

SOME DIARY NOTES AT RANDOM

NEGRO SLAVES IN NEW YORK

I can myself almost remember negro slaves in New York State, as my grandfather and great-grandfather (at West Hills, Suffolk county, New York) own'd a number. The hard labor of the farm was mostly done by them, and on the floor of the big kitchen, toward sundown, would be squatting a circle of twelve or fourteen "pickaninnies," eating their supper of pudding (Indian corn mush) and milk. A friend of my grandfather, named Wortman, of Oyster Bay, died in 1810, leaving ten slaves. Jeanette Treadwell, the last of them, died suddenly in Flushing last summer (1884,) at the age of ninety-four years. I remember "old Mose," one of the liberated West Hills slaves, well. He was very genial, correct, manly, and cute, and a great friend of my childhood.

CANADA NIGHTS--Late in August--

Three wondrous nights. Effects of moon, clouds, stars, and night-sheen, never surpass'd. I am out every night, enjoying all. The sunset begins it. (I have said already how long evening lingers here.) The moon, an hour high just after eight, is past her half, and looks somehow more like a human face up there than ever before. As it grows later, we have such gorgeous and broad cloud-effects, with Luna's tawny halos, silver edgings--great fleeces, depths of blue-black in patches, and occasionally long, low bars hanging silently a while, and then gray bulging masses rolling along stately, sometimes in long procession. The moon travels in Scorpion to-night, and dims all the stars of that constellation except fiery Antares, who keeps on shining just to the big one's side.

COUNTRY DAYS AND NIGHTS--

Sept. 30, '82, 4.30 A.M.--I am down in Camden county, New Jersey, at the farmhouse of the Staffords--have been looking a long while at the comet--have in my time seen longer-tail'd ones, but never one so pronounc'd in cometary character, and so spectral-fierce--so like some great, pale, living monster of the air or sea. The atmosphere and sky, an hour or so before sunrise, so cool, still, translucent, give the whole apparition to great advantage. It is low in the east. The head shows about as big as an ordinary good-sized saucer--is a perfectly round and defined disk--the tail some sixty or seventy feet--not a stripe, but quite broad, and gradually expanding. Impress'd with the silent, inexplicably emotional sight, I linger and look till all begins to weaken in the break of day.

October 2.--The third day of mellow, delicious, sunshiny weather. I am writing this in the recesses of the old woods, my seat on a big pine log, my back against a tree. Am down here a few days for a change, to bask in the Autumn sun, to idle lusciously and simply, and to eat hearty meals, especially my breakfast. Warm mid-days--the other hours of the twenty-four delightfully fresh and mild--cool evenings, and early mornings perfect. The scent of the woods, and the peculiar aroma of a great yet unreap'd maize-field near by--the white butterflies in every direction by day--the golden-rod, the wild asters, and sunflowers--the song of the katydid all night.

Every day in Cooper's Woods, enjoying simple existence and the passing hours--taking short walks--exercising arms and chest with the saplings, or my voice with army songs or recitations. A perfect week for weather; seven continuous days bright and dry and cool and sunny. The nights splendid, with full moon--about 10 the grandest of star-shows up in the east and south, Jupiter, Saturn, Capella, Aldebaran, and great Orion. Am feeling pretty well--am outdoors most of the time, absorbing the days and nights all I can.

CENTRAL PARK NOTES

American Society from a Park Policeman's Point of View

Am in New York city, upper part--visit Central Park almost every day (and have for the last three weeks) off and on, taking observations or short rambles, and sometimes riding around. I talk quite a good deal with one of the Park policemen, C.C., up toward the Ninetieth street entrance. One day in particular I got him a-going, and it proved deeply interesting to me. Our talk floated into sociology and politics. I was curious to find how these things appear'd on their surfaces to my friend, for he plainly possess'd sharp wits and good nature, and had been seeing, for years, broad streaks of humanity somewhat out of my latitude. I found that as he took such appearances the inward caste-spirit of European "aristocracy" pervaded rich America, with cynicism and artificiality at the fore. Of the bulk of official persons, Executives, Congressmen, Legislators, Aldermen, Department heads, &c., &c., or the candidates for those positions, nineteen in twenty, in the policeman's judgment, were just players in a game. Liberty, Equality, Union, and all the grand words of the Republic, were, in their mouths, but lures, decoys, chisel'd likenesses of dead wood, to catch the masses. Of fine afternoons, along the broad tracks of the Park, for many years, had swept by my friend, as he stood on guard, the carriages, &c., of American Gentility, not by dozens and scores, but by hundreds and thousands. Lucky brokers, capitalists, contractors, grocery-men, successful

