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OLD SHADY, WITH A MORAL.

I NOTICED recently that General Ben Harrison, a candidate for President of the United States, found himself called on to deny a charge of having said that a dollar-a-day was all that an American laborer should expect. I remember when I, myself, worked for half a dollar a day—Sundays, holidays and rainy days excepted—and we all remember when Congress enacted thirteen dollars a month with a ration per day, full compensation for an able-bodied soldier who had to work twenty-four hours a day, Sundays and holidays included, with the chance of getting killed or wounded thrown in gratis.

We should be above such demagoguery now, and I am sure the people of the United States are not to be deceived by such nonsense. Still this circumstance calls to my memory a little episode which may explain the matter even to the satisfaction of the most prejudiced.

July 4, 1863, the Union Army captured the city of Vicksburg. In the siege were three corps d'armée: The Thirteenth, McClernand; the Fifteenth, Sherman; and Sixteenth, McPherson. After the surrender, the Thirteenth Corps was sent by General Grant down the Mississippi to assist at Port Hudson and the Lower River towns; the Fifteenth, Sherman, was dispatched inland to Jackson and Raymond to drive the rebels well out of Mississippi, and the Sixteenth, McPherson, remained in Vicksburg as a permanent garrison.

A great many negroes, slaves, had escaped within the Union lines. Some were employed as servants by the officers, who paid them regular wages; some were employed by the Quartermaster; and the larger number went north, free, in the Government chartered steamboats.

Among the first class named was a fine hearty "darkey," known as "Old Shady," who was employed by General McPherson as steward and cook at his headquarters in Mrs. Edwards' house in Vicksburg. Hundreds still living, among whom I may safely name General W. E. Strong, of Chicago; General Hickenlooper, of Cincinnati, Mrs. General Grant, Fred Grant, Mrs. Sherman and myself, well remember "Old Shady." After supper he used to assemble his chorus of "Darkies," and sing for our pleasure the songs of the period, among them one personal to himself, and, as I then understood, composed by himself. It was then entitled the "Day of Jubilee," but is now recorded as simply "Old Shady"; and I do believe that since the Prophet Jeremiah bade the Jews "to sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations," because of their deliverance from the house of bondage, that no truer or purer thought ever ascended from the lips of man than did at Vicksburg in the summer of 1863, when "Old Shady" sang for us in a voice of pure melody his own song of deliverance from the bonds of slavery. Here it is, not in full, for other verses have been added, but I give it entire as it *then* was :

OLD SHADY.

Yah ! Yah ! Yah ! Come laugh wid me,
 De white folks say Old Shady am free,
 I 'spec de year of ju-be-lee
 Am a coming, am a coming.
 Hail mighty day !

CHORUS.—Den away, den away, I can't stay here no longer.
 Den away, den away, for I am going home.

REPEAT.—Den away, den away, I can't stay here no longer,
 Den away, den away, for I am going home.

Old massa got scared, and so did his lady ;
 Dis chile break for old Uncle Aby.
 Open the door, for here's Old Shady
 A coming, a coming.
 Hail mighty day !

CHORUS.—Den away, den away, I can't stay here no longer, etc.

Good-bye, Mass Jeff; good-bye, Mass Stephens.
 'Scuse dis nigger for taking his leavins.
 I 'spec by-and by you'll see Uncle Abraham
 A coming, a coming.
 Hail mighty day!

CHORUS.—Den away, den away, I can't stay here no longer, etc.

Good-bye, hard work without any pay,
 I'se going up North where de white folks say
 Dat white wheat bread and a dollar a day
 Am a coming, am a coming.
 Hail mighty day!

CHORUS.—Den away, den away, I can't stay here no longer, etc.

Oh! I'se got a wife and a nice little baby,
 Way up North in the lower Canady,
 Won't they shout when they see Old Shady
 A coming, a coming.
 Hail mighty day!

CHORUS.—Den away, den away, I can't stay here no longer, etc.

Now it is plain to me that "Old Shady" is responsible for the saying that white wheat bread and a dollar a day were all the old slave hoped for. I have no doubt that General Harrison has helped us sing that song with an emphasis amounting to an indorsement, just as Generals Grant, Sherman, McPherson, Logan, Strong, Hickenlooper, etc., have often done. After the war I met Old Shady on a steamboat on the upper Mississippi, when he sang for us on the hurricane deck that good old song, which brought tears to the eyes of the passengers; and more recently I heard of him far up in Dakota, near the "Lower Canady," toward which he seemed to lean as the coigne of safety, where his wife and "nice little baby" had sought and obtained refuge. I believe him now to be dead, but living or dead, he has the love and respect of the old army of the Tennessee which gave him freedom. "Good bye, Mass Jeff; good bye, Massa Stephens," was a beautiful expression of the faithful family servant who yearned for freedom and a "dollar a day." And yet "Old Shady" was only one of the tens of thousands of slaves who escaped from bondage to freedom in the days of our National struggle. More than two millions of slaves were practically free before Mr. Lincoln's Proclamation of Freedom. That proclamation was simply the notice by the high sheriff of the nation of a

concluded fact. I saw the whole process of emancipation from beginning to end. I have attended the auction sales of slaves in the rotunda of the St. Louis Hotel, New Orleans, of which Colonel Mudge, of Illinois, was the proprietor and landlord. I have seen old men, women, and children put up at auction and sold like animals; the father to one, mother to another, children to a third, and so on. I have seen young girls in new calico dresses inspected by men buyers as critically as would be a horse by a purchaser—eyes, hair, teeth, limbs, muscles, etc., etc.—and have seen spirited bidding for a wench of handsome form and figure by men of respectable standing. Such things were then common—not so now; and say what we may, we are more the creatures of habit than of original thought.

