

"GENTLEMAN" JOHN PERKINS

By W. W. SCOTT

Some Account of the Life and Times of "Gentleman" John Perkins, of Lincoln; and of His Contemporaries, Successors and Descendants; Together With a Glance at the History of the Manners, Customs and Development of What is Now Caldwell County and of the Adjacent Country, During the Latter Part of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries.

(Continued from Last Week)

Only four races are recorded: (1) May, 1837, Polly Morgan won a sweepstakes in Morganton, purse \$137.50, entrance fee \$25, beating Capt. McDowell's Lance filly, Alexander Perkins' Riott filly, Isaac West's Fied filly and a South Carolina horse belonging to Mr. Little, Polly carrying nine pounds over weight. Polly Morgan was a red sorrel and was bought from Capt. Moody in Raleigh in 1836.

(2) October 10, 1837, At Morganton she beat Capt. McDowell's Lance filly and Alexander Perkins' Peter Pindor by Riott, she carrying 18 pounds over weight. Entrance fee \$50.

(3) At same time and place she was beaten in two heats, of one mile each, by A. Sherrill's Riott filly, one heat "from the throat-latch out" and the other by half a length. "It was believed she would have distanced the filly if she had carried equal weight." (A case of too much jockey.) These were all mile heats and Polly's distance is two miles. (No quarter horse.)

(4) Ran Polly Morgan at Wilkesborough, November, 1837, two miles heats against Gen. Lowdermilk's Monsieur Tomson, 4-year-old horse, and against Bogie's colt. She distance the field with ease under a hard pull.

This is a transcript of the account of four races that has been preserved out of a record covering a racing-stable career extending over 20 years into the future from a date when the stables and Polly Morgan were of the same age—about three years old; the remaining portions of the record, if available, would show many victories (and some defeats) in notable events in which the redoubtable filly and the other horses in the stable took part; for Polly Morgan and others of her colleagues made great reputations in racing circles. In the two heats in which Sherrill's Riott filly beat her once "from the throat-latch out" and again "by half a length," her fat jockey should have paraphrased Tennyson and encouraged her, in the second heat at least, by crying out, "Half a length, half a length, half a length onward!"

A horse having the pedigree, appearance and qualities of the three-year-year bay filly, Ellen White, sold to Judge Strange in 1836 for \$150, would sell today for not less than \$1,000, and probably for \$1,500.

The record speaks of a fine mare, Arabia by name, the property of Judge Pearson, who rusticated, during the summer of 1837, on the mountain pasture at Blowing Rock. Fellow-guests with Arabia were a gray mare and her thoroughbred colt, Grampus, the property of Bartlett Shipp of Lincoln. Mr. Shipp, a respected friend and honored guest at Mary's Grove, was cousin and guardian of Lucy K. Abernethy, who became the wife of Robert C. Miller, Maj. Miller's eldest son, and was also a cousin of Nancy Abernethy, the wife of John Perkins, Jr., Maj. Miller's uncle. A kinsman of the Mary's Grove family used to make the whimsical complaint that they spoke of "Mr. Shipp" better than any of their kinspeople and that, when they liked Mr. Shipp, they employed a tone of voice like that of the wife of a second lieutenant in the army or an ensign in the navy when she called her husband "Mr.," as if he were just a little better kind of "Mr." than the ordinary "Mr." This was an inherited friendship, for Parson Miller was very fond of Bartlett Shipp and his forebears. Still, he could not always have his way with his young friend Bartlett, for the correspondence between Bishop Ravenscroft and Parson Miller shows that these Reverend and Right Reverend gentlemen endeavored unsuccessfully to induce Bartlett Shipp and Robert Burton to become Episcopal lay-readers in Lincoln.

Commencing notices of horses and people is proper, for the horse is a noble animal and the friendship between the thoroughbred and his master is very fond and their relations close and intimate. Doubtless Gov. Burton of Halifax took pride in having raised aristocratic Lucy Forrester, and her subsequent owners, W. J. Alexander and E. P. Miller, were not less proud of the glory she and her progeny brought to their stables or of the profit they put in their pockets. Mr. Alexander was grandfather of the beautiful and talented Miss Laura Alexander, who was one of the first of the women of North Carolina to break an old tradition in entering a public profession; for soon after the civil war she went upon the stage, and her no less beautiful and charming aunt, Miss "Coosie" Wilson, beloved and admired in all that section, went with her as a companion and was her niece's chaperon during her theatrical career. Thus it appears that with the passing of the old regime the character of racing changed and the thoroughbred and their masters entered upon new careers involving much of practical utility and no less of high breeding.

