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OF

LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ART.

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# The Old Dominion Magazine.

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No. 7.

## SUN FLOWER INN.

Sir Walter Scott has made quite a character out of Old Mortality. Riding along one evening he descried a "dim looking figure" of a man working away as hard as he could at the cairns of the Scottish martyrs. The incident was suggestive to him, as it would have been to any person possessed of invention. We hope that the novelist invited the chiselman to a night's lodging, and that he gave his pony a good feed. In like manner he caught Mungo Park casting pebbles into Gala Water, that he might judge of the depth of rivers by the time it took for the bubbles to appear. Not long after Mungo was off to that sullen Niger, and how much better would Sir Walter have been employed in writing about Park than Napoleon. Wiffen wrote a poem about the African traveller. It was not republished in this country, but the writer sent and obtained a copy in Liverpool.

Well. It may be asked, what connection has your frontispiece with "Flower Inn?" Not a great

deal we admit, but as Old Mortality went for honoring the martyrs, the writer goes for the sweet remembrance of Virginy's antique inns. The most of them are sadly decayed. The rail cars dash by them, and the passengers leave not a picayune for the support of aged widows, but city taverns catch all the greenbacks. Virginia has passed through the golden period of the humanities, but is now under the iron wheels of mechanical science. Shades of Fulton and Watt! what havoc your inventions have made on the lives of men and the caravanseras in which those men were once safely entertained. What a stir you try to make, says the reader, about a parcel of little boxes set up along the blue mountain, or among the Alleghany crags. But the reader must remember that they were not boxes for the accommodation of pigeons. They were for wayfaring men from every clime—for gentlemen in the lower parts of the Old Dominion—for ladies

going to spend Wall street money at our Springs—for Miss Knickerbocker on a journey to catch a South Carolinian, and for the behoof of the world and his consort. So reader you had better hush up your mouth.

We shall take no special pains to define the location of the Sun Flower. East Virginians might not be pleased to find the cosmopolite west of the Alleghanies. They were offended at the queer way in which West Virginia became a State. Its people seized a Handle and crowded a heap of territory into the Pan, and tossed it out of Old Virginy without the least ceremony. The daughter eloped in the night. But we must not cherish malice, and we leave this snap judgment affair to the future historian. As the thermal springs of Bath county had magically cured the rheumatism in my right arm, we thought a little excursion might not be amiss. The advance of the season had not brought a sufficiency of strangers to the Hot Spa to make it agreeable. We thought it no great achievement to place even the formidable Alleghanies under my ten toes, particularly as a large portion of their crags belonged in days of yore to a State thought at that time to be indivisible forever. It occurred that over in Pocahontas we might meet with some waterfalls, green banks, a verdant mountain, briery creek or wayside inn. If any rambler will only be on the look out he might find in West Virginian cascades like the Jackson

river falls—streams on which the Indian used to gaze—well defined and well pictured landscapes, tinted rocks and gorges worn by water courses. There is no lack of objects about which to scribble. But readers generally prefer to hear of people like themselves, instead of cow pastures and sheep walks, and this remark brings me to the Sun Flower Inn which was under the management of the Widow Kepler.

“Heard of your inn along the road,” said I to the widow. “Its name struck my fancy. Glad to reach it, though we were not on an exploration after the seven cities of Cibola.”

“Did you walk?” she inquired. “If so, ’tis not to be wondered at that you rejoice to rest. You shall share our comforts.”

“Have heard,” I rejoined, “of a king who took a nap every day under a tree, the boughs of which were laden with bells of gold.—We seek no such pomp, but plain, simple comfort. We are indebted to the luminary which brings us day for the designation of more objects than we can mention. Mississippi has a Sun Flower county, and Pennsylvania a Sun Flower town. We have sunny rivers, creeks, hills, valleys and dales in abundance.—Pray why did you name your establishment after so gaudy a flower?”

“Thought,” she replied, “that it would be taking to the fancy of travellers. The very name has brought me all the comforts you see. In addition, its odor is said

to keep off moles that make ridges on the earth and worm themselves along in the dark, that they may feed on poor insects. Besides it always turns its face to the sun, and there is a moral luminary on which our attention ought to be fixed at all times."

