

AS OTHERS SEE US.
A Live New York Yankee Look-in On a Hoosier's Nest.
Where There is Little to Commend and Much to Condemn.
But It Was Always Thus with the Quality Sort.
Something to Praise After All.

[Correspondence of the Rochester (N.Y.) Express]
NEW ALBANY, IND., Feb. 29, 1876.

We read in the Express last evening that you are having sleighing in Rochester, therefore I send you these jonquilles. They have been blowing here for a fortnight or more. I picked them from a neglected old garden "up in the knobs," yesterday, where we strolled in the warm sunshine and sat under the pine trees with pitying thoughts of you at the North, until an unmistakable chilliness sent us home to hug the fire and growl with neuralgia.

No we are not going to Louisville to the Mardi Gras to-day. It will satisfy us to see the foolish ones come home to-night tired and disgusted. From my window I can see the thoroughfare leading to the cars and ferry. It is yet early in the day, but the eager sight-seers are on the move. They will have hours to wait before the five miles long procession starts on its triumphal march. I wish there was a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, to snatch away those poor babies silly mothers are carrying along. Northerners, as a rule, fail to appreciate Mardi Gras. They call it a "fool's parade," and other hard names. It is naught but a ridiculous merry making, wherein grossness has fair chance to assert itself - if not indecency. We turned out last year, when our verdancy was fresh and inexperienced, and were quite reconciled, because there was no punishment greater than extreme weariness and self-dissatisfaction meted out to us.

New Albany, which you know is a suburb of the beautiful city of Louisville, Ky., had its Mardi Gras on St. Valentine's Day. Wherefore, at that sentimental period nobody seemed to understand. "The eternal fitness of things" never changes the plans of the average Hoosier. With him there is an eternal unfitness of things. Well, on this auspicious 14th of February the schools were closed by a royal edict, the great manufactories stopped work, the daily press boiled over with advertising the wonderful attractions of the day. And what went they all out for to see? A straggling procession of men and boys dressed in whatever costume the rag-bag could produce, each wearing a grotesque mask, and either blowing a horn, or beating a tin pan, or carrying a shattered umbrella. Funny, wasn't it? Of course, the Board of Education would not deny the elevating privilege of beholding such a spectacle to the tender minds under his care. Women and children were chiefly caricatured, and with such lack of humor and wit, nobody was merry, and but for rivalry and assault it would have been a dull day - very dull indeed - and the closing of the public schools would have been unpardonable. But this yearly entertainment is not to be gainsaid by the New Albanians. Washington's birthday bloomed a few flags, but never a fire cracker, or procession; Christmas was a hideous Fourth of July, and last year's "Independence" was steeped in repose. When there is a masquerade or other gay doings, you may see the undertaker's wagon driving up and down the streets and a man beating a gong vociferously. And the dear Rochester folks keep asking, "How do you like the Southwest?" For more than a year we have been trying to answer; and still

we "give it up." Our likes and dislikes are conglomerated and unsettle each other, preventing absolute content or discontent. "It's always so with Eastern folks," they tell us. An old hotel keeper, who has had experience, asserts - "The Rochester folks always think there is no place under heaven like Rochester, go where you will."

And that only makes us out worse than Bostonians - so we survive the old man's lecture, which you shall be spared. Transplanting Western New Yorkers to the Southwest, where an uninformed Democracy is rampant, soft coal is used, and Western manners intensify Southern conceit, is a hazardous undertaking. There is sure to be languishment, if not extinction.

New Albany is an old town - venerable in years, compared to Rochester. It has had its bloom - blossoming steamboats chiefly - now it withers upon a manufacturing stalk. It has about twenty thousand inhabitants. Its best and leading citizens are from the Northeast. So many of them came here in their honeymoons, with hopeful brides, who cried their pretty eyes out for a year or more. But for the large manufactories located here - the famous Glass Works, the largest in the United States - a woolen mill, iron mills, and hickory mills, every fall chimney belching forth clouds of coal smoke, that blackens everything, New Albany would be nothing more than a suburban retreat. Its business streets are tranquilizing even on market day. The accessibility of Louisville prevents the maintenance of a first class hotel, and as it is not on the road to anywhere, New Albanians having to go to Louisville to start for Chicago or Indianapolis, very few are the strangers roaming about our quiet streets. There is a dearth of public entertainments. Theodore Tilton and Eli Perkins have been the sole lecturers of any reputation during the year we have been here. The Public Library would not fill a case in the Athenaeum at home. Never a hospital - sadly as it is needed - nor a charitable organization of any kind, unless we rank the Young Men's Christian Association, in its feeble struggle for existence, as such. We did have a Martha Washington tea party, for the benefit of the Good Templars, tickets ten cents, supper fifteen. There are street railways and the beginning of water works. One or two millionaires reside here, and there are many fine residences, with well kept grounds.

