

He was a kind and indulgent master to his slaves; and, as too often happens, instead of becoming more tractable and industrious from such humane treatment, they were rendered more thievish, indolent, and insubordinate. From these causes his income was much narrowed during the latter part of his life, and it was with difficulty that, with such scanty resources, he contrived to defray his necessary domestic expenditure.

A happy faculty of persuading himself of the superior value of every article in his possession was one of his peculiarities. An amusing instance of this harmless sort of delusion occurred in reference to a favorite pointer. . . . In that neighborhood it was the common amusement of the gentlemen in the fall season to hunt partridges. . . . He always had a pointer, which he represented as possessing first-rate qualities. . . . In a large hunting party, on one occasion his dog, whose excellent training he had frequently vaunted to his incredulous companions, suddenly made a dead point. "See, gentlemen", exclaimed my grandfather exultingly, "did you ever behold a stauncher pointer, or one of finer action?" The spectators not being able to gainsay those boastful assertions, dismounted with all speed and eagerly advanced on the expected quarry when behold, instead of a covey of partridges, up started a sow and pigs. The discovery was greeted with shouts of laughter by the whole party except my grandfather, who was completely discomfited. . . .

Captain Dabney was a zealous stickler for ancient usages, and, as the common habit of seniors, was a laudator temporis acti. I remember that one Christmas eve he was lamenting the decay of sociability among us and the disuse of those joyous and noisy accompaniments, with which our ancestors formerly ushered in the advent of this anniversary; telling us among other things that in the good old times the firing of guns commenced about midnight and was kept up without intermission until sunrise. We assured him that on the present occasion, this laudable practice should be punctually observed, and accordingly we opened a fusillade under his window about twelve o'clock at night and maintained it incessantly until breakfast. . . . He was equally tenacious of ancient fashions in dress and persisted to the last in wearing shorts fastened above his hips by a string in the waistband, and in having his hair shorn close all over his head. His brother Charles had adopted pantaloons on account of some disease in his leg, and suspenders for the sake of convenience. This conformity to modern forms of apparel my grandfather could not abide, and insisted that the Colonel had a hapkering to become a fashionable man, or he would not have been so ingenious in devising excuses for dressing a la mode. When the practice of wearing the hair long before and short behind was first introduced, Captain Dabney was exceedingly disgusted and declared that, with such an uncouth tonsure, a man appeared to him to enter a room tail foremost, and to bow backward when he made his obeisance to the company. If this fashion was so offensive to him, how would he have been horrified in this age of beards and mustaches?

Captain Dabney was an Episcopalian both from principle and education. He had been reared in all the prejudices of that church and, like too many of its members, was rather intolerant towards those whom that proud hierarchy in former times arrogantly branded as Dissenters. His prepossessions were particularly strong against the Quakers and Presbyterians. The disuse of the eucharist by the former, and the Calvinism of the latter, were extremely obnoxious to the school or religion in which he had been brought up. Yet it was only to their doctrines that he objected. For many individuals in both those denominations he felt and displayed sincere respect. The Quakers were numerous in his neighborhood, and he was not only on friendly terms with several members of that sect, but I have heard him myself apply to their characters the language of strong commendation. The Reverend John D. Blair, a Presbyterian clergyman, was his intimate friend, and I know that, for some years, he maintained a familiar correspondence with that gentleman. These facts demonstrate that whatever might be his speculative opinions, he was not practically intolerant. In his religious tenets he was not only