

The Sumter Banner.

DEVOTED TO SOUTHERN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY, NEWS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND THE ARTS.

W. J. FRANCIS, Proprietor.

"God—and our Native Land."

TERMS—Two Dollars Per Annum In Advance.

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TERMS.

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Rev. Frederick Rush, is a travelling Agent for this paper, and is authorized to receive subscriptions and receipt for the same.

Miscellaneous.

[From Chambers Edinburgh Journal.]

The Christmas Tree.

Louisa, my love, said Mrs. Crawford, 'I don't at all like this method of yours, or rather want of method. It shows a sad fickle disposition never to finish what you have begun, but invariably to leave it for something new. Where are the slippers you were working for papa, and which you were so anxious to finish by Christmas-Eve?'

'In the chiffoniere, mama. There is plenty of time. I have only the grounding to complete.'

'Then those warm winter mitts you have for Aunt Townsend. She would be very glad of them this frosty weather. You have had them in hand, I think, for more than a month.' Louisa looked annoyed. 'I mean to finish them, mama; but I am quite tired of hearing of them. I think you need not be so very particular. I only just want to do this new pattern of a couvrette before Emily Lawson leaves us.'

'I should not mind about it, Louisa, if this were a solitary instance. But I see the disposition perpetually manifested! If you suffer it to grow upon you, my dear, you will never do anything well. Then look at the waste of material! There are three or four unfinished pieces of rugwork at this moment, thrust into different corners out of the way, faded and dirty from having lain about on chairs and sofas, and which I do not believe you will ever finish.'

Louisa, whose temper was by no means perfect, made a somewhat abrupt reply; and her mother, seeing that no further good could then be done with her, ceased to speak, and soon after left the room.

The couvrette took up much more time than the little girl had calculated upon—so much, that Emily Lawson was obliged to return home before she had seen her pupil safe through the intricacies of the pattern. But she left behind what she considered plain directions for its continuance and completion; which, however, proved so little intelligible without the personal superintendence of the instructor, that Louisa, after many fruitless trials, gave up the attempt in despair; and the unfortunate crocheted-work was consigned like many of its predecessors, to the oblivion of some work-table or chiffoniere.

It was now the Thursday before Christmas-Eve, which fell on a Monday. Louisa's brothers and sisters had all nearly completed their presents for each other, and for papa and mamma, which were to be hung, labelled with the names of the persons for whom they were intended, to the grand Christmas Tree that was then to be exhibited. Louisa, less fortunate than they, was working in desperation at the only present she was at all likely to complete—the pair of slippers for papa.

'Louisa,' her mamma called from her little bedroom, 'come here before you do any more work, and arrange your drawers. I cannot allow you to leave them in such disorder.'

Louisa muttered an impatient exclamation, and obeyed; but in so hasty and passionate a manner, that her mamma remarked it, and desired her to be more gentle in her movements.

'There is no occasion to hurry, Louisa. You know that I do not like you to fuss about it, as if you had

all the business of the house upon your shoulders.'

'But I shall never have finished my slippers, mamma.'

'That is your own fault, my love. I told you what would be the consequence of your persisting in your working at that couvrette.'

Louisa went discontentedly back again to her slippers, muttering to herself as she did so. 'I wish mamma would not be so neat. She might let me alone just till I had finished my present. How do I hate neatness and order!'

The Monday morning arrived, a joyful time to the little Crawfords, for every other occupation was laid aside that they might deck the Christmas Tree. A young fir tree had been cut down for the purpose, and placed in a gaily painted tub half filled with earth. Among the branches were numerous tiny tapers fastened there ready for lighting at the time of exhibition. The children now, under the direction of their mamma, proceeded to hang oranges and apples by strings to some of the boughs, and to fasten among them bon-bons, gilded crackers, figs, bunches of raisins, and other such trifles. Then came the disposition of presents, chiefly their own handiwork, in conspicuous parts of the tree; and at this period of the proceedings mamma was requested to retire.

'Where is Louisa?' said little Emmeline. 'We want her present to hang up.'

'I will go and look for her,' said James. 'I am afraid she is in trouble. She was crying this morning; and when I asked her what was the matter, she could not speak to me.'

Poor Louisa was sitting in a corner of the library, laboring at the grounding of the unfortunate work. The canvas was so small, and working being so fine, that she could not get by the utmost exertion more than one square in an hour. The tears were running down her face, dropping on the gay colors of the Berlin wood, and obstructing her gaze, so that she could scarcely see the stitches she wished to form.

'Dear Lou!' exclaimed her brother, running up to her, and throwing his arms round her neck, 'what is the matter? Are you ill? Is any one angry with you?'