"Your reasons," I replied, "are perfectly satisfactory, except that the habits of the mole are congenial to one who loves to steal his way in obscurity among men.—Nothing distresses me so much as being in a crowd, though we like a select company when it shall assemble at the Warm Springs in Bath."

Much pleased with this first talk at the Sun Flower. It seemed as easy to get acquainted with my hostess as to put on a slipper without any heel.

"But your name," said the good lady, "has more than once appeared in print."

"Oh the name is just nothing at all. You may print mole as often as you please, but the smooth little creature stays in its underground railway. They may print it as often as they choose, but he who carries my name will always be found in some quiet nook."

A porch is my delight. It is pleasant in summer to occupy such a vestibule to an inn. It has sundry advantages. It reminds one of Athenian philosophers. You get clear of divers sweepings in the rooms, and sometimes of ironing clothes. You can see who passes the road and observe the

arrivals that take place. You can read or ruminare on what has been read, or talk if an interlocutor or interlocutrix should draw a chair.

One morning in lifting the eye off a book, quite a genteel wagon with a handsome pair of bay horses, stood before the Sun Flower. The driver descended and joined me on the porch.

"How are you, this fine morning?" I said.

"Thank you, well, and how'se yourself?"

"Aint you from Yankeedom?" I enquired. "What brings you into the Alleghany county of Pocahontas? It's so hidden at the foot of rugged mountains, and somewhat bristled with Greenbrier spurs, that we did not suppose a vulture's eye could have found out this secluded inn."

"You know," he remarked, "that the Yankees are a very stirring people. They are called the Universal nation. They can capture seals and harpoon a whale in no time. They can double capes as soon as you could whistle Jack Robeson. If Saussure, who first reached the top of Mont Blanc, could have sent up a new invention, he would have found a Yankee before him in the climbing, and he would have opened a patent office on the snow. Our suns are too dim to elicit the raw material from our barren hills, and therefore we get your products at half price if we can, and manufacture them into useful wares. Even our little girls work sixteen hours

a day, 'til some of them look more like white lilies than tulips."

This struck the writer as a kind of set speech which he had used on previous occasions; but it was so candid that we took a liking to the Yankee Gent.

"Your wagon then," I remarked, "is probably laden with the wares of which you spoke, and you wish to set them up at auction; but in a place so lonely, the bell of the auctioneer would collect no more than a small family. If you have any light, summer hats in your schedule should like to purchase one, for the sun is growing hotter every day."

"Can't accommodate you," he replied. "My business is to supply and fix lightning rods on all buildings the proprietors of which may consent. This inn could be made perfectly secure at an expense of thirty-five dollars. It would be money well laid out, and there could be no better investment. There is a county of Virginia named in honor of the distinguished Franklin. That fact shows clearly that in his day no prejudices existed against Yankees, for he was one of the shrewdest that ever wore shoe leather."

"But do you feel certain," I remarked, "that your rods are certain safeguards? We have known dwellings injured and barns consumed that were protected by Franklin's rods."

"They were not set up correctly," he replied. "The rod ought to extend at least five feet above

the top of the chimney, with three prongs, which should be tipped, and the tipping renewed each succeeding spring, and the rod carried out to a well, and we notice a well on the premises. Let me bespeak your good offices with Mrs. Kepler in my behalf. It's impossible for her to refuse, for Kepler is a great name in science as you probably know. Had they lived at the same time Kepler and Franklin would have been as warm friends as David and Jonathan."

"It would give me pleasure," I answered, "to seek an interview with my hostess and urge her to accept your terms. So long as Yankeedom shall faithfully observe the Constitution of 1789, which made us a Confederacy of States, not a consolidated government, so long will every Virginian be true to the compact. No act of kindness should be withheld from any wayfaring man, whether he come from North, South, East or West of our extensive country. We are all shut up within the circle of the cardinal points not in a prison, but beneath the horizon of freedom."

