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CHAS. M. STIEFF,
No. 109 N. Main Street,
Gastonia, N. C.

NORTH CAROLINA SKETCHES

PREPARATIONS FOR MAKING A CROP.

Hannibal Dismisses His Plans to His Family for Making Four Bales—His Wife's Sleepy Thought Saved Him from the Calamity of Breakfast Ground on a Friday—A Pleasant Day.

John W. Hayes, in Charlotte Observer.

It was one of "those early" days of spring, when nature feels the first pulse stir in her dull, cold veins. The storm had shifted in the night. The rains had ceased. And now the south-wind blowing softly awoke the buds and whispered to the sleeping grass and dandelions that spring had come. Overhead shuffling fragments of clouds, belated stragglers, scudged away into the deep expanse of blue. A hawk sailing there screamed a shrill challenge caught up and flung back by the crow in the pinetop before he sped away to his fellows with clamorous war-murmur.

In the apple tree a mocking-bird crouched his wings, then tried his pipe and scolded to find the notes had not come. The moist rails of the barnyard fence steamed in the early sun. Among the logs of the empty crib there a little brown wren played hide and seek with a hungry rat, twittering excitedly to sweet, the blackness dog curled in the warm sunshine below, and to Bill, the ox, standing with head over the half lowered bars. His hide, which should have been white and red, was dingy and begrimed. Each separate rib showed plainly, and the scars of trace-chains were there, and collar marks, relics of bygone toil. Since New Year the barn had been bare. The last load of his winter feed Bill had hauled to town and seen bartered for his master's Christmas revel. And the cockles under the little hen's tail now told how his search had since been through low-grounds for such poor remnants of stucco and fodder as the birds might have left on the battered corn. Bill was of that breed most commonly known as "scrub," and the toll and hardship which had come to his early years had not improved the strain. It had brought him a sullen countenance and shanks snowy and lean. His red hair was thinning. And the troubled noise of a rat was uttering now rose a protest that the bars denied him access to his scant pasture, and the sun already rising two hours high. Presently the master Hannibal appeared in the cabin doorway and Bill broke impatiently into short, sharp calls that needs must have reached the negro's ear, for without removing his pipe from his teeth he turned and called whist:

"Mose, you feed Bill dis mawning like I told you." "Like to know what I been doing all mawning if I ain't feed Bill?" "Bill grumble like he ain't had narry bite?" "Bill always grumble!" Bill grumbled if he's bumin'. Day ain't no satisf-yin' dat steer!" And saying this Mose slouched out of the cabin and dragged his sullen footsteps towards the barn yard. His pipe was out of Hannibal's mouth now and he stood gazing after his young hopeful unable to find words to express himself. "Great mine to take a briek an' bus' yer!" he exclaimed at length. "Dat make me say what I do 'bout niggerst Y'er triflin' lazy dog! If you don't feed Bill and fetch dat plow up I swear to God I take dis ax an' brain yer!"

But Mose had sauntered out to the barn yard with his eye fixed on the counterpane of the little beast, which with head uplifted, was appealing persistently for his breakfast. "Great mine to pick up a rail an' bus' you!" he exclaimed. "Aint never gwien to gi' yer nutten!" And he leaned across the bars sunning himself in the comfortable warmth of the morning. "Dis de fus' call!" he muttered, "an' from now on till de cot-ton pick all I gwien to Lear is 'feed Bill,' an' 'plow Bill,' like followin' atter Bill was de 'joyment in dis life'!"

"You black nigger dare! Don't you hear me!" Mose leaned down and raking together an armful of windblown sedge from the fence corner, tossed it over into the mire. Then, still muttering, turned across the desolate rows of cotton stalks, seeing the plow, where it had stood in the furrow since last year's crop was finished. But the voice of Hannibal jangling rime in the doorway came after him. "I gwien to hire out! No use tryin' to make a crop wid dese niggerst! Day triflifer dan po' white trash! I gwien to cut a cow-hide! Dats what! You can't work niggerst 'bout de oberseer! Dat nigger Mose he oughter be bus'! What de reason now nigger can't make crop as same as white man?" The steer had seized the wisp of straw tossed him and was grinding it fanthfully, his big eyes fixed on the master who controlled, without let or hindrance, his poor body and for the time such soul as is to brute things who do their toil dumbly and patiently. Yesterday Bill had left the swamp thickets to find shelter from the wind and driving rain. Once a shed had leaned against the log-bait crib, but this had tumbled down, and all day he had pressed from the wind where his house had been, while the eaves dripped upon his shivering sides. Hannibal drew the blue apron deep and strong as he watched Bill now and reflected upon his foresight in having raised the bars last night when he might have had to hunt for him this morning through acres of briary bottom land. He would begin the breaking of ground for his crop today. It was almost April now, and since the last bag of cotton was picked in November he had his hand done so well. New year had found the ladder bare, the crib empty, and not a penny to show that the year had been. Then Hannibal had tramped up to Quire Tom Wilson's, at his cross-roads store, leased the cabin and