Louisa wept more bitterly than before, turned away from her would be consoler. But James took her face gently between both his hands, and made her turn it towards him again, and drop the covering pocket-handkerchief.

'Come, dear Louisa, tell me, and I shall perhaps be able to help you.'

'No, my dear James,' sobbed the distressed child, 'you cannot help me. It is quite hopeless. I wish, I wish I had attended to what mamma said.'

'What is it, dear? Is it this work? You have only a little bit of this to finish.'

'That little bit, dear James, will take—oh, so long! I shall not be in time with it, if I work every minute of the day. There will be no present of mine on the Christmas Tree.'

'Is that all, Louisa? We will soon manage that,' said James cheerfully. 'Say nothing about it. Wait until I come back, and I will soon supply you with a present or two for the Christmas Tree.'

He was hastening away, but Louisa stopped him. 'No, brother, she said firmly; I will not be so mean as to take the credit of any present that is not really my own. It is my own fault delaying so long, and I will patiently bear the mortification I deserve.'

James remonstrated, but it was of no use. Louisa dried her tears. 'Come said she, 'the rest will be waiting for us.'

They were all very sorry when they heard the state of the case, and would have given up any thing to console their sister. The Christmas Tree was at length complete, and the schoolroom in which it was placed was looked up until the morning.

'Now, dear papa,' said Harriet, 'who was a year older than Louisa, after a great many nods and signs had been exchanged between the children after tea, and James and Emmeline had been quietly in and out of the room several times—'now, papa, come, if you please.'

Mr Crawford good humoredly allowed himself to be half dragged, half pushed by the exulting children

into the school room. There, with its dozens of tapers blazing merrily, giving the spiked branches that peculiar tint which they only assume by artificial light, stood the Christmas Tree. The kind father of course made believe that he was much surprised, tho' the same thing had occurred to him for the last three years; and the younger children danced about and clapped their hands with delight, as he advanced towards the tree, and examined its decorations.

'For dear Papa,' she read on the label a neat little box that was suspended from one of the principal boughs.

James blushed. He had a mechanical genius, and his father having on the last Christmas-Eve placed a small turning lathe and a neat assortment tools beneath the shadow of the Christmas Tree, the boy had since made good use of them. His present to his father was a very handy little box, to place on Mr. Crawford's writing desk, for the purpose of holding steel pens, odd bits of sealing-wax, and so forth.

The children now began to look a little closer; for while their father pretended to be merely examining the tree, he was in reality feeling in his pockets for various trifles therein deposited; which he quietly placed on the earth inside the tub, as a kind of ornamental barrier round the tree.

'Stand off! you young rogues,' he playfully shouted, making a great demonstration of fits and squared elbows: 'stand off, until I have taken possession of my share of the good things.'

'Oh, papa! papa is eating all the figs!' cried one. 'There goes my great bunch of raisins,' shouted another. 'Me some!' begged little Willie, the youngest. 'Me some, papa!'

'Look here, Emmeline,' said Mr Crawford to his wife, who stood by enjoying the scene. 'Some fairy has procured you the very thing you wanted—a new sheath for your spectacles; and here is a pincushion; and there a bag—all for you.'

'Come away, papa—naughty papa,' cried the children, who were tired of remaining inactive spectators. 'Papa is doing everything.'

Papa was ousted from his prominent position, and then commenced a general distribution of presents. Even little Willie had been able to contribute. With this store of saved-up-pennies he had walked with Harriet to the town on the previous Saturday, and there bought some pretty trifles for dear papa and mamma.

'Now let us look under the tree,' said mamma, when nothing remained on the branches but the tapers, and a few apples and oranges. 'Louisa, my love, the first present I meet with is labelled with your name.'

'Oh what a pretty box!' said the children. 'What is inside? Let me look.' 'And me.' 'And me.'

'Stop, my dears,' said their mamma; 'Louisa must open it herself.'

'Why don't you come forward to receive your present, my love?' inquired her father. 'It is a crochet and knitting box, or whatever you call that work you are so fond of. I thought you would like something of the kind.'

Louisa blushed, and the tears stood in her eyes. 'Tell them, James, she whispered, 'that I can take it. I have given no present to any body.'

When Mr. Crawford knew how it was, he was very sorry; but he did not reprove Louisa just, then, for her own sense of wrong was punishment enough, and he could not bear to see her young and sorrowful face on that festive evening. All the children were made happy—each in his or her own way; and then they left the Christmas Tree in its native simplicity, with the remains of one or two dying tapers flickering among its branches.