The landlady was easily found, for she was brushing about both in passing and repassing. She was thinking, perhaps, that some company might call on their way to Bath. My budget was opened and the contents made known. "If you advise it," she remarked, "that the rod should be raised, well and good. Have'nt another word to say, for the eye of a sparrow could detect the practical turn of your mind." But,

just then an octogenarian came hobbling up the steps of the porch.

"Uncle Ironside," said my hostess.

"Happy to make your acquaintance, uncle. You seem to have notched down about eighty years."

"Put to that ten years," he replied.

He had an air of sternness, but it was easy to see that good humor was not left out of his temperament.

"Is my mistress," he said, "goin' to shell out all that thar money jist for puttin' up that thar rod?"

"Why, uncle, the stranger gives a quid pro quo, and the thing is done every day. Money is always in circulation. The man's had a long drive for the accommodation of the Pocahontas people. He has fed his horses on the way and has been his own driver. He is pursuing an honest mode of getting a livelihood. Let's hear your objection and it shall be fairly weighed on the scales which reason holds for the adjustment of all litigated questions."

"You'se too high flowin'," he said, "for Nelson Ironside; but he argues that what's to be will be, and so our preacher says, for they put up a rod to his meetin' house and he would'nt give us yea—yea or nay—nay till it was took down."

"Why, uncle, that's a curious preacher. As a reasonable man does he discard all means? Would he wade Greenbrier Creek and drown himself if a bridge were close by over which he might safely pass? Does'nt he cover up his fire

at night for fear his house may be burned to ashes? Would'nt he go to the Sweet Springs in Monroe if they would cure him of consumption? Is'nt he thankful for all the gushing fountains of health dispersed over Virginia? Would he lie eight and thirty years and ask no arm to assist him into the pool? If he would'nt, tell him, uncle, from me, that he ought to be sent to a hospital. But, here is a silverling for the polite way in which you have managed your cause."

"Thank you, master, but them's my principles."

As he withdrew he was laughing, "but them's my principles" was interspersed with his humor. He had naturally a strong mind, but certainly was not so good a grammarian as Bishop Lowth or Lindley Murray.

The work of fixing the rod went bravely on, very much to the gratification of Mrs. Kepler.

"My consent was given," she said, "solely on the strength of your advice."

"Had no suspicion," I replied, "that my influence would have produced any such result. But our Creator undoubtedly expects us to exercise our rationality in providing for the safety of our lives and our property."

"You need not wonder at your influence, for strange to say, a presentiment of your advent to this Inn took possession of my mind before your arrival. It made me glad to see you in these diggins. Do you believe in presentiments?"

"Only," I replied, "to a limited extent. Montezuma anticipated the coming of the Spaniards into Mexico and it gave him keen distress, and Powhatan was probably in the same fix about the English. The maid of Orleans had a presentiment that she would raise the siege of Orleans, but if the fact of her being burnt as a witch could have been foreseen, my opinion is that she would have staid at home. The mother of Bonaparte was haunted for twenty years by a presentiment of his downfall; but this last impression may have resulted from the folly of his course. She had a greater insight into the mutability of human affairs than her son.—And there is little doubt that Pocahontas, in honor of whom this county was named, foresaw that she would marry an Englishman, and glad that she caught Rolfe, who was a more youthful knight than Captain Smith, though the latter was dressed in Lincoln Green."

"You'll not easily shake my confidence in presentiments," observed Mrs. Kepler, "though with some concessions you seem to be sceptical.

"You were visible to me before your entrance into that door. Your hazel eye, raven locks and diminutive stature had been ambrotyped on my mind. You are to exercise an influence on my family. Everything shall be told before you leave, and stay as long as you please, for you are my guest and not my customer."

The lady withdrew; but her

daughter, Pocahontas, succeeded to her chair.

"Mother," she remarked, "has every comfort around her, but she takes trouble on interest and fancies evils that may never come."

"But why," said I, "do they call you Beekie when you bear the immortal name of an Indian princess?"

"Because," said she, "the princess received the Christian name of Rebecca at her baptism. Uncle Ironside started the change because Pocahontas was too long—as he said—to be easily pronounced."

"A pretty good reason," I rejoined.