forty acres for another year, supplies to be advanced, given notes signed with a cross mark, payable in the crop not yet planted, and further secured by a mortgage on "me steer, same mattress, one pine table, one bench, three chairs, a pot, and one griddle." This being the sum total of the property which Hannibal and his wife, Angy, possessed. These little preliminaries done he had trudged home again with a bag of meal and stid of bacon, the first fruits of a crop not yet planted.

After impounding Bill last night Hannibal had jostled his family, Bill's co-laborers, spread about the wide berth by the pine-knot fire. There was Angy with the last baby in arms. Mose whom we this morning saw at the barnyard. Pomp, Pete and Mirandy, skilful at weeding cotton, besides Lige, Bellindy, Miss and Babe, none too small to pick the white fleeces from the bursting bolls, these not deceiving or asleep all unimindful of impending toil. Angy was hushing her baby and dipping the cooking snuff, while the young ones turned yams roasting on the hearthstone. "Now you niggers hear what I tells yer!" began Hannibal as he kicked the dog away from the freestone and lit his pipe. "You niggers hear me now! I's gwien to make a crop dis year. I ain't no 'dese po' trin' niggers an' when o' dese po' pace you's got to follow! We's gwien to work de crop in de mawning. Mose, him an' Bill he's mawning. Mose, him an' Bill he's mawning. Angy an' Pete work de bees, de res' o' yer burn stalks an' I gwien to help all round!"

"You gwien to stand 'round an' be de oberseer!" explained Angy. "Who dat talkin' 'bout de oberseer. I ain't heard nobody say nuttin' 'bout oberseer! But you hear what I tells yer! I's gwien to make a crop wid you niggers. All o' yer 'ente to buy an' we owes Squire Tom half de 'till bale dis minute for rannin' us 'till now! Six bushels o' meal an' fifty pounds o' meat you niggers dese at since new year, an' de intrus arrunin' s'of de cotton's planted!" "De house on fire, Daddy!" called one from the hearth. "De house on fire, Daddy!" called one from the hearth. "De house on fire, Daddy!" called one from the hearth.

It was that good as having them. The sun fell so comfortable. He leaned back now in the bend of the fence. His head lay over against a rail. The pipe fell from his fingers, and with mouth open and face upturned he slept under the noon-day sun.

"Dat's right now!" put in Angy. "I's 'spectable an' you's 'spectable. An' dey's got to be 'spectable!" "It's 'spectable alger, an' you's got to work an' be 'spectable. I'll be yer open! Reason why alger don't gi' long no better jae case dey don't gi' long. Mose, you gi' it up at crack o' day an' feed Bill, an' dese taters I's rounin' will do for break'as'!" "The night had passed, day come, and now the sun rising two hours high shone comfortably upon Hannibal smoking in his open doorway. Within the cabin the children swarmed like flies about the cooking breakfast, for Hannibal and they had not slept the night before until the last roasted yam was eaten.

Mose, with plow on shoulder, still muttering at fate generally and at Bill the material embodiment of his particular fate, was returning plainly through the tangled cotton rows. Overhead the blue was swarming with clamorous birds. "Crow! Crow! Hawk! Hawk!" he called, and then came, the long drawn squeal of the crow in his climbing up and up and up. "Crow! Crow! Hawk! Hawk!" And from every point of the compass burrying wings beat fiercely in the fray. Ragged feathers came whirling down, and falter and more faint from the depths above fell the scream as the great bird tore from the countless breaks high into clear thin air. Under the eaves of the barn the grey rat was nibbling the bones of the little brown wren, and sweet roused from his sleep by the falling fragments was nosing hungrily about.

