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From the Petersburg Express.
SORGHUM AND BACON.

Greensville, Va., April 13th, 1864.

DEAR EXPRESS:—I send you a communication on a subject of much importance to our people—I might add to our cause. We need food, and it is now a settled fact that more can be made by planting Sorghum than any other crop. The sweet potato approximates it more nearly than anything else we cultivate, but unfortunately it is rather uncertain, and withal is very difficult to keep. The farmer should plant some of all our staple crops; the seasons will suit a part and perhaps all. His aggregate will be much larger than by confining himself to one or two, as he will then have profitable employment for every season. The only drawback to a large crop of Sorghum is the scarcity of boilers. Can you suggest a remedy?

SORGHUM A SUBSTITUTE FOR BACON.

The scarcity of bacon in the Confederacy naturally suggests the inquiry, can anything be done to supply its deficiency? Is there any other article we can raise at moderate cost, and in requisite quantities, which may be used as a substitute for bacon? The question is one which experience has already answered affirmatively, and that article is Sorghum.

A brief analysis of its claims will satisfy any candid mind of the correctness of the above assertion. Its healthfulness is no longer a problem. It is conceded by all who have used it, to be not only innocent, but a wholesome diet. The next question of interest is the quantity which may be produced. The yield varies from eighty to one hundred and fifty gallons to the acre of good thick syrup, each gallon equal to from five to six pounds of bacon. It will thus be readily perceived that a very few acres on each farm, planted in Sorghum, will produce a supply equal to any demand likely to arise, and that without materially lessening the grain crop. Let us be more precise, and by way of illustration, take the State of Virginia. It contains an agricultural population (outside of the Federal lines,) of at least 800,000. I have no hesitancy in saying ten gallons of syrup may be made to each inhabitant the present year. If this be true, we have eight millions of gallons of Sorghum, equal to more than forty millions of pounds of bacon. And this in our State only.

The writer's experience justifies the assertion, that more than ten gallons may be made to each head in a family, having produced more than that proportion the past year, and this result produced with very rude machinery for expressing the juice. It could have been easily trebled with proper fixtures for expressing and boiling. To obtain the above result, I did not cultivate in Sorghum more than one-fortieth of such land as was seeded in corn, peas and potatoes. An acre of land that will produce four barrels of corn, will yield one hundred and twenty gallons of Sorghum, fully equal to 600 pounds of bacon; but four barrels of corn will not raise and fatten more than 150 pounds of pork. It follows then, in an economical view, that Sorghum is four-fold cheaper than bacon. But it has other advantages. It is subject to few casualties. The plant is hardy, resisting in a remarkable degree extremes of drought and moisture, and when matured, will wait for the mills, (with little loss,) for several months. I have left the seed and fodder cut out of the account, and they are excellent food for stock, and the yield is abundant. In conclusion, if half what I have stated be true, (and I assume the estimate is low,) is it not evident that Sorghum is a good substitute for bacon, and withal a remunerative crop? Then let our farmers plant largely, and we shall soon cease to hear of extravagant prices for bac-

con, for it may advantageously take the place of the latter article consumed in the Confederacy. The time for planting is at hand. Let every farmer do his utmost, and before the first of October, we shall have enough and spare. These are the honest convictions of a practical

FARMER.

CASTOR OIL.—A medical friend has furnished us with the following recipe for making Castor Oil, taken from the British Cyclopaedia. It is an article exceedingly scarce, and in great demand. The process of manufacture is so simple that any one may make the Oil:

Steep the seeds (Pis Christi) for a night in cold water, boil for two hours, then dry them in sun, and afterwards pound or bruise them. The seeds thus bruised are then put into water and boiled till the whole is extracted, when it rises to the surface and is skimmed off.

From the Magnolia.

Blind Willie's Christmas Song.