My curiosity now became excited and rose to a culmination. What mighty affair is this which is to be committed to the confidence of a stranger? It's not in my power to keep off the Greeks from Troy or deliver the keys of Imperial Rome to the Goths. Content with the homespun life of Virginy we should not have interfered with the Jason fleece or Cleopatros barge. We leave all other people to paddle their own canoes. We have no ambition to interpose any body between the sun and the earth. Who ever called me an intermeddler? What harmony did the Interim decree of Charles V. produce between Catholics and Protestants? If interleaved should only be a blank leaf in the diary of Sun Flower Inn. But yet interferences are not always bad. They are sometimes beautiful as in optics when the mutual action of rays of light on

each other produces interesting phenomena. Dr. Young, a Quaker, *interfered* to make this discovery. Virginians are glad when the sun interferes to disperse its tide water mists, to wake the slumbering flowers and shed his setting splendors on our gray Alleghanies and the Apalachian chain with its ever blue links and its emerald slopes.

"Overheard your soliloquy," said the lady of the Inn.

Noticed her gold spectacles.

"Mrs. Kepler," said I, "your guest was kept awake last night several hours."

"My sympathy is strong as that spoken of in Adam Smith's theory of Moral Sentiments. What troubles you otherwise placid mind? You must know," she rejoined. "It was wrong to keep you in suspense even so long as a bird poised itself in the air or perches on my sun flowers. Beckie has gone for the day to Green Bank where there is much grass in the place. To-morrow she joins an angling party at Greenbrier Creek."

"You Pocahontas people," I remarked, "are fond of an emerald color. You have among you Greenbrier Mountain, the curve of which is perfect as any the moon can exhibit; but proceed with the story of your troubles. Don't make it so long as the one that the Trojan hero told to the Queen of Carthage. Have you found out any Kuklux conspiracy?"

"No; but my Beckie has taken an unfortunate attachment which grieves me beyond expression."

"If that be all," I replied; "it's not of much account. Have settled several affairs of that kind. Is he a man of bad character?"

"Not at all."

"Is he able to take care of her by making her comfortable?"

"Yes, he turns out each harvest about seven hundred bushels of wheat and two hundred and fifty barrels of corn. He has as good a cowpen as Dr. Jenner ever saw, and as good hives as would have pleased Huber who wrote a book about bees and honey."

"Very good," I remarked. "Is he an old crusty bachelor or a widower with a house full of noisy children?"

"Neither," she replied. "There is but a difference of four years in their ages."

"Why; you must be hard to please. Is he going to live among the Yankees?"

"No, he has settled himself within two miles, but after tea this evening will state my objections out on the porch."

"Can wait," I replied, "for my curiosity has lost its edge. Your objections."

"You have probably noticed," said Mrs. Kepler, "that my daughter is very handsome, even to being the belle of the neighborhood."

"A person with one eye might have observed the fact," I remarked.

"Well, then, this pretender to the hand of my daughter is very homely. 'Tis startling to think of such a union. People are talking about



it and wondering at her taste. If Beckie had the right command of her wits she might go to Bath this summer and catch a Richmond lawyer or a Wall Street broker, and live on Shockoe Hill or else in Greenwich, the genteelest street in New York. So thinks Uncle Ironside, who is remarkably shrewd about such things."

"The most of mothers," I replied, "like their daughters to be established in proximity to their own apron strings. I wonder you should think of Wall Street for it's unpopular in the Old Dominion. But tell me, is Beckie of the same opinion with yourself about the homeliness of her intended?"

"Partially so," she replied, "but she conceits that he can borrow a part of her own beauty and pay her the interest of the loan in acts of kindness and by showing her off to his friends. She jeers me by saying that his homeliness has been put into one scale and his probity—industry and religion—in the other, and that the homeliness went to Halifax and that the probity and religion rose into the fibres of her heart. Such talk is very vexatious. It makes me irascible. They circumvent me in every way. He's forbidden these premises, but so sure as you were born he's over at Green Bank to-day."