Bill stood harnessed now, sleek collar and wooden hames, and trace chains bound with many rags. The bars were down and he was out, but still he stood there patiently, his hungry eyes upon the field wondering dimly why he could not wander there, why he stood so harnessed, and why he needs must spend his life pulling that plow simitely up one row and down the other, never getting anywhere. Patiently he yielded to the fate he could not comprehend and stood apart waiting for his accustomed toil. But something was amiss with his old-time comrade the plow. He, too, had spent the winter in the low-grounds, and now the swing-ree had gone. Hannibal had come out, followed by all the young ones, and they stood about as though the whole crop prospect had suddenly collapsed with the swing-ree.

"Mose," ventured Hannibal at length, "you lent de ax an' go out in de woods an' cut a hickory swing-ree, an' de res' o' yer go down de creek an' hunt a grapevine for to tie dat swing-ree on wid." "But at this moment Angy appeared in the cabin door and hailed, "Hannibal! You know what day dis is!" "Whatten you ax me dat?" he grumbled. "I say you know what day dis is!" "What de reason I don't know! Sunday we went to meeting! Monday Herr Josh got married. Chuesday I went up to Squire Tom's. Next day Herr Lige's funeral was preachd. Dat was Wednesday. Yistiddy was Thursday, and to-day —" Mose, put dat steer up! If here aint we asettin' in

on de crop on a Friday! There was a hurrah at this unexpected holiday. The children stood on their heads, such as had acquired the accomplishment. Pomp kicked sweet and knocked Pete down in mere exuberance and the rest of them crowded to help unharness Bill. Angy stood smiling on them from the doorway, delighted that it should have been her forethought which had ward off an impending calamity from the household. Hannibal drew a good breath of relief that for the present, at least, he need not face the problem of making a crop with a rotten plow, lit his pipe afresh and settled comfortably against the rail fence in the sun.

"Tarp Bill in de fat!" called one. "Put him in de lot!" ordered Hannibal. "Yer gwien to work to-morrow!" "I look here nigger! You think yo' daddy a convit?" When I gits to be a convit? I 'spee's to work on Saddy! I's gwien to to-tow-morrer in darts 'sert like a 'spectable gen'tleman!"

He raised the black swarm of darters which he was chasing from the crows overhead, and he ceased what he was so serenely a solitary spook in the depths of blue. Bill relieved of his gear stood again in the barnyard mud. The plow and collar had brought no toll to-day. The bars were up again. He was incomprehensible. He said to his masters say "Friday" and behind his head, and he ceased pondering, closed his eyes and observed what God he had. Hannibal smoked, rested his gaze upon the stibbled, and pictured again the big crop he was going to make. It was so quiet now it was easy to think. The young ones had gone fishing. Bill stood near with eyes closed chewing his cud. A grey cat was curled asleep where sunset had laid him. A single feather, white and lustrous, came down and laid on from that fair height, and not a sound broke the stillness but the soft clucking of a hen to her brood. Hannibal could see the cotton growing; the biggest crop he had ever planted; the rows laid by, tall and green; the bursting bolls, the fleecy brokets, the four blades piled at the ginhouse door. It was that good as having them.

The sun fell so comfortable. He leaned back now in the bend of the fence. His head lay over against a rail. The pipe fell from his fingers, and with mouth open and face upturned he slept under the noon-day sun.

That is better. The Creator who beautified and adorned the earth with fruits and flowers and gave us birds to sing and music to charm, and studded the heavens with stars, did not make man to mourn. He has given us only buzzards for birds and dog fennel for flowers and the howling of the winds for music we might have mourned; but I rather like that poet who in the gush of his gratitude said:

"Behold a smiling Providence
Who wears a smiling face."
That is better. The Creator who beautified and adorned the earth with fruits and flowers and gave us birds to sing and music to charm, and studded the heavens with stars, did not make man to mourn. He has given us only buzzards for birds and dog fennel for flowers and the howling of the winds for music we might have mourned; but I rather like that poet who in the gush of his gratitude said:

"This world is very lovely, O, my God,
I thank Thee that I live."
Young was another sad and solemn poet, and says:
"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."
Sidney Smith was more genial, and says:
"Man wants but little here below,
As beet, pork, lumb, and venison show."
I wish somebody would tell me where I can find a parody on that same text that was written by John Quincy Adams about half a century ago. It was a charming poem, and began:

"Man wants but little here below,
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"Then he sets forth a delightful catalogue of what he does want, and it accords with our desires and excuses as a reason for indulging them. Let a man, especially a woman, wish as much as he or she pleases, but so good comes of a distressed longing for things we can't get. Woman is peculiar about that. She can want pretty things ever so badly, and do without them ever so graciously. During the war and about his distressing close the wives and mothers who had lived in luxury came down to poverty and hard times with more fortitude than the men. I know many men who gave up and plow and died, but their wives didn't. They held up their heads and struggled on. I remember how crushed and helpless I felt when I got my family back home and found nothing but a shelter—not a bed to sleep on—not a cow in the county, no flour, no sugar nor coffee—not a chicken nor an egg, and no money to buy with, if there had been anything to buy—no wood to burn, no fence around the house, and so we had to burn the stable that the Yankee built on our lot for their horses. It was desolation, and with me was almost despair, but my wife never surrendered, and she hasn't yet. She wants as many good things and nice things as anybody, but when trouble comes she can suffer and be strong.

ARP HAS A BIRTHDAY.

AND HE PHILOSOPHIZES A LITTLE ON THE OCCASION.

Says Everything Strains on Me Now the Gen'l-Fishin' Man Was Made to Be Happy—Meditation.

ARP in Atlanta Constitution.

Another paternal birthday in my family. They seem to come about twice a year to me now. How every-thing shrinks as we near the goal. The trees are not so tall nor the hills so high as they used to be. That is very natural, and is nothing new—but how is it that even time should shrink—time, that is so exact, so unchangeable, and that is measured by the same ticking of the clock, and that is measured by the rising and setting of the sun, and that is revolving in its orbit, and that by its annual course around the sun? I can't see why time should seem to shrink at all, or, if any change, it should expand, for we can do more, think more, learn more, in a day than when we were children. Seventy-two years ago to-day I came into this suburban world and here had my share of joy and sorrow and an equal with my lot in life. As David said, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. Yet I have a good heritage." But poor old Job took it hard when Satan despoiled him, and he cursed his day and said, in the anguish of his soul: "Let the day perish wherein I was born. Why did I not die in the womb, for then I should have lain still and been at rest, for then the wickedness came from troubling me; I would not have born sorrow. Poor old man; his sad story always excites my sympathy. Then there was Jeremiah, who exclaimed: "O, that my head were waters and mine eyes a river of tears. Cursed be the day wherein I was born; cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father saying: 'A man child is born unto thee.'" "I don't like these sad people nor sad stories nor tales of misery. I never read a romance that ends sadly. I don't like the company of people who wear sad faces and are never happy unless they are miserable. I wish that Robert Burns had never written "Man was made to mourn," for I don't believe it. Of all God's creatures, man is the only one that can smile, and he should smile as often as he can. Cowper was a sad poet, but he does say:

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Who wears a smiling face."
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It is a good time about now for a one of my years to look back and take a kind of inventory of what I have done all this time—what has been accomplished for the world's good or anybody's good, not for my own good, for that don't count up yonder. Before I go into the receiver's hands it is well for me to make up an invoice. When a schoolboy we need to debate whether or not there was such a thing as disinterested benevolence. I thought then that there was, but it seems to me now that almost every good thing I ever did was very much mixed with selfishness, and all that will excuse me will be on the line of the poet who says:

"They who joy would win,
Must share it—happiness was born in twin."
There is some comfort in that for I believe I have taken pleasure in dividing with others the blessings that God has given me. The retrospect is, however, not free from clouds and bars, and I would that I could live these

parts of my life over again, and live better. Dr. Johnson said to Boswell that a man who lived for himself lived in vain and that it was every man's duty to do something for his fellow-men and also for those who were to come after him. "Our fathers and forefathers," said he, "wrote books and invented useful contrivances, and planted trees and vines for us, and we should do something for posterity." I am about even on that line, for I have planted trees both shade and fruit wherever I have lived, and my wife still keeps me planting vines. I have written many sketches and a book or two, without malice aforethought, and can say, with Byron:

"What is writ is writ,
Would I were worthless."
On the whole, I am grateful that my life has been allotted to the last three-quarters of this century—seven decades that have witnessed more progress in science, art, invention, and Christian civilization than any previous thousand years in the world's history. A great leap forward has been made since there was a boy, for I remember when there were but two or three short railroads, and not a telegraph or telephone—when there was no light but candle-light, and not a friction match in the world, nor a steel pen. But progress always brings a train of evil things along with it. Every light has its shadow. The devil is a lively cuss and keeps up with the procession.

