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LIFE AMONG THE CRACKERS.

BY ZITELLA COCKE.

The origin of the Crackers is not unlike that of many heroes who have figured in the chronicles of the historian or the story of the bard—it is clouded in obscurity, with here and there a ray of information, which at best but serves to illumine the path of conjecture. From whatever source they have sprung, it is unquestionably true that they are "*sui generis*" in character, dress, habits of life and dialect, whether found among the sand-hills of Carolina or in the hills and mountains of Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama.

With man in his highest state of civilization they have and wish only that intercourse which subserves their purposes of petty barter and exchange. A closer association than is required by such necessities they seem to repel with something of the untamed persistency which characterizes the wild Indian. Their thoughts, manners, and vocabulary set at naught all legislation of custom, fashion, or grammar. Their conservatism is of the intensest school; and their religion, being that of their fathers, is, they declare, quite good enough for them. The same words and expressions and the same type of physical and facial conformation will run through a whole community of these strange people with a fidelity which is startling to one who beholds them for the first time. In a section of country where, if we accept the verdict of Dean Stanley and Lord John Russell, the educated classes speak purer English than elsewhere on the Continent, we find these in-

habitants of the hills and mountains speaking a dialect with a harsh and incisive accent—a reverberating Western *r*—and a prolonged nasal twang which might have been imported from "down-east." To ears polite such language might well suggest the lines of Shakespeare:

"What cracker is this same that deafs our ears
With this abundance of superfluous breath"?

Why they bear the name Cracker remains an unanswered question. Some argue that as the Sand-hillers receive their name from the lank, ungainly sand-hill crane — *Grus Canadensis* — so the Cracker, a branch from the same stem, obtains his name from the corn crake, a bird of similarly ungraceful proportions. It is even claimed that they are descended from the Hessians of Revolutionary notoriety, and not unfrequently a patronymic found among them points strongly to such an origin.

They are not slow to perceive the vast difference which lies between themselves and their civilized countrymen, and anything in word or manner which betrays a consciousness of superiority on the part of the better class is sure to provoke the bitter resentment of the Cracker. "Them white-handed restercrats," as they dub ladies and gentlemen, he always eyes with the suspicion that to them he must necessarily be an object of contempt, and in the presence of such contempt he feels bound to assert his manhood.

"I'm jest about a leetle the best man in this settlement!"—strong accent on last syllable—

TABERNACLE PULPIT

A MONTHLY REPORT OF THE SERMONS DELIVERED BY REV. T.
DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D., FROM THE PULPIT OF THE
BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

The reports of my sermons published in THE BROOKLYN MAGAZINE, made by my own stenographer and printed after my personal revision, are authorized and recommended by me to the public as accurate reports of the sermons delivered from the pulpit of the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

T. DE WITT TALMAGE.

Brooklyn, March 15, 1886.

HARDSHIPS OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

DELIVERED IN BROOKLYN TABERNACLE, SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 30, 1886.

TEXT: "So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil."—ISAIAH xli. 7.

You have seen in factories a piece of mechanism passing from hand to hand and from room to room, and one mechanic will smite it, and another will flatten it, and another will chisel it, and another will polish it, until the work be done. And so the prophet describes the idols of olden times as being made, part of them by one hand, part of them by another hand. Carpentry comes in, gold-beating comes in, smithery comes in, and three or four styles of mechanism are employed. "So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil." When they met, they talked over their work and they helped each other on with it. It was a very bad kind of business; it was making idols which were an insult to the Lord of heaven. I have thought if men in bad work can encourage each other, ought not men engaged in honest artisanship and in honest mechanism speak words of good cheer?

The Bible comes down to the minutiae of everything. It tells us how many dollars Solomon paid for his horses. It tells us in Deuteronomy what kind of a roof we ought to have on our house. It applauds the industry

and ingenuity of the Israelitish spinsters. It gives us specimens of old-time needlework, leather-making, tanning establishment, pottery, brick kiln, city water-works, shipbuilding.