My firm belief is that domestic slavery at the South before the war was not cruel and inhuman. As a rule the family servants were treated as well as the average hired servants of to-day—but the “field hands” were regarded and treated as animals; and it is one of the most extraordinary anomalies in political history, that the owners of these slaves, who were not one-twentieth of the whole population, should have ruled their fellow citizens with despotic severity. They controlled the fashions of their neighbors, dictated to the counties or parishes and States, and were even arrogant to the United States of America in Congress assembled.

Looking back on the condition of facts in 1861, we are simply amazed that such things could be. I well remember when the merit of an army officer was measured in the inverse ratio of the distance of his birthplace from Fairfax Court House, and when Lieut. Braxton Bragg, in 1840, at Governor’s Island, New York Harbor, under orders for the Florida war, asked leave to go by land instead of by sailing vessel to visit en route and at his own expense his old, sick father, premised his written application thus: “I was not lucky enough to be born in Virginia, but I was born in a county of North Carolina, bordering on Virginia—and *therefore* I ask leave to proceed by land to Florida, etc., etc.” Of course, he got prompt orders to embark at once with the first batch of recruits by sea to St. Augustine. Again, on another occasion, at Fort Moultrie, S. C., in 1845, the officers gave a Fourth of July banquet to the citizens, among them one Stewart of the Charleston *Mercury*, the impersonation of the fire-eating secession class. With him the United States of America was the sov-

ereign State of South Carolina, into which confederation he grudgingly admitted Virginia with qualifications. Responding to his toast he spoke most disrespectfully of North Carolina, and described it as a "strip of land lying between two States," viz., Carolina and Virginia. Bragg, who was present, was bound to resent this indignity to his native State—high words and a challenge passed—pistols for two, coffee for one the next morning—but John F. Reynolds and I, from remote and obscure regions like Pennsylvania and Ohio, were chosen peacemakers, and succeeded in getting Stewart to admit that North Carolina was a State in the Union, claiming to be a Carolina, though not comparable with *South* Carolina. At all events we postponed the battle. In truth, at that period, 1845, old Blackburn Madeira and Scotch whiskey were more plentiful at Charleston than now, and will account for the silly quarrels and pretensions of that day. I think I knew Bragg as well as any living man, appreciated his good qualities, and had charity for his weaknesses. His heart was never in the Rebel cause. He was of Scotch descent, was austere, severe, stern, of great integrity, and had he followed the example of his best friend, George H. Thomas, might have transmitted an honorable name to posterity.

But I must return to the negro race. They still form one-tenth of our aggregate population. They were once slaves, but are now free ; not only free, but entitled by the Constitution and law to all the privileges of American citizenship. They are a kindly, domestic and inoffensive race, and since the world began no higher virtue was ever exercised than by these lowly people, who toiled in the fields to raise corn and food for the Rebel armies in Virginia and Georgia whom they knew to be employed to perpetuate their own bondage. Every Southern gentleman who has a spark of knighthood left in his nature should take off his hat to the old bondsman who staid at home to care for his mistress and the young ladies while he was himself away fighting to destroy his own government, and to strengthen the fetters which bound his slave to the master. That bondsman is now free, and by the Constitution and laws of his land is entitled to a vote as though he were born a free white man ; but we all knew then, as we know now, that Constitutions and laws are idle winds. People are governed by usages, customs, and not by laws.

The negro is not permitted to vote if the vote disturbs the

judgment of the white majority; and if it changes the verdict of their former masters, it is not counted.

What is the use of shutting our eyes to a well-known fact? We did so from 1850 to 1860, and have paid the penalty. The next war may be avoided by reason and common sense, and if I can help to avert it, I will feel more honored than in past victories and triumphs. I say to the South, Let the negro vote, and count his vote honestly. It will not disturb, but, on the contrary, will hasten your prosperity and stability as a people. There is no use of talking to me about "Bloody Shirts"—I have seen enough of them; yea, coats and overcoats ensanguined by the heart's blood of the best men who ever lived. I begged and implored my friends in Louisiana, in 1861, not to arouse the enmity of the sleeping lion of the North. Ever since the beginning of time, Southern people have been quick to anger, but not enduring. The Northern people, per contra, are slow to anger, but once aroused are not easy to allay. The Northern people will not long permit the negro vote to be suppressed, and yet be counted in the political game *against* them. Better meet the question honestly. Ask the abrogation of Article XIV. of the Amendments to the Constitution of the United States, or allow the negro to vote, and count his vote. Otherwise, so sure as there is a God in Heaven, you will have another war, more cruel than the last, when the torch and dagger will take the place of the muskets of well-ordered battalions. The negro is gaining in experience and intelligence every day, and he has read Byron: "Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not, who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?" Should the negro strike that blow, in seeming justice, there will be millions to assist them. Were I to-day a citizen of Louisiana, as I was in 1861, I would far prefer "Old Shady" as a voter than any of the Bohemians who reach Castle Garden by thousands every day of the year. I know my Southern friends will answer, why not leave us alone? "We are now all agreed—we are 'solid.'" So they were in 1861, when a tithe of their number, united by self-interest, made the whole mass to sacrifice their lives and wealth for the alleged protection of the slave property of the few.

