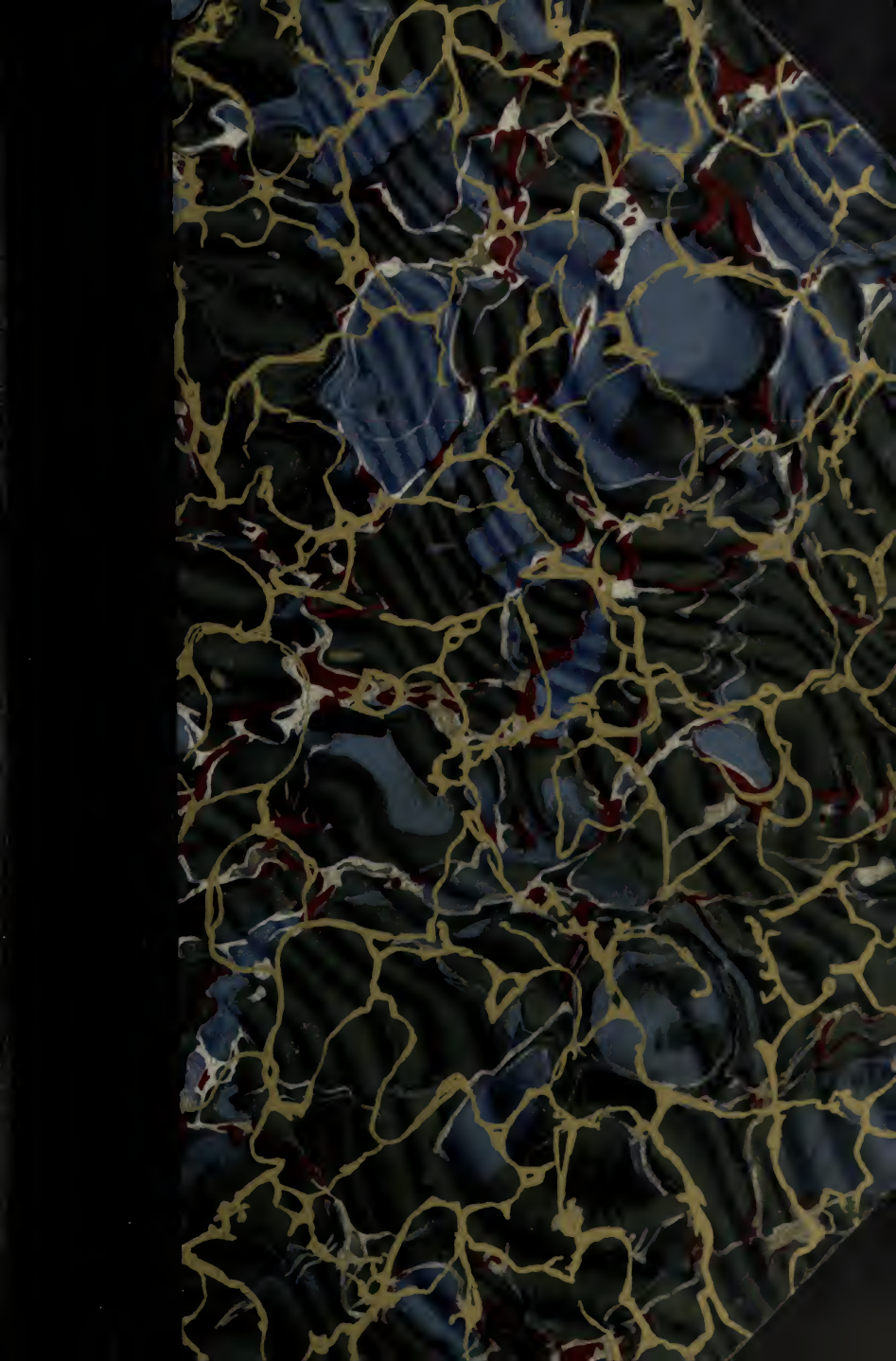

Tales from "Blackwood"

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD"

Being the most Famous Series of Stories ever Published Especially Selected from that Celebrated English Publication

Selected by

H. CHALMERS ROBERTS

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TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

THE MISSING BILLS: AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY.

THE death, last autumn, of a distant relation of the writer, leaves him free to publish the curious facts which are noted below. He has known them long, and often wished that, in these days when phenomena which were formerly termed supernatural are submitted to scientific and patient investigation, instead of being superciliously dismissed or weakly shuddered at, they might receive the attention of persons qualified to weigh and utilise, or possibly to explain them. But the witnesses felt a great—it ought, perhaps, to be said, a morbid—objection to the discussion of the story outside the family circle, and thus it has been kept comparatively secret for more than half a century.

Care was, however, taken to procure their written testimony, so that the narrative is supported by evidence as clear and positive as purely documentary evidence can be. The writer has frequently heard from the lips of the actors their accounts of what happened to them, and has no hesitation in putting forward what follows as entirely credible.

Mr Ezekiel Burdon — locally known as Zeke Burdon—was one day seated in his counting-house in Sydney, New South Wales. He had been looking over the office books, which told him a very satisfactory tale; and, after a little indulgence of elation at his success in life, he subsided into moralising, and was trying to pick out some of the proofs that men's fortunes are the natural and legitimate consequences of their actions. And this was by no means an investigation to be simply and readily made. Mr Burdon was now, and had been for many years, an honest, fair-dealing, liberal man, as men went; nay, he was generous. But this had not always been his character. The circumstances connected long ago with his coming to New South Wales were not such as, according to the rules of poetical justice, would have insured prosperity. But prosperity had come, and glad as he was of her presence, he would have been glad also to justify it by the

discovery of some conspicuous desert of his own. Sometimes he would think of the patriarch Joseph, and say to himself that possibly he, Ezekiel Burdon, had been allowed to fall into error chiefly as a means of bringing him to wealth and ease; that he had been sold to be a bond-servant, not principally for any moral obliquity in himself, but in order that good might be done to him at the latter end. If only (he was thinking now) he had gone along in the humdrum way, as his pastors and masters would have had him, what a different lot his would have been! He would for a certainty have married Jessie Manders; they would, in respectable poverty—or, more likely, penury—have dragged up a destitute, uneducated family, and, worn out by want and care, have died or gone to the workhouse in middle age. But it had been ordained that Jessie should give him up and should marry comparatively well. She had been induced to discard him by the only cause which could have been effectual—namely, by the knowledge that he had disgraced himself: and she had afterwards married a well-to-do man, with whom she lived happily, who prospered in his calling, and who was a good husband and father. Ezekiel himself had, by force of circumstances, been guided unexpectedly, and by a leading which was still hardly intelligible, to wealth and consideration. He had married well as far as his wife and her means were

concerned—it was absurd to inquire closely about people's connections and antecedents out there,—he had been happy in his short married life, in his children, and in his business; and now, long a widower, but hearty and healthy, he was facing life's downhill with complacency. Though these facts were so, they were not reflected on by Zeke Burdon in a cynical, dare-devil spirit; he did not in his heart of heart say that religion and morality were names wherewith to amuse children and drivellers, and that the wise were they only who had the courage to set both at defiance; he saw plainly how, if things had taken a different and more usual turn at a point where he was wholly unable to influence them, his fate would have been most miserable; he would have preferred to discover some relation between his desert and his lot; he was a puzzle to himself.

But when a man's own prosperity constitutes the puzzle, his mind can exercise itself thereon patiently enough; it is when things have gone crossly that he feels the wear and tear of working out the problem. And so, although Mr Burdon never entirely saw how his fortunes harmonised with the eternal fitness of things, he did not tire of the subject, but would return to it again and again, whenever he might be disposed to contemplation. He was thinking over how the twelve months last past had been the most fortunate year that he had

ever known, and wondering how it was that things prospered with him as they did, when he was aroused from his reverie by the opening of the door. A very pretty but very delicate-looking young woman stood on the threshold, apparently hesitating about advancing farther.

"Oh, Probity, is that you? Come in, my child. Is anything the matter?"

"No, father — nothing is the matter; but I thought—I thought, I should like to speak with you."

"Speak with me? Well, come and talk away then, Probity; but we generally manage our little businesses in the house. What is it—a bonnet?"

"Nothing of that kind, father; and that is why I have come into the office to talk to you. It's something about business."

"Business, eh, you little puss? Why, what can you possibly have to say about business? Well, come then, let's have it."

Probity had seated herself by the time this was said. The excitement of going to her father at his desk, and of having to say to him something which she would rather not have been forced to say, evidently distressed her: her breathing was very agitated, and her colour came and went. Ezekiel looked tenderly at her, and was conscious of a painful sensation at some association of ideas which he

did not then pause to ascertain; for Probity, who wished to get her errand told, began to speak.

"Father," she said, "I heard you say this morning that you would send his money home to Robert Lathom when Mr Waddington goes in the Kangaroo. Now the Kangaroo is a very slow vessel, as is well known. She may not get to England for many months, and in the meantime the young man may be much straitened for want of the money. There is a packet to sail to-morrow. Wouldn't it be possible to send his money by that?"

"Why, what the deuce," said Zeke Burdon, with some astonishment, but not unkindly—"what have you to do with young men and their money, and the packets, and all that; eh, Miss?"

"Only that, as I know it never makes any difference to *you* having to wait a little longer or shorter for your money, I feared you might forget that it isn't the same with Robert; and that by making him wait for Mr Waddington, you might cause him inconvenience or loss."

"Well, that is not badly thought on, lass. Your little head has been more thoughtful than the old man's in this. We ought not to wait, and we won't. But look ye, Probity, we don't commonly send money home in coin. There's a better way than that. I shall draw bills on some English merchant who will give Lathom money for them; and to make the risk as small as possible, I can

send duplicates, or even triplicates, by later ships, so that if a mischance should befall the first copy, it will be hard if the second or third does not turn up. However, what you say about delay is all right. I think I will send first copies by to-morrow's mail; Mr Waddington may take the second; and, by the time he is ready, we shall find some means of sending the third. That will do; won't it?"

"Yes, thank you, father; I'm glad now that I spoke," said Probity, breathing freely again.

"Robert Lathom," observed Ezekiel, "is a good, industrious young man, but I have some suspicion that he employed himself in other things besides farming and commerce while he was here. What has the lad been saying to you, Probity?"

Again Probity showed signs of agitation, and again her colour came and went. Burdon realised now why it was that her look made him feel a pang. It was the same look which her mother's face wore long years ago; and her mother never again made a return towards health or strength after he first observed that look. The girl made some confused remark in answer to her father's question, of which he did not take particular heed. He was shocked by the thought just presented to his mind of Probity's health giving way, and thinking that a change of climate and scene might possibly restore her."

"I would," said he, "that Robert Lathom, or some equally respectable young man, would come and take you to the old country, where you might learn to look stout and saucy again. I don't half like these puny looks, and these pantings all about nothing at all. I can never go to England again, and I don't know that there's anybody there extremely anxious to receive any member of my family; but if now you could go home with a husband of your own (which means with another name, you know), that would be an excellent arrangement."

These words were not altogether unpleasing to Probity's ear, but they were rather plainer than she liked to listen to; so she beat a retreat from her father's presence, leaving that old gentleman rather less serene than she had found him. He repeated, as she went out, that the bills should be seen to at once, and said very reassuringly that there was nobody living whom he would more heartily welcome to his hearth than Robert Lathom, if ever he should come back again. And if words could have put life into the girl, these words would have done it, for she knew that Lathom meditated a return to Sydney some day when he should have thriven a little, and she had doubted till now as to the reception that he might meet with. If it was a relief to know that her father would not frown on Robert, that relief only intensified another affliction. Pro-

bity knew better than her father, and had been conscious for some time, that health and strength were deserting her. Her bitter thought now was, that when Robert should return, as he surely would, she might be in her grave.

As soon as his daughter had left the office, Mr Burdon set about preparing the bills. He then wrote three copies of a letter to Mr Lathom, and ordered that letters of advice in triplicate should be written to the firms on whom he had drawn his bills. When this was done his clerk was ordered to put up the three sets of despatches ready for transmission; and the clerk in a short time produced three packets with a strong family likeness, each of them addressed, of course, to Mr Robert Lathom, and each having in the left-hand lower corner the words *By favour of*, then a blank, and then *Esq.* The cause of this last endorsement was that Ezekiel, for some reason or other—probably some prejudice of his early days—had a dislike to, and distrust of, the mail-bags: where he possibly could do so, he sent his letters by private hands. So his envelopes were always prepared for that mode of transmission. Now an acquaintance of his named Müller was about to proceed to England by the mail, *en route* to Frankfort, where his friends resided; and Mr Burdon hoped that he would take charge of a letter, and post it in England before proceeding to the Continent. Müller

did take charge of one copy: and Mr Waddington, when he a week or two after sailed in the Kangaroo, took with him the duplicates, and promised Probity that on his arrival he would himself write to Lathom, with a view of ascertaining whether the bills had reached him by packet, and that the remittance was soon enough for his requirements. The young girl was evidently much troubled in mind about the transmission of this money; and her father, after wondering much why she fretted so, concluded that some passing fear or fancy had presented itself to her mind, and in her present low condition she had not strength to banish it. He therefore, with the hope of comforting her, would frequently calculate the progress which the packet and the Kangaroo must have made, and the probable date of the arrival of each, showing that the latter ship even must reach England before Lathom could be in need of more money. And it was one of these kind computations and assurances which one day drew from Probity the confession that she had had a dream which had greatly impressed her and raised this alarm. She said that she fancied she had made a long passage through the air to some house where she saw Robert sorely troubled and in danger, but that she could not get near him to ask the cause of his grief, and that she was consequently in great agony, when an old man with a white beard appeared to her, and in foreign ac-

cents told her that Robert's distress was caused by his having been disappointed of expected remittances of money, but that she could help him by plunging into the sea, and bringing him money from thence. She descended into the waters accordingly, and as she did so, awoke with a cold shudder. She saw Robert in the dream as plainly as she ever saw him in her life: the face and voice of the old man with the beard haunted her still, he was so life-like; she was sure that something terrible had happened or was about to happen to Robert, for the dream was not like ordinary dreams. Zeke Burdon did all he could to combat this imagination, but he confessed that the awe which had overcome his daughter in some sort affected him also, strong old fellow as he was, and that he looked quite nervously to the time when he should get advices of the packet having arrived safely in England. That packet never did reach England, but the Kangaroo did. It will be best, however, that, before the circumstances of her arrival are mentioned, a few words should be said about Robert Lathom, so often named.