It was a quaint old store, that village Church. It had been long before the Reformation, and its walls and high arched ceiling had often to the majestic chants of Rowland had once been honored by the presence of a crowned King, and that one no less than England's fifth Henry. The standing boast of the villagers, for generation after generation the sphere King Henry had knelt was looked upon as a hallowed ground. The old walls were cracked and stained, and in many places the ivy was growing silently and slowly. It was a quaint and venerable pile, the honest villagers regarded their love as a part of their religion. Its venerable walls had witnessed the reception into the fold of all their ancestors for centuries back; from its portals had borne all that was mortal of their kindred who slept in the little mounds around it; and there, too, had their infant forms been signed "with the sign of the cross," and among those little mounds many, too, sleep when the cares and trials of life had passed away. As it stood in the December moonlight, which appeared to heighten every mark of antiquity, it seemed to the solitary man who stood at the gateway gazing at it, the saddest, and the dearest sight he had ever seen.

From the large Gothic window which opened from the organ loft, a stream of light stole out, and was lost in the lighter rays of the moon, and the man's gateway could hear, stealing out at it, the low faint tones of the organ, which celebrated throughout the country its sweetness.

The man paused only for a moment, and then passing through the gateway along the little churchyard, he opened the heavy door and passed into the church. There was but one light in the building, that was in the organ loft, and by it he saw a slight figure sitting at the organ, playing a simple air that he was playing, was so soft and sweet that the man's involuntary filled with tears. He went through the church, ascended the stairs, and was soon standing on the loft.

As he entered the organ was sounding, and an old man, who had been blowing the bellows, approached the new comer and looked at him respectfully. The player looked at him in surprise, and asked if he was just aroused from a dream:

"Why did you stop, grandfather?"

"Here is the Curate, Willie," the old man, without answering his question, said to him.

The player arose, holding on to the organ to support himself, and said, in confusion:

"I was only playing a hymn, sir. The eyes that were turned to me had a dull, heavy appearance. Alas! had always been so. They had never the sweet light of day, and to the world was only a world of darkness. A musician was only a boy, but the s-

and unnatural glow upon his cheeks, and sharp, gaunt features of his sad young face, all told that his brief course was nearly run.

"I am not angry, Willie," said the curate kindly, as he took the boy's hand and pressed it gently. "I saw a light in the church, and heard the organ, and came in to learn the cause of it. I did not know that you could play."

"Oh yes, sir, exclaimed the boy quickly, "I know how now."

"Who taught you?" asked the curate.

"God!" was the earnest reply. "Yes," the boy continued, "he sends the angels to me in my sleep, and they sing to me and play on their harps all night long. Last night they sang to me, oh! such a glorious song. It was the same song that they sung to the shepherds when the Saviour was born. It is almost Christmas now, you know, and they told me I must play it in the church on Christmas day. I will play it for you now."

The old man resumed his post at the bellows and the boy took his seat at the organ, while the curate stood watching him with a feeling of astonishment, not unmixed with awe.

A short prelude, and then the rich tone of the great organ rolled majestically through the dim aisles of the church, in a strong, full strain of joy. Louder and louder yet, and sweeter and more joyful they grew, until the whole church seemed full of melody. It was the grandest strain ever heard within those walls, and the curate bent his head in silence, for he felt that he was listening to the music of Heaven. The boy's face glowed with a radiance that seemed unearthly, and he appeared to be lost to everything but the music.

At last the organ was silent, and the boy turned to the curate and asked:

"May I play that on Christmas day?"

"Yes, Willie," replied the curate—

"Will you sing anything to the air?"

"Yes."

"What will it be?"

"Nothing but what the angels sang to the shepherds." Then, rising from his seat, he called his grandfather to him and added: "I must not play any more now. I would have the choristers here to-morrow night, and I will teach them the song. You are very kind to let me play the organ on Christmas day. I ought to do so, you know, for the angels told me. Good-night, sir."

In a few moments the church was dark and empty. Willie went home with his grandfather with his heart filled with a quiet happiness, and the curate returned to the rectory to muse over the strange scene through which he had just passed.

