

## THEODORE DREISER

### *A True Patriarch*

**I**N THE STREETS of a certain moderate-sized county seat in Missouri not many years ago might have been seen a true patriarch. Tall, white-haired, stout in body and mind, he roamed among his neighbors, dispensing sympathy and a curiously genial human interest through the leisure of his day. One might have taken him to be Walt Whitman, of whom he was the living counterpart; or, in the clear eye, high forehead and thick, appealing white hair, have seen a marked similarity to Bryant as he appeared in his later years. Already at this time he had seen man's allotted term on earth, and yet he was still strong in the councils of his people and rich in the accumulated interests of a lifetime.

At the particular time in question he was most interesting for the eccentricities which years of stalwart independence had developed, but these were lovable peculiarities and only severed from remarkable actions by the compelling power of time and his increasing infirmities. The loud, though pleasant, voice, and strong, often fiery, declamatory manner, were remnants of the days when his fellow-citizens were wholly swayed by the magnificence of his orations. Charmingly simple in manner, he still represented with it that old courtesy which made every stranger his guest. When moved by righteous indignation, there cropped out the daring and domineering insistence of one who had always followed what he considered to be the right, and who knew its power.

Even then, old as he was, if there were any topic worthy of discussion, and his fellow-citizens were in danger of going wrong, he became an haranguing prophet, as it were, a local Isaiah or Jeremiah. Every gate heard him, for he stopped on his rounds in front of each, and calling out the inhabitant poured forth such a volume of fact and argument as tended to remove all doubt of what he, at least, considered right. All of this he invariably accompanied by a magnificence of gesture worthy of a great orator.

At such times his mind, apparently, was almost wholly engrossed with these matters, and I have it from one of his daughters, who, besides being his daughter, was a sincere

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admirer of his, that often he might have been seen coming down his private lawn, and even the public streets when there was no one near to hear him, shaking his head, gesticulating, sometimes sweeping upward with his arms, as if addressing his fellow-citizens in assemblage.

"He used to push his big hat well back upon his forehead," she said on one occasion, "and often in winter, forgetful of the bitter cold, would take off his overcoat and carry it on his arm. Occasionally he would stop quite still, as if he were addressing a companion, and with sweeping gestures illustrate some idea or other, although, of course, there was no one present. Then, planting his big cane forcibly with each step, as though still emphasizing his recently stated ideas, he would come forward and enter the house."

The same suggestion of mental concentration might have been seen in everything that he did, and I personally have seen him leading a pet Jersey cow home for milking with the same dignity of bearing and forcefulness of manner that characterized him when he stood before his fellow-citizens at a public meeting addressing them on some important topic. He never appeared to have a sense of difference from or superiority over his fellowmen, but only the keenest sympathy with all things human. Every man was his brother, every human being honest. A cow or a horse was as much to be treated with sympathy and charity as a man or a woman. If a purse was lost, forty-nine out of every fifty men would return it without thought of reward, if you were to believe him.

In the little town where he had lived so many years, and where he finally died, he knew every living creature from cattle upwards, and could call each by name. The sick, the poor, the widows, the orphans, the insane, and dependents of all kinds, were his especial care. Every Sunday afternoon for years, it was his custom to go the rounds of the indigent, frequently carrying a basket of his good wife's dinner. This he distributed, along with consolation and advice. Occasionally he would return home of a winter's day very much engrossed with the discovery of some condition of distress hitherto unseen.

"Mother," he would say to his wife in that same oratorical manner previously noted, as he entered the house, "I've found

such a poor family. They have moved into the old saloon below Solmson's. You know how open that is." This was delivered in the most dramatic style after he had indicated something important by throwing his overcoat on the bed and standing his cane in the corner. "There's a man and several children there. The mother is dead. They were on their way to Kansas, but it got so cold they've had to stop here until the winter is broken. They're without food; almost no clothing. Can't we find something for them?"

"On these occasions," said his daughter to me once, "he would, as he nearly always did, talk to himself on the way, as if he were discussing politics. But you could never tell what he was coming for."

Then with his own labor he would help his wife seek out the odds and ends that could be spared, and so armed, would return, arguing by the way as if an errand of mercy were the last thing he contemplated. Nearly always the subject of these orations was some public wrong or error which should receive, although in all likelihood it did not, immediate attention.