Robert Lathom, then, was no other than a son of that very Jessie Manders whom Zeke Burdon remembered as his old sweetheart. Her feelings had been cruelly wrung when Ezekiel's good name was forfeited. In misfortune, in sickness, even in death, she would not have turned from him to an-

other; but in his disgrace she had shown a spirit, and said she wished never to hear his name again. Not long after Zeke had gone abroad she married a young surgeon of the name of Lathom, making a match which all her peers considered a very exalted one, but which brought its troubles nevertheless, for her husband had some difficulty in struggling into practice. Their whole history, however, we are not concerned with, but only so much of it as relates to the sending of Robert, their second son, to New South Wales,—and this is the way in which that measure came about. Mr Lathom, who for many years practised his profession in Liverpool, was one evening called to attend an eccentric old man, a German Jew, who, though suffering from a violent attack of illness, had made no move toward summoning assistance, until an acquaintance, having accidentally discovered his condition, brought the surgeon to his bedside. The patient seemed poverty-stricken, and almost friendless; but he managed somehow to rouse the benevolence of Lathom's nature, who not only carefully prescribed for him, but furnished him with a nurse, and many comforts which he required. When the old man recovered, Lathom refused all compensation, and persisted in doing so after the Jew assured him that he was not so poor as he appeared to be.

"All the zame, I shall pay," said the Jew, "you zee."

And somehow or other he did pay very well, for he sent Lathom notices from time to time of some excellent means of employing money, and though the latter had not much to invest, the little that he had was very profitably placed. It was not, however, until Lathom had moved to a practice in Cheshire, and his family had grown up, that he began to feel how thoroughly the Jew was keeping his word about paying him. His eldest son was to follow his own profession, but for his "zecond zon, Robert," the Jew proposed emigration to New Holland, where, he said, he had relations and friends who would put him in the way of making a fortune.

A voyage to New Holland was a serious business in those days, and, as a matter of course, both Lathom and his wife hesitated before giving consent to their son's going to the other side of the world. Behrens, however (that was the Jew's name), put the whole arrangement so plainly before them, disposing of all difficulties, and setting forth the advantages of the plan, that the parents gave way, and Robert, who had always liked the thoughts of the adventure, was duly despatched to the antipodes.

"He shall be reesh man, I bromise," said Behrens.

"Well, I daresay he may," answered Lathom; "but of course he must abide his fortune as well as another."

"No, he is zure; I have bromised," repeated the Jew.

"As far as you can help him, I feel that he *is* sure," answered the father. "Don't imagine that I doubt your goodwill. I have had too many proofs of it for that."

"Well, believe what I tell you; he will brosber. I know it for zertain."

"How can you know it?" asked Lathom, smiling; "can you see into futurity?"

"Zertainly I can," answered Behrens, with the utmost coolness. "How does any one read the zecrets of the future, and know what iz to be?"

And the old fellow stroked his white beard and looked at Lathom as if he would look through him. Beards were far less common in those days than they are now, and the surgeon felt a thrill, as if a magician were exercising his art upon him. It did, however, certainly happen that things went well with Robert Lathom. He made a quick and pleasant voyage out, and was received with much kindness by the Messrs Müller, the relatives to whom Behrens had consigned him. (It was one of this firm who sailed in the packet, as has been said.) His employment was partly pastoral and partly mercantile, a combination not likely to be found except in a community of early settlers; it yielded him a good maintenance, with the promise of more than a maintenance before long. This,

however, was but the beginning of success. After he had made some acquaintance with his profession, business threw him into the way of Zeke Burdon, one of the leading men of the colony, who, knowing the name which his lost Jessie now bore, soon made out that this was her son. Thereupon the favour of Ezekiel was extended to Robert Lathom, and brought in its train the favour of many another colonist. The encouragement which the young man enjoyed could not be exceeded, and he showed himself to be entirely worthy of it, for he improved all his opportunities, worked hard, and became noted as very able and likely to grow wealthy. It need scarcely be added that his relations with Burdon led to the affection between him and Burdon's daughter which has been more than hinted at in the course of the story. It existed for many months before Robert went home again, and was, indeed, to a great extent, the cause of his leaving, but it was a matter about which very little had been said. Probity, who was a sort of princess out there, could hardly without presumption, or with a chance of success, be sought by a young adventurer lately come out to try his fortune (for Lathom knew nothing of Ezekiel's former acquaintance with his mother): and both Probity and Robert, though their strongest wish was to live for one another *somewhere*, thought they would prefer that that somewhere

should not be in New South Wales. Now Mr Burdon, although he did not know how things stood between the young people, had not overlooked the possibility of this attractive pair becoming attached. Callous and placid as he for the most part was, nature had thought proper to interweave with the tough fibre one silken thread of romance. The idea of Jessie's son and his daughter being united was not altogether unpleasing to him, and he often and often turned the matter in his mind when he indulged himself with a reverie. But he, too, would have preferred that Probity should settle in England; he thought that Robert should acquire both experience and property before trying matrimony, and he desired that the lovers—if indeed they were lovers—should be parted for a season. "If," thought Zeke to himself, "he is fond enough of the girl, he will come for her when he is able to keep her; if not, it may be as well to separate them before she becomes too deeply attached. True, the separation may be the means of putting an end to a fancy which would otherwise ripen into love. What if it be? There is no great scheme sacrificed nor great opportunity lost; time shall settle it." And so Zeke set himself to realising a plan which had long been sketched in his mind. He would establish at home a correspondent and agent, who, though he should be in business on his own account, should neverthe-

less trade principally if not solely with New South Wales, and should, by his knowledge both of the colonial and the home markets, greatly assist the business at both ends, and produce a reciprocity of advantages. And thus it was that Robert found himself bound once more for England, to be settled at Liverpool, his father's old place of residence, indeed his own birthplace. The latter meetings and the last parting of the lovers were tender and sad in the extreme, but they both saw in this arrangement a way to the hitherto unhoped-for fulfilment of their dearest wishes. Each felt sure of the other's constancy, and so, full of hope in their direst distress, they separated; and Lathom, when he could collect his thoughts, found himself on the bosom of the great Pacific, the waves gently smiting the good ship's sides, and New Holland only a dark line on the horizon.

The voyage was prosperous, as most things had been with the young man. He reached Liverpool in due time, and found (what he did not expect) a house ready to receive him there; for the Jew, who had heard of his movements, had written to tell his father that he was going to the Continent for some time, it might be for several years, and while he was absent Robert might reside in his house, and have the use of all that it contained at a very low rent. This offer had been accepted; his father had added to Behren's *supellex* what was wanted to

make the place comfortable for a single man; and so, when Robert landed, he found that, instead of having to spend his time in looking out for a residence, he was able to stay a week with his parents. This visit over, he took to his business in good earnest, and did in no sort disappoint the good opinion which old Burdon had formed of him. Shrewd, diligent, and devoted, he soon found that he could give a great fillip to Zeke Burdon's business, and at the same time set himself trading in a modest but profitable way. After he became a little intimate with men of his own age, his friends used to joke him about his house, which they called a wizard's den. It was a one-storied building, standing a little way out of town; and they declared that while old Behrens lived there, it was noted for the most unearthly sights and sounds, so that few cared to go near it after dark, and that the popular belief was that ghosts and devils revelled there all night. The old fellow, they said, was quite proud of being thought a magician, and preferred to act in a mysterious manner, so as to give the appearance of supernatural intervention; and they told some stories which certainly seemed to prove that he could find out and do things in a strange way, and that he would be at pains to make it appear that he worked by some unearthly power. These gibes and reflections on his house might have made

Robert uncomfortable if he had heard them in the early days of his habitation; but as he had been some time in occupation, and had never been disturbed when they first came to his ears, he only laughed and said he wondered how people could utter or listen to such nonsense. His perfect composure, and the fresh look with which he came to business in the morning—not a characteristic of all his acquaintances—soon stopped the jesting on this subject.

And so things went on as prosperously as could be desired. More than eighteen months had passed away since his return to Liverpool—months which he scored off on the calendar one after another with the utmost complacency,—for did not the lapse of them bring nearer and nearer his reunion with his beloved Probity! But none of us can live in unvarying sunshine. Young Lathom, after being some time at home, and becoming acquainted with his work, had taken some steps which, although they were by no means unwarranted, made him more anxious than he had been before. To take advantage of a most favourable state of the market, he had shipped largely to Sydney on credit, calculating that his obligations would be more than met whenever he should receive from Burdon his share of farming profits from lands out there, and remittances in payment of former consignments. The money, if it should arrive in regular course, would

be in his hands before it was wanted; but to obviate all risk, he wrote, urging Burdon to be punctual; and we may suppose, from the earnestness which we have seen Probity display, that he also wrote to her, although there is no evidence of this fact.

Well, the time when his payments would be due began to draw near. Neither money nor advice of it had arrived, but he felt that it could not be far distant. A packet was due even now. It was tiresome that on this important occasion she should happen to be late, but such *contretemps* were always happening. She would make her number in a day or two, and then all would be well. But a day or two and more time than that passed away, and still she did not appear. (It was the very packet which left Sydney the day after Zeke Burdon's conversation with his daughter in the office, and which never after that day was again seen.) Robert's anxiety of course increased as the hours rolled away; it became of an intensity such as he had not experienced before. He had not, however, learned to despond. He felt certain that it was only a question of time; but then the day of payment was drawing disagreeably near. When it was only three or four days off, he had to effect some arrangement to gain time; and this was not very easy to manage, as the amount was large in proportion to his business; but he did, by the aid

of some friends, get an extension of three weeks, which would be ample, he did not doubt. This accommodation, however, greatly increased his anxiety, as, if the payment were now to fail, his friends might suffer as well as himself. Nevertheless he would not suppose but that everything would be right. In a day or two he read a notification that the expected packet was in sight, and his heart rejoiced at the thought that his difficulty must be past. The day after, the notice was contradicted; it was another packet which, on a foggy day, had been mistaken for the missing one. And still the time wore on, and still he got no advice. In his extremity he wrote to Behrens, who was at Frankfort, telling him of his case, and asking if he could assist him. The friends who were sureties for him had entire faith in him, and bade him be of good cheer, for they would pull him through somehow or other; but assurances of this kind did not relieve a mind like Robert Lathom's. His perplexity became most distressing. He determined that there should be no more suretiship or borrowing. If his money did not arrive by the 10th of October (that was the day) he would be declared a bankrupt, give up everything in the present, sacrifice position and prospects, and trust that, at the least, he might, in a very short time, reimburse those who had so kindly come to his relief. He had not formed this resolution without a bitter struggle.

On the 8th October he received the following reply from Mr Behrens:—

"Do not be sorrowful. I let myself be interested in you. The letters shall come to you in good time.

"BEHRENS."

But this enigmatical epistle did not bring much comfort.

It was the 9th of October. Lathom had declined the invitation of his sureties to dine together—which they had kindly given in the hope of diverting him from his chagrin—and had gone home early, taking with him some books and other documents, in order that he might prepare letters and statements, which it was now only too certain that he would require to use on the morrow.

Lathom was surprised to find what a calm was lent him by despair. He worked away the whole of that evening vigorously, and, compared with the state of mind from which he suffered while yet in doubt, cheerfully. He did not complete his labour till eleven o'clock, and when it was done he felt fatigued and drowsy, not watchful and excited as had been his wont for some nights past. When he withdrew to his bed-chamber, he locked away his books and papers, all except one large foolscap sheet containing a list or abstract, which, as he

intended to put it in his note-case before going forth in the morning, he took with him, and placed on a table near the foot of his bed. He lay down with his mind cleared of figures and of much of the doubt and fear which had been oppressing it for days; and his thought turned sadly but fondly to poor Probity Burdon, and he wondered how the reverse of fortune which he had to encounter would affect the plans which they had cherished. Happen what might, he could rely on the faith of his betrothed. It was with this comfortable thought that he fell asleep.