"My impression is that your objection, Mrs. Kepler, is untenable, but we can't go into an argument on the subject. Like a Judge we deal in short opinions. The poor man can't help his homeliness.—

Had he created himself he might have been handsome as Cooper the Actor, or George the Fourth. The current of love is often ruffled by opposition. Opposition leads to elopements. It keeps the marrying blacksmith at Gretna Green busy as a Hyblian bee. Perhaps you may have heard of Lord Ullin's daughter who ran away from her home with a Knight. They had to cross the ferry of a Scotch lock in boisterous weather. Her sire, in hot pursuit, got to the ferry armed cap-a-pie to kill the Knight, but before the boat went down in the tempest the father cried aloud, 'Come back, come back, and we'll make up the quarrel.' Ah! it was too late, for the party were lost."

"You terrify me," said my hostess.

"Then is your objection withdrawn?"

"Withdrawn," she answered, "but one or two others are to be considered."

"How is he, Mrs. Kepler, as to his exterior—say his dress or apparel, by way of example? Some men of homely face are remarkably neat in their persons. They rig themselves out in handsome style. We have known officers in the service of Uncle Sam as homely as Beau Nash, and yet ladies were caught by their buttons, epaulettes, straps, spurs and military boots. Indeed, in the conquest of the fair, dress is sometimes half the battle. If a man be a little careless in his attire, what is that before a modest mien, attractive manners and an

even temper? We care nothing for a dandy, but admire neatness."

"My daughter, then, will miss a figure on the score of neatness, and this want of it is one of my objections. He often wears shoes down at the heels, list at his ankles fastened by a pin, his waistcoat half buttoned, his cravat knotted on the side of his neck instead of below his chin, and his lapels flying in the wind."

"Would you believe it," said I, "that Virgil dressed himself in the same way?"

"And who was Virgil?"

"The greatest," I said, "of the Latin poets, and when at Rome he used to dine with Augustus Cæsar and his Prime Minister. He lived and died an old bachelor; but a tasteful wife would have put him into a bandbox before allowing him to promenade the streets of Rome. My conviction is that he is an earnest farmer and wants to sustain your daughter in a style correspondent to her rank."

"On week days he does'nt mind a dust of flour on his coat."

"I never think of a miller without thinking at the same time of moral purity, but doubtless he has a Sunday suit. But all the defects of his raiment shall be corrected so soon as Pocahontas shall return. Give yourself no further concern on that point."

"How can you manage it," said my interlocutrix, "for the affair of his dress has given me many a sleepless hour?"

"The easiest way imaginable," I

replied. "We shall persuade the young lady to make a velvet collar to his coat and a stock of the same material for his neck, and a pair of boots to hide the list about his shins, and several other appendages, and to suspend his destiny on the obedience to her wish.— Think you that he'll cast her away by neglecting such a gentle hint? Not he, indeed, for the lethalis arundo of Cupid makes no such slight impression. He will see a meaning in the act, for the eye of love could have read the hieroglyphics of the Rosetta Stone which Napoleon lost by his precipitate retreat from Egypt. Is this objection withdrawn?" I asked.

"On condition," she replied, "that your plan should succeed."

"Let me hear any other of your antipathies."

"There is one more objection," said Mrs. Kepler, "and that is truly formidable."

"State it in the strongest terms."

"It shall be so stated. In my prospective vision of your coming it seemed that you were to achieve something in my family, and therefore you may explain away the objection, but it seems to me insurmountable. Because the Christian name of Beckie's admirer is Powhatan he conceits himself to be King of the Old Dominion. He dreams that he's of some great patrician family and regards this family no doubt as plebian."

"How do you know that?" I asked. "Did he ever tell any one his thoughts so that the thing can

be proved? Suppose his name be Powhatan. Has'nt he sought one bearing the name of a princess as his equal in all respects?"

"It can't be proved on him," said Mrs. Kepler, "but he used to ride by this house and give us nothing but a slight inclination of his head as if he thought us his inferiors. Our feelings were hurt. He made no effort to cultivate our acquaintance until Cupid forced him to back down from his lofty airs. Now he plays Peter polite; but it's hard to forget past times. When my affairs began to prosper his manner was changed to some extent and it went on to improve just in proportion to the increase of our comforts."