Always of a reverent, although not exactly religious, turn of mind, he took considerable interest in religious ministration, though he steadily and persistently refused, in his later years, to go to church. He had St. James's formula to quote in self-defense, which insists that "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Often, when pressed too close, he would deliver this with kindly violence. One of the most touching anecdotes representative of this was related to me by his daughter, who said:

"Mr. Kent, a poor man of our town, was sick for months previous to his death, and my father used to go often, sometimes daily, to visit him. He would spend perhaps a few minutes, perhaps an hour, with him, singing, praying, and ministering to his spiritual wants. The pastor of the church living so far away and coming only once a month, this duty devolved upon some one, and my father did his share, and always felt more than repaid for the time spent by the gratitude shown by the many poor people he aided in this way.

"Mr. Kent's favorite song, for instance, was 'On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand.' This he would have my father sing, and his clear voice could often be heard in the latter's small house, and seemed to impart strength to the sick man.

"Upon one occasion, I remember, Mr. Kent expressed a desire to hear a certain song. My father was not very familiar with it but, anxious to grant his request, came home and asked me if I would get a friend of mine and go and sing the song for him.

"We entered the sick-room, he leading us by the hand, for we were children at the time. Mr. Kent's face at once brightened, and father said to him:

"'Mr. Kent, I told you this morning that I couldn't sing the song you asked for, but these girls know it, and have come to sing it for you.'

"Then, waving his hand gently toward us, he said:

"'Sing, children.'

"We did so, and when we had finished he knelt and offered a prayer, not for the poor man's recovery but that he might put his trust in the Lord and meet death without fear. I have never been more deeply impressed nor felt more confident in the presence of death, for the man died soon after, soothed into perfect peace."

On another occasion he was sitting with some friends in front of the courthouse in his town, talking and sunning himself, when a neighbor came running up in great excitement, calling:

"'Mr. White, Mr. White, come, right quick. Mrs. Sadler wants you.'

He explained that the woman in question was dying, and, being afraid she would strangle in her last moments, had asked the bystanders to run for him, her old acquaintance, in the efficacy of whose prayers she had great faith. The old patriarch was without a coat at the time, but, unmindful of that, hastened after.

"'Mr. White,'" exclaimed the sick woman excitedly upon seeing him, "I want you to pray that I won't strangle. I'm not afraid to die, but I don't want to die that way. I want you to offer a prayer for me that I may be saved from that. I'm so afraid."

Seeing by the woman's manner that she was very much overwrought, he used all his art to soothe her.

"Have no fear, Mrs. Sadler, now," he exclaimed solemnly. "You won't strangle. I will ask the Lord for you, and this evil will not come upon you. You need not have any fear."

"Kneel down, you," he commanded, turning upon the assembled neighbors and relatives who had followed or had been there before him, while he pushed back his white hair from his forehead. "Let us now pray that this good woman here be allowed to pass away in peace." And even with the rustle of kneeling that accompanied his words he lifted up his coatless arms and began to pray.

Through his magnificent phraseology, no doubt, as well as his profound faith, he succeeded in inducing a feeling of peace and quiet in all his hearers, the sick woman included, who, listening, sank into a restful stupor, from which all agony of mind had apparently disappeared. Then when the physical atmosphere of the room had been thus reorganized, he ceased and retired to the yard in front of the house, where on a bench under a shade tree he seated himself to wipe his moist brow and recover his composure. In a few moments a slight commotion in the sick-room denoted that the end had come. Several neighbors came out, and one said, "Well, it is all over, Mr. White. She is dead."

"Yes," he replied with great assurance. "She didn't strangle, did she?"

"No," said the other, "the Lord granted her request."

"I knew He would," he replied in his customary loud and confident tone. "Prayer is always answered."

Then, after viewing the dead woman and making additional comments, he was off, as placid as though nothing had occurred.

I happened to hear of this some time after, and one day, while sitting with him on his front porch, said, "Mr. White, do you really believe that the Lord directly answered your prayer in that instance?"

"Answered!" he almost shouted defiantly and yet with a kind of human tenderness that one could never mistake. "Of course He answered! Why wouldn't He—a faithful old servant like that? To be sure, He answered."

"Might it not have been merely the change of atmosphere which your voice and strength introduced? The quality of your own thoughts goes for something in such matters. Mind acts on mind."

"Certainly," he said, in a manner as agreeable as if it had always been a doctrine with him. "I know that. But, after all, what is *that*—my mind, your mind, the sound of voices? It's all the Lord anyhow, whatever you think."

How could one gainsay such a religionist as that?