In the night he was awaked by the noise of unusually heavy rain descending on the roof. It has been said that the house was one-storeyed, and it may be added that the rooms were rather low; so that the slates on which this downpour was coming were not much above the bed's head. Robert turned himself about, and began to think whether he had observed on the previous evening any sign of bad weather; but in truth he had been so occupied with his affairs that he had never looked at the sky. Then he felt vexed that, as he had been lucky enough to go to sleep, he should have been thus early disturbed, for it was still pitch-dark. And after that he resolved to shut his eyes and ears, and to court sleep again. As he thus resolved, he saw a gleam of soft light in the direction of the door of his room. He looked attentively to see

what this might be, and saw a female figure, much draped, and with the head veiled or shrouded. It carried in one hand a lamp, and with the other hand shaded the light so as to throw the rays back upon itself, rather than to allow them to disperse themselves in the room. As he stared at it, simply in wonder so far, it moved without noise across the chamber, not far from the bed's foot. It was near, as he judged, the opposite wall, when the thought suddenly struck him—"One of old Behren's ghosts, by jingo!" and thereupon he sprang out of bed and rushed towards the figure, which, however, disappeared he knew not how, and he found himself groping about in the dark among the furniture, and was fain to feel his way back to bed. As he turned to do so his foot came in contact with, and pushed along the floor, a piece of paper, which he concluded to be the abstract which he had put on the table, and which he must have brushed off it when he rushed from the bed. That he remembered this paper was proof that he had not been in a dream. He got back to bed again, and was surprised at the calm way in which he was able to think over what he had seen. From what he knew of himself, an appearance such as this should have overcome him with horror; but here he lay, coolly thinking the matter over, and not caring if he should see the lady and her lamp reappear. She did not, however, trouble him again; and, strange

to say, he was in a short time asleep once more, and when he awoke it was broad daylight.

As he rubbed his eyes and recalled the visitation of the night, it occurred to him that he had thrown down the folded paper containing the abstract, and he looked out to see where it was lying, that he might judge where he stood when the figure eluded him. But the paper had not fallen at all. There it lay on the table just where he had placed it; and now he felt perplexed, for although *he* had no doubt about what he had seen, he felt that to others it would appear simply a dream, when the paper which he had felt on the floor was admitted to have never been moved from the table. But then he would swear that his foot had come upon a paper, and he now arose to examine the room. Near the wall, and about where he thought he must have stood in the night, there lay a paper, sure enough. Nothing of the kind, so far as he could remember, was lying there when he went to bed. He picked it up, and did not find its presence explained when he saw that it was a sealed packet, and that it was addressed to himself. Turning it over in astonishment, after the manner of people so surprised, he recognised the well-known seal of Ezekiel Burdon, and in the superscription the handwriting of a clerk in the office. *By favour of*

Esq., was written beside the address. There was no post-mark. After vainly puzzling himself for

a few seconds as to how it had come there, Lathom broke the seal and opened the packet. In it he found bills of exchange quite sufficient to meet his necessities, also letters of advice, and a letter from Zeke Burdon to himself. One can understand how the surprise caused by the first discovery of the letter gave way to delight at its contents, and how the young man, dazed by a crowd of emotions, forgot all about his toilet, and sat rejoicing and wondering for long by his bedside. As he dressed he endeavoured to put the whole occurrence into shape. The contents of the letter were certainly genuine, and certainly what he had been expecting. The bearer must have arrived by some indirect passage. He had called somewhere on his way home, and so had come in a ship not reported as from Sydney. But how the letter got into his room—well, it *was* a puzzle!

In answer to his questions, the servants assured him that neither the postman nor any one else had brought a packet that morning; and indeed the postman, bearing some letters of very secondary import, made his visit afterwards. Looking a little more leisurely over Mr Burdon's letter while he sat at breakfast, Robert noticed that the first copies of the bills were to have been sent by the packet so long overdue, and that Mr Waddington, who had been a passenger—or at any rate had intended to be a passenger—in the Kangaroo, was to take the

second. He had never seen that ship's arrival announced, and he knew that she traded to London. Either, therefore, Mr Waddington must at the last have proceeded by some other route, or else he had somehow been transhipped on the voyage. After all this had been put together, there remained the inexplicable problem,—How did the letter get into his chamber? Mr Waddington not having himself written seemed also a rather strange thing, but of course it was possible that he might have despatched the packet while too busy to write himself; an early post might bring the expected advice from him.

It will readily be believed that Robert Lathom did not on that day give himself up to wonder or conjecture. He had work to do—work far more agreeable than that which he had believed to be awaiting him. His bills, received by private hand, were accepted at once; his difficulty was at an end. The congratulations of his friends were hearty and profuse. It was quite romantic, they said, to be thus relieved at the last minute; and so it was—they didn't half know *how* romantic.

Never doubting that the whole of this mystery would be cleared up—for he was a matter-of-fact, strong-minded fellow, as has been said—Lathom, when his first duties were performed, set himself to examine shipping lists, but no notice of the Kangaroo could he see. He must wait now for

Waddington's letter. He and his friends did dine together that day at the Mersey tavern, and a very pleasant evening they passed. But now that his commercial trouble was off his mind, the young merchant was the more anxious to penetrate the mystery of the letter, and his first thought, when he got home, was to closely search the chamber again. He examined and tried the windows and door, and looked well at the low roof; then he moved the wardrobe and bed, and turned round one or two pictures, to assure himself that no secret entrance existed. Finally, he displaced, and then replaced, a cumbrous old clock which stood near to where he had found the letter. Looking up to some gilding which surmounted this piece of furniture, he saw, or fancied he saw, the very faintest outline of a face, and the mild regard of blue eyes, which called up the dear recollection of his Probity. It faded into nothing as he gazed, but then in a moment came back the recollection of his mysterious visitant, whom the change in his fortune had quite made him forget. He questioned his servants again, and more closely than before. No one had brought letters to the house on the preceding day after the morning's post; and no one had been there at all in the afternoon except a person from a German clockmaker's in the town, who came to fit a key to the old clock in Lathom's room. "I couldn't help remarking of him," said the servant,

"he was such a queer-looking old man, with a white beard, and *such* a hooked nose." Robert could make nothing of it at all.

It may have been three weeks after all this that Lathom read in a newspaper the arrival of the Kangaroo, and the same evening received a letter from Mr Waddington, dated London, Nov. 1, which ran as follows:—

"Dear Sir,—As I take for granted that you received advices by the last packet from Sydney, it will, I hope, have become a matter of secondary importance whether some duplicate despatches of which I was the bearer come immediately to hand or not. I deeply regret to have to tell you that the packet intrusted to my charge has been unaccountably mislaid, and is not immediately forthcoming; and I request that you will be good enough to write at once saying whether you have received advices which ought to have reached you per mail-packet.—I remain, dear sir, faithfully yours,

"F. Waddington."

The mystery seemed only to grow deeper. Lathom did not in reply to this enter into particulars, but said that he proposed to be in London as early as possible, and would wait on Mr Waddington. In the meantime the latter gentleman need be under no anxiety as to the packet of letters, as no inconvenience was caused by the want of it.

The next post, however, brought another letter from Mr Waddington, who had been made miserable by the discovery that the mail-packet had not arrived. He wrote to say that the circumstances under which the despatch had been mislaid were strange and peculiar, and that he could not enter upon them until he could sit down leisurely and collectedly to write. In the meantime he entreated Lathom to consider him and his brother as in every way answerable for any difficulty that might have occurred about money. The letter then went on to give messages, and to speak of Probity (who had written by the mail packet), and to give some Sydney news.

Lathom and Waddington had not been very intimately acquainted before, but this letter showed so much kind feeling, that Lathom, when he got to London, met the other as an old friend. He assured him that he was quite at his ease concerning money, but did not mention the circumstances under which he had been supplied. They agreed to dine together that evening, when Waddington would have the opportunity of mentioning some matters which he longed to confide to Lathom.

"We had a terrible voyage," said Waddington, when they were quietly seated together; "driven this way and that, and sometimes in great danger. We have been at Rio, and glad enough we were to get there; but our troubles did not end with reach-

ing that port, for when we set sail again from thence, the Atlantic seemed in a more violent mood than the other oceans had been. We were knocked about for several weeks, being often in imminent danger, and had wellnigh lost our reckoning through the thick weather, until one morning, after having had a violent thunderstorm in the night, we were delighted by a calm day and a clear sky, with land looming in the distance. We made this land out to be Cape Finisterre, and the sight of it is inseparably connected with the loss of the letter which I was bringing to you. I noted the matter carefully: it was on the 10th October that we made the land, and on the 9th I am certain that the letter was in my possession."

Lathom started at the mention of the date, but did not interrupt.

"You must know," went on Waddington, "that, before the thunderstorm, we had been much in doubt as to the ability of the ship to reach England, and there had been some talk of taking to the boats. To be prepared for such a contingency I went to my cabin, and separated from my baggage a few gold pieces, which I secured in the waistband of my trousers, and some articles of value and importance, which I made up into a small package as well secured as might be from wet, and provided with straps to attach it to my person whenever it might be proposed to leave the ship. I can be on my

oath that the letter for you was in this package; but though the package remained in my possession, apparently just in the condition in which I had put it, believe me that, when the fair weather and the sight of land induced me to open it again, your letter had disappeared, and I have never seen it since!"

"Nay," put in Lathom, as calmly as he could, though he felt his heart galloping under his waistcoat, "you were, of course, a good deal agitated when you were making up your parcel, and the letter may easily have dropped out, and been, by the motion of the vessel, jerked into some of the innumerable crevices and corners of the ship."

"I have a particular recollection," answered Waddington, "of having put your letter with my valuables, and I know exactly where I put it. Nevertheless, as soon as I found it wanting I made search among my baggage, and all over the cabin, without success. It was the only thing missing. Besides, there is another circumstance, which I have not liked to mention, and which I mention now with some fear that you may think me a romancer. and distrust all that I have been telling you."

"Not at all; I shall not in the least distrust you," answered Robert, whose curiosity was now painfully aroused.

"Well, then, I must tell you that on the night of the storm—which night, you will remember, suc-

ceeded the day on which I made up my parcel—I had gone to my cabin much wearied, both in body and mind. I did not dare to undress, but threw myself into my sleeping-berth, where I lay tossed about by the motion of the vessel, and watching the flashes of light, whose brilliancy and frequency exceeded anything in my experience. Between the flashes it was so dark as to create a feeling of great horror. I could keep no account of time, but fancy it may have been midnight or thereabout when the storm began to roll away. As the lightnings moderated, I felt my eyes—which had been watching them—sore and weary, and I closed the lids from exhaustion, but not from drowsiness, which was very far from overcoming me—I was too much disturbed, both bodily and mentally. But I lay, as I was saying, with my eyes shut, noting the increased and increasing distance of the thunder, and wondering what report the captain would make of our prospects in the morning. Chancing to open my eyes as I rolled from side to side, I was sensible of a soft light in the cabin, very different from the vivid lightning, but yet a very decided change from the extreme darkness. And, surveying the cabin by this light, I was conscious of a figure, of not very distinct outline, bending over the parcel of valuables which I had packed up. My idea was that somebody who had seen me at work in the afternoon, and guessed what I was about, had now

come in the dead of night to appropriate my little bundle. In this thought I scrambled out of my berth and made for the intruder; but the light now disappeared. However, I soon got a lantern from the watch on deck, and examined my cabin; but nothing was amiss there. It proved to be between two and three o'clock, so I lay down again, and know of nothing remarkable till the morning, when we heard that the land was in sight. East winds kept us from entering the Channel for a fortnight, but we got in at last, thank God!"

"Should you know the envelope again, do you think?" asked Lathom, somewhat tremulously.

"That should I," replied Waddington; "the appearance of it is stamped on my brain. I don't know anything that ever gave me so much anxiety."

Then Robert took from his note-case the cover of the mysteriously found letter. Waddington turned as pale as death.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "this is the very thing. Where on earth did you get it?"

"I must in my turn ask your indulgent acceptation of what I have to say, for my story is no less marvellous than yours." And thereupon Lathom told how he had found the packet, how it had contained undeniable bills and other documents, and how he had seen a figure in his room on the night between the 9th and 10th of October, just before he felt a paper on the ground.

"Have mercy on us!" exclaimed the other; "I should have told you that the figure which I saw in my cabin on board the Kangaroo also held a lamp, and was habited exactly as you describe. Why, the same person—or being—that robbed me, must have taken the package straight to you."

"And pretty rapidly too. You remember that you were at the time off Cape Finisterre, and I in Liverpool. There is, however, one other point which perhaps you may be able to explain. My friend Mr Burdon advised me that you would take a duplicate packet; now the papers which were within this mysterious cover were first copies."

"That is strange," said Waddington; "but no—not unaccountable after all. You know the way in which the clerk gets ready the two or three copies, as it may be, all at one time. It is very likely that in his hurry on the day of the packet sailing he may have handed Müller—poor fellow, his was a sad fate!—the duplicate; which would have left the original for me. I know he asked me to put my own name on the back of the envelope in the blank space which you still see, as he had omitted to do so before coming to see me off. Had *I* brought the letter to land, of course I should have filled in the hiatus before sending on the despatch."

"Yes, certainly," answered Lathom, "you must have brought the original by mistake. Indeed I am truly grieved for poor Müller: the brothers

were very kind to me when first I went out. They are relatives of Mr Behrens, an old friend of my family, now at Frankfort: Karl was going to visit the old man. It is a sad affair."

Waddington mused a long time: he was sorely astonished. At last he said—

"It is surely the strangest thing that ever was; but what could be the object of this—this miracle, for I can call it nothing less? Only to perplex and astonish two unfortunate people, as far as I can see. The letter did but reach the person to whom it was addressed, and the same thing would have happened in due course if the documents had been left quietly in my possession. What possible difference could it have made?"