Sired by the great Bertrand and with fast Polly Morgan for her dam, chestnut sorrel Scotia, foaled April 30, 1839, was a princess of the blood royal, so trim and dainty that she was never put upon the course, but was set aside as riding horse for the only young lady of the Mary's Grove family, which consisted of seven sons and the daughter. One afternoon, as Scotia and her young mistress were leaving Lenoir for their home at Mary's Grove, two miles away, there rode in front of them an old citizen who sat his horse in that bending-forward, bundled-up and swaying attitude characteristic of a gentleman in his cups, and as they neared him he turned his face upward and backward and, in the most agreeable and sociable, if somewhat tipsy, manner, called out, "Whip up, my good gal! We're both both going the same way." The "good gal" took him at his word and a gentle touch of the crop on Scotia's flank was all the hint she needed to show her heels and burn the wind. Scotia had been unsaddled and unbridled and had wallowed, and had about finished cropping all the grass she cared for on the lawn, when she raised her head and whinnied a derisive hello at the inebriated citizen and his nag as they joggled and nodded along down the road.

Personal Recollections

A grandson who was eight years old when Maj. Miller died in 1861 has some charming childish recollections of Mary's Grove during the last years of the old regime. A recent visit to the old place afforded him food for interesting philosophical reflection. Only four things remained as they appeared to him in his childhood, the graveyard (which is his own property); the grove, still beautiful but depleted; the old well, and the door that opened into "grandmother's sitting room"; though even the grove and the graveyard are changed. The old door, with its curious little metal knob and catches and its quaint battens, was one that Parson Miller had placed in the old house when it was built in 1806, and, long before it began to open up the pleasures of childhood to the philosophizing visitor, it had swung upon its hinges for the frequent comings and goings of Bishop Ravenscroft, Bishop Ives, Bishop Atkinson, Bishop Green, John Henry Hobart, Dr. Buxton, Dr. Thurston, Dr. Gries and scores of other ecclesiastical and lay worthies. When the old house was torn down, many years ago, the then owner, perhaps for sentimental reasons, saved this door and had it set in a doorway of the new house built upon the old site. The present owner, with rare generosity, has given the door to the whilom small boy, who has replaced it with a modern shutter.

This boy's recollection is that in Bertrand's stead another Sultan reigned, a fine black-bay named Puzzle, who lived in solemn, stately seclusion in a stable built for him on the lower borders of the limbertwig orchard, where Perry, in charge of the horses, cared for him and caressed him. Old Perry, good old black Perry—it was the joy of his heart to lead Puzzle two miles to Lenoir, on court days and other public days, for the purpose of parading him before the gaze of an admiring audience, the bestowal of whose praise upon the horse was as the oil of gladness to Perry. The boy remembers distinctly seeing the horses in the stables and hearing the race-course talk of the negroes, but he does not remember ever having seen a race or knowing anything about one. It is quite evident that during the first six years of his life he was too small to be taken to the races and, whether there were any races then or not, he would have no recollections concerning them. The same is probably true of him, from the age of six to eight years, though it is very probable that in those years, owing to the distracted state of public opinion, the minds of the community were set upon things more serious than horse-racing and that there were no races.

Fox Hounds and Game Chickens

The man, to whom the boy referred to as father, never hears a "jar-fly," that big locust whose raucous, strident scream from the great oaks is accounted portentous of hot, dry weather, or the chanting of myriads of swamp frogs, but he thinks of Mary's Grove. His way of getting to Mary's Grove was generally this: His grandfather, bestriding his horse, whose head is turned homeward from Lenoir, in the afternoon, reaches down and, grasping him by the left arm near the shoulder, lifts him up behind, on the horse, where he sticks, like a toad on a tussock, holding on grimly to his grandfather's coat-skirts. This is often not accomplished without earnest material protests which fill the archin's heart with misgivings but do not seem to move the grandsire at all; and what can one do under such distressing circumstances? Soon, however, the spirit of depression departs and the pleasant prospects and happy greetings on the road bring back cheerfulness and the joy of life. As the gray shortens, as the westerling sun declines and as the dark shadows of the gruesome grove envelop them, every oak furnishes a jar-fly who joins his fellows in sawing out a savage symphony and the frogs in the meadow take up the refrain and sing a funeral dirge. It is then that the little lad first learns what vanity of vanities means and realizes the futility of all human endeavor without maternal supervision, and, shamefacedly but sincerely, he weeps against his grandfather's back. But, hark! More cheerful sounds are heard. The hounds come trooping out, barking and baying around their master in welcoming