The poor, the blind, the insane, and sufferers of all sorts, as I have said before, were always objects of his keenest sympathies. Evidence of it flashed out at the most unexpected moments—loud, rough exclamations, which, however, always contained a note so tender and suggestive as to defy translation. Thus, while we were sitting on his front porch one day and hotly discussing politics to while away a dull afternoon, there came down the street, past his home, a queer, ragged, half-demented individual, who gazed about in an aimless sort of way, peering queerly over fences, looking idly down the road, staring strangely overhead into the blue. It was apparent, in a moment, that the man was crazy, some demented creature, harmless enough, however, to be allowed abroad and so save the county the expense of caring for him. The old man broke a sentence short in order to point and shake his head emotionally.

"Look at that," he said to me, with a pathetic sweep of the arm, "now just look at that! There's a poor, demented soul, with no one to look after him. His brother is a hard-working saddler. His sister is dead. No money to speak of, any of them." He paused a moment, and then added, "I don't know what we're to do in such cases. The state and the county don't always do their duty. Most people here are too poor to help, there are so many to be taken care of. It seems almost at times as if you can't do anything but leave them to the mercy of God, and yet you can't do that either, quite," and he once more shook his head sadly.

I was for denouncing the county, but he explained very charitably that it was already very heavily taxed by such cases. He did not seem to know exactly what should be done at the time, but he was very sorry, very, and for the time being the

warm argument in which he had been indulging was completely forgotten. Now he lapsed into silence and all communication was suspended, while he rocked silently in his great chair and thought.

One day in passing the local poor-farm (and this is of my own knowledge), he came upon a man beating a poor idiot with a whip. The latter was incapable of reasoning and therefore of understanding why it was that he was being beaten. The two were beside a wood-pile and the demented one was crying. In a moment the old patriarch had jumped out of his conveyance, leaped over the fence, and confronted the amazed attendant with an uplifted arm.

"Not another lick!" he fairly shouted. "What do you mean by striking an idiot?"

"Why," explained the attendant, "I want him to carry in the wood, and he won't do it."

"It is not his place to bring in the wood. He isn't put here for that, and in the next place he can't understand what you mean. He's put here to be taken care of. Don't you dare strike him again. I'll see about this, and you."

Knowing his interrupter well, his position and power in the community, the man endeavored to explain that some work must be done by the inmates, and that this one was refractory. The only way he had of making him understand was by whipping him.

"Not another word," the old man blustered, overawing the county hireling. "You've done a wrong, and you know it. I'll see to this," and off he hustled to the county courthouse, leaving the transgressor so badly frightened that whips thereafter were carefully concealed, in this institution at least. The court, which was held in his home town, was not in session at the time, and only the clerk was present when he came tramping down the aisle and stood before the latter with his right hand uplifted in the position of one about to make oath.

"Swear me," he called solemnly, and without further explanation, as the latter stared at him. "I want you to take this testimony under oath."

The clerk knew well enough the remarkable characteristics of his guest, whose actions were only too often inexplicable from the ground point of policy and convention. Without

ado, after swearing him, he got out ink and paper, and the patriarch began.

"I saw," he said, "in the yard of the county farm of this county, not over an hour ago, a poor helpless idiot, too weak-minded to understand what was required of him, and put in that institution by the people of this county to be cared for, being beaten with a cowhide by Mark Sheffels, who is an attendant there, because the idiot did not understand enough to carry in wood, which the people have hired Mark Sheffels to carry in. Think of it," he added, quite forgetting the nature of his testimony and that he was now speaking for dictation and not for an audience to hear, and going off into a most scorching and brilliant arraignment of the entire system in which such brutality could occur, "a poor helpless idiot, unable to frame in his own disordered mind a single clear sentence, being beaten by a sensible, healthy brute too lazy and trifling to perform the duties for which he was hired and which he personally is supposed to perform."

There was more to the effect, for instance, that the American people and the people of this county should be ashamed to think that such crimes should be permitted and go unpunished, and that this was a fair sample. The clerk, realizing the importance of Mr. White in the community, and the likelihood of his following up his charges very vigorously, quietly followed his address in a very deferential way, jotting down such salient features as he had time to write. When he was through, however, he ventured to lift his voice in protest.

"You know, Mr. White," he said, "Sheffels is a member of our party, and was appointed by us. Of course, now, it's too bad that this thing should have happened, and he ought to be dropped, but if you are going to make a public matter of it in this way it may hurt us in the election next month."