political strikers, rich butchers, dry goods' folk, &c. And on a large proportion of these vehicles, on panels or horse-trappings, were conspicuously borne heraldic family crests. (Can this really be true?) In wish and willingness (and if that were so, what matter about the reality?) titles of nobility, with a court and spheres fit for the capitalists, the highly educated, and the carriage-riding classes--to fence them off from "the common people"--were the heart's desire of the "good society" of our great cities--aye, of North and South.

So much for my police friend's speculations--which rather took me aback--and which I have thought I would just print as he gave them (as a doctor records symptoms.)

PLATE GLASS NOTES

St. Louis, Missouri, November, '79.--What do you think I find manufactur'd out here--and of a kind the clearest and largest, best, and the most finish'd and luxurious in the world--and with ample demand for it too? Plate glass! One would suppose that was the last dainty outcome of an old, almost effete-growing civilization; and yet here it is, a few miles from St. Louis, on a charming little river, in the wilds of the West, near the Mississippi. I went down that way to-day by the Iron Mountain Railroad--was switch'd off on a side-track four miles through woods and ravines, to Swash Creek, so-call'd, and there found Crystal city, and immense Glass Works, built (and evidently built to stay) right in the pleasant rolling forest. Spent most of the day, and examin'd the inexhaustible and peculiar sand the glass is made of--the original whity-gray stuff in the banks--saw the melting in the pots (a wondrous process, a real poem)--saw the delicate preparation the clay material undergoes for these great pots (it has to be kneaded finally by human feet, no machinery answering, and I watch'd the picturesque bare-legged Africans treading it)--saw the molten stuff (a great mass of a glowing pale yellow color) taken out of the furnaces (I shall never forget that Pot, shape, color, concomitants, more beautiful than any antique statue,) pass'd into the adjoining casting-room, lifted by powerful machinery, pour'd out on its bed (all glowing, a newer, vaster study for colorists, indescribable, a pale red-tinged yellow, of tarry consistence, all lambent,) roll'd by a heavy roller into rough plate

glass, I should say ten feet by fourteen, then rapidly shov'd into the annealing oven, which stood ready for it. The polishing and grinding rooms afterward--the great glass slabs, hundreds of them, on their flat beds, and the see-saw music of the steam machinery constantly at work polishing them--the myriads of human figures (the works employ'd 400 men) moving about, with swart arms and necks, and no superfluous clothing--the vast, rude halls, with immense play of shifting shade, and slow-moving currents of smoke and steam, and shafts of light, sometimes sun, striking in from above with effects that would have fill'd Michel Angelo with rapture.

Coming back to St. Louis this evening, at sundown, and for over an hour afterward, we follow'd the Mississippi, close by its western bank, giving me an ampler view of the river, and with effects a little different from any yet. In the eastern sky hung the planet Mars, just up, and of a very clear and vivid yellow. It was a soothing and pensive hour--the spread of the river off there in the half-light--the glints of the down-bound steamboats plodding along--and that yellow orb (apparently twice as large and significant as usual) above the Illinois shore. (All along, these nights, nothing can exceed the calm, fierce, golden, glistening domination of Mars over all the stars in the sky.)

As we came nearer St. Louis, the night having well set in, I saw some (to me) novel effects in the zinc smelting establishments, the tall chimneys belching flames at the top, while inside through the openings

at the facades of the great tanks burst forth (in regular position)
hundreds of fierce tufts of a peculiar blue (or green) flame, of a
purity and intensity, like electric lights--illuminating not only the
great buildings themselves, but far and near outside, like hues of the
aurora borealis, only more vivid. (So that--remembering the Pot from
the crystal furnace--my jaunt seem'd to give me new revelations in the
color line.)