"Simply that I should have been a bankrupt on the 10th of October!"

"Good God!"

Before Robert returned to Liverpool, the two men agreed that it would be very unpleasant to have this story canvassed, to have their veracity —or perhaps their sanity—doubted by matter-of-fact prigs, or to attain to the kind of notoriety which the heroes of such adventures suffer. So they kept the circumstances very quiet.

Third copies of the triplicate bills arrived soon after the Kangaroo, and dissipated all doubt (if doubt anywhere existed) as to the genuineness of

the second copy. Robert Lathom went on and prospered, and was very little troubled either by day *or by night.* There are, however, troubles in plenty which are unconnected with what is ordinarily called prosperity, and one of these was awaiting Robert—a trouble which, notwithstanding that he grew rich, as old Behrens said he would, cast a shadow on his life till his dying day. The winter was passed, the spring was passing, and Robert's heart rejoiced, for he had been doing so well in the past six months that the time might not be far distant when he might revisit Sydney to realise his most ardent wish. At this time he received a letter from Ezekiel Burdon which struck him down, and, as he used to say afterwards, then and there made an old man of him before he was six-and-twenty. Probity Burdon was dead. . . . Poor old Zeke wrote with much more feeling than had seemed to be in his nature, and in a strain that completely unmanned poor Robert. He knew that his child had been weak and ailing, but had never thought that she was seriously diseased. At times she would be bright and happy; and she was unusually so on the last day of her life, when she had volunteered the information that she felt quite well and strong. Three hours afterwards she had lain down and died. A letter and parcel found in her desk and addressed to Lathom were duly forwarded, and brought him probably all the comfort

which he was now likely to get. It is believed that these are the same letter and parcel which by his most particular injunction were laid upon his breast in the coffin. For many weary nights he spelt over the details of Ezekiel's most sad letter, but it was not till after some time that he perceived the curious approximation of the date of poor Probity's death to that of the mysterious occurrences about the bills of exchange. She had died between noon and one o'clock on the afternoon of the 10th October, only about ten hours after the letter had been spirited into his bed-chamber! Mr Waddington was also struck with the almost coincidence, and said that, if the dates had corresponded exactly, he could not have avoided the conviction that the events were somehow intimately connected; but of course, as there was not exact correspondence,[1] that idea might be dismissed.

It is not known in what year, but Mr Lathom certainly did revisit Sydney, probably to look at a grave there. He never married, but he grew very rich, as the Jew had predicted that he would. For many years, it is said, he could not bear to hear any event of this story even hinted at; but

[1] Mr Lathom and Mr Waddington—indeed our contributor also—appear to have overlooked the difference of longitude. If that be taken into account, it will be seen that, as nearly as can now be ascertained, Probity Burdon's death and the apparitions to the two gentlemen must have occurred at the same time!—ED. 'Blackwood's Magazine.'

towards the end of his life—the part with which the writer is personally acquainted—he conversed very freely on the subject with his friends, and he at length gratified them by making a written statement. Mr Waddington also left written testimony behind him.

It should be mentioned, as connected with this story, and as further proof of the mystery which seems to surround the whole of it, that among Mr Lathom's papers was found a small slip cut from a German newspaper announcing the death, at Frankfort, of Karl Müller. This was enclosed in a piece of faded writing-paper, whereon was noted, in Lathom's writing, *Can this possibly have been poor Karl, thought to have been drowned? Behrens has not replied to my inquiry. I hear of three men having landed in a boat on the coast of Brittany, about the time when the packet must have foundered. The Müllers have all left Sydney. Poor Karl!*

It was only last autumn that Mr Lathom died, a millionaire, leaving his large fortune to be curiously subdivided. His lamented decease removed the last barrier against the disclosure of the facts here narrated, which, it is hoped, will prove a valuable contribution to the science of the invisible world.

POSTSCRIPT.

Note Relating to the Story of "The Missing Bills: an Unsolved Mystery."

[*MAGA.* JAN. 1874.]

Having found ourselves quite unable to send a separate reply to every correspondent who has desired further information concerning this story, we subjoin, for the benefit of our readers generally, the substance of such replies as we would have desired to send. Our numerous correspondents on this subject may, we think, be separated into three divisions: 1. Those who are satisfied that there was nothing supernatural in the occurrences at all, and who rather reproach us for publishing the case without a protest against its being credible as narrated. 2. Those who would like to have more particulars concerning the apparitions; some, apparently in a sceptical spirit, desiring to institute a cross-examination of the witnesses, while others are manifestly anxious for minor details of a matter in which they feel deep interest. 3. Those who, entirely accepting the narrative as it stands, desire us to say whether such and such a point may not have been inadvertently omitted, as that point alone is wanting to bring the story into harmony with what happened to their grandmothers or other members of their families.

To the first class, who contend that if Mr Lathom

had not dreamed a dream there would have been no pother about the matter, and who desire us to say honestly whether it isn't certain that the young man had a dream—perhaps remarkable, but still simply a dream,—we can only reply that Mr Lathom himself, who is certainly the best evidence on this point, would never for a moment allow that he had been deceived by a dream. He was often enough asked, it seems, by those whom he allowed to question him on the subject, whether he could be certain that he was awake, and his replies were always distinctly in the affirmative. This, we know, will hardly satisfy some people, who would deny other people senses at all, when those senses presume to reveal anything which is at variance with certain crotchets. The objections are a complete justification of the silence which Mr Lathom and Mr Waddington agreed to maintain immediately after the events.

The second division appear to forget that there no longer exist means of probing the testimony, except so far as some of the questions now asked were anticipated in family conversations. We can't say how far Mr Lathom may have kicked the packet along the floor, or whether he may not have first encountered it at some distance from the spot where his visitant vanished. We don't know what he had for supper, or whether he supped at all. He certainly did not chew opium in his later days, and

it is extremely unlikely that he ever did so: correspondents who speak of this "well-known Eastern practice" should consider that the habits of Australia and of China are very dissimilar, although both countries are in the East. There is not the slightest ground for supposing that the bills so mysteriously discovered, after a certain number of months or days, turned to tinder or rags; and certainly Mr Lathom, as he grew old and rich, expressed not the slightest apprehension that he had received an uncanny loan, repayment of which was likely to be exacted: on the contrary he looked forward to the grave as the only bed where he could be at rest—the only place where he could lay down an intolerable burden of care. The belief of his relatives is, that he did not at all in his mind connect Probity Burdon with the spectre until months after its appearance. No reason can be given for the figure not looking towards Robert, nor for its bearing a lamp, which our correspondents are probably right in supposing that it might have dispensed with, it having, no doubt, other means of seeing its way. There was no attempt to seize the mysterious lady, no thought of clasping her tenderly in his arms, which caused her to vanish: we have not the least authority for saying that she would have remained and spoken if she had been more delicately dealt with, and if profane language had not been used. Mr Lathom was

brought up sharply by his nose coming into contact with the wall, or something that stood against the wall, and too disconcerted to say exactly how things happened about that minute. The Jew cannot possibly be alive now, unless he writes *wandering* before his name. Whether he let fall his mantle on any one who could throw light on the strange story, our contributor does not know. It is not known who received the rent for the Jew's house after Lathom left it, which he did soon after he heard of Probity's death: it has long been pulled down, and a railway runs over the site.

Replying to inquirers of the third kind, we say, once for all, that no agent of ours has been grubbing in the muniment-room of any family, old or new. If the writer of any particular letter insinuating a charge of this kind could but see the letters of other writers, he would be convinced that there is oftentimes a strong likeness between ghostly legends, and that it is quite possible to be able to tell one without pirating from his archives. The gentleman whose great-aunt followed a ghost into the woods, and came back with her shoes and dress smeared with red clay, which gave the first intimation of the whereabouts of one of the richest iron-mines in the country, has had no wrong done him. And we do not admit even resemblance to our story in the case where a gentleman was commanded by an apparition to marry a supposed poor

girl, who turned out afterwards to be a great heiress. Dr Smollett is more likely to have invaded the secrets of this last family than ourselves, for he does distinctly make an apparition order Commodore Trunnion to "turn out and be spliced, or lie still and be ——;" on which occasion it was the spirit, and not the ghost-seer, that was a little forcible in the mode of expression, and convinced Trunnion that it was better to marry than to burn. So far as we can ascertain, there was no peculiar odour in the apartment, no noise as of waving wings, and the ghost did *not* raise its arm with a warning gesture before disappearing. So far was Lathom from feeling horror or even a shudder, that he distinctly noted how much more calmly he bore the sight than he thought possible. In short, not one of the additional incidents suggested to us belongs to *our* story.

And here our notice might end, were it not that from among the stories sent us as resembling ours, we have been so much struck with three, that we think our readers also might like to know the outlines of them.

The first occurred about twenty years since to an officer of the army, who is still alive. He had arrived at a station on the South American continent, and taken possession of a one-storied house, his official residence. Soon he found it to be a subject partly of perplexity and partly of jesting

at the mess, that the last occupant (indeed we believe several former occupants) of the house had been troubled by the visits of an apparition, supposed to be a young lady who died there many years before. Of course he was congratulated on the pleasure that was in store for him; but the prospect did not alarm him much; and as time wore on, and he remained unmolested, he was very indifferent about the matter, and had a cheerful answer to make always to them who bantered him about the ghost. So far, good; but his tribulation was coming. He retired to rest one night in the rainy season, as serene as ever, and sank off to sleep as a young fellow with a clear conscience would do. But a tropical rain descending on the shingles of his roof rudely disturbed his slumber. He woke up, heard the rain, wished it at—well, perhaps at Jericho, if there happened to be a drought in the Holy Land at that time—and turned over with the resolve of going to sleep again in spite of the deluge and its din. But as he formed this resolution, he was aware of a gentle light in the chamber, and, looking forth from his bed, he saw, much as Mr Lathom did, a female figure, shrouded and bearing a lamp, passing across the room. For a second or two he lay astonished; then, as the legend of the house occurred to him, he sprang from the bed, exclaiming "——'s ghost by ——." The figure eluded him, and the light disappeared. He felt his

way back to bed and calmly slept again; at which he was much surprised, as he never thought himself able to bear such a sight without being strongly affected by it. The thing told upon him afterwards, though, and he had to get leave of absence and make a short excursion to get rid of the effects.

The second narrative we give entire as it reached us:—

To the Editor of 'Blackwood's Magazine.'

Thurlestone Rectory, Kingsbridge,
Devonshire, 14*th November* 1873.

Dear Sir,—A friend of mine has just sent me this month's number of your Magazine,—and yesterday I read in it an interesting little story called "The Missing Bills—an Unsolved Mystery." Had it not been prefaced by an assurance of its truth, and a hint that what sometimes seems supernatural may not be so, I should have passed it over as a pleasing fiction; but while awake during the dark hours of this morning, recalling it to my mind, its circumstances seemed rather to bring the story within the bounds of solution—at all events, of possibility—extraordinary as they were. An honest and industrious young man, the son of a surgeon, who in former days had conferred a great obligation on a Jew, had the loan of that Jew's house for a period, accompanied with a promise that he would certainly repay the obligation he had received—in *some* way. The young man, in course of business, became involved in great difficulties, and applied to a friend in Australia, whose daughter he was probably to marry, for some money, which, if it arrived in time, would save him from bankruptcy. The

money, in bills, was sent at once; but, for safety's sake, these bills were made out in triplicate, and each packet was directed in rather a singular manner, but all exactly the same. The bearer of the first packet, named Karl Müller, was wrecked, and supposed to have been lost; yet, strange to say, the packet of which he was the bearer found its way in a mysterious manner to the floor of the bedroom in which the young man slept in the Jew's house, just in time to rescue him from his pecuniary difficulties. The young man that same night believed, or dreamed, that he saw an apparition; that he jumped out of bed, and struck his foot against a packet on the floor. The idea was so vivid that he could scarcely believe it was a dream; and to his surprise, on getting out of bed in the morning, he saw the packet on the floor. Now, from what is said in the end of the story, it appears that this Karl Müller was an acquaintance of the Jew, and that a man of that very name had died in that same town to which the Jew had gone (Frankfort, I think the name was, but your Magazine has left this house now); that he had lived there many years, and had begun to reside there at the same time as a boat with three men saved from a wreck had come in somewhere on the coast of Brittany, one of whom he was supposed to have been. Now the Jew was quite aware of his young friend's difficulties, and, a few days before, had written to assure him that he was greatly interested in his circumstances, and solemnly promising him that all should come right. Is it impossible that Karl Müller, supposed to have been lost, may, for reasons of his own, have given sanction to that supposition, and have gone to his friend at Frankfort; but feeling that ruin might be the consequence to an innocent person—a friend, too, of the Jew's—if the packet he was intrusted with missed its destination at the

time it should have reached it, is it not probable that he consulted his friend as to what was best to be done; and that the Jew, perhaps knowing something about his own house that others did not, and perhaps having an able confederate (I think there was something said about a clockmaker who repaired a clock in that room the day before), contrived that the packet should be made to reach the floor in the middle of the night? I think I could contrive such a thing myself. We know what conjurors do with horse-hair;—and if any movement of bedclothes detached a packet from the top of the clock, the noise of its fall might in a dream be connected with a great many extraordinary ideas. As for the bearer of the second packet believing that the mysteriously found one was the very one he was intrusted with, owing to the number marked on it, there is no great difficulty in supposing he was simply mistaken; and his mistake was not of such a character as to have attracted his attention, but that he really believed his packet *was* marked with the number it *should have been* marked with. I should like much to know if the writer of the story agrees with me. However, I don't know that I should have written this to you, were it not for the circumstance of the knowledge I possess, and for the truth of which I can vouch, of another story perhaps as extraordinary—an episode in the life of my father, and which I have often heard my mother relate—though, to be sure, I cannot sprinkle it judiciously with a ghost and a love story; and yet it is not absolutely without a little touch of the latter. I have already scribbled so much, that I believe I must take it for granted you will not publish it; yet an old friend of mine told me the other day, when we were conversing on the subject of Providence, that I ought not to keep such a tale unknown. I will therefore jot it down.