The old patriarch threw back his head and gazed at him in the most blazing way, almost without comprehension, apparently, of so petty a view.

"What!" he exclaimed. "What's that got to do with it? Do you want the Democratic Party to starve the poor and beat the insane?"

The opposition was rather flattened by the reply, and left

the old gentleman to storm out. For once, at least, in this particular instance, anyhow, he had purified the political atmosphere, as if by lightning, and within the month following the offending attendant was dropped.

Politics, however, had long known his influence in a similar way. There was a time when he was the chief political figure in the county, and possessed the gift of oratory, apparently, beyond that of any of his fellow-citizens. Men came miles to hear him, and he took occasion to voice his views on every important issue. It was his custom in those days, for instance, when he had anything of special importance to say, to have printed at his own expense a few placards announcing his coming, which he would then carry to the town selected for his address and personally nail up. When the hour came, a crowd, as I am told, was never wanting. Citizens and farmers of both parties for miles about usually came to hear him.

Personally I never knew how towering his figure had been in the past, or how truly he had been admired, until one day I drifted in upon a lone bachelor who occupied a hut some fifteen miles from the patriarch's home and who was rather noted in the community at the time that I was there for his love of seclusion and indifference to current events. He had not visited the nearest neighboring village in something like five years, and had not been to the moderate-sized county seat in ten. Naturally he treasured memories of his younger days and more varied activity.

"I don't know," he said to me one day, in discussing modern statesmen and political fame in general, "but getting up in politics is a queer game. I can't understand it. Men that you'd think ought to get up don't seem to. It doesn't seem to be real greatness that helps 'em along."

"What makes you say that?" I asked.

"Well, there used to be a man over here at Danville that I always thought would get up, and yet he didn't. He was the finest orator I ever heard."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"Arch White," he said quietly. "He was really a great man. He was a good man. Why, many's the time I've driven fifteen miles to hear him. I used to like to go into Danville just for

that reason. He used to be around there, and sometimes he'd talk a little. He could stir a fellow up."

"Oratory alone won't make a statesman," I ventured, more to draw him out than to object.

"Oh, I know," he answered, "but White was a good man. The plainest-spoken fellow I ever heard. He seemed to be able to tell us just what was the matter with us, or at least I thought so. He always seemed a wonderful speaker to me. I've seen as many as two thousand people up at High Hill hollerin' over what he was saying until you could hear them for miles."

"Why didn't he get up, then, do you suppose?" I now asked on my part.

"I dunno," he answered. "Guess he was too honest, maybe. It's sometimes that way in politics, you know. He was a mighty determined man, and one that would talk out in convention, whatever happened. Whenever they got to twisting things too much and doing what wasn't just honest, I suppose he'd kick out. Anyhow, he didn't get up, and I've always wondered at it."

In Danville one might hear other stories wholly bearing out this latter opinion, and always interesting—delightful, really. Thus, a long, enduring political quarrel was once generated by an incident of no great importance, save that it revealed an odd streak in the old patriarch's character and his interpretation of charity and duty.

A certain young man, well known to the people of this county and to the patriarch, came to Danville one day and either drank up or gambled away a certain sum of money intrusted to him by his aunt for disposition in an entirely different manner. When the day was all over, however, he was not too drunk to realize that he was in a rather serious predicament, and so, riding out of town, traveled a little way and then tearing his clothes and marking his skin, returned, complaining that he had been set upon by the wayside, beaten, and finally robbed. His clothes were in a fine state of dilapidation after his efforts, and even his body bore marks which amply seconded his protestation. In the slush and rain of the dark village street he was finally picked up by the county treasurer seemingly in a wretched state, and the latter, knowing

the generosity of White and the fact that his door was always open to those in distress, took the young man by the arm and led him to the patriarch's door, where he personally applied for him. The old patriarch, holding a lamp over his head, finally appeared and peered outward into the darkness.

"Yes," he exclaimed, as he always did, eyeing the victim; "what is it you want of me?"

"Mr. White," said the treasurer, "it's me. I've got young Squiers here, who needs your sympathy and aid tonight. He's been beaten and robbed out here on the road while he was on his way to his mother's home."

"Who?" inquired the patriarch, stepping out on the porch and eyeing the newcomer, the while he held the lamp down so as to get a good look. "Billy Squiers!" he exclaimed when he saw who it was. "Mr. Morton, I'll not take this man into my house. I know him. He's a drunkard and a liar. No man has robbed him. This is all a pretense, and I want you to take him away from here. Put him in the hotel. I'll pay his expenses for the night, but he can't come into my home," and he retired, closing the door after him.