Men see in their own work hardships and trials, while they recognize no hardships or trials in anybody else's occupation. Every man's burden is the heaviest and every woman's task is the hardest. We find people wanting to get into other occupations and professions. I hear men in all kinds of toil wishing they were enabled to do something else, saying to me: "I have mistaken my path in life; I ought to have been a mechanic and I am a merchant;" or, "I ought to have been a merchant and I am a mechanic. I ought to have been a lawyer and I am an artist; if I had undertaken some other path in life I would have had an easier time and I would have had grander success." I suppose when the merchant comes home at night, his brain hot with the anxieties of commercial toil, disappointed and vexed, agitated about the excitements in the money market, he says: "Oh, I wish I were a mechanic! When his day's work is done the mechanic lies down; he is healthy in body, healthy in mind, and healthy in soul, but I can't sleep;" while at that very moment the mechanic is wishing he were a banker or a merchant. He says: "Then I could always have on beautiful apparel; then I could move in the choicest circles; then I could bring up

my children in a very different sphere from that in which I am compelled to bring them up."

Now, the beauty of our holy religion is that God looks down upon all the occupations and professions, and while I cannot understand your annoyances and you cannot understand mine, God understands them all. He knows all about the troubles of these men mentioned in my text, the carpenter who encouraged the goldsmith and he that smootheth with the hammer, and the goldbeaters.

I will speak this morning of the genuine hardships of the working classes. You may not belong to this class, but you are bound as Christian men and women to know their sorrows and sympathize with them, and as political economists to come to their rescue. There is great danger that the prosperous classes, because of the bad things that have been said by the false friends of labor, shall conclude that all this labor trouble is a "hullabaloo" about nothing. Do not go off on that tangent. You would not, neither would I, submit without protest to the oppressions to which many of our laborers are subjected.

You do a great wrong to the laboring classes if you hold them responsible for the work of the scoundrelly anarchists. You cannot hate their deeds more thoroughly than do all the industrial classes. At the head of the chief organ of the Knights of Labor, in big letters, I find the following vigorous disclaimer :

"Let it be understood by all the world that the Knights of Labor have no affiliation, association, sympathy, or respect for the band of cowardly murderers, cut-throats, and robbers known as anarchists, who sneak through the country like midnight assassins, stirring up the passions of ignorant foreigners, unfurling the red flag of Anarchy, and causing riot and bloodshed. Parsons, Spies, Fielding, Most, and all their followers, sympathizers, aiders, and abettors should be summarily dealt with. They are entitled to no more consideration than wild beasts. Their leaders are cowards and their followers are fools."

You may do your duty toward your employees, but many do not, and the biggest business firm in America to-day is Grip, Gouge, Grind & Company.

Look, for instance, at the woes of the womanly toilers, who have not made any strike, and who are dying by the thousands, and dying by inches.

I read a few lines from the last Labor Report, just out, as specimens of what female employees endure. "Poisoned hands and cannot work. Had to sue the man for fifty

cents." Another : "About four months of the year can by hard work earn a little more than three dollars per week." Another : "She now makes wrappers at one dollar per dozen ; can make eight wrappers per day." Another : "We girls in our establishment have the following fines imposed : For washing our hands, twenty-five cents ; eating a piece of bread at our loom, one dollar ; also for sitting on a stool, taking a drink of water, and many trifling things too numerous to mention." Some of the worst villains of our cities are the employers of these women. They beat them down to the last penny, and try to cheat them out of that. The woman must deposit a dollar or two before she gets the garments to work on. When the work is done it is sharply inspected, the most insignificant flaw is picked out, and the wages refused and sometimes the dollar deposited not given back. The Women's Protective Union reports a case where one of the poor souls, finding a place where she could get more wages, resolved to change employers, and went to get her pay for work done. The employer says : "I hear you are going to leave me?" "Yes," she said, "and I have come to get what you owe me." He made no answer. She said :

"Are you not going to pay me?" "Yes," he said, "I will pay you;" and he kicked her down-stairs.

I never swore a word in all my life, but I confess that when I read that I felt a stirring within me that was not at all devotional.