"It seems, my kind hostess, that in this thing you have acted on bare suspicion. Perhaps he thought your family above his own and for this reason he only gave you a cold and distant salutation as he passed. In the absence of all testimony there is a doubt, and all suspected persons are entitled to the advantage of the doubt. This is law."

"It may be so," she replied, "but you may depend on it that my keeping an inn was the cause of his fancied superiority."

"An inn," I rejoined; "why the keeping of one is among the most honorable employments. Did'nt Hofer keep an inn? Did'nt the mother of Whitfield do the same thing in the city of Gloster? Did'nt Archbishop Leighton always desire to die at one, and his wish was fulfilled? And above all, did'nt

the mother of the illustrious Kepler superintend such an establishment?"

"Kepler?" said the lady, "that's my name. What made him illustrious? Tell me something about him, for you have excited my curiosity. Don't claim kin with him, however, for perhaps he never saw Virginy."

"He never did," I remarked, "but he was born in the town of Weil, in Wurtemberg, Germany, in 1571, and died at Ratisbon, 1629, at the age of fifty-eight. He was the contemporary of the celebrated Tycho Brohe, the Danish astronomer. They were comrades in study."

"And what made Kepler such a great man?" said my hostess.

"That question," I answered, "would lead into a long dissertation, but it may be said in few words that he discovered three laws of nature which have been used by men of science ever since his day. He wrote a playful letter to his sovereign that he had taken prisoner the great warrior known by the name of Mars, but had released him on his parole. He was too magnanimous to keep the planet shut up in any kuklux den, but left him free to range at his own sweet will. We like him because he wrote in a quaint, humorous and highly figurative way. It adds to his glory, that like La Place and Humbolt, he never ignored the Great Supreme. He was reverential at all times, even at his meals. A philosophy without a God is like

the superb Escorial built on barren rocks. And now, Mrs. Kepler, we are not skilful in heraldry, and cannot say whether you be even a collateral relative of the great astronomer. Wish it were in my power to strike the false point in your coat of arms, but should you be the hundredth cousin of Kepler, you can look down with complacency on Powhatan, but don't act towards him like a stately tulip. Play the part of a lowly violet. Is your last objection superseded?"

"Set aside," she answered.

Miss Beckie had now returned in spirits somewhat depressed. It was evident that a struggle was going on in her mind between filial obedience and a warmly cherished attachment. But a joyful feeling supplanted all depression, when told that the crook in her lot had become perfectly straight, and the mole hill objections had disappeared. Sun Flower Inn became placid as some discarded fossil. It was time for the writer to be off, for Bath at that time was to Virginians what Cintra was for a long time to the elite of Lisbon. Couldn't stay to the wedding, for another twinge of rheumatism had been felt in my arm.

"You must stay," said Uncle Ironside. "Thought all would come right. What is to be must be, for them's my principles. Told you so when that thar rod was fixed."

Bade white and blacks adieu.—Started. Thought on the way how Virginia had named one county

after Pocahontas, but it does not lie where her great deeds were done. What a pity. There's plenty of statues in Richmond, but none of the Princess. Yet Marshall, Mason and Clay would have been born in England had *she not saved the Colony*. In this monumental age what are the ladies of the Old Dominion about that they have forgotten the debt they owe to Pocahontas? Many daughters have done nobly, but she surpassed them all. Don't like a crowd, but should there be such a thing at Bath will get some Wall street broker to build me a kiosk in Green Valley not far from the Springs.

T. B. BALCH.

THE CONSUMMATION of madness is to do what, at the time of doing it, we intend to be afterward sorry for—the deliberate and intentional making of work for repentance.

WHAT CAN be a more wretched sight than to see a starving miser mortify without religion?—to submit to such voluntary hardships to no purpose, and lose the present without providing for the future.

WE MUST not speak all that we know (says Montaigne), that were folly; but what a man says should be what he thinks, otherwise it is knavery.

GREAT POWERS and natural gifts do not bring privileges to their possessors so much as they impose duties.

DO NOT choose your friend by his looks. Handsome shoes often pinch the feet.