The next morning was Christmas Day, and no work was thought of; but the morning after—the children having no lessons that week—Louisa set herself with steady purpose to an undertaking she had planned in her own mind. Her mother coming into the school room, found her in the midst of pieces of discarded rug and crocheted-work and skeins of knitting and crochet cotton, which she was sorting and folding up with the various pieces of work they were intended to complete.

'Mamma,' she said, rising and

throwing her arm round her mother's neck, 'if I finish these, one by one, will you have hope of my amendment?'

'I shall, indeed, my darling. By the time the last is completed, I trust you will have formed a habit of perseverance which will stand you in good stead all your life long.'

A Fix in Quicksand.

A THRILLING STORY.

We entered the country of the Artemesia, and with the exception of snakes, and occasional sage cock—as rancid as the berry upon which he feeds—not an animal was to be seen.

We had encountered the last buffalo, an old bull, three days before. Him we had killed, but the meat was tough and stringy, and, taking out the tongue and hump ribs, we had left the remainder of his carcass to the wolves. We began to repent of our generosity as we rode further into the desert. We were already on half rations of the 'jerked,' and, as the hunters remarked, 'dried chavins' it was. We might, ere long, be glad of a steak from the same old bull. We shall see.

As we rode along, treading our way through the wormwood bushes, an antelope sprang in our path.—Half a dozen rifles were raised, but before a 'head' could be drawn, the shy animal was far beyond range dashing the white leaves from his shining flank. The rifles came back to their rest across theommel of the saddle, while their owners, with looks of disappointment, might be heard apostrophising the goat in not very respectable terms.

About a mile further on, and at some distance to the right, I thought I observed a pronged head disappearing behind a swell of the prairie.—My companions were sceptical, and wheeling out of the train, I started alone. My horse was fresh and willing, and whether successful or not, I knew that I could easily overtake them by camping time.

I struck directly towards the spot where I had seen the object. It appeared to be only a half a mile from where I had left the trail. I found it nearer a mile—an illusion which is very common in the chrysalis and cloudless atmosphere of those elevated regions.

A curiously formed ridge traversed the plain from east to west. A thicket of cacti covered part of its summit; this thicket was the original point of my destination. Dismounting, I led my horse slowly up the slope, and, reaching the cacti, fastened the lariat to a branch. I then crawled cautiously through the spiky ovals towards the point where I expected to find the game. To my joy, not one antelope, but a brace of these beautiful animals, were quietly grazing beyond—but, alas! too far beyond for the carry of my rifle. They were full three hundred yards distant, upon a smooth, grassy slope, without even a sage bush to serve me as a cover. What was to be done?

I lay for several minutes thinking over the different tricks known in hunter craft for taking the antelope. Should I imitate their call? Should I hoist the handkerchief? No, they were too shy. I knew this from the fact that, at short intervals they threw up their graceful necks, and struck the sward with their hoofs, looking wildly around. I have no alternative. I shall steal back to my horse, take the red 'makina' from my saddle, and display it over the 'nopals.'

I had come to this conclusion, when all at once my eye rested upon a clay covered line in the prairie, about a hundred yards beyond the point where the animals were feeding. It was evidently a break in the surface of the plain—a buffalo road, perhaps the bed of an arroyo. In either case, the very shelter I wanted, and the game was approaching it step by step as they fed. The question now was, could I reach this hollow in time; and giving up the plan of spreading my blanket, I resolved to make the attempt. Creeping back out of this thicket, and leaving my horse where I had tied him, I ran alongside of the ridge toward the point where I noticed it was depressed to the prairie level. On reaching this point, to my surprise I found myself on the bank of a broad arroyo, whose waters ran over a bed of sand

and gypsum. The banks were low, not three feet above the surface, except where the ridge impinged upon the stream. Here there was a high bluff, and hurrying down to its base, I entered the channel and commenced wading upward. As I anticipated, I soon reached a head, where the stream after running parallel to the ridge, struck upon a huge rock, and sweeping round to the right, had canoned the hill. Here I stopped and looked cautiously over the bank. The antelopes had approached within fifty yards of the arroyo, but still quietly cropping the grass, and once more bending my back I proceeded up the stream. The bed of the arroyo was soft and yielding, and I was compelled to lift my feet with caution, lest their splashing might disturb the game. After a weary drag of several hundred yards, I came to an artemesia bush, which grew solitary upon the top of the bank.

'I must be high enough,' thought I. I clutched my rifle firmly brought it to a level, then raised myself and looked through the leaves of the artemesia. I was in the right spot, and sighting the heart of the buck, fired. He leaped three feet from the ground, and fell back again a lifeless lump.