By what principle of justice is it that women in many of our cities get only two thirds as much as men, and in many cases only half? Here is the gigantic injustice—that for work equally well, if not better done, woman receives far less compensation than man. Start with the national Government. Women clerks in Washington get \$900 for doing that for which men receive \$1800. The wheel of oppression is rolling over the necks of thousands of women who are this moment in despair about what they are to do. Many of the largest mercantile establishments of our cities are accessory to these abominations, and from their large establishments there are scores of souls being pitched off into death, and their employers know it. Is there a God? Will there be a judgment? I tell you, if God rises up to redress woman's wrongs, many of our large establishments will be swallowed up quicker than a South American earthquake ever took down a city. God will catch these oppressors between the two millstones of His wrath, and grind them to powder.

Why is it that in some of the cities a female

principal in a school gets only \$25 for doing work for which a male principal gets \$1650? I hear from all this land the wail of womanhood. Man has nothing to answer to that wail but flatteries. He says she is an angel. She is not. She knows she is not. She is a human being who gets hungry when she has no food, and cold when she has no fire. Give her no more flatteries; give her justice! There are sixty-five thousand sewing-girls in New York and Brooklyn. Across the sunlight comes their death groan. It is not such a cry as comes from those who are suddenly hurled out of life, but a slow, grinding, horrible wasting away. Gather them before you and look into their faces, pinched, ghastly, hunger-struck! Look at their fingers, needle-pricked and blood-tipped! See that premature stoop in the shoulders! Hear that dry, backing, merciless cough. At a large meeting of these women held in a hall in Philadelphia grand speeches were delivered, but a needlewoman took the stand, threw aside her faded shawl, and with her shrivelled arm hurled a very thunderbolt of eloquence, speaking out the horrors of her own experience.

Stand at the corner of a street in New York at six or seven o'clock in the morning, as the women go to work. Many of them had no breakfast except the crumbs that were left over from the night before, or the crumbs they chew on their way through the street. Here they come—the working girls of New York and Brooklyn! These engaged in bead-work, these in flower-making, in millinery, in paper-box-making; but most overworked of all and least compensated, the sewing-women. Why do they not take the city cars on their way up? They cannot afford the five cents. If, concluding to deny herself something else, she gets into the car, give her a seat. You want to see how Latimer and Ridley appeared in the fire. Look at that woman and behold a more horrible martyrdom, a hotter fire, a more agonizing death. Ask that woman how much she gets for her work, and she will tell you six cents for making coarse shirts and furnishing her own thread.

I speak more fully of woman's wrongs because she has not been heard in the present agitation. You know more of what men have suffered. I said to a colored man who, in Missouri last March, came into my room in the morning to build my fire: "Sam, how much wages do you people get around here?" He replied: "Ten dollars a month, sir!" I asked: "Have you a family?" "Yes," said he, "wife and children." Think of it—a hundred and twenty dollars a year to sup-

port a family on! My friends, there is something in this world awfully atwist. When I think of these things, I am not bothered, as some of my brethren, with the abstract question as to why God let sin come into the world. The only wonder with me is that God don't smash this world up and start another in place of it.

One great trial that the working classes feel is physical exhaustion. There are athletes who go out to their work at six or seven o'clock in the morning, and come back at night as fresh as when they started. They turn their back upon the shuttle or the forge or the rising wall, and they come away elastic and whistling. That is the exception. I have noticed that when the factory bell taps for six o'clock, the hard-working man wearily puts his arm into his coat sleeve and starts for home. He sits down in the family circle resolved to make himself agreeable, to be the means of culture and education to his children; but in five minutes he is sound asleep. He is tagged out—strength of body, mind, and soul utterly exhausted. He rises in the morning only half rested from the toil. Indeed, he will never have any perfect rest in this world, until he gets into one narrow spot which is the only perfect rest for the human body in this world. I think they call it a grave! Has toil frosted the color of your cheeks? Has it taken all spontaneity from your laughter? Has it extracted the spring from your step and the lustre from your eye, until it has left you only half the man you were when you first put your hand on the hammer and your foot on the wheel? To-morrow, in your place of toil, listen, and you will hear a voice above the hiss of the furnace and the groan of the foundry and the clatter of the shuttle—a voice not of machinery nor of the taskmaster, but the voice of an all-sympathetic God as He says: "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Let all men and women of toil remember that this work will soon be over. Have they not heard that there is a great holiday coming? Oh, that home, and no long walk to get to it! Oh, that bread, and no sweating toil necessary to earn it! Oh, these deep wells of eternal rapture, and no heavy buckets to draw up! I wish they would put their head on this pillow stuffed with the down from the wing of all God's promises. "There remains a rest for the people of God."