In the year 1807, my father (Captain Courtenay Ilbert of the Artillery) was ordered to take troops to Quebec; and in those days the Government was not very particular sometimes with regard to the seaworthiness—so I have been led to believe—and proper provisioning of troop-ships. My father was a young married man then, and had his wife, with an infant, on board, so that the voyage was a matter of anxiety. Just as they neared the Gulf of Newfoundland, a passing ship hailed the Thames transport, in which my father was; and the captain of the ship, in the few words that passed about their position, said that "of course they had with them a chart of the Gulf of St Lawrence?" On the captain of the Thames replying that he had not, the observation of the other captain was, "Then if you get safe to Quebec your lives are given to you!" The Thames soon got into difficulties, owing to the fogs, and more than once narrowly escaped being wrecked. Provisions were falling very short also. One day they observed, at a little distance from them, a dark object, which, on nearing, they perceived to be an abandoned vessel. My father and his subaltern (the late Major-Gen. Hardinge), and a sergeant, took the boat to examine her, and went on board. They found that she had been scuttled; but going out of the cabin, one of the party kicked the door of a sort of cupboard more open than it was, and saw some litter. There were three things—an old wig, an old Bible, and a chart of the Gulf of St Lawrence. This was not supernatural, but it was what we will term providential. This soon set the Thames right in its bearings. However, as the provisions were short, as, soon after, they were passing an island, my father and others thought they might as well take the boat and rectify their commissariat a little, if they could. The island was called Percy, in Gaspe Bay,

and they found its population was merely a few Irish people, the chief of whom was named Phelim O'Flinn. They were living in rather a primitive manner; but on my father's asking Phelim O'Flinn if he could possibly render them any assistance regarding food, he immediately collected all he could, chiefly bread and such things as would be acceptable. When my father asked him what he should pay him for them, his answer was, that "he was not the man to take advantage of his fellow-creatures in distress;" and refused to accept any money at all. When he heard, however, that my father was going to be stationed at Quebec, he said it was just possible he might have to go there some day, and if it should so happen that my father was still at Quebec, he would make so bold as to come and see him. Many months after this, one dark night after a heavy fall of snow, it was my father's turn, as captain of the guard, to go round the fortifications of Quebec with a sergeant and twenty men, — the sergeant, with a lantern, marching first, my father rather behind the others. He kicked something with his foot, and as the ground was even with snow he was surprised, and desired the sergeant to step back with the lantern. It was a large pocket-book, and in it he perceived there were many dollar-notes, and to a large amount—more than a hundred pounds' worth, I believe. Looking for the name of the owner, he read inside the cover the words, "Phelim O'Flinn, Percy, Gaspe Bay, Gulf of St Lawrence." Of course my father, the next morning, made every inquiry he could for any one of that name, but for a great part of the day unsuccessfully; but in the latter part of it, in his search in the lower part of the city—Lower Town, as I believe it was called—looking in at a large sort of cellar, there he saw Phelim O'Flinn sitting on a cask—the picture of

misery and despondency. He went up to him, and asked him how he could possibly come to Quebec and not come and see him, as he had promised. "Ah, sir!" said the poor man, "I am heartbroken. Yesterday I arrived at Quebec from home—for I had come up to get the things required for my daughter's marriage—her furniture and other things; and I had brought up all the money we had saved. I met some fellow-countrymen, who were very kind to me, and very hospitable. We were very merry last evening, and we thought we would take a walk round the garrison. In the walk I lost my pocket-book that contained all my money, and now I must go back, and my poor girl must remain unmarried." My father then produced the pocket-book, telling him he had found it. Phelim O'Flinn dropped on *his knees, and thanked God.* I believe I have told you the story in the very words used, or almost exactly the words—remembering so well the words in which I have so often heard my mother relate them: and I well remember, when I was a boy, the old sergeant's wife showing me the Bible that was found in the deserted vessel, with the chart of the Gulf of St Lawrence. This story, then, may certainly be placed in the class termed providential; and I believe apparent interpositions of divine providence are often happening in the world, especially to such as poor Phelim O'Flinn, whose first ejaculation was to *thank God.* Not that I think that the persons to whom they happen have any very great reason to congratulate themselves on account of them. They may be intended to strengthen the faith of those whom God sees to be rather inclined to weakness; not for such as those whose lot will be the most glorious in a future state. For instance, the three who, in the face of the fiery furnace, could say: "Our God whom we serve is *able* to deliver us from the burn-

ing fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods;"—and for a reward and testimony to their faith and trust so strong, and for the benefit of others who had it not, God did then and there interpose.—Yours faithfully,

PEREGRINE A. ILBERT.

The third story (without the writer's address, though he asks for an answer) has the Limerick post-mark; and although it has something in common with "The Missing Bills," as exhibiting a spirit moving matter, yet there is not sufficient similarity to suggest to any candid mind that the one tale can be derived from the other. It appears that our correspondent's great-grandmother, being at the time in delicate health, in which state she continued for a month or two afterwards, woke up one night out of a troubled sleep, with an intense longing for a drink of butter-milk. This desire had not long oppressed her, when she saw a girl named Biddy — (surname illegible) — enter the chamber bearing a pitcher which the invalid lady felt assured contained the coveted butter-milk. So vehement was her craving that she never thought for a moment of the singular way in which it was to be gratified; for it was past midnight, the house was locked and barred, and she might have remembered that the girl who came in was sup-

posed to be in the country, seven or eight miles off. She heeded not the strangeness of these things, but aroused her husband, desiring him to rise and fetch her the drink from Biddy's pitcher. No sooner, however, had she given this order than she revoked it, and with frantic haste (she was a woman of very refined feeling) pulled the bed-clothes over her spouse's eyes. The cause of this sudden action was, that the girl was making some singular motions, and seemed inclined to throw a somersault. She did not exactly do this, but she did what was quite as peculiar. She stood on her head; and now the meaning of this position became apparent. It was intended to show that the being on whom the lady in the bed looked was not material, nor clad in material drapery, *for the natural consequence of inverting her position did not ensue.* After remaining inverted long enough to convince the beholder that this could not be Biddy So-and-so in the flesh, the apparition vanished; and now the lady, still intent on the butter-milk, permitted her husband to get up, strike a light (for it had become dark again), and examine the room. There he found, sure enough, a pitcher full of the most beautiful butter-milk, with which he soon relieved his wife's intolerable craving. After this they both enjoyed a tranquil night. In the morning they inquired after Biddy, and were shocked to hear that she had been hysterical for some days,

and that last night she was for several hours in a trance, during which she carried (as she declared) butter-milk to the lady who saw the apparition. This was not all. The grandfather of the writer was born not long after, and he was curiously marked with a pitcher; so that when he stood on his head, as he used to do when a little bit of a thing, the mark could be distinctly seen. His descendants (including, of course, our correspondent) have all the same mark.

We now leave the subject, only regretting our inability to explain particulars, which, if they could be made clear, would take the story of "The Missing Bills" out of the list of Unsolved Mysteries.

MY HUNT OF THE SILVER FOX.

BY W. B. CHEADLE.

SABLE and ermine are associated in our minds with rank and wealth, and at the mention of them, images of duchesses and princesses, of judges and kings, clothed in the robes of dignity or royalty, at once rise up before us. But the use of furs as an article of dress is not confined to the noble and rich of civilised countries. The Indian wears his sables as well as the delicate lady; and buffalo-skins form the robes of the savage as well as the rugs of English carriages or Canadian sleighs The soft rich velvet skin of the sea-otter adorns the person of the native of the North Pacific as well as the cloak of the Chinese mandarin; and the delicate white ermine, with black-tipped tail, is the choicest ornament of the Blackfoot warrior of the American prairies as well as the symbol of royalty and dignity in this country. The wearing of skins seems, indeed, to be a mark of each extreme of the human race—the most primitive and

the most civilised. Nature has supplied the animals of northern climates with coats of unequalled quality for keeping out the cold and enduring wear; and these admirable properties, and the fact of the material being ready made, no doubt induced our savage forefathers and their contemporaries, in the first instance, to transfer such useful coverings from the bodies of the inferior creation to their own. But this is not the only cause of the almost universal love for furs. There is a handsome appearance about soft glossy fur of the finest kind, which is very striking, and which has caused it to be valued as an article of ornament alone. It may be questioned whether the ladies who roll along in their carriages wrapped in seal-skin and sables do not regard the beauty of their clothing quite as much as its property of warmth; and it is the combination of usefulness with a handsome appearance which makes them prize it so highly. The mandarin, however, wears the fur of the sea-otter—nearly the whole supply of which he monopolises—purely for the sake of ornament. The Blackfoot chief prizes the tiny ermine-skin as a garniture for his head, or a trimming for his fire-bag or his medicine-belt. The same fur is esteemed by Christian princes as an emblem of dignity and regal power. It was borne alone on the coats-of-arms of the ancient earls of Brittany; and in England, in the time of Edward II., none but members of the royal

family were permitted to wear it. I also, in my humble way, have a great fancy for furs. I have felt their value in the bitter cold of the far north, and admire them too for their rich and beautiful appearance.

A year or two ago, another Englishman and myself spent a winter in the wilds of the Hudson Bay Territories, the Rupert's Land of the missionaries and old geographers, and there I learnt a great deal about furs and fur-hunting. For these Territories, together with Russian America and Siberia, supply the whole world with furs of nearly every kind, the chinchilla of South America being the only important exception. Hence come sable (the fur of the marten) and a little ermine, although neither of these are quite equal in quality to the Russian varieties, and also the beaver, the mink, the lynx, the fisher, the otter, the black bear, the sea-otter, and the cross and silver foxes. The sea-otter and silver fox, although less known than sable and ermine, are the most valuable of all furs, a single skin of each being somtimes worth £40. The sea-otter is only found on the North Pacific coast, and has now become exceedingly scarce. The few which are taken are bought by the Russian merchants for the Chinese market. The fur is very close, and beautifully soft and velvety, like that of a mole, but longer, and in colour a rich brown slightly tinged with grey. For the softness,

smoothness, and closeness of its pile it is perhaps unequalled. The silver fox is found all through the forests of the northern part of the Hudson Bay Territories. The greatest number of their skins go to Russia, where they are esteemed the choicest of all furs, fit wear for grand-duchesses and princesses. The coat of the silver fox is not of a glistening white, like that of the Arctic fox, as might be imagined from the name, but is more nearly black. The fur is more valuable in proportion to the darkness of its colour, although it is never quite black even in the finest specimens, but a beautiful grey. The white hairs, which predominate, are tipped with black, and mixed with others of pure black. This admixture of pure white and black gives a peculiarly silvery or frosted appearance to the coat of this king of the furry tribe, which is more delicate in proportion to the amount of black it contains, and with the softness and fineness of the hair would cause its rich quality to be recognised at once by the most superficial observer.

I have described the true silver fox only, which seems very distinct from the common red fox, and yet foxes of every variety of colour between these extremes are found. These are called cross foxes, from their being marked along the back by a band of silver grey, with another over the shoulders, at right angles, in the shape of a cross, like the stripe of a donkey. The stripes may be slight, and the

fox closely resemble the red one, or broad and distinct, so as to occupy the principal part of the skin, when it more nearly approaches the silver fox both in appearance and value. There are two other distinctions between the red, the cross, and the silver fox—that of size, and the localities which they inhabit. The red fox is much larger than his English representative, which, however, he closely resembles in other respects. He frequents the prairies and the park-like country which lies between the great plains to the south of Rupert's Land and the vast forests of the north. The silver fox is much smaller than the red one, and is found only in the thick woods or their immediate neighbourhood. The cross foxes vary in size as in colour, and frequent the country between the two extremes, being found on the edge of the woods and the borders of the plains also—those nearest the habitat of the red fox of the prairies being larger and lighter-coloured, those of the woods where dwells the silver fox darker and smaller. At the close of autumn, when the animals have donned their winter coats, and fur is in full season, every Indian and half-breed in this wooded country turns trapper; for it is their time of harvest, and on their success in obtaining skins with which to trade depend their supplies of ammunition and all comforts and luxuries, such as tea, tobacco, and blankets. I determined to follow the fashion of the

country, and invade the home of the sable and the silver fox, gathering what spoils I could for my fair relations and friends at home; and if I caught a silver fox—*if*, I said to myself, I *should* have such luck, for a fox is not easily circumvented—well, vulpicide is a sin in Leicestershire, but a virtue in Rupert's Land; and there was one, I thought, who deserved the prize, and would, I half believed, be proud to wear a gift of mine, which, if all went well, might perhaps recall how long days of weary absence had been succeeded by a happier time.