I was about to rush forward and secure my prize, when I saw the doe, instead of bounding away, run up to her fallen partner, and press her tapering nose to his body. She was not more than twenty yards from me, and I could plainly see that her look was one of inquiry and bewilderment. All at once she seemed to comprehend the fatal truth, and throwing back her head, commenced uttering the most piteous cries, at the same time running in circles around the dead body of her mate.

I stood wavering between two minds. My first intention was to load and kill the doe, but her strange and plaintive cries entered my heart, and completely disarmed me of all hostile feeling—nay, more; I began to feel remorse for what I had already done. Had I dreamt of witnessing a spectacle so painful as the one before me, I should never left the train. 'Jerked bull,' for a month, and half rations at that, would have been happiness to what I endured as I listened and looked upon this strange scene. But the mischief was now done. 'I have worse than killed her,' thought I, 'it will be best to despatch her at once, and in this way relieve her of all pain.' Actuated by a principle of common, but to her fatal humanity, I rested the butt of my rifle and reloaded. With a guilty look and faltering hand, I raised the piece and fired. My hand was steady enough to do its work. When the smoke floated aside, I could see the little creature bleeding upon the grass, her head resting upon the body of her murdered mate.

I shouldered my rifle and was about to move forward, when to my astonishment I found myself held by the feet, and firmly as if my boots had been screwed in a vice! I made an effort to raise my legs, but could neither raise one or the other—another moral—a third more desperate, and loosening my balance, I fell back with a splash into the water. Half suffocated, I endeavored to recover my upright position. This I easily accomplished, and my knees were already beneath the surface of sand, and, in fact, now bent with difficulty. I could neither move forward nor backward, to the right or left, and I became sensible that I was gradually going down deeper and deeper! Then I truth flashed upon me; I was sinking in a quicksand!

A feeling of horror ran through me. I renewed my efforts with the energy of desperation. I bent to one side, then to the other, almost pulling my legs from their sockets, but my feet; I could not move them an inch. The soft, clingy sand already overtopped my horseskin boots, wedged them around my legs, so that I vainly endeavored to draw them forth; slowly but surely, as though some horrid monster leisurely dragging me downward. The very thought was horror, and I cried aloud for help. To whom? There was no one within miles—no living thing. Yes; the neigh of my horse answered me from the hill, mocking my despair.

I bent forward as well as my constrained position would allow, and with frenzied fingers tearing up the sand. I could barely touch my feet;

the little hollow I was able to scrape out, filled up as quickly as it had been formed.

A thought occurred to me. I will place my rifle between my thighs, horizontally; it may support me for a time. I looked around for the object. I had dropped it in my first efforts to get free. It was beyond my reach—it has disappeared.

The next thought—'Can I throw my body flat, and thus, by constant exertion prevent myself from sinking deeper?' No; the surface of the water was two feet above that of the sand. In this position, I should have drowned at once! I proved that by bending forward and resting my hands upon the bottom. The running stream swept my face and shoulders, and I rose again half choked with the water. The last shift I made no effort to think. A strange stupor seized upon me—my very thoughts were paralysed. I knew that had left me; I could think of no other; I was going mad—for a moment I was mad.

After an interval my senses returned. I made an effort to rouse my mind from this paralysis, in order that I might meet my death, which I now felt was certain, like a man. I stood erect; my eyes had sunk to the prairie level, and resting upon the still bleeding victims of my cruelty; my heart smote me at the sight, and I could not help feeling that my fate was a retribution from God.

With humble and penitent thoughts, I turned my face to Heaven, almost dreading that some sign of Omnipotent anger would scowl upon me from above. But no; the sun was shining as brightly as ever, and the blue canopy of the world was without a cloud. I gazed upon it, and prayed with an earnestness known to the heart only in similar situations.

As I continued looking up, an object attracted my attention. It was but a speck when my eye first rested upon it, but every moment it grew larger, until against the sky I distinguished the dark outlines of a huge dark bird—I knew it to be the obscene bird of the plains—the buzzard vulture. Whence had it come? who knows? Far beyond the reach of human eye it had seen or scented the slaughtered antelope, and with a broad silent wing, was now descending in spiral gyrations to the feast of death. Presently another, and another, and another, and many others mottled the deep azure, curving wheeling silently earthward; and then the foremost swooped down upon the bank, and after gazing around flapped off towards the prey. In a few seconds the surface of the prairie was black with filthy birds, who clambered over the dead animals, and beat their broad wings against each other, and tore out the tongues and eyes with their fetid beaks.—And now came gaunt and hungry wolves—the white and coyote—stealing from cactus thickets, and loping cowardly over the green swells of the prairie; these drove away the vultures, and dragged forth the entrails with the quickness of thought, and growled, and snarled, and snapped venomously at each other, and licked their blood clotted jaws with looks of guilty enjoyment.