I confess that I feel partial to the colored people of the United States. During the war they had a difficult part to play. They understood from beginning to end their status in our community.

They were faithful to their masters and mistresses. They never betrayed the confidence of a poor Union soldier who had escaped from his prison and was trying to reach "God's country." They knew the geography of the country in which we were operating, and always answered our questions honestly and truthfully, which is more than their white masters did; and best of all, in the crisis of their fate, they did *not* resort to the torch and the dagger, as their race had done in San Domingo.

I remember well that Henry Clay often asserted that his colored boy, ——, was the most accomplished gentleman in America. I myself have seen General Persifer F. Smith, of Louisiana, take off his cap and make a profound bow to every colored man whom he met in San Francisco in 1849, because, he said, they were the only gentlemen who kept their promises. And I here assert that Henry Sampson, of San Francisco, a slave to Colonel Chambers, of Rapides Parish, La., who paid through *me* twelve hundred dollars for his freedom, though the law would not have enforced one cent, was as well qualified to exercise the great American right of suffrage as any single man now resident in the State of Louisiana. What more beautiful sentiment than that of my acquaintance "Old Shady": "Good-bye, Massa Jeff; good-bye, Massa Stephens; 'scuse dis nigger for takin' his leavin's"—polite and gentle to the end. Burns never said anything better.

When the army I had the honor to command from "Atlanta to the Sea" reached Savannah, the first essential step was to carry, by assault, Fort McAlister, in order to open up communication with the fleet sent in anticipation with supplies. The work was promptly and genteelly done by the Second Division of the Fifteenth Corps, commanded by General W. B. Hazen. I was watching the assault from a rice mill across the Ogeechee, but as soon as I saw the Rebel flag go down and "Old Glory" go up on the flag-staff, I jumped into an oyster boat and pulled down. Reaching the McAlister plantation after dark, I was conducted to the overseer's house, where General Hazen and his officers were taking supper. I, General Howard, and the few officers with me were invited in, an invitation promptly accepted, because we had had nothing to eat since daylight. General Hazen, who sat at the head of the (kitchen) table, remarked: "General Sherman! Major Anderson who commanded the captured garrison is now a

prisoner of war out in the 'corral.' He is a gentleman. May I invite him to share our supper?" "Of course, this is your table, and I am only your guest; certainly bring the major in." An aide-de-camp was sent, and soon entered Major Anderson in handsome dress of approved gray, with decorations on the collar to indicate his rank. He was courteously received by General Hazen, introduced to me and the others, and shown to a seat opposite me at that (kitchen) table. He looked at me hard to discover the horns and talons of the devil, for at that time my reputation was not good at the South; but, like myself, being hungry, he lay to on the ham, hard bread and coffee served out to us by our host. He was naturally somewhat oppressed at the thought that his post had been carried by assault, and I attempted to compliment him on his gallant defense. In time he finished his first cup of coffee, and turned to the servant in waiting with the familiar coffee-pot, and recognized his own boy "Bob," who had been his own servant and slave two hours before in Fort McAlister. He seemed overwhelmed at the recognition, and turned to me. "General Sherman, may I speak to this individual?" "Certainly," I answered; "but, Bob, remember you are now a free man; answer the gentleman truly and politely, without fear or favor." "Bob," said Major Anderson, "is it possible that you have run away to the Yankees?" "Oh!" answered Bob, "I'm working for Mr. Hazen." Here was a black man who two hours before was the slave of Major Anderson in the rebel Fort McAlister now working cheerily for wages with *Mr.* Hazen. We never construed a negro as a prisoner of war. Anderson, after receiving his cup of coffee from his former slave, "Bob," said: "General, it looks to me as though the game was up." "Yes," I answered, "the game is up. Slavery is gone, and the Southern Confederacy a thing of the past."

I believe that the game *was* up, long before Appomattox. The American Union is as firmly established on the basis of equality of citizenship and personal freedom of action as any nation on earth. Let us freely accord to the Negro his fair share of influence and power, trusting the perpetuity of our institutions to the everlasting principles of human nature which tolerate all races and all colors, leaving each human being to seek in his own sphere "the enjoyment of life, liberty and happiness."

W. T. SHERMAN.