Established, then, in a little log-hut, with my friend and two half-breeds, on the southern border of the great forests of the north of Rupert's Land, I commenced my journeys into the woods. As my companion and instructor in the art of trapping, I took one of the men we had engaged, a French-Canadian half-breed, by name Louis la Ronde, or *De* la Ronde, as he delighted to sign his name—a noted hunter of the fur animals. By this time it was the beginning of November. The ground was covered with a slight coating of snow, and the cold very considerable, although not to be compared in severity with that which we afterwards experienced in mid-winter. The only provisions we took with us on our expeditions consisted of a little dried meat or pemmican, which we rolled up in a couple of blankets, together with a few steel traps, and slung the pack thus made upon our backs. A

small axe and a gun apiece completed our equipment, and we started into the woods for an excursion of six or eight days, marching straight towards the north for thirty or forty miles. We set traps at intervals along the route wherever we observed the tracks of the animals we sought, returning home again when our provisions were exhausted. At night we slept in the open air, clearing away the snow, and strewing a few pine branches on the bare ground for a bed, on which we lay wrapped in our blankets, with a huge fire of great dry trunks blazing at our feet. Our stock of food was frequently finished long before we regained the hut, and we were compelled to eat the bodies of the animals which we killed for their skins. The marten, fisher, and mink, which were our principal objects of pursuit at first, are all of the pole-cat tribe, and as the taste of their flesh exactly corresponds with the odour of their bodies—and this is very similar to the disgusting smell of the ferret—it may be imagined that sharp-set appetites were needed to enable us to face such nauseous fare. These we never lacked, however, for hard work and severe cold begot the most savage hunger; and we grumbled not at our condition, for we were in robust health, and I enjoyed keenly the excitement of the novel pursuit, which La Ronde followed with the utmost ardour. At first we contented ourselves with the capture of the less important animals I

have mentioned, although the marten, or sable, and the fisher, whose skins are worth about a guinea apiece, can hardly be deemed very humble game. They were tolerably plentiful, and entered readily into the traps—simple wooden contrivances on the plan of a figure-of-4 trap called a "deadfall." This is a small enclosure of short palisades covered in at the top, an opening being left at one end. Above the entrance a heavy log is propped up, so arranged that when an animal seizes the bait the log falls upon it and crushes it to death. Occasionally we shot a frozen-out otter travelling along the banks of a stream, or caught musk-rats by placing steel traps in their winter huts on the ice-bound lakes, or snared a lynx with a noose of deer-skin, which that simple animal never attempted to gnaw through, but remained half-strangled and helpless until we arrived to despatch him. Our success with the wooden traps was seriously interfered with by the depredations of the wolverine and the ermine. The latter merely devoured the baits, and sprang the traps without injury to himself—since his small size permitted him to enter the enclosure with his entire body safe from the fall of the fatal tree at the door. The former, however, gave us far more trouble, and inflicted far greater loss. He sometimes destroyed the whole of a long line of traps, frequently one hundred to one hundred and fifty in number, as often as they were rebuilt and re-

baited. His ravages inflict such loss upon the Indian hunters, that they have named him the Evil One. But in spite of these enemies we managed to amass a goodly store of furs, and I daily attained greater skill in my new calling. I had, however, made up my mind to have a silver fox if possible, and was eager to find an opportunity of securing the greatest prize of the fur-hunter. We met with several tracks, which were pronounced by La Ronde to be those of fine cross foxes. The only way in which the presence of animals can be ascertained in these wilds is by their footprints in the snow, which lies a field of virgin white, whereon these tell-tale marks are printed. The animals which make them are rarely seen, for they are so constantly hunted by the Indians, and associate the approach of man only with danger and pursuit, that they take alarm at the slighest sound, and immediately hide themselves from view. The so-called wild animals of civilised countries are accustomed to meet with men who are not intent on their destruction, and thus we see rabbits playing about in the fields, and even foxes forget in their six months' holiday the constant dangers of the hunting-season. But it is far different in the trapping-grounds of North America, where game must be tracked up before it can be found. The eye of the practised hunter reads without difficulty the signs left in the snow. He detects at once, with the most astonishing

accuracy, the species of animal which has passed, whether it had been frightened by his approach, the pace at which it was going, and how long before or how recently it had visited the place. At first sight it appears extremely difficult to the uninitiated to distinguish between the footprints of a fox and those of a small wolf, or a dog of similar size. But to the Indian or half-breed this is simple enough. The dog blunders along through the snow with low action of his legs, and scrapes the surface with his toes as he lifts them forward in his stride, thus leaving a broad groove in front of the footprint, and perhaps the mark of his tail carelessly dragging behind him. The little wolf, also, generally catches the point of the toe, but less roughly than the dog, leaving merely a slight scratch on the surface. But the dainty fox, stepping with airy tread and high clean action, clears the snow perfectly in his stride, however deep it may be, and leaves no mark whatever, except the seal of his foot sharply lined and clearly impressed upon the white carpet. To distinguish the footprint of a silver fox from that of a cross fox or a red one is more difficult. The only difference between them is in size, and this is so slight that it requires much experience to attain any certainty in detecting it.

Now although, as I have said, I was exceedingly anxious to attempt the capture of the prize I coveted

so much immediately, my eagerness was repressed by La Ronde, who argued that it was useless to set any trap for a fox until the frost became more severe, whereby the hunger of our destined prey would become more keen, and the scent of the human fingers which had touched the bait would be destroyed by the intense cold. The fox is the most sagacious and wary of all the fur animals except the wolverine, and is never taken in a dead-fall. A steel trap or poisoned bait are the only devices which have any chance of success with such a knowing fellow. And in setting these it is necessary to obliterate all traces of man's presence by smoothing the snow evenly around for some distance; and then in course of time the action of the wind, or a fresh fall of snow, destroys every footmark, and the bait lies buried as if it had fallen from the skies. The position of the bait is marked by a twig or long stalk of grass planted in the snow above it, which is displaced by the fox if he digs out the seductive morsel. When the trapper visits his baits, he is careful not to approach them, but contents himself with observing from a distance whether the significant stem stands undisturbed or not. When a steel trap is set, moreover, it requires to be watched daily; for if a fox be caught, it is by the fore-leg as he cautiously scrapes away the snow to get at the bait beneath, and since the trap is merely attached by a chain to a heavy log, he

marches off, dragging them away with him, until he is brought up by its becoming entangled amongst the fallen trees and underwood which cover the ground in the primeval forests. When the animal discovers that he is unable to proceed any farther, he commences without any hesitation to amputate the imprisoned limb, and, thus freed from the clog, escapes on three legs far out of the reach of the hunter unless he be quickly followed up.

Soon after the commencement of winter the numerous lakes which occur in the forest were firmly frozen over, so that we were able to traverse them as if they had been dry land. These we frequently sought on our excursions, since we were able to march more easily over the smooth ice than if we kept to the woods, where our progress was impeded by the prostrate trunks which lie undisturbed where they have fallen for ages—timber of every size, in every stage of growth and decay, entangled in every possible combination. On one of the largest of these lakes, prettily situated in the centre of a cluster of low hills covered with birches and aspens and tall slender firs, whose branches, white with hoar-frost and snow-wreaths, sparkled in the bright sunlight as if set in diamonds and silver, I stopped an instant to admire the strange beauty of the scene; I forgot all about furs and traps for the moment, but my attention was speedily recalled to the subject by La Ronde, who marched ahead of

me. Pointing to a neat little footprint impressed distinct and clear, without blur or fault, he remarked, with some excitement, "Un beau reynard, Monsieur; un beau—un noir—noir!" There was no doubt about it. The delicate impress of the dainty foot told us as plainly as if we had seen the owner of it himself, that we had found on this wild lake of the woods the haunt of a true silver fox of the finest kind. I was highly delighted at the discovery of the object I had so constantly sought, and I resolved to exert all my ingenuity to circumvent this rare animal, whose caution and sagacity were on a par with his extreme beauty and value. "Mais tout à l'heure, Monsieur," said La Ronde; for the weather was not yet severe enough to afford us a fair prospect of succeeding, and we decided to await a more favourable opportunity. Before we were able to carry out our plans, however, the stock of provisions at headquarters fell short, and in order to escape absolute starvation it was imperatively necessary to secure a fresh supply as soon as possible. The only place where the things we required could be obtained was the Red River Settlement, above six hundred miles distant, the intervening country a trackless wild, and the snow already two feet deep on the ground. But there was no choice, and La Ronde and the other half-breed cheerfully tied on their snow-shoes and set out on their long and harassing journey. I and

my fellow-adventurer were thus left entirely alone, a few Indians being our only society. I secured the services of a little Indian boy, who accompanied me on my trapping excursions, which I forthwith resumed. My new juvenile companion, Misquapamayoo, or "The thing one catches a glimpse of"—for this was his name and its meaning in the Cree language—proved one of the jolliest, merriest little fellows possible, and as active and clever as he was agreeable. His large black eyes, set in a full round face, twinkled with fun, and he would lie down and hold his sides with laughter at my very poorest jokes with most gratifying appreciation. He possessed a strong sense of the ridiculous, and a very slight mistake or failure was quite sufficient to rouse his mirth. As I knew but little of the Cree language, and the boy nothing of English, puzzles and blunders were frequent. I displayed, moreover, on some points, an ignorance of woodcraft which to an Indian seemed very absurd, and Misquapamayoo spent a very merry time on our first excursion together. But although he was thus lively and laughter-loving when the occasion permitted it, such as in camp or in the hut, the moment he slung on his pack and placed his gun on his shoulder to pilot us through the woods his manner changed completely. He seemed to pass from a child of thirteen to a man on the instant. The Indian hunter never lightens the tedium of the way

by song or whistle, but walks stealthily along without word or sound, lest he should disturb the game for which he is unceasingly on the watch. So the little Misquapamayoo marched on in front of me, dignified, grave, and silent, as became an Indian hunter, his keen restless eyes scanning every mark in the snow, and noting every broken twig or displaced leaf with as clear an understanding of their significance as La Ronde himself.

The frost had continued to increase in severity for several weeks after the departure of the men; the thermometer went down from 20° to 30° below zero, the lakes were frozen over to the thickness of several feet, and the snow accumulated on the ground until it was nearly a yard in depth. In order to obtain water we were compelled to melt ice or snow, which caused tea-making to be a very slow process, and a washing-day a vast deal more serious and tedious business than in this country. As we walked along the moisture of our breath froze in passing through our beards, and formed great masses of ice, often the size of a man's fist, on our lips and chins. The oil froze in our pipes, which required to be thawed before we could smoke them. The bare hand laid upon iron stuck to it as if glued, from the instantaneous freezing of its moisture. Although I wore four flannel shirts, with leather shirt and buffalo-skin coat over all, had my feet swathed in bands of thick blanketing, and my

hands in enormous leather gloves lined with the same warm material, my cheeks, ears, and neck being protected by a curtain of fur, we could only keep warm, in open ground, unsheltered from the wind, by the most violent exercise. When resting under cover of the woods, we kept ourselves thawed by the aid of a log fire piled up until we had a great hot wall of blazing trees in front of us. The snow was light and powdery, and did not melt beneath the warmth of the foot, so that we walked dry-shod in our pervious moccasins; and although we often tumbled in our unwieldy snow-shoes over the fallen timber treacherously hidden under the deep snow, into which we soused head-first, we did not get wet, for the dry hard-frozen powder could be shaken off as if it were so much sawdust.

Surely, I thought, the time must have come for me to try for my prize. The nose of a fox even cannot scent danger in such cold, nor his habitual caution control the fierce hunger which it creates. We therefore turned our steps towards the haunt of the silver fox, and in two days reached the margin of the lake. I walked quickly on to the wide-stretching plain of ice, and looked eagerly round for the little footmarks I had by this time learned to know so well. There they were sure enough, freshly printed the night before, and my satisfaction was very great at the discovery that this rare fox still frequented the lonely lake. I had noticed,

wherever I had seen the track before, that it always traversed the lake in the same direction, diverging from time to time as the animal turned aside to look at one or other of the numerous houses of the musk-rats which dotted the frozen surface, the only objects which relieved the uniform pure whiteness of the bare expanse. These he visited in order to see whether the inmates were still unassailable in their ice-bound domes; but he invariably returned to the old course again. The fox was evidently in the habit of regularly visiting some point at the farther side of the lake, and I now carefully followed up the trail. As I neared the opposite shore, I observed a great variety of tracks of different animals converging towards the one I followed. There was the huge print of the lion-like foot and claws of the ubiquitous wolverine, placed two and two together, as he had passed in the hurry of his invariable gallop; the careless step of the little wolf, with its scratch of the toe in the light powdery snow; the soft cat-like tread of the lynx; the regular firmly sealed mark of the great marten or fisher; and the clear, sharply cut impress of the less hairy foot of the active cantering mink,—all tended to the same quarter, and it was plain that there was some great attraction which these smaller beasts of prey were seeking with one accord. The tracks became more and more numerous, until they were so blended together in one broad path that it

was impossible to distinguish one from the other, as if a whole army of animals had trooped along in a body. The trees on the verge of the woods which surrounded the lake were here tenanted by a flock of carrion crows, which at times flew lazily about, and then settled again on the branches, hoarsely croaking, while the little blue and white magpies were fluttering and hopping about in a state of great excitement. Within a few yards of the shore the snow was beaten down for a considerable space into a broad road by the multitude of feet, and through the trees we saw other well-frequented paths coming in from the opposite direction. Where the ice and land met, I observed, to my surprise, a little pool of open water, in which numberless small white objects seemed in constant motion, glistening in the sunshine. On a nearer view, I saw that this was owing to the presence of myriads of small fish, varying in size from that of a minnow to a gudgeon. They were so closely packed together that they could with difficulty move one on the other, and, constantly struggling to get to the surface, appeared like one moving mass of bodies. I bared my arm and plunged it in up to the shoulder, as into a mess of thick stirabout, and found the same dense collection of fish, as far as I could reach with my hand, in every part of the pool. A clear spring bubbled up at one corner; and after much puzzling over this curious circumstance, I came to the conclusion that