'Thank Heaven! I shall at last be saved from this!' I was soon relieved from the sight of it, my eyes had sunk below the level of the bank, and I had looked my last upon the fair green earth; I could see only the white gypsum walls that contained the river, and the water that ran heedlessly between them. Again I fixed my gaze upon the sky, and with prayerful heart endeavored to resign myself to my fate. In spite of my endeavors, the memory of earthly pleasures, and friends and home would come stealing upon me, causing me at intervals to break out into wild paroxysms of grief, and shouting for help, make fresh and fruitless struggles.

During one of these moments, my horse again neighed, answering my shouts. A thought struck me—I shall see him again before I die. Journeys, shared hardships, had made us known to each other; he would come at my call; the lariat was loosely tied, or the soft cactus would break at a single jerk. I lost not a moment to attempt its execution. I raised my voice to its highest pitch and cried, 'Mor! Moro!' A loud neigh was my answer—a neigh of recognition, that came back as quick

as an echo. I shouted again—'Proh! Moro! Proh!' I listened with a bounding heart. For a moment there was a silence, only a moment, and then came the hollow sounds of the prancing hoof; at first rapid and irregular, as of a steed struggling and rearing to get free, then another neigh, and after that, the stroke of the iron heel in a measured and regular gullopp. Nearer appeared the sounds, nearer, and nearer, and nearer, until the gallant brute bounded out upon the bank; here he halted, and flinging back his tossed mane, uttered another shrill neigh. He was bewildered, and looked on every side, snorting loudly. I knew that having once seen me, he would not stop until he had pressed his nose against my cheek—his usual custom; and holding up my hand, I once more called out the magic words, 'Proh! Moro! Proh!'

New, for the first time, looking downwards, he perceived my head and shoulders above the waters; and stretching himself, he sprang out into the channel, and came towards me. The next moment I held him by the bridle.

There was no time to be lost. I was still going down; and my armpits were fast nearing the surface of the quicksand.—Reaching up, I caught the lariat and passed it under the saddle-girths, fastened it in a firm tight knot. I then looped the trailing end, making it secure around my body, and across my ribs. I had left enough of the rope between the bit ring and the girths, to enable me to check and guide the animal, in case the drag upon my body should become too painful.

All this while, the dumb brute seemed to comprehend what I was about, as well as the nature of the ground on which he stood; for during the operation, he kept lifting his feet and replacing them alternately, without either plunging or rearing.

My arrangements were at length completed, and with a strange feeling of awe, I gave my horse the signal. Here again the faithful creature bore evidence of the duty he had to perform. Instead of moving off with a start, I felt the rope tighten upon me slowly and gradually, as if it had been drawn by human hands! I experienced the wild delight to feel that, slowly and gradually, too, I was moving.

The lariat cut painfully, and I checked the horse for a moment to rejust the thong. This was done; and giving the signal a second time, I was drawn from the tenacious element, and felt myself—a feeling I cannot describe—sailing along the water. I sprang to my feet with a shout of joy. I rushed up to my brave steed, and throwing my arm around his neck, kissed him with as much delight as I would have kissed a beautiful girl. He answered my embrace with a low and singular neighing that told me I was understood.

I looked for my rifle. Fortunately it had not sunk deeply, and I soon found it. My boots, with my spurs, remained in the quicksand and doubtless, by this time, have reached the granite formation, to be fessiled and thrown up by some future conyulsion. I made no attempt to recover them—being smitten with a wholesome dread of the place where I had left them—but mounting my gallant Moro, I was soon scouring across the prairie in the trail of my companions du voyage.

I reached the camp at sundown, where I was met with wondering looks, and such questions as 'Did yer kum across the goats?' 'Whether hev ye been huntin' or fishin?'

I answered these questions by relating my adventure; and that night, at least, my horse and myself were looked upon as the tallest buffers in that gang. Should the reader ever wander to the Rocky Mountains, he may hear the story—much better told—of 'that ar feller who wur fetched right out of his boots!'

Cancer Cured.—A worthy gentleman of our acquaintance, who had been suffering seriously from what was cured entirely by the following simple application. We give it, hoping that it may relieve some other individual, similarly situated.

Make a strong decoction of red oak bark—let it be boiled until it is as stiff as ordinary adhesive plaster. Spread it on a patch of silk cloth, and apply it to the diseased part. Let it remain until it comes off of itself—renewed it until the sore is healed. Let no water come near the place during the treatment.—Edinburgh Ad.