Willie, or Blind Willie, as he was called in the village, was an orphan. He had but one relative living, and that one was his grandfather, the sexton of the old church. He had been blind from his birth, and in addition to this misfortune, he had been deprived of the strength of mind which is given to man by his Maker, and was regarded in the village as a kind of simple, half-witted creature. He said many strange things, which rarely failed to provoke a smile from those who were older and wiser than himself, and yet, while people smiled, they wondered at his sayings.

The next afternoon the curate collected the choristers and repaired to the church, where Willie and his grandfather were waiting for them. The young singers were delighted with Willie's "song," and sang it very willingly. They had no difficulty in learning it, for they seemed to catch it instantly. The organist, who was a kind, benevolent man, came and helped them, and every one seemed perfectly charmed at Blind Willie proving to be such a fine musician.

For many days Blind Willie met the choristers, and taught them his "song." He taught them many other things, and among them was a very sad, sweet air, which he called "Blind Willie's Dirge," and which he said had been taught him by the angels. He said they must learn it and sing it at his funeral, for the angels had told him they would come for him ere long, and take him away with them, and give

him a harp and a crown like their own. All the while his face grew thinner, sadder and more spiritual, and there rested upon it an expression of happiness such as had never been seen there before.

II.

The merry bells of the old church rang out a joyous peal on the still midnight air of Christmas Eve. It was a quaint old English custom, and one which had been scrupulously regarded by the villagers, and now as the full, rich tones of the bell came floating through the midnight air, they seemed to carrol a song of joy and gladness. Joy, joy the old bells seemed to say, as they had said so many hundred of times before—joy to the weary and the desolate, the light-hearted and the gay—joy to the captive and the dweller in princely halls—joy to the old man and the boy, the mother and the babe—joy, joy, joy to all the world—Christ is born, and as the full, sweet cadence floated along on the sighing winter wind, the stars seemed to glitter more brightly and genially, as though they too joined in the glorious song; and then all the world, the sky, the night breeze and the stars seemed to unite and swell the grand triumphal chaunt sung so long ago on the bleak hill side of Judea: "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

All night Willie had laid awake, thinking of to-morrow. For several days he had grown feebler, and when he parted from his grandfather as he went to bed on Christmas eve, he told him that he was going away the next day—the angels were coming for him, and he was going with them. At midnight he heard the sweet bells of the old church filling the air with their music, and when they had died out into silence, he heard the angels coming to him again, and all the night long they talked to him and sang to him until the boy's heart seemed bursting with joy. Then, as the daylight came, they left him; but before they went they told him they would come for him in a few short hours.

Christmas morning broke brightly over the little village, and soon all the people were making their way to the church to return thanks to God for having given Christmas Day to the world. Every one had heard of "Blind Willie's Song," and how the angels had taught it to him, and all went to the church, anxious to hear the wonderful melody.

Willie rose early, and waited patiently until the time for church. He was very quiet and gentle that morning, and went about absently, like one in a dream. He was thinking of the angels and their promises to come for him that day.

When he went to church the youthful choristers surrounded him with praise of his "song," and told him he would be famous when it had been sung in the church. Blind Willie only turned his sightless eyes to them and smiled, and wondered if the angels would come as they had promised.

At last the service began. It was arranged that Willie's song should be sung just at the close of the service, and, when the time came, the organist took the boy in his arms and seated him at the instrument, whispering as he did so:

"Courage, Willie! you will be famous now."

Willie only smiled, and turned to the organ. A low sweet prelude, and then burst forth the full, rich strains of that triumphant song. Louder and louder yet they rose, until it rolled through the church in wave after wave of exquisite melody. Such music had never been heard there before, and as the sweet voices of the choristers took up the strain, the people listened with a feeling of reverential awe. It was indeed a song such as angels might sing.

The "song" was finished, but the strains of the organ continued to roll through the gray old aisles. Suddenly they were hushed. Blind Willie had grown pale, and had fallen over and was resting heavily on the side of the organ. The organist and the choristers sprang to him.

"Don't you hear them?" he asked, eagerly.

"Who, Willie?"