

MY FRIEND'S STORY.

(CONCLUDED).

When the train stopped at our destination and we stepped out on the platform a cannon was discharged, and Madam Smith for a moment thought of war. I said:

"It is in Captain Smith's honor—an American custom."

Four sober men in sober black conducted us to a close back in waiting. We sat down inside, and the depot committee stowed themselves away, two on the seat with the driver and two on the boot behind. Then the village band formed in front, and we started. Ah! my fellow-countrymen, it was ridiculous, no doubt, but it was so American after our long absence that I wanted to get out of the hack, kick in the base drum, and batter your brass horns into stovepipe in pure enthusiasm. With minute guns from the cannon as a signal of our distress, and the band playing "Sweet Little Buttercup," we arrived in front of the hotel. There a reception committee of six awaited us. No word of enthusiasm, no embraces, no laughter; it was business. The reception committee led the way two abreast into the village hall, or opera house, which was a portion of the hotel. Down the aisle we tramped, with the band playing ahead of us. We were placed on the stage in a conspicuous place, and as I looked at Madam Smith I could see that she commenced to appreciate the fun of the thing. When we were all seated a grave man in a grave voice nominated a president. Then a secretary was nominated. Then I almost expected the minutes of the previous meeting to be read, but instead the president drew out a formidable looking paper, fixed his glasses and commenced to read a reception speech. "There had gone out from us a youth, etc., and on bloody fields had won renown for the place of his birth," etc., etc. "On the tented field he had climbed step by step, but still he remembered the hills and valleys of his native land. Wealth had come to him, and in the generous affection natural to such a man he had remembered Sinclairville. Not in paltry hundreds or thousands—but a million! Acting as mouthpiece for this people, he would thank that man," etc., etc.

Now, according to the etiquette of American receptions, Napoleon Smith should have responded. Madam Smith looked troubled. I asked Napoleon to stand up. He rose, and his magnificent form charmed the audience. I said:

"My fellow-citizens. We appreciate this honor. You see before you Napoleon Smith and his wife. Napoleon Smith bears on his breast the badges showing his valor on many fields, but he also bears a wound that you cannot see which incapacitates him from expressing his love and affection here. You will believe me when I tell you that the evidence of his love of country and his love of his fellows is seen and proven by the silence compelled by his very wound." A tall Yankee in the back of the room arose and said, in a tremulous voice:

"Mr. President, I move that this 'ere crowd gives Captain Napoleon Smith three cheers."

It was the only spontaneous thing in the whole programme. Well, what cheers they were! The house shook.

Then the tall, grave man said again:

"Mr. President, I propose that this 'ere crowd gives the captain's wife three cheers and a 'tiger!'"

The madam's eyes flashed with admiration as I turned to her and said:

"It is rough and uncouth, but God bless the American cheer and 'tiger!' It comes pretty near being original with us."

Then the band played while we marched down to a banquet spread below. While enjoying the banquet I turned to the President and asked what disposition had been made of the million dollars.

"Well," said he, "it ain't been disposed of. The Captain was unwise in leaving it to us to decide what to do with it. You see, a meeting was called and views freely expressed as to how it would build up the place best. The Baptists suggested a Baptist college and the Methodist wanted a Wesleyan seminary. This opened the way for the Congregationalists, and they proposed to build a preparatory school for divinity students. Hardness grew out of it, and Elder George Migley shook his fist in Parson Ackersley's face, and b'gosh he hit him biff in the eye! While they were fightin' in the hall the Methodists and Baptists tried to git a snap vote to divide the money and build two schools, but the crowd got back before the vote was took and busted up the project. The young fellows run out and got in a big crowd and posed to lay out a mile trotting course with a grand stand and elevated seats, to build up the town. So it went. Several proposed a street railroad, but there was no place for it to come from or go to, and it dropped. Well, in less than a week the churches were divided, and all had evening meetings at once, and sort of divided the interest, so that the preachers didn't git enough at their donations to pay for the tickets. Everybody chose sides, and a new hotel was run up to catch the overflow, as it were, from the old tavern. I ain't no idea the captain's money will ever be called for, because the people won't ever unite on a suitable way to expend it. Why, bless you, one man wanted to build an orphan asylum, when there ain't ten orphans in the town; and when we expostulated with him he said it would draw in orphans from other towns and we could build up an orphan industry. Another man wanted to bore for natural gas, and start manufacturing, to keep our young people from drifting into the city, and so it went

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until everybody neglected business and wasted time to settle what we would do with that million of money. Of course, the Captain meant well, but his gift is liable to ruin the town or fit the people to go into a lunatic asylum and then take the money and build the asylum. If he had given us two million we would all had to move out and leave the town."

