"Squire," he said in his slow, hesitating way. "You have made a mistake."

"In what way, Mr. Brisben?" asked the magistrate, who had a high regard for his visitor.

"You have caused the arrest of an innocent man."

"But—" began the magistrate.

"Issue an order for my brother's instant release. He is innocent of the intent to do wrong. I am the guilty man. I forged the name of Charles Ellison to the check which he uttered. He did not know that it was a forgery."

"You!" cried the astounded magistrate. "You a forger—impossible."

"Nothing is impossible in these days," said the white-haired old man, sternly. "I alone am guilty. My brother is innocent."

So stoutly did he aver that he was the forger, that the magistrate reluctantly issued a warrant for his arrest, and at the same time wrote an order to the gaoler for the release of Joseph Brisben.

"My constable will be in soon," said the magistrate, but the old hero picked up both the papers.

"I will not trouble him," he said: "I will execute both papers."

And he did. Handing the gaoler both papers he explained their meaning thus:

"They have made a mistake. It is I who am to be your prisoner. My brother is innocent."

Accordingly Joseph Brisben was released and returned to the farm. John remained at gaol a prisoner. When the extraordinary affair became known, several prominent citizens offered to go on the accused man's bond, but he would

not accept their kind offices. At the trial he pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment at hard labour in the penitentiary. Joseph came to see him before he was removed to Frankfort, but their interview was a private one.

Joseph Brisben remained at the farm, but he was a changed man. From the day of his release from gaol down to the time of his death, he was never known to touch a card, and a drop of liquor never passed his lips. Last April he died, and his confession, duly sworn to before a Justice of the Peace, was made public after his burial. In substance, it was this: That he was guilty of the forgery, for which his heroic brother was suffering a long imprisonment.

"It was my brother's wish, not mine," reads the document. "He insisted that he, who had no ties of blood or marriage, could better suffer the punishment and disgrace than I who had dependent upon me a large family."

Noble John Brisben: Of such stuff are heroes made.

## NATURE'S LADY.

Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
Then nature said, "A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown;  
This child I to myself will take,  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse; and with me  
The Girl, in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn  
Or up the mountain springs;  
And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
And hers the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her; for her the willows bend;  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the storm  
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face."

## THE DIAMOND.

A writer in the London "Chemical News" thinks he has solved the question of the origin and formation of the diamond—it being due, he argues, to the fact that the carbonaceous matter of fossils, such as plants and animal remains, has been dissolved by highly heated water, aided by great pressure existing in the crust of the earth. The fact is well known that highly heated water, aided by pressure, can dissolve silica, as in the geysers of Iceland, etc., where it is formed around the mouth of the vent; and there are also the experimental researches of De Senarmont and others, on the artificial production of crystallized minerals, as quartz, mispickel, corundum, heavy spar, etc., by the prolonged action of water at high temperatures and pressures. On these grounds, therefore, it is urged that no reason exists why highly heated water, or water gas, should not have the power of dissolving the carbonaceous matter of fossiliferous plants and animals, and then, on cooling, depositing the carbon in the crystallized condition, forming the gem known as the diamond.

## JACK, THE CHICAGO FIRE DOG.

Jack goes to all the fires, and is first to hear the buzz of the telegraph. If upon the third floor when the call comes, he is the first member of the company down. He never dresses, but goes to the fire as he is. He always manages to run down the first flight of stairs like an ordinary Christian; but in his anxiety to get to the horses, he invariably rolls down the second flight. He drives the horses to the pole, and runs ahead of them barking. Jack is known to thousands of persons, and his barking informs them that there is a fire in the district. He clears the street for the engine better than a man could. He is always first in the building. At night, he looks for a fireman's light; and often when the smoke is thick and he cannot be seen, the men know he is about by hearing him sneeze. If there is a fire and the apparatus does not go out, Jack sits down and howls in his disappointment, and cries as if his heart was broken. Sometimes the horses step on him, but he keeps on three legs and sees the fire out, but, often, when he gets home, he is laid up for days. He has been known to go up and down an iron fire-escape, and walk up and down a peaked roof that was at an angle of forty-five degrees. He will go anywhere the men do. At home he is fastidious, disliking the smell of the smoke when the stove is lighted. When the floor is being scrubbed, Jack goes across the street, where he sets up a howling until the cleansing operation is over. But, at fires, he does not mind the densest smoke or the heaviest shower-baths. — *Inter-Ocean.*

A VERMONT villager has his walk and front yard paved with headstones from a cemetery.

THE recovery of an old parchment manuscript of Deuteronomy dated 800 B.C. from a Bedouin tribe, by the Palestine Exploration Fund, will be very gratifying to all Biblical students.