I wonder how many tired people there are in the house to-day. A thousand? More than that. Two thousand people who are tired, tired out with their work, tired in hand

and foot and back and heart? Ah! there are more than two thousand tired people here today, supposing all the rest to be in luxury and in ease. Yonder is a woman who has her head down on her hand. What does that mean? Ask her. It has been a tiresome week to her. "Oh," she says, "when will I ever get any rest?"

Do you say: "We have sewing-machines now in our great cities, and the trouble is gone." No, it is not. I see a great many women wearing themselves out amid the hardships of the sewing machine. A Christian man went into a house of a good deal of destitution in New York, and he saw a poor woman there with a sick child, and he was telling the woman how good a Christian she ought to be and how she ought to put her trust in God. "Oh," she said, "I have no God; I work from Monday morning until Saturday night and I get no rest, and I never hear anything that does my soul any good; and when Sunday comes I haven't any bonnet that I can wear to church, and I have sometimes got down to pray and then I got up, saying to my husband: 'My dear, there's no use of my praying; I am so distracted I can't pray; it don't do any good.' Oh, sir, it is very hard to work on as we people do from year to year, and to see nothing bright ahead, and to see the poor little child getting thinner and thinner, and my man almost broken down, and to be getting no nearer to God, but to be getting farther away from Him. Oh, if I were only ready to die!" May God comfort all who toil with the needle and the sewing-machine, and have compassion on those borne down under the fatigues of life.

Another great trial is privation of taste and sentiment. There are mechanics who have their beautiful homes, who have their fine wardrobes, who have all the best fruits and meats of the earth brought to their table. They have their elegant libraries. But they are the exception. A great many of the working people of our country are living in cramped abodes, struggling amid great hardships, living in neighborhoods where they do not want to live, but where they have to live. I do not know of anything much more painful than to have a fine taste for painting, and sculpture, and music, and glorious sunsets, and the expanse of the blue sky, and yet not be able to get the dollar for the oratorio, or to get a picture, or to buy one's way into the country to look at the setting sun and at the bright heavens. While there are men in great affluence, who have around them all kinds of luxuries in art, themselves entirely unable to

appreciate these luxuries—buying their books by the square foot, their pictures sent to them by some artist who is glad to get the miserable daubs out of the studio—there are multitudes of refined, delicate women who are born artists and shall reign in the kingdom of heaven as artists, who are denied every picture and every sweet song and every musical instrument. Oh, let me cheer such persons by telling them to look up and behold the inheritance that God has reserved for them! The King of Babylon had a hanging garden that was famous in all the ages, but you have a hanging garden better than that. All the heavens are yours. They belong to your Father, and what belongs to your Father belongs to you.

Then there are a great many who suffer not only in the privation of their taste, but in the apprehensions and the oppressive surroundings of life, that were well described by an English writer. He said:

"To be a poor man's child and look through the rails of the playground, and envy richer boys for the sake of their many books, and yet to be doomed to ignorance. To be apprenticed to some harsh stranger and feel forever banished from a mother's tenderness and a sister's love. To work when very weary, and work when the heart is sick and the head is sore. To see a wife or a darling child wasting away and not be able to get the best advice. To hope that the better food or purer air might set her up again, but that food you cannot buy, that air you must never hope to breathe. To be obliged to let her die. To come home from the daily task some evening and see her sinking. To sit up all night in hope to catch again those precious words you might have heard could you have afforded to stay at home all day, but never hear them. To have no mourners at the funeral, and even to have to carry on your own shoulder through the merry streets the light deal coffin. To see huddled into a promiscuous hole the ~~dust~~ which is so dear to you, and not venture to mark the spot by planted flower or lowliest stone. Some bitter winter or some costly spring to barter for food the clock or the curious cupboard, or the Henry's Commentaries on which you prided yourself as the heirloom of a frugal family, and never to be able to redeem it. To feel that you are getting old, nothing laid aside, and present earnings scarce sufficient. To change the parlor floor for the top story, and the top story for a single attic, and wonder what change will be next."

But I have no time this morning longer to dwell upon the hardships and the trials of those who toil with hand and foot, for I must

go on to offer some grand and glorious encouragements for such ; and the first encouragement is, that one of the greatest safeguards against evil is plenty to do. When men sin against the law of their country, where do the police detectives go to find them ? Not amid the dust of factories, not among those who have on their "overalls ;" but among those who stand with their hands in their pockets around the doors of saloons and restaurants and taverns. Active employment is one of the greatest sureties for a pure and upright life. There are but very few men with character stalwart enough to endure continuous idleness. I see a pool of water in the country, and I say : "Thou slimy, fetid thing—what does all this mean ?" "Oh," says the pool of water, "I am just stopping here." I say to the pool of water : "Didn't I see you dance in the shower ?" "Oh, yes," says the water, "I came down from God shining like an angel." I say to that water : "Didn't you drop like a beautiful gem into a casket of other gems as you tumbled over the rock ?" "Oh, yes," says the water, "I sang all the way down from the cliffs to the meadow." I say again : "Didn't I see you playing with those shuttles and turning that grist-mill ?" "Oh, yes," says the water, "I used to earn my living." I say again : "Then what makes you look so sick ? Why are you covered with this green scum ? Why is your breath so vile ?" "Oh," says the water, "I have nothing to do. I am disgusted with shuttles and wheels. I am going to spend my whole lifetime here, and while yonder stream sings on its way down the mountain-side, here I am left to fester and die accursed of God because I have nothing to do." Sin is an old pirate that bears down on vessels whose sails are flapping idly in the wind. The arrow of sin has hard work to puncture the leather of an old working apron. Be encouraged by the fact that your shops, your rising walls, your anvils, are fortresses in which you may hide, and from which you may fight against the temptations of your life. Morning, noon, and night, Sundays and weekdays, thank God for plenty to do.

Another encouragement is the fact that their families are going to have the very best opportunities for development and usefulness. That may sound strange to you, but the children of fortune are very apt to turn out poorly. In nine cases out of ten the lad finds out if a fortune is coming by twelve years of age—he finds out there is no necessity of toil ; and he makes no struggle, and a life without struggle goes into dissipation or into stupidity. There are thousands and tens of thousands of men in

our great cities who are toiling on, denying themselves all luxuries, year after year toiling and grasping. What for ? To get enough to spoil their children.

The father was fifty years getting the property together. How long will it take the boys to get rid of that property, not having been brought up in prudent habits ? Less than five years to undo all the work of fifty. You see the sons of wealthy parents going out into the world inane, nerveless, dyspeptic, or they are incorrigible and reckless ; while the son of the porter that kept the gate learns his trade, gets a robust physical constitution, achieves high moral culture, and stands in the front rank of Church and State. Who are the men mightiest in our Legislatures and Congress and Cabinets ? Did they walk up the steep of life in silver slippers ? Oh, no ! The mother put him down under the tree in the shade while she spread the hay. Many of these mighty men eat out of an iron spoon and drank out of the roughest earthenware—their whole life a forced march. They never had any luxuries until, after a while, God gave them affluence and usefulness and renown as a reward for their persistence. Remember, then, that though you may have poor surroundings and small means for the education of your children, they are actually starting under better advantages than though you had a fortune to give them. Hardship and privation are not a damage to them, but an advantage. A clipper likes a stiff breeze. The sledge hammer does not hurt the iron that it knocks into shape. Trouble is a hone for sharpening very keen razors.