chorus; the little darkeys, scampering from the nearby quarters, run an Olympic race in noisy competition, the goal being opening the gate for "Ole Marse"; the cheerful, ruddy lights of candles and hickory log fires emanating through the doors and windows enliven the scene, and by the time the small boy falls into grandfather's arms and is hugged and kissed and patted upon the cheek and called "little tackey" by her, his tears are dry and the world has become new and fresh and beautiful again. Where to go and what to do next is the problem. And he fears the edict that it is too late to go anywhere out of doors, for he had been counting on a round of the quarters with his favorites among the young darkeys and a visit to Uncle Jim to see the 'possum he has fattened and to learn what progress Joe is making at putting a new handle in the small boy's miniature axe. There were other things it would be very agreeable to do also, as visiting the stables, examining the chicken runs, etc., but they would "keep" till morning, especially as he was sure that out of seven uncles there would be enough at home to furnish him with choice diversion between supper and bedtime. Much as he loved and admired his grandfather, who was something of a valetudinarian at this time, he had no patience with his impies diet of mush and milk, followed by hot corn pone and butter and a glass of milk; so he contrived to be seated at the supper table near his grandmother and regaled himself on the more toothsome dainties with which she provided him. After supper everybody repaired to "the hall," in the wide fireplace of which a big log fire was blazing, the grandmothers, who always wore a "cap," sitting in one corner knitting (the most suitable diversion for a lady at night when the brightest light was that afforded by tallow candles and pine-knots), while the grandfather sat in the other corner reading the National Intelligencer, which was not the easiest thing in the world for an old gentleman, as was indicated by his frequent "snuffing" of the candles. (People in those days seem to have eaten a great deal more beef than they do nowadays, and the question is raised whether they did not butcher the beefs, as much as for any other reason, to obtain tallow for candles.) The small boy seems to remember seeing candle "moulds" always in process of being strung with wicks, of having the melted tallow poured in the dozen cylinders of each mould and of being hung out in cool places to harden. The long winter nights were the cause of the burning up and melting of millions of candles.) Be that as it may, the boy was soon deeply interested in more or less venacious stories of hunting, fishing and riding, and of the prodigies performed by the various animals engaged in the chase and race, which his uncles laid themselves out to relate for his entertainment. One of these uncles, who allowed himself to be monopolized and tyrannized over by him, was full of folk-lore and woods-lore, was weather-wise and knew all about animals, birds and fishes. He was a modern Will Honeycombe, without his vagrant habits. It is true that he divided his time largely between Mary's Grove, the gold mine and the mountain farm. The gold mine and the mountain farm were both located, by the small boy's imagination, in the realm of romance and mystery. The gold mine, he was sure, was the residence of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp, and he had a great longing to visit the mountain farm, for "Sairy in the Mountains," a negro woman who cooked at the mountain farm, and who from time to time came to Mary's Grove for a change, had given him accounts, exaggerated no doubt, of the broad acres in meadow and pasture, of the vast droves of horses and herds of cattle on the pastures and of the grand scenery. Later his strong desire to go to "the mountains" was gratified and he visited the mountain farm and Valle Crucis. He has vague memories of horses, cattle, mountains massed upon mountains and distant views, but the only really distinct recollection he has is that of seeing a huge rattlesnake which his uncle, who owned Valle Crucis, kept in a box with a glass window, together with deer horns stuck around the walls and bear skins spread on the floors. Dried venison hams and "mountain sugar" made from maple syrup also rise up out of the indistinctness and claim a place in memory. The boy was allowed to "sit up" till all the family went to bed and the excitement of the afternoon and evening had only the effect of closing his little eyes in dreamless slumber as soon as he was well tucked in. In the middle of the night he was waked by strains of music he recognized as the winding of the hunters' horn rounding up the hounds for a fox-chase, and Loud Lumber, Music and all the pack responded in joyful chorus of baying up and down the gamut, from the treble of Music to the deep bass of old Lumber. A few sharp halloos from "the boys" got the hounds well in hand and presently they speeded, yelping, barking, baying, off and away toward the forest. The stories the little boy had heard made him familiar with every move to be made—circling and hunting, with a yelp of encouragement now and then from the leaders, egged on by sharp halloos from the hunters; striking the scent and following the trail, announced by the "opening" of the leader, when the whole pack joined in a grand volume of exciting music which kept up as long as the trail was "hot" but diminished and faded away if it grew "cold," which happened if the wily fox back-tracked, doubled or took to water; then followed more hunting and long-range circling till the hot trail was picked up again; on a hot trail the concerted baying of the hounds was resumed and became one harmonious volume of concerted music as it grew hotter; no tongue or pen can describe the climax of this swelling, sonorous, bounding billow of baying, sweeping in waves through the forest, as the foremost hounds, in the

LAST INSTALLMENT NEXT WEEK.