"Well," said I, "I had never thought of the difficulty in expending the money in a satisfactory manner to all. It is quite a problem. How is the village supplied with water?"

"Wells and cisterns," said the President.

"How would a system of waterworks strike you? An aqueduct, a reservoir in the park, pipes on every street, and the interest of a portion of the money to keep a lot in repair, with trustees to manage the funds?"

"Biggest idea out!" said he. "Make a suggestion of that as coming from the Captain and it will go, mark my word!" And I may as well say here that it did go, and on a tablet on the reservoir the Captain's name appears to-day—his bas monument.

Well, the banquet came to an end at last, and we retired, weary but happy. I purchased a beautiful little cottage in Sinclairville and installed the Captain and his wife in it. What halcyon days awaited them after their long struggle with adverse fate! Napoleon wandered dreamily along the trout streams where he played as a boy. Hand-in-hand the beautiful couple wandered along forest paths outside the village. On the broad piazza of the cottage all that lovely summer, on sunny days, they might be seen at their tasks as teacher and pupil. Loving men spoke kindly words to the handsome wounded veteran, and LeNoir was too happy to be silent. Trills of exquisite song floated out on the street and arrested the attention of passers-by. Smith himself had reached a second boyhood when I left them in the autumn. Was memory ever coming back? No one might say, but he stood now for hours and dreamed as he looked at his native hills. What did it mean when he stopped suddenly at the call of a robin and put his hand to his head? Had she awakened an echo in his heart? No matter, they were happy—happy as we dream that angels are. They were as guileless children, and when I left them I whispered a blessing on the Providence that had thrown this loving woman across the life-history of my friend.

CHAPTER XXIII.

You will remember the opening of the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia on the anniversary of our Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. On July 4, 1876, all the nations of the earth were invited to visit us and congratulate us, not only on the existence of the Republic through a century, but to sympathize with us in our just pride in the growth and advancement made in that time. Our two millions had swelled to forty millions of inhabitants, through immigration and natural growth. We had only ten years before emerged from a war almost unparalleled in proportions and expense. In that war we had stood alone. Not an ally on the face of the earth. Not a dollar or a man came to our assistance. In the eyes of the world we were on trial. The experiment of popular government was being put to the severest test, and men coolly watched what might be our death-agonies. It was again the Pharisees at the cross: "Let be; let us see if Elias will come to help him." And the Centennial was a joyful resurrection after the pangs of political death. Who shall say that it was vanity when we had brass bands and booming of cannon. Gratitude to God can go up in one manner of voice as well as another, and a deal of ours went up in blaring trumpets and on wings of powder-smoke in the goodly year of 1876. Then it was, too, that the world stood in wonder as it saw a nation that had just retrieved from the field an army of two millions of men, that had just turned loose from prisons and hospitals a half million more, and had buried in four years six hundred thousand of the fairest and bravest of her sons—then it was, I say, that the world looked on and saw us calmly return to specie payments. At the gates of the Exposition grounds were boxes, and into these dropped a silver stream from morning until night. Here and there a youth stopped and took from his pocket a coin of gold or silver and gazed at it curiously. For fifteen years the rustle of paper was heard in the marts of trade, and that youth had grown to manhood without handling a coin of gold. At the mint the revolving wheels were grinding out a stream of twinkling gold and silver coins, for underneath in the great vaults were the vast treasures of another century loaned to the government by Napoleon Smith. Ah! there is a romance in history that only the few ever read. You will not remember at the opening ceremonies on July 4th seeing a strong, handsome man standing beside General Grant, who formally opened the Exposition. Nor will you recall the fact, so unusual, that on that platform sat a woman—a woman of startling and majestic beauty—who leaned forward to hold the hand of the handsome veteran that stood beside General Grant. You will know now who they were, and how much the prosperity of a great people depended upon what Napoleon Smith once called "only an idea." Credit was restored. Trade was quickened, manufacturing took a new impetus, and the buried treasure was scattered where its every coin was a benediction.

Captain Smith and his lovely bride were now installed in one of those magnificent villas along the Hudson which lend a fairy beauty to the American Rhine. Servants moved deftly to and fro across the velvety lawns or in and out of the conservatories of flowers. The Captain entertained only a few friends. He would sit for hours looking down on the white sails of the coasters, or the great masees of boats drifting by, impelled by the puffing steamer. Only for a time would he sit alone; then he would turn and call, "Magdalene!" and the sweeping of rich skirts would fall on the ear, and she would bend above him and print a kiss on his smooth brow, for as

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