SOME WAR MEMORANDA

Jotted Down at the Time

I find this incident in my notes (I suppose from "chinning" in hospital with some sick or wounded soldier who knew of it):

When Kilpatrick and his forces were cut off at Brandy station (last of September, '63, or thereabouts,) and the bands struck up "Yankee Doodle," there were not cannon enough in the Southern Confederacy to keep him and them "in." It was when Meade fell back. K. had his large cavalry division (perhaps 5,000 men,) but the rebs, in superior force, had surrounded them. Things look'd exceedingly desperate. K. had two fine bands, and order'd them up immediately; they join'd and play'd "Yankee Doodle" with a will! It went through the men like lightning--but to inspire, not to unnerve. Every man seem'd a giant. They charged like a cyclone, and cut their way out. Their loss was but 20. It was about two in the afternoon.

WASHINGTON STREET SCENES

Walking Down Pennsylvania Avenue

April 7, 1864.--Warmish forenoon, after the storm of the past few days. I see, passing up, in the broad space between the curbs, a big squad of a couple of hundred conscripts, surrounded by a strong cordon of arm'd guards, and others interspers'd between the ranks. The government has learn'd caution from its experiences; there are many hundreds of "bounty jumpers," and already, as I am told, eighty thousand deserters! Next (also passing up the Avenue,) a cavalry company, young, but evidently well drill'd and service-harden'd men. Mark the upright posture in their saddles, the bronz'd and bearded young faces, the easy swaying to the motions of the horses, and the carbines by their right knees; handsome and reckless, some eighty of them, riding with rapid gait, clattering along. Then the tinkling bells of passing cars, the many shops (some with large show-windows, some with swords, straps for the shoulders of different ranks, hat-cords with acorns, or other insignia,) the military patrol marching along, with the orderly or second-lieutenant stopping different ones to examine passes--the forms, the faces, all sorts crowded together, the worn and pale, the pleas'd, some on their way to the railroad depot going home, the cripples, the darkeys, the long trains of government wagons, or the sad strings of ambulances conveying wounded--the many officers' horses tied in front of the drinking or oyster saloons, or held by black men or boys, or

orderlies.

THE 195TH PENNSYLVANIA

Tuesday, Aug. 1, 1865.--About 3 o'clock this afternoon (sun broiling hot) in Fifteenth street, by the Treasury building, a large and handsome regiment, 195th Pennsylvania, were marching by--as it happen'd, receiv'd orders just here to halt and break ranks, so that they might rest themselves awhile. I thought I never saw a finer set of men--so hardy, candid, bright American looks, all weather-beaten, and with warm clothes. Every man was home-born. My heart was much drawn toward them. They seem'd very tired, red, and streaming with sweat. It is a one-year regiment, mostly from Lancaster county, Pa.; have been in Shenandoah valley. On halting, the men unhitch'd their knapsacks, and sat down to rest themselves. Some lay flat on the pavement or under trees. The fine physical appearance of the whole body was remarkable. Great, very great, must be the State where such young farmers and mechanics are the practical average. I went around for half an hour and talk'd with several of them, sometimes squatting down with the groups.

LEFT-HAND WRITING BY SOLDIERS

April 30, 1866.--Here is a single significant fact, from which one may judge of the character of the American soldiers in this just concluded war: A gentleman in New York city, a while since, took it into his head to collect specimens of writing from soldiers who had lost their right hands in battle, and afterwards learn'd to use the left. He gave public notice of his desire, and offer'd prizes for the best of these specimens. Pretty soon they began to come in, and by the time specified for awarding the prizes three hundred samples of such left-hand writing by maim'd soldiers had arrived.

I have just been looking over some of this writing. A great many of the specimens are written in a beautiful manner. All are good. The writing in nearly all cases slants backward instead of forward. One piece of writing, from a soldier who had lost both arms, was made by holding the pen in his mouth.