The treasurer fell back amazed at this onslaught, but recovered sufficiently to knock at the door once more and declare to his friend that he deemed him no Christian in taking such a stand and that true religion commanded otherwise, even though he suspected the worst. The man was injured and penniless. He even went so far as to quote the parable of the good Samaritan who passed down by way of Jericho and rescued him who had fallen among thieves. The argument had long continued into the night and rain before the old patriarch finally waved them both away.

"Don't you quote Scripture to me," he finally shouted defiantly, still holding the light and flourishing it in an oratorical sweep. "I know my Bible. There's nothing in it requiring me to shield liars and drunkards, not a bit of it," and once more he went in and closed the door.

Nevertheless the youth was housed and fed at his expense and no charge of any kind made against him, although many believed, as did Mr. White, that he was guilty of theft, whereas others of the opposing political camp believed not. However, considerable opposition, based on old Mr. White's

lack of humanity in this instance, was generated by this argument, and for years he was taunted with it although he always maintained that he was justified and that the Lord did not require any such service of him.

The crowning quality of nearly all of his mercies, as one may easily see, was their humor. Even he was not unaware, in retrospect, of the figure he made at times, and would smilingly tell, under provocation, of his peculiar attitude on one occasion or another. Partially from himself, from those who saw it, and the judge presiding in the case, was the following characteristic anecdote gathered.

In the same community with him at one time lived a certain man by the name of Moore, who in his day had been an expert tobacco picker, but who later had come by an injury to his hand and so turned cobbler, and a rather helpless, although not hopeless, one at that. Mr. White had known this man from boyhood up, and had been a witness at various times to the many changes in his fortunes, from the time, for instance, when he had earned as much as several dollars a day—good pay in that region—to the hour when he took a cobbler's kit upon his back and began to eke out a bare livelihood for his old age by traveling about the countryside mending shoes. At the time under consideration, this ex-tobacco picker had degenerated into so humble a thing as Uncle Bobby Moore, a poor, half-remembered cobbler, whose earlier state but few knew, and who at this time had only a few charitably inclined friends, with some of whom he spent the more pleasant portion of the year from spring to fall. Thus, it was his custom to begin his annual pilgrimage with a visit of ten days to Mr. White, where he would sit and cobble shoes for all the members of the household. From here he would go to another acquaintance some ten miles farther on, where he could enjoy the early fruit which was then ripening in delicious quantity. Then he would visit a friendly farmer whose home was upon the Missouri River still farther away, where he did his annual fishing, and so on by slow degrees, until at last he would reach a neighborhood rich in cider presses, where he would wind up the fall, and so end his travel for the winter, beginning his peculiar round once more the

following spring at the home of Mr. White. Naturally the old patriarch knew him and liked him passing well.

As he grew older, however, Uncle Bobby reached the place where even by this method and his best efforts he could scarcely make enough to sustain him in comfort during the winter season, which was one of nearly six months, free as his food and lodging occasionally were. He was too feeble. Not desiring to put himself upon any friend for more than a short visit, he finally applied to the patriarch.

"I come to you, Mr. White," he said, "because I don't think I can do for myself any longer in the winter season. My hand hurts a good deal and I get tired so easily. I want to know if you'd won't help me to get into the county farm during the winter months, anyhow. In summer I can still look out for myself, I think."

In short, he made it clear that in summer he preferred to be out so that he might visit his friends and still enjoy his declining years.

The old patriarch was visibly moved by this appeal, and seizing him by the arm and leading off toward the courthouse where the judge governing such cases was then sitting he exclaimed, "Come right down here, Uncle Bobby. I'll see what can be done about this. Your old age shouldn't be troubled in this fashion—not after all the efforts you have made to maintain yourself," and bursting in on the court a few moments later, where a trial was holding at the time, he deliberately led his charge down the aisle, disturbing the court proceedings by so doing, and calling as he came:

"Your Honor, I want you to hear this case especially. It's a very important and a very sad case, indeed."

Agape, the spectators paused to listen. The judge, an old and appreciative friend of his, turned a solemn eye upon this latest evidence of eccentricity.

"What is it, Mr. White?" he inquired.