the only reasonable explanation of it was, that the lake, being shallow, had frozen to the bottom except in this single place, whither the fish had been gradually driven as the ice gained ground; and the constantly flowing fountain and the moving bodies preventing the formation of ice, fish had thus collected in such countless shoals. This was the secret of the concourse of animals which flocked nightly to the spot, to feast, in the season of scarcity, on the Lenten fare. I now turned back, and in the middle of the lake, near the nocturnal walk of the silver fox, away from the tracks of the rest of the four-footed supper-party, set a steel trap, temptingly baited with a piece of raw buffalo-meat, and covered over carefully with snow, its position being marked in the approved manner by a reed-stalk planted upright above it. Time after time I visited my trap, and found that the fox had not failed to discover that something good to eat was hidden there, but he resolutely abstained from any attempt to appropriate it. From the footmarks which circled round and round it at a respectful distance, I interpreted his great desire to enter in and partake, and the extreme caution which prevented him from yielding to his inclination. At length the weather became still more severe—the north wind blew strongly, with scathing blast, and the thermometer went down to 36° below zero. Again I visited the lake, hoping that the extreme cold might have sharpened the

fox's hunger and destroyed all human taint which might have defiled the bait; but the tell-tale straw still stood erect, and I found that the wary silver fox had still wandered longingly round and round it without yielding to the fatal temptation. I was now almost in despair of ever outwitting so cautious a quarry. I had a last resource, however, which I resolved to adopt. I had heard from La Ronde that a fox could detect the presence of a steel trap by his keen sense of smell, or some inexplicable instinct, and I thereupon removed the one that had rested uselessly hidden for so long, and substituted for it a most appetising piece of meat, in the centre of which a small quantity of strychnine was enclosed. The bait being frozen as hard as a piece of stone, and strychnine too being completely inodorous, it seemed impossible that my discriminating acquaintance—for I may call him an acquaintance, since I knew his form and habits so well, although I had never seen him—should detect anything wrong in the savoury morsel offered for his acceptance. I buried it in the snow, and smoothed the surface as carefully as before, planting a significant straw above it, which was visible for a considerable distance in the pure white expanse. The snow fell fast as we finished our task, and with the aid of the north wind, which was now blowing fiercely, must soon have obliterated all traces of our visit. The blast seemed to grow colder and colder

as we recrossed the lake, so that before we gained the shelter of the forest my fur-protected ears tingled with pain, my bare cheeks and ice-covered lips and chin ached again, and my benumbed fingers could with difficulty retain their grasp of my gun. The tall fir-trees groaned and creaked as they bent and recoiled under the pressure of the increasing wind, and these mournful sounds, together with the explosions of the trunks cracking and splintering from the intense frost, resounded through the desolate woods. Not a sign of life greeted us; for the rabbit was cowering in his haunt under the fallen timber; the bear hugged himself more closely in his wintery cave as he heard the roaring of the storm without; the willow-grouse sheltered with ruffled feathers, hidden in the thick underwood; and even the lively squirrel, who seldom found it too cold to come out, resolutely remained in his warm hole, and refused to cheer us with his pleasant chatter. The only animal which still went abroad was a rare marten or fisher, roaming about to appease his sharpened hunger; but they passed within a yard of the traps, regardless of attractions usually irresistible, not because they had any new fear of treachery, but because scent was destroyed, and they could not perceive the proximity of the bait. The masses of snow collected on the broad flat branches of the fir-trees, dislodged by the wind, showered down upon our heads; dead twigs and

branches, snapped off by the violent air, pelted us; and every now and then some huge dead and withered tree, which, though dry and half-rotten, had long withstood the assaults of time and wild weather, overcome at last by the tempest, came thundering down with a mighty crash close by, and threatened to crush us in its fall. The snowfall from the skies, made denser by the masses which tumbled from the trees, and increased yet more by the clouds whirled up from the ground by the circling currents, blinded us so that we stumbled and fell continually over the fallen timber which beset the way, and wearied us with frequent shocks. The path which we had made on our outward journey, broadly and deeply ploughed though it was with snow-shoes, became confused and uncertain, and at length completely drifted over and undistinguishable from the rest of the snow-covered ground, whose uniformity was only varied by the slight difference in the patches of shrubs or the arrangement of trees. To retrace our steps was our only means of finding the way back, since the sun was hidden, and we had no other compass by which to steer. Pelted by branches, buffeted by the wind, blinded by the driving clouds of snow, benumbed by the cold, and bewildered by the disturbance of our senses, the obliteration of the track, and the absence of the guiding sun, even the brave little Misquapamayoo, who led the way, was compelled to exclaim at last,

"Osharm aimen," —"It is too hard,"—and suggest that we should camp for the night, trusting to have clearer weather to-morrow. I was only too glad to agree to a course which I had been too proud to propose to the boy, and we thankfully threw off our packs in a sheltered hollow, protected from the hostile north by thickly-growing trees and underwood, and with a good supply of dry trunks hard by. It was with great difficulty that we lighted a fire, for flint and steel fell repeatedly from our palsied fingers, incapable of feeling them, and almost powerless to grasp them; but in spite of many fruitless attempts we persevered, knowing well that failure meant death. The welcome sparks struck by our shaking hands at last caught the ready tinder, and a wisp of dry grass and birch-bark was fanned into flame by spasmodic puffs from our cold-stricken lips, as we knelt side by side eager and intent over the hopeful glow. Chips of resinous pine fed the tiny fire, on which we proceeded cautiously to place a few dry branches, and then, as the blaze grew stronger, added larger and larger boughs, until with great dead trunks of trees we made a huge bonfire, from which we drew warmth and life. When we had somewhat recovered, we diligently melted snow in our kettle, and before long one of the most grateful cups, or rather mugs, of tea which I ever drank, restored me to a contented frame of mind; then to lie down on a bed of springy pine-boughs seemed

to complete my happiness for the moment. Peace and rest lasted only for a short time, however. We had but three blankets between us, and one of them we spread on our evergreen couch to lie upon; and though the boy and I clung together, full clothed as we were, covered by the other two, with our feet close to the roaring fire, the relentless wind found us out, and pierced through the pervious coverlets as if they had been gauze. The tired boy slept on, but I, less hardy, soon trembled and shook with cold, and finding sleep impossible, crept away from my companion and cowered over the fire, nodding as I sat in the fast-falling snow. From time to time I awoke from my doze, with aching limbs, as the fire waxed low, and jumped up to heap on fresh logs, and then resumed my weary watch. The dark and stormy night seemed prolonged to twice the usual number of hours, for I could but guess the time as I had no watch, and the stars were not visible in the clouded heavens. Daybreak—"keekseep," as it is poetically named by the Indians, or "the time when the birds begin to chirp"—appeared at last, the wind went down, and before long the sun rose in a clear sky. I woke Misquapamayoo, and after a hasty breakfast we commenced to search for the lost track, which we eventually succeeded in discovering, and reached the hut the following evening. But my return to seek the silver fox was delayed by more urgent and important business. The Indi-

ans around us were starving, and our scanty reserve of pemmican was soon exhausted in their relief.

The men we had sent for provisions could not possibly accomplish their hard journey of twelve hundred miles through the snow, with heavy-loaded sledges, in less than three months, and not one had yet elapsed since their departure. It was imperatively necessary to obtain meat at once, and we were obliged to give up trapping for furs for the time, and take to hunting for our subsistence. Although moose were to be found in the neighbouring woods, our need was so urgent and immediate we dared not trust to the chance of killing them; for of all animals the moose is the most wary, and can only be approached by the most skilful hunter, except at certain seasons, under peculiarly favourable circumstances. We turned our faces, therefore, towards the great plains, about a hundred miles away, on the skirts of which, where prairie and woodland meet and form a beautiful park-like country, we hoped to find bands of buffalo. These animals, contrary to the usual practice, migrate northward in the winter, leaving the open prairie of the south for the protecting woods and sheltered valleys of the mixed country, and even at times penetrating far into the great forest itself. It is not necessary to relate how we sought, with much toil and suffering, the game which could save us from starvation. Buffalo were exceedingly scarce,

having been driven southwards by the Indians; but we managed to secure a few of the stragglers left behind by the main body. Famished Indians, less fortunate than us, with their patient squaws and gaunt and hungry children, crowded to us, looking with longing eyes at the meat which they were too proud to ask for, although they had eaten but little for weeks, and fasted totally for several days. Thin skeleton dogs, so wonderfully thin that it seemed hardly possible for life to remain in the framework of skin and bone, or motion be consistent with such an absence of muscle, came to feast on the offal; and packs of hungry wolves hovered round us, waiting to pick the abandoned carcasses, serenading us with a morning and evening chorus of dismal howls.

When we returned to the hut, the supply of food we brought with us was speedily consumed by the help of voracious Indian friends, and again we had to renew our hunt for provisions. After a time we stored up sufficient to allow of our devoting a week to our traps again. The weather had become even colder than before—the thermometer went down to $-38°$; and it was hardly possible to induce the Indians to leave their lodges and face the bitter, benumbing, untempered air of the open ground. My faithful little ally, Misquapamayoo, however, cheerfully responded to my invitation to visit the poisoned bait, and we started on our way to the forest lake. The frost abated slightly, the sky was

clear, and the sun shone brightly during the short day, although its rays yielded no perceptible warmth, and we travelled along cheerily. The animals were abroad again, and the woods less silent and deserted than in the terrible storm which battered us so unmercifully on our return from the former expedition. That arch-burglar, the wolverine, had broken into all the marten-traps, and either devoured the baits, or, where an animal had been caught, had abstracted it, torn it to pieces, and half eaten it, and hid the scanty remains in the bushes. We found little but the tails of the victims, and a few scattered tufts of the fur which I had destined for enduring service. Yet as the severity of the cold had been sufficient to drive the wolverine to eat martens, which he devours only under dire extremity—for the more savoury baits are what he generally contents himself with, although he wantonly destroys in his malice the animals which he finds in the traps—I had good hopes that the same urgent hunger might overcome the scrupulous caution of the fox, and betray him into the indiscretion of tasting the deadly morsel I had prepared for him. Three days brought us to the margin of the lake, and I eagerly scanned the broad expanse for the dark object I fondly believed I might see lying there, conspicuous in its contrast to the pure white plain of ice. As we began to draw near the centre of the lake, I detected a black spot about the very

point where I had placed the snare. It was, however, more undefined and irregular than it would have appeared if merely the body of the fox, and I hastened on, troubled with grievous doubts whether I had succeeded after all. As I drew near, my misgivings increased; the one black spot which I had seen at first appeared less and less like the form of an animal, an indistinct conglomeration of dark patches, some of which seemed to be moving. I ran quickly to the place, eager to solve the mystery, half hoping I might have killed a whole family of black foxes, forgetting in my excitement that I had set but a single bait. I could see that the signal straw was down, and the snow scratched up where it had been planted; a pair of carrion crows flapped up from the dead body with an angry croak, and I found that it was indeed a matchless silver fox—"un beau reynard, noir, noir," as La Ronde had prophesied—not whole and perfect, but a half-eaten and mangled carcass. The eyes were picked out, the beautiful coat torn to pieces, and fragments of the rich grey fur lying scattered around. The ill-omened birds, which had gathered together to feast on the shoals of fish hemmed in by the ice in the little pool at the end of the lake, had served me an evil turn. My return had been too long delayed; the pool had become frozen by the extreme cold, and the ruthless fish-eaters had appeased their hunger by the costly meal which the body of my

victim had supplied them. My disappointment and chagrin were unbounded at the provoking result of all the ingenuity and toil with which I had laboured to secure the great prize—nay, my devices had better have failed altogether to deceive the ill-fated animal, and I felt unfeigned regret at the useless destruction of the dainty fox. The sympathising Misquapamayoo, who had entered into my plans with all the ardour of an Indian hunter, joined heartily with me in anathematising the vile birds to whose unscrupulous appetites we owed our loss. My only chance of obtaining the skin of a silver fox was gone for the season, and we plodded our way home to the hut disgusted and disconsolate.

NARRATIVE OF PRINCE CHARLIE'S ESCAPE:

BY ONE OF HIS COMPANIONS.

[EDINBURGH, *September* 9, 1873.

SIR,—The Manuscript narrative of the escape of Prince Charles Stuart, by John Macdonald, one of his companions, of which a copy follows, is the property of the Misses Macdonald of Dalilea, granddaughters of the author, and was intrusted to me by them. I have transcribed the MS. carefully, *verbatim et literatim*, and have merely added an introduction and conclusion, partly from information I already possessed, and partly from that furnished to me by the family. Of the authenticity of the MS. itself I have not the shadow of a doubt. The appearance of the original MS., which was in my hands for some time, carries truth in its face, and I know that it has been in the possession of the author's descendants from his death to the present time, having been always prized by them as an interesting family relic.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

GEORGE SKENE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "BLACKWOOD."]

