

Keokuk Daily Post
April 10, 1857

Correspondence

Snodgrass, in a Adventure

Cincinnati, March 14, 1857

MISTER EDITORS:

It mought be that some people think your umble sarvent has "shuffled off this mortal quile" and bid an eternal adoo to this subloonary atmosphere--nary time. He aint dead, but sleepeth. That expreshun are figerative, and go to signerfy that he's pooty much quit scribblin.

It's been cold here, Mr. Editors. And when I asserts that fact, people can take it for granted I mean its been mighty nasty particler cold--a considerable sight colder'n coffee at the seckond table. Fust it snowed, and snowed, and snowed, tell you actilly couldn't see the mud in the streets. Next it kivered up and blotted out the sines, and continued on tell all the brick houses looked like the frame ones, and visy versy--and at last, when it did stop, you couldn't a told Cincinnati from the Rocky Mountains in January. The Ohio river was friz to the bottom--which warn't no great shakes in the freezing line, considering that krick aint never got more'n forty barls of water in it, no how--and the steamboats were friz to the airth, and the Dutch was friz to the sour-kraut kegs, and the preachers was friz to ther parsonages, and somehow I think the Devil hisself got ketched and had to win terin the durned uncomfortable town.

Well, in course, coal went up and fires went down. People couldn't neither beg, nor steal, nor borry the preshus truck--and buyin was clean out of the question, seein that they asked seventeen cents an ounce for it, and not keerin much about sellin it anyhow. Things got to sich a pass that the poor porshuns of the sitizens wanted the Mayor to discontinuer the use of the steam fire injuns, cause when a house would conflaggerate, them eternal noosances would drowned it out afore they could git warm. Gold dust warnt worth no more'n coal dust, and in course the blasted Jews got to adulterating the fuel. They mixed it up half and half--a tun of coal dust to a tun of ground pepper, and sold it for the genuine article. But they ketched them at it at last, and they do say that some of the indignant inhabitants took a hoss whip and castigated one of 'em till he warn't fit to assoshiate with Jeemes Gordon Bennett hisself.

After a spell, the City Council concluded to try ther hand at relievin the sufferin community. Thy laid in a stock of coal, and advertised to sell cheap and to poor devils only. But it was curus to see how the speckalation worked. Here's a instance. A indigent Irish woman--a widow with nineteen children and several at the breast, accordin to custom, went to the Mayor to get some of that public coal. The Mayor he gin her an order on the Marshal; the Marshal gin her an order on the Recorder; Recorder sent her to the Constable; Constable sent her to the Postmaster; Postmaster sent her to the County Clerk, and so on, tell she run herself half to death, and friz the balance, while she had sixteen places to go yet, afore she could git the coal. But that

is only just half of the little circumstance. You see that widder had been trotting after Recorders and Postmasters and sich for considerable more'n a good while--and the Curoner's jury that sot on her scraped up the orders she'd got and sold 'em to the paper mill at three cents a pound, clearin about four dollars and a half by the speculation. Now only think what a mercantile education mought a done for the unfortunit daughter of Eve. (I say "daughter of Eve," meanin it as kinder figerative or poetastical like, for I forgit, now, whether the Irish come from our Eve, or not.)

I reckon I orter tell you about the little advenster I had tother night, but drat if it don't work me worse'n castor oil just to think of it. I was a santerin up Walnut street, feelin pooty nice, and hummin to myself that good old Metherdis hymn I learnt at class meetin in Keokuk, commencin:

"Boston isn't in Bengal,
And flannel drawers aint made of tripe;
Lobsters don't wear specs at all,
And cows don't smoke the German pipe,"