Next week will complete the "Gentleman" John Perkins articles by Mr. Scott. These articles are being printed in book form and will be ready for distribution within the next two weeks. The price will be \$1.50 per copy. Only a limited number are being printed. Those wishing a copy of these articles in book form should send in their orders now, accompanied by check.

ecstasy of the chase, caught the first distant, fleeting glimpse of Reynard's gray brush; soon run down and exhausted, the fox was an easy prey, for in face of a pack of hounds he could not be said to be "at bay;" the hunters tried always to keep up with the hounds by cutting across and doubling like a fox, in order to enjoy the music and excitement and to be in at the death to prevent the hounds from tearing the fox to pieces. Lying tucked away in his warm nest in bed, the little boy's imagination drew for him these exciting pictures while he listened to the music of the horns and hounds scampering away to the forest, and, as the last faint notes of the sweet music died away, he dropped off to sleep again. As a boy and man this was as near as he ever came to being on a fox-hunt and he is well satisfied, for it took a tough, hardy youngster to keep up with the hounds in the rough woods, where "riding to the hounds" would have been out of the question. The start was at an hour anywhere from 2 a.m. until daybreak, in order to encounter the fox fresh upon his travels and to trail him when the dew was on the ground and the scent was fresh and hot.

Next morning he was up bright and early, had been all around the quarters and seen his little black friends and had examined Uncle Jim's 'possum, which was getting very fat and appeared to be quite as "sullen" as was becoming in a 'possum growing in girth and devoted to a sacrifice that was only delayed awaiting the preparedness of the accompanying sweet potatoes. Joe had given him his toy axe, newly helved, which he kept with him as closely as a little girl keeps her baby-doll, and as there was still plenty of time on his hands before the breakfast bell would ring, he was engaged in watching a function that interested him intensely. The game had been abroad in the forest in numbers that night, and the wind had been fair—that is to say it had been gentle and had not dried up the dew—and the uncles had caught two foxes between 2 o'clock and sunup, and as the last one was caught near home they "came in." The pelts and brushes had been nailed up against the granary wall to dry and the carcasses of the foxes, after having been boiled in a pot prepared for the purpose, were being cut up in proper proportions and thrown to the dogs, which caught them, as trained seals on the vaudeville stage catch pieces of fat bacon thrown to them, and devoured them greedily. A well-kept hound does not care for the raw flesh of a fox but only "picks over it." By feeding them on the well-seasoned cooked flesh they were educated to like it and their appetites joined with their natural instincts to make them eager for success in the chase. This pack, as their predecessors had been, were deer-hounds as well as fox-hounds, but as deer was less plentiful than formerly the fox was a more frequent quarry than deer. A pack of beagles was once introduced, but it was soon discovered that these short-legged little hounds were fit only for rabbits, and as the rabbit, like the 'possum, was "nigger game," they were not kept busy. The little boy's uncle Will Honeycombe was something of a heretic in this particular, for he caught rabbits, generally by trapping them, for their "hams," which he dried just as venison hams are dried. Dried venison is delicious, but, by comparison, dried rabbit ham is as frog legs to mutton chops, and the small boy was never happier than when he came into possession of a "ham."

After breakfast there was much to do—visiting the stables, riding a gentle horse and so forth. But a surge of never-ending interest and entertainment was the chicken run, in which only game chickens were raised, and only one breed of them, the Arrington Games or Raleigh Reds. They were called Arrington Games because Maj. Miller got the cock from Senator Arrington of Nash, a colleague in the General Assembly and the popular and alliterative name of Raleigh Reds was given to them because the cocks were always of some shade of red in color and because Maj. Miller was supposed to have brought them with him in his hands, their legs tied together, when he returned from the Legislature at Raleigh. They were notable fighters and the stock still ranks high among the dominant breeds in this section. Besides the Mary's Grove run there were runs at the gold mine and at the mountain farm. The chickens were smaller and lighter in weight than chickens not pugilistically inclined, but those familiar with them have always maintained that no broiler was ever quite so tender and toothsome as a game spring chicken. The little boy has never to this day seen a chicken fight except as between roosters who of their own will and accord have entered upon hostilities, but in those days there is no denying that there were cocking mains held. "Other times, other customs" again comes to the rescue. It had been a strenuous day and by the time the boy had finished supper he could scarcely keep his eyelids apart, so he was put to bed and fell asleep as soon as he "touched the feathers."

After a full night's rest he rose with the sun, and it seemed to him that Mammy Sophy was just trying herself to delay having breakfast till dinner time, and after she had served it away up in the day (according to his computation), that his grandfather, who had promised to take him home after breakfast, was inventing excuse upon excuse to attend to first one trivial piece of business after another before starting. There had never been a mule or a pair of shafts at Mary's Grove and, unless you walked, the only way to get away from there was to drive a pair of horses to a buggy or carriage or to ride one. The very convenience of it made horse-

back riding a common mode of transportation. At last the little boy was perched up behind his grandfather on his way to town and to his mother.

The love of the little boy for his sweet young mother and her love for him—what can measure it? At the first sight of her dear face such a great joy entered into his heart that it could not hold it and he fell into her arms and sobbed upon her breast, and she fondled and caressed him and mingled her tears with his. Then they loved each other back to joy and gladness and lightness of heart and the world was bright and happy again for both.

(To be Concluded Next Week)

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