CENTRAL VIRGINIA IN '64

Culpepper, where I am stopping, looks like a place of two or three thousand inhabitants. Must be one of the pleasantest towns in Virginia. Even now, dilapidated fences, all broken down, windows out, it has the remains of much beauty. I am standing on an eminence overlooking the town, though within its limits. To the west the long Blue Mountain range is very plain, looks quite near, though from 30 to 50 miles distant, with some gray splashes of snow yet visible. The show is varied and fascinating. I see a great eagle up there in the air sailing with pois'd wings, quite low. Squads of red-legged soldiers are drilling; I suppose some of the new men of the Brooklyn 14th; they march off presently with muskets on their shoulders. In another place, just below me, are some soldiers squaring off logs to build a shanty--chopping away, and the noise of the axes sounding sharp. I hear the bellowing, unmusical screech of the mule. I mark the thin blue smoke rising from camp fires. Just below me is a collection of hospital tents, with a yellow flag elevated on a stick, and moving languidly in the breeze. Two discharged men (I know them both) are just leaving. One is so weak he can hardly walk; the other is stronger, and carries his comrade's musket. They move slowly along the muddy road toward the depot. The scenery is full of breadth, and spread on the most generous scale (everywhere in Virginia this thought fill'd me.) The sights, the scenes, the groups, have been varied and picturesque here beyond description, and remain so.

I heard the men return in force the other night--heard the shouting, and got up and went out to hear what was the matter. That night scene of so many hundred tramping steadily by, through the mud (some big flaring torches of pine knots,) I shall never forget. I like to go to the paymaster's tent, and watch the men getting paid off. Some have furloughs, and start at once for home, sometimes amid great chaffing and blarneying. There is every day the sound of the wood-chopping axe, and the plentiful sight of negroes, crows, and mud. I note large droves and pens of cattle. The teamsters have camps of their own, and I go often among them. The officers occasionally invite me to dinner or supper at headquarters. The fare is plain, but you get something good to drink, and plenty of it. Gen. Meade is absent; Sedgwick is in command.

PAYING THE 1ST U. S. C. T.

One of my war time reminiscences comprises the quiet side scene of a visit I made to the First Regiment U. S. Color'd Troops, at their encampment, and on the occasion of their first paying off, July 11, 1863. Though there is now no difference of opinion worth mentioning, there was a powerful opposition to enlisting blacks during the earlier years of the secession war. Even then, however, they had their champions. "That the color'd race," said a good authority, "is capable of military training and efficiency, is demonstrated by the testimony of numberless witnesses, and by the eagerness display'd in the raising, organizing, and drilling of African troops. Few white regiments make a better appearance on parade than the First and Second Louisiana Native Guards. The same remark is true of other color'd regiments. At Milliken's Bend, at Vicksburg, at Port Hudson, on Morris Island, and wherever tested, they have exhibited determin'd bravery, and compell'd the plaudits alike of the thoughtful and thoughtless soldiery. During the siege of Port Hudson the question was often ask'd those who beheld their resolute charges, how the 'niggers' behav'd under fire; and without exception the answer was complimentary to them. 'O, tip-top!' 'first-rate!' 'bully!' were the usual replies. But I did not start out to argue the case--only to give my reminiscence literally, as jotted on the spot at the time."

I write this on Mason's (otherwise Analostan) island, under the fine shade trees of an old white stucco house, with big rooms; the white