Speaker Kerr honors New Albany as his place of constructive residence.

It is not a pretty town or attractive in any way whatever, unless you compare it with its neighbor, Jeffersonville; and then it is paradisiacal. It is badly paved, sparsely shaded, and its shrinkage has left a woeful number of great buildings to stare with broken windows from unoccupied rooms. Mules are driven tandem with a rider; sewers are voted unnecessary; the town is wonderfully healthy, we must allow. And pigs are the scavenger. Goats, cows, geese and even mules and horses, have the freedom of the public streets. It is nothing remarkable to see a goat beginning on a sunny door step, or to have pigs obstruct your promenade.

We miss the charming water resorts we had at home. We have no bay, sea breeze nor Ontario beach, nothing better than a ferry or steamboat ride on the muddy Ohio.

Then there are no pennies, nothing less than a nickel, and our souls grow not within us at the daily extortions we must suffer in making change. The Sunday schools suffer here, but pennies are only fit for Yankees you see. We sigh for a Bergh Society, when we see the poor over tasked horses and mules

lashed up the levee. I never saw so much wanton cruelty to animals as I have seen unrebuked in this place.

But now for another side of the picture: The climate is delightful. No snow, therefore, no slush. The soft, warm, sunny days are in majority. The changes are sudden, and we have had bitter cold weather, but it is occasional, and don't stay long. With the climate and "The Knobs" we ought to feel compensated for much that we have lost. New Albanians will tell you, with justifiable pride, that Bayard Taylor declared the view from the Knobs to be the finest in all civilization. And, having climbed up to any point upon this long range of hills, you will not dispute Bayard Taylor's assertion. These abruptly-rising Knobs, enclosing New Albany on the west and north like a wall, average some two hundred feet in height. The Knobs are barren in localities- these sterile, clayey soil being cleft with water courses. But, in the main, they are covered with forest growth, save where clearing has been made for cultivation. From the knob, rising precipitously at the foot of the main street, and crowned with the hospitable dwelling of Col. Tuley, one looks directly down upon the roofs of the city, and for miles away into Kentucky. The great river is spread out like a panorama of navigation, and Louisville and the great high bridge are distinctly seen under a maledictory cloud of smoke.

There are but few houses upon the knobs. We expect to take one on a prominent bluff for the summer. The roads up are dreadfully hard to travel (everybody in this country, outside of city limits, has a private road, you know, and mysterious are your ways until you learn them). To us, the knobs are the redeeming feature of New Albany. Scarcely a week has passed during our exile that we have not pulled up some of their rough roads to pant out our undying admiration of the landscape scene from almost every point.

Yesterday we drove down the river to see what the last high water had accomplished. The river road is one of the most delightful of the many charming drives around the city - that is in dry weather. A rainy spell makes it almost impassable, if the great river is not surging over it, stealing acres and acres of somebody's rightful possessions, and leaving chills and fever and poverty behind. We saw the usual devastation. The road was narrowed in many places, several feet by the flood. Great trees had been broken down, and the bottom land strewn with debris. The market gardeners were planting onions and plowing. Planting began two weeks ago. We saw beeches and maples in bud, and those who are watching the fruit say that a bitter frost would now destroy the crop.

The farm houses about here are in sorry contrast to those seen in Western New York. The air of thriftless poverty is unvarying, and when you meet the Hoosier farmer with his sun-bonneted wife and daughter going home from the city under a canvass-topped wagon, most likely, you are not led to magnify the social advantages of Southern Indiana rustic life. They seldom house stock, nor take a newspaper. Their vernacular will puzzle you, and their use of tobacco fill you with amazement. But the rustic Hoosier is not alone in excelling in the gymnastics of expectoration. I have seen one preacher use the pulpit carpet as a cuspadore, and another his hotel window, beneath which was the sidewalk of the Main street. But that's nothing in comparison to what might be recorded.

Those living on the river "bottom" submit to chills and fevers as one of the inevitable ills of this life. There was a certain pathos in the floricultural display I saw in a front door yard last summer. A box of posies perched high on a stake, because of the pigs, and the geese, and the chickens, and on the box was the maker's trade mark, "Sure cure for the chills," in lettering eclipsing the marigolds.

[from Emma Carleton's Scrapbook #4, p. 3]