"Man never builds a house of prayer,
But what the devil has a pupil there."
And his pupil, though invisible, is at the other end, where the sinners love to congregate. I remember when there were no hip pockets nor pistols to put in them. I remember when there was no whisky in this country, and the only spirits drank were wine, peach brandy, cognac brandy, that was made from grapes, and New England rum that they took made from molasses. They made the rum to buy sugar with in Africa, but some of it got down south. Whiskey came later, and was originally unwhisky, a gastic word that, strange to say, means water of life. The last syllable was happily dropped in course of time, for it means life—anybody was pronounced wessky.

But it would take a book to tell all the changes that has marked the last 60 years—the good of it and the bad of it. I would blot some things out if I could, and set the clock back, but God knows. Especially would I blot out every bad thought and every bad deed of my own—every act that gave pain or anxiety to those who loved me. The worst word in the language is remedy. I am free from that, I know, but not from regret. I wish that all the young people would stop and think—sometimes stop and think—before they resolve to do nothing that will follow them like Banquo's ghost when they get old.

The South Planned Him.
Manufacturers' Record.

According to his opinions, expressed after a brief trip through a portion of the South to visit the Nashville Exposition, the anticipations of Secretary Wilson about the South have not been disappointed. Naturally his opportunity for judging of the whole region known as the South was rather limited, but no one will question his judgment of the patriotism, hospitality and other attractive traits of the people. This judgment will be confirmed in him when he makes his proposed extended trip through the South for the purpose of studying its resources and becoming better acquainted with its people.

One practical result of his visit will be the preparation of a bulletin on the subject of reclaiming worn-out soil. This promises to be an important study. In the richness and fertility of their territory many Southern agriculturists have in the past been rather prodigal of the soil, but with the rapid migration of homeseekers from less inviting sections has come a realization of the importance not only of maintaining the productivity of the land under cultivation, but also of looking to the future demand by taking steps to bring under culture again the land in some sections which has been allowed to deteriorate. Secretary Wilson has decidedly practical views on this subject, and from the hints which he has already let fall his study will be of great value to those who would conserve fruitful soil and reclaim the waste places.

More Foot Deeds of the Fusion Legislature.
Concord Times.

The last Legislature passed a special law for Concord, allowing it to tax insurance men and sewing machine owners. This is a beautiful set of people went right ahead and put a clause in the machinery act saying that no corporation should levy a special tax on these people. Concord's commissioners last Monday levied these special taxes, but will be unable to collect them. Every day fresh evidence of the assiduity of the last Legislature comes to light.

Many think

when it was said to the world that it was every man's duty to do something for his fellow-men and also for those who were to come after him. "Our fathers and forefathers," said he, "wrote books and invented useful contrivances, and planted trees and vines for us, and we should do something for posterity." I am about even on that line, for I have planted trees both shade and fruit wherever I have lived, and my wife still keeps me planting vines. I have written many sketches and a book or two, without malice aforethought, and can say, with Byron:

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Manufacturers' Record.

According to his opinions, expressed after a brief trip through a portion of the South to visit the Nashville Exposition, the anticipations of Secretary Wilson about the South have not been disappointed. Naturally his opportunity for judging of the whole region known as the South was rather limited, but no one will question his judgment of the patriotism, hospitality and other attractive traits of the people. This judgment will be confirmed in him when he makes his proposed extended trip through the South for the purpose of studying its resources and becoming better acquainted with its people.

One practical result of his visit will be the preparation of a bulletin on the subject of reclaiming worn-out soil. This promises to be an important study. In the richness and fertility of their territory many Southern agriculturists have in the past been rather prodigal of the soil, but with the rapid migration of homeseekers from less inviting sections has come a realization of the importance not only of maintaining the productivity of the land under cultivation, but also of looking to the future demand by taking steps to bring under culture again the land in some sections which has been allowed to deteriorate. Secretary Wilson has decidedly practical views on this subject, and from the hints which he has already let fall his study will be of great value to those who would conserve fruitful soil and reclaim the waste places.

More Foot Deeds of the Fusion Legislature.
Concord Times.

The last Legislature passed a special law for Concord, allowing it to tax insurance men and sewing machine owners. This is a beautiful set of people went right ahead and put a clause in the machinery act saying that no corporation should levy a special tax on these people. Concord's commissioners last Monday levied these special taxes, but will be unable to collect them. Every day fresh evidence of the assiduity of the last Legislature comes to light.