stucco house, originally a fine country seat (tradition says the famous Virginia Mason, author of the Fugitive Slave Law, was born here.) I reach'd the spot from my Washington quarters by ambulance up Pennsylvania avenue, through Georgetown, across the Aqueduct bridge, and around through a cut and winding road, with rocks and many bad gullies not lacking. After reaching the island, we get presently in the midst of the camp of the 1st Regiment U. S. C. T. The tents look clean and good; indeed, altogether, in locality especially, the pleasantest camp I have yet seen. The spot is umbrageous, high and dry, with distant sounds of the city, and the puffing steamers of the Potomac, up to Georgetown and back again. Birds are singing in the trees, the warmth is endurable here in this moist shade, with the fragrance and freshness. A hundred rods across is Georgetown. The river between is swell'd and muddy from the late rains up country. So quiet here, yet full of vitality, all around in the far distance glimpses, as I sweep my eye, of hills, verdure-clad, and with plenteous trees; right where I sit, locust, sassafras, spice, and many other trees, a few with huge parasitic vines; just at hand the banks sloping to the river, wild with beautiful, free vegetation, superb weeds, better, in their natural growth and forms, than the best garden. Lots of luxuriant grape vines and trumpet flowers; the river flowing far down in the distance.

Now the paying is to begin. The Major (paymaster) with his clerk seat themselves at a table--the rolls are before them--the money box is open'd--there are packages of five, ten, twenty-five cent pieces.

Here comes the first Company (B), some 82 men, all blacks. Certes, we cannot find fault with the appearance of this crowd--negroes though they be. They are manly enough, bright enough, look as if they had the soldier-stuff in them, look hardy, patient, many of them real handsome young fellows. The paying, I say, has begun. The men are march'd up in close proximity. The clerk calls off name after name, and each walks up, receives his money, and passes along out of the way. It is a real study, both to see them come close, and to see them pass away, stand counting their cash--(nearly all of this company get ten dollars and three cents each.) The clerk calls George Washington. That distinguish'd personage steps from the ranks, in the shape of a very black man, good sized and shaped, and aged about 30, with a military mustache; he takes his "ten three," and goes off evidently well pleas'd. (There are about a dozen Washingtons in the company. Let us hope they will do honor to the name.) At the table, how quickly the Major handles the bills, counts without trouble, everything going on smoothly and quickly. The regiment numbers to-day about 1,000 men (including 20 officers, the only whites.)

Now another company. These get \$5.36 each. The men look well. They, too, have great names; besides the Washingtons aforesaid, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, Calhoun, James Madison, Alfred Tennyson, John Brown, Benj. G. Tucker, Horace Greeley, &c. The men step off aside, count their money with a pleas'd, half-puzzled look. Occasionally, but not often, there are some thoroughly African physiognomies, very black in color, large, protruding lips, low forehead, &c. But I have to say

that I do not see one utterly revolting face.

Then another company, each man of this getting \$10.03 also. The pay proceeds very rapidly (the calculation, roll-signing, &c., having been arranged beforehand.) Then some trouble. One company, by the rigid rules of official computation, gets only 23 cents each man. The company (K) is indignant, and after two or three are paid, the refusal to take the paltry sum is universal, and the company marches off to quarters unpaid.

Another company (I) gets only 70 cents. The sullen, lowering, disappointed look is general. Half refuse it in this case. Company G, in full dress, with brass scales on shoulders, look'd, perhaps, as well as any of the companies--the men had an unusually alert look. These, then, are the black troops,--or the beginning of them. Well, no one can see them, even under these circumstances--their military career in its novitiate--without feeling well pleas'd with them.

As we enter'd the island, we saw scores at a little distance, bathing, washing their clothes, &c. The officers, as far as looks go, have a fine appearance, have good faces, and the air military. Altogether it is a significant show, and brings up some "abolition" thoughts. The scene, the porch of an Old Virginia slave-owner's house, the Potomac rippling near, the Capitol just down three or four miles there, seen through the pleasant blue haze of this July day.

After a couple of hours I get tired, and go off for a ramble. I write these concluding lines on a rock, under the shade of a tree on the banks of the island. It is solitary here, the birds singing, the sluggish muddy-yellow waters pouring down from the late rains of the upper Potomac; the green heights on the south side of the river before me. The single cannon from a neighboring fort has just been fired, to signal high noon. I have walk'd all around Analostan, enjoying its luxuriant wildness, and stopt in this solitary spot. A water snake wriggles down the bank, disturb'd, into the water. The bank near by is fringed with a dense growth of shrubbery, vines, &c.