"Your Honor," returned the latter in his most earnest and oratorical manner, "this man here, as you may or may not know, is an old and honorable citizen of this county. He has been here nearly all the days of his life, and every day of that time he has earned an honest living. These people here," he

said, gazing about upon the interested spectators, "can witness whether or not he was one of the best tobacco pickers this county ever saw. Mayhew," he interrupted himself to call to a spectator on one of the benches, "you know whether Uncle Bobby always earned an honest living. Speak up. Tell the Court, did he?"

"Yes, Mr. White," said Mayhew quickly, "he did."

"Morrison," he called, turning in another direction, where an aged farmer sat, "what do you know of this man?"

Mr. Morrison was about to reply, when the Court interfered.

"The Court knows, Mr. White, that he is an honest man. Now what would you have it do?"

"Well, your Honor," resumed the speaker, indifferently following his own oratorical bent, the while the company surveyed him, amused and smiling, "this man has always earned an honest living until he injured his hand here in some way a number of years ago, and since then it has been difficult for him to make his way and he has been cobbling for a living. However, he is getting so old now that he can't even earn much at that, except in the spring and summer, and so I brought him here to have him assigned a place in the county infirmary. I want you to make out an order admitting him to that institution, so that I can take it and go with him and see that he is comfortably placed."

"All right, Mr. White," replied the judge, surveying the two figures in mid-aisle, "I so order."

"But, your Honor," he went on, "there's an exception I want made in this case. Mr. Moore has a few friends that he likes to visit in the summer, and who like to have him visit them. I want him to have the privilege of coming out in the summer to see these people and to see me."

"All right, Mr. White," said the judge, "he shall have that privilege. Now, what else?"

Satisfied in these particulars, the aged citizen led his charge away, and then went with him to the infirmary, where he presented the order of the Court and then left him.

Things went very well with his humble client for a certain time, and Uncle Bobby was thought to be well disposed of, when one day he came to his friend again. It appeared that

only recently he had been changed about in his quarters at the infirmary and put into a room with a slightly demented individual, whose nocturnal wanderings greatly disturbed his very necessary sleep.

"I want to know if you won't have them put me by myself, Mr. White," he concluded. "I need my sleep. But they say they can't do it without an order."

Once more the old patriarch led his charge before the Court, then sitting, as it happened, and breaking in upon the general proceedings as before, began:

"Your Honor, this man here, Mr. Moore, whom I brought before you some time ago, has been comfortably housed by your order, and he's deeply grateful for it, as he will tell you, and as I can, but he's an old man, your Honor, and, above all things, needs his rest. Now, of late they've been quartering him with a poor, demented sufferer down there who walks a good deal in his sleep, and it wears upon him. I've come here with him to ask you to allow him to have a room by himself, where he will be alone and rest undisturbed."

"Very well, Mr. White," said the Court, "it shall be as you request."

Without replying, the old gentleman turned and led the suppliant away.

Everything went peacefully now for a number of years, until finally Uncle Bobby, having grown so feeble with age that he feared he was soon to die, came to his friend and asked him to promise him one thing.

"What is it?" asked the latter.

By way of replying, the suppliant described an old oak tree which grew in the yard of the Baptist Church some miles from Danville, and said:

"I want you to promise that when I am dead, wherever I happen to be at the time, that you will see that I am buried under that tree." He gave no particular reason save that he had always liked the tree and the view it commanded, but made his request a very secret matter and begged to be assured that Mr. White would come and get his body and carry it to the old oak.

The latter, always a respecter of the peculiarities and crotchetts of his friends, promised. After a few years went by,

suddenly one day he learned that Uncle Bobby was not only dead but buried, a thing which astonished him greatly. No one locally being supposed to know that he was to have had any special form of burial, the old patriarch at once recalled his promise.

"Where is his body?" he asked.

"Why, they buried it under the old white oak over at Mt. Horeb Church," was the answer.

"What!" he exclaimed, too astonished to think of anything save his lost privilege of mercy, "who told them to bury him there?"

"Why, *he* did," said the friend. "It was his last wish, I believe."

"The confounded villain," he shouted, amusingly enough. "He led me to believe that I was the only one he told. I alone was to have looked after his burial, and now look at him—going and having himself buried without a word. The scoundrel! Would you believe that an old friend like Uncle Bobby would do anything like that? However," he added after a time, "I think I know how it was. He got so old and feeble here of late that he must have lost his mind—otherwise he would never have done anything like that to me."

And with this he was satisfied to rest and let bygones be bygones.