when a young lady with a big basket birsted in on my revery. "I say, mister," says she, "is your name--" "Snodgrass," says I, wonderin how on airth she knowed me. "The very man I wanted to see," says she. "The dev-- dickens," says I. "Yes, and I've always hearn you was sich a good, kind feller, that I allers wanted to have a talk with you." "By jings, madam, I am glad to hear you talk so. I'm just as much at your service as if I was your own grandmother." "Yes, you'r just the man, and now I've got something to tell you. But bless my life (lookin skeered), I've left my portmoney in the grocery around the corner. If you would please to hold my basket tell I go and git it, Mr. Snobrag, I'll never forget you." "With the all-firedest pleasure in the world, madam--but Snodgrass," says I, correctin her as I took the big basket. And away she went around the corner, leavin me as happy as a dog with two tails. Thinks I, I'll galant that gal home, and then (she's already struck with my personal. appearance) she'll ask me to come again--spect she's rich as a Jew. No doubt the old man'll take a likin to me (changing the heavy basket to tother arm) and he'll ask me to call around. In course I'll come, and come often, too, and when about a dozen of that gal's sweethearts find me a shinin up so numerous they'll get mad and after a spell they'll challenge me (changin the basket again). I'll jest take 'em across the river to Kaintuck and shoot 'em down like pole cats. That'll fetch the old man. He'll think I'm the devil hisself. He'll come and tel me how many banks and railroads he owns, and ask me to marry his darter. And I'll do it--but hold on--by the eternal smash, where's that gal took herself off to? Seems to me she's having a arful chase arter that portmoney of her's. So I shove out arter her, which was dern sensible, considerin she'd been gone a hour and a half.

Pooty soon there commenced the eternalist, confoundest, damnationist kickin in that basket, follered by the eternalist, confoundest squallin that you ever heard on. I run to the gas lamp and jerked off the kiver, and there was the ugliest, nastiest, oneriest he-baby I ever seed in all my life. "Sold, by Jeminy. Dern the baby. Oh Lordy, Lordy, Lordy," says I, blubberin like a three-year-old. "Dang yer skin, don't make sich a racket."

But it wouldn't do to stand there with that basket full of baby lungs, raisin the devil and the perlice all over the neighborhood. So I gathered up the traps and broke for home like a quarter-hoss, cussin at every jump and mixin it up with what the woman said, and grittin my teeth like a tobacker worm. "Often hearn of me--lost her portmoney--kind, good man." O Lordy, Snodgrass, you're a fool. "Never forget me." Wish to jeewhillikins I could forget her. O

Lordy, what'll I do with the baby? Snodgrass, you're a blasted, eternal, onmitigated fool." And so I ranted and cussed till I got home to my own room.

Then the thing quit hollerin and I locked the door. Becomin a leetle composed, I took the tongs and lifted the critter out of the basket, so as to get a good look at it. Well, the varmint kept so quiet that it kinda fooled me, and I thought I might ventur on makin a face at it, throwin my hands up like claws and makin a leetle small jump at it, jest by way of revenge, you know. Now right thar is where Snodgrass missed it. Sich a yell as skeered animals sot up--shucks, a shiveree wasn't nothing longside it. In course I had to grab it, to keep it from wakin the dead before Resurrection Day, and I walked it, and tossed it, and cussed it, till the sweat run off my carcass to the amount of a barl at least. O Lordy, warn't I in agony of sufferin?

"Sh-h-h," says I, tossin the brat, "there now, there, there, your mother is coming (singing a leetle occasionally); 'ockey by baby, in the tree top, when the wind blows--there now, poor little dear--when the wind blows--oh, darn your everlastin yaller skin, won't you never dry up? " But it wasn't no go. The baby wouldn't quit cryin, so I sot baby, basket and all under the bed and piled old clothes on 'em, tell I was pooty certin the cretur wouldn't freeze, if it didn't smuther, and I turned in.

Well, Mr. Editors, it's no use harryin up my feelings by dwellin on the onpleasant epox of my kareer, therefore I'll jest mention that arter standing guard over that infant all the next day to keep the sarvent girls from gettin a sight of it, I was ketched by a perliceman about midnight down to the river, trying to poke the dang thing through a hole in the ice. They raised the dickins about it the day arter. The crowd in the court room let out their opinyons pooty free, and I tell ye I was riled when I hearn a young lady say that "the poor innocent little cherub ort to be put out of the reach of its onnateral father." "Onnateral, thunder," says I, bustin out all at wunst. "Fine the prisoner ten dollars for contempt of court," yells the judge. "Fine and be--" but they didn't let me finish. They lugged me off and locked me up, and never let me out till I promised--

No, sir I swar I wont' tell what I promised them sharks. But twixt you and me somethin dark's goin to happen. It pears to me that that baby'll larn to swim yit afore its six weeks older--pervided it don't perish in the attempt. I reckon I'll bid you adoo, now, Mister Editors, and go on tryin to find out the meanin of the verse that says: "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," and several other passyges. "Onnateral father," dern my skin, I wish I war, well, never mind.

Yours, et cetary,
SNODGRASS.