Akenside rose to his eminent sphere from his father's butcher shop. Robert Burns started as a shepherd. Prideau used to sweep Exeter College. Gifford was a shoemaker ; and the son of every man of toil may rise to heights of intellectual and moral power if he will only trust God and keep busy.

Again, I offer as encouragement that you have so many opportunities of gaining information. Plato gave thirteen hundred dollars for two books. The Countess of Anjou gave two hundred sheep for one volume. Jerome ruined himself financially by buying one copy of Origen. Oh, the contrast ! Now there are tens of thousands of pens gathering up information. Type-setters are calling for "copy." All our cities quake with the rolling cylinders of the Harpers and the Scribners and the Appletons and the Lippincotts and the Ticknors, and you now buy more than Benjamin Franklin ever knew for fifty cents ! A hard-working man comes along toward his home,

and he looks into the show-window of the bookstore and sees an elegantly bound volume. He says: "I wish I had that book; there must be a great deal of information in it." A few months pass along, and though that book which he looked at cost five dollars, it comes now in pamphlet shape and costs him ten cents. The high wall around about the well of knowledge is being broken down, and people come, some with porcelain pitchers and some with pewter mugs, to dip up the living water for their thirsty lips. There are people who toil from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night, who know more about anatomy than the old physiologists, and who know more about astronomy than the old philosophers. If you should take the learned men of two hundred years ago and put them on one bench, and take twenty children from the common schools in Brooklyn and put them down on the other bench, the children could examine the philosophers, and the philosophers could not examine the children! "Ah!" says Sir Isaac Newton, coming up and talking to some intelligent lad of seven years, "what is that?" "Oh, that is a rail train." "What is that?" "That is a telegraph." "What is that?" "It is a telephone." "Dear me! I think I shall go back to my bed in the dust, for I am bewildered, and my head turns." Oh, rejoice that you have all these opportunities of information spread out before you, and that seated in your chair at home, by the evening light, you can look over all nations and see the descending morn of a universal day!

One more encouragement: Your toils in this world are only intended to be a discipline by which you shall be prepared for heaven. "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy," and tell you that Christ, the carpenter of Nazareth, is the workingman's Christ. You get His love once in your heart, O workingmen! and you can sing on the wall in the midst of the storm, and in the shop amid the shoving of the plane, and down in the mine amid the plunge of the crowbar, and on ship-board while climbing the ratlines. If you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, He will count

the drops of sweat on your brow. He knows every ache and every pain you have ever suffered in your worldly occupation. Are you weary? He will give you rest. Are you sick? He will give you health. Are you cold? He will wrap around you the warm mantle of His eternal love. And besides that, my friends, you must remember that all this is only preface and introductory. I see a great multitude before the throne of God. Who are they? "Oh," you say, "those are princes; they must have always been in a royal family; they dress like princes; they walk like princes; they are princes; there are none of the common people there—none of the people that ever toiled with hand and foot." Ah! you are mistaken. Who is that bright spirit before the throne? Why, that was a sewing girl who, work as hard as she could, could make but two shillings the day. Who is that other illustrious soul before the throne? Why, that man toiled amid the Egyptian brick kilns. Who is that other illustrious soul before the throne? Why, her drunken father drove her out on a cold winter night, and she froze into heaven. What are those kings and queens before the throne? Many of them went up from Birmingham mills and from Lowell carpet factories.

And now I hear a sound like the rustling of robes, and now I see a taking up of harps as though they were going to strike a thanksgiving anthem, and all the children of the saw and the disciples of the shuttle are in glorious array, and they lift a song so clear and sweet, I wish you could hear it. It would make the pilgrim's burden very light and the pilgrim's journey very short. Not one weak voice or hoarse throat in that great assemblage. The accord is as perfect as though they had been all eternity practising, and I ask them what is the name of that song they sing before the throne, and they tell me it is the song of the redeemed working people. And the angel cries out: "Who are these so near the throne?" and the answer comes back: "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and had their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb."