AMID the wildest scenery of the West Highlands, and just on the boundary-line that separates the counties of Argyll and Inverness, lies the sequestered sheet of water known as Loch Shiel. Even in that land of lakes and rocky mountains, it would be difficult to find a more striking landscape than is afforded by that lonely lake. Hemmed in, throughout the most part of its extent, by high mountains of the most picturesque forms, the opposite heights approach so near, that although the lake at their foot is upwards of twenty-six miles in length, it never attains even to one mile in breadth. This wild glen was in former days, and indeed still is, the home of a family of the name of Macdonald, who possessed a considerable extent of property in the neighbourhood, comprising Dalilea and Glenaladale on the lake shore, Glenfinnan at its head, and the farm of Borradale on the shore of Loch-nan-Ua. These different parts of the property were frequently occupied by members of the family, as circumstances might render convenient, and, as was usual in other Highland families, the different occupants were then distinguished by the names of their residences. A green island in the lake, known as St Finian's Isle, has been the burial-place of the race since they first settled there, and is covered with the memorials of the dead. Besides the natural beauty of its scenery—in which this estate is hardly equalled,

certainly not excelled, by any other in the Highlands—an interest of a different kind attaches to it, from the fact that both the commencement and the close of the romantic expedition of Prince Charles Edward Stuart took place within its bounds. At the farm of Borradale, that daring adventurer first set foot on Scottish ground; in Glenfinnan he raised his standard and assembled the clans who took arms for the restoration of their ancient royal line; and at Borradale, again, he succeeded in baffling his enemies, and embarking on board of the French man-of-war that carried him from the country.

On the outbreak of the insurrection of 1745, the ClanRonald, to whom the Macdonalds of Loch Shiel belonged, took an active part on behalf of the House of Stuart, bearing their full share of all the difficulties and dangers of that unfortunate campaign. A hundred and twenty-seven years have elapsed since the fatal battle of Culloden terminated the last attempt of the Highlanders to place their ancient royal House on the British throne. The chief incidents of the expedition of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and of his own romantic adventures, after the final dispersion of his adherents, are known to every reader of our history, and are generally regarded as no more than an interesting episode in our national annals, and a remarkable instance of the devoted affection

of a primitive people to the descendant of their ancient kings. In the Highlands, however, the recollection of the "'45" is something very different from this. Even to this day, every incident in the personal history of those devoted men who strove to cut a path for their Prince to the British throne is remembered, and related by their descendants as an honour to the family, never to be forgotten. Every relic, even remotely connected with "Bonnie Prince Charlie," is preserved as a cherished heirloom by its fortunate possessor. In the immediate neighbourhood of Loch Shiel, at the foot of Glenfinnan, a monument, surmounted by a statue of the Young Adventurer, has been erected by Mr Macdonald of Glenaladale. It occupies the exact spot where Charles Edward unfurled his banner on August 19, 1745. In this neighbourhood also there was brought to light, a few years ago, a most interesting memorial of the unfortunate Prince's wanderings, after the final destruction of his hopes of success in his expedition on the field of Culloden. As will be seen hereafter, the Prince was for some time in hiding in the neighbourhood of Loch Shiel, and it has been remembered ever since that time that he and those with him found it expedient to cross the loch, in order to proceed to new quarters. The Argyll militia, however, were then patrolling all round the loch, and had destroyed all the boats, in order to prevent the

fugitive party from crossing. In these circumstances, the party having found a large oak-tree in a favourable position, felled it, and hollowed the trunk, partly with their axes and partly by fire, as many savage tribes are in the habit of doing, till they had produced a rude imitation of a canoe, of the kind known in America as a *dug-out.* This primitive boat they then conveyed at midnight to the lake shore; and being afraid to use oars, lest the sound should betray them to their watchful enemies, they laid the Prince at full length in the boat, and entering the water themselves, swam across the loch, dragging the boat after them. Having thus effected the desired passage, they sank the boat, at a place called Camus Blain, nearly opposite St Finian's Isle. Here the boat lay under water for a hundred and nine years, till 1855, when a gamekeeper of Mr Hope Scott's, known in the neighbourhood as Black John, brought it again to light. It is now in the possession of Colonel Robertson Ross of Glen Moidart. The account of its construction above given was derived from the grandson of the man who made it, and who is still alive, or at least was recently so. It is difficult to conceive a more interesting memorial of the dangers and difficulties to which the fugitive Prince was exposed than is afforded by this old canoe.

At the time when Charles Edward landed at Borradale, that farm was held by a gentleman

named Angus Macdonald; whilst that part of the property of the family which was situated on the shore of Loch Shiel was held by his nephew, generally known as Macdonald of Glenaladale. Macdonald of Borradale had two sons, Ronald and John. Of these, the younger, John Macdonald, having shown a greater taste for learning than was then common in the Highlands, had been sent for his education to the then famous Scottish College at Ratisbon. On the outbreak of the insurrection, young John left the college and hurried home. He joined the Highland army at Perth, serving along with his cousin Glenaladale, who was a major in the ClanRonald regiment, and who had proclaimed Prince Charles Edward at Perth. John Macdonald was noted in the army for his eminently handsome figure, and for his striking resemblance to the Prince himself—a resemblance the effect of which was enhanced by the foreign air and accent he had contracted at Ratisbon, and which was so strong that the young Highlander was frequently mistaken for the Prince himself.

Through the whole of the romantic campaign which followed, John Macdonald bore his full share; and on the march to the fatal field of Culloden he was one of those to whom the Catholic priest accompanying the army administered the sacrament, in anticipation of the bloody conflict which all knew to be inevitable. On that fatal day to the hopes of

the Stuarts, his cousin Glenaladale received three severe wounds, but John himself escaped unhurt; and as soon as he found it in his power, he joined the fugitive Prince, whom he accompanied through the greater part of his wanderings, and was finally only prevented from following his master to France by a severe attack of fever. On parting with him, however, the Prince gave him his gold-headed cane as a remembrance and acknowledgment of his devoted loyalty, telling him at the same time that it was the only valuable property he had left. Of this cherished relic the family were afterwards deprived by an unfortunate accident, to their great and lasting regret. After the final escape of Prince Charles Edward, and the restoration of peace to the Highlands, John Macdonald occupied himself in writing memoirs of different parts of the campaign in which he had borne so active a part,—a task for which his German education rendered him peculiarly well qualified. Of his MSS. some were sent by himself to Home the historian, who had applied to him for information; another was given by him to his relative, Sir John M'Gregor Murray, and cannot now be found; but one remained in the possession of his descendants, by whose kind permission it has now been printed *verbatim et literatim*. It is a curious and most interesting document. Of its authenticity, that it really is what it professes to be—a narrative by an actual companion of Prince

Charles of what he himself saw and experienced during that wonderful escape—there cannot be a shadow of doubt. Independent of the fact that it has never been out of the hands of the author's family, the very paper and ink on and in which it is written refer it at once to the middle of the last century as the date of its composition. The author speaks of himself frequently in the first person; and the quaint and often ungrammatical style and irregular spelling are exactly what was to be expected from John Macdonald, a man of considerable education, but one whose native tongue was Gaelic, and who in writing English was in fact using what was to him a foreign language. Besides, the simple and unaffected manner in which the incidents are narrated bears unmistakable evidence that he was merely recording what he himself remembered, without any thought of its ever becoming public.

A TRUE AND REAL STATE OF PRINCE CHARLES STUART'S MIRACULOUS ESCAPE AFTER THE BATLE OF CULLODDEN.

When the Prince at the batle of Cullodden perceived and that the horse he rod was wounded, and any stand he and his smal force could make was needless, he made off, accompanied by two Irishmen, Mr Sullivan and O'Niel, his aid de camp,

and few more, and took litle or no rest till they arrived at Glenbiestle in Arasaig, which is a pendicle belonging to the ffarm of Borradil. Being the place he first landed in the continent at his arrival, he rested there three nights before a sufficient boat, belonging to John M'Donald, son to Old Borradil, was procured to transport him to the long Island of Uist, in view to get some vessel at Stornway to carrie him to France, and for that purpose send the Mr Sullivan, his Aid du camp, to Stornway where he found one, but would not wait the Princes coming, therefore made off with himself, and landed safe in France.

Being in this maner disappointed, he thought proper to risk his person in the hands of Clanranald's people in South Uist, who gave him all the aid and assistance in their power, till such time the country was surrounded by his enemies; then clearly perceiveing the impossibility of escaping, he was advised to go to Clanranold house, in Benbecula, twenty five miles from the place he then was at, and endeavour to ferrie to the Isle of Sky, accompanied by the then Miss Flory M'Donald; and he, under the name of Miss Bety Burk, and her servant-maid, effected there escape, and arrived safe at Kingsbrough, in Troterness, parte of Lord M'Donald's estate. There Miss Flory M'Donald parted with him.

After some rest there, he proceeded to M'Leod

Rasa's familie, where he was received with the greatest kindness and friendship. After an night's rest there, he was sent under the care of Malcom M'Leod to the care of one John M'Kinon, alias John M'Rorie vic Lachlan in M'Kinon's estate, who next night conveyed him to the Laird of Moror's ffarm in the mainland, and he beged of Moror to send a sure guide with him to his faithfull old Landlord (this is what he allways termed my father) to Borradil; after his arrival there, the old Gentleman and his two sons, Ronald and I, received him with all the marks of friendship and Respect, and gave our word of honour we would use our utermost to save him in spite of all his enemies; and that we depended on Divine Providence that he would grant him and us health, strenght, and vigour to endure all the fatigue and hardship necessary for that purpose.

As the Prince at all times entertained the greatest regard for Mr M'Donald's of Glenaladil's integrity and capacity in aideing him as far as in his power, he ordered me to goe directly to him and acquaint him of his present situation, and hoped he would meet him and his present smal Company in the woods of Borradil next night.

After Glenaladil considered the message, he looked upon it exceeding hard to depart from his wife and five prety weak children, and his great stock of catle were before then taken awy by the

enmie; and haveing received three bad wounds at Cullodden, of which one of them was not then fully cured; notwithstanding these consideration he despised them, and thought it his duty to grant all the aid and assistance in his power to save a poor distressed Prince, notwithstanding of the great temptation of thyrty thousand pound stel promised by government to any that should deliver him up. Though Glenaladil and his old uncle Borradil, with his children, were in the greatesst distress for want of any support at the time, two nights thereafter he appeared at the place appointed with the above party. They proceeded next morning to M'Leod's Cove, upon a high precipes in the woods of Borradil, where they all deliberated what steps they woud take for there safety; few days after they visibly saw the whole coast surrounded by ships of war and tenders, as also the country by other military forces; then it was determined to use all efforts to depart out of the country, and began there march that very night, and came the lenth of Meoble, in the brays of Moror, where the old gentleman Borradil, and his soon Ronald, took there leave of him. The Prince then, accompanied only by Glenaladil, and his brother John and I, made streight for the brays of Glenfinen, which is parte of Glenaladil's estate. To our great surprise we found that place surrounded by three hundred of the Enemies. Then we came to a resolution to departe

the country for some time; and for that purpose sent an express to Donald Cameron, Glenpean, an aged gentleman, to meet us at Corrour, in the brays of Moror, which accordingly he did; we proceeded under night till sunrise next morning, to the top of a high mountain laying between Locharkeig and Lochmoror head, a camp of the enemy laying on each side of us, and two different camps of the military before us. In the course of three nights we passed by four camps and twenty-five patroles, and some so nigh us that we heard them frequently speaken, without any food farther than a smal slice of salt cheese, and aboundance of water.

The Thyrd morning we arrived near the top of a high mountain near Lochurn head, and found there a bit hollow ground, covered with long heather and brenches of jung birch bushes, where we all five of us lay down to rest, almost fainting for want of food; these severe tryals and circumstance drew many heavy sighs from his poor oppressed heart. I informed him then that I had a leepy of groaten meal wrapt up in a Nepkin in my pocket, which, when I produced, made alwast alteration in the counteinance of the whole of them. Come, come, says he, let us, in Gods name, have a share; never was people in more need. I expect soon to meet with plenty; so I divided the whole of it between us five; and they began to chat and crak heartily,

after our refreshment. We perceived fourty of the military, with a Captn as there commander, laying at the foot of the mountain, all this time; we saw them visibly all allong, durst not move till dark night, for fear of being discovered, proceeded then on our jurny to the brays of Glenshiel; the darkest night ever in my life I traveled; and arrived within a mile of it by sunrise, quite exhausted with hunger and fatigue.

Glenaladil and I were then sent to the village in view to procure some provisions, and bought a stone of cheese and a half stone of buter, as we could get nothing else; immediately returned back where we left him, Donald Cammeron, and Glenaladil's brother; words cannot express the quantity we consumed of the buter and cheese at the time, hough both kind exceeding salt. We met that day with one Donald M'Donald, a Glengary lad, with whome we agreed to be our guide farther North, as Donald Cameron returned, after his refreshment, to look after his own family; and we passed the whole day, which was exceeding hot, in the face of a mountain, above a river that run throu Glenshiel; were all seized with such a druth that we were all like to perish before sunset. He woud not allow any of us to move for water, though we might have bein provided within fourty yards to us, so cautious he was. At sunset we all went stagern to the river side, and drank water at no allowance; at

same time we saw a boy coming towards us at some distance; Glenaladil and I went to meet him. This was a son of the honest M'Kra that furnished us with provision in the morning, whom his father sent with five Scots pints of goat milk for our relief. Glenaladil, who had all our bank in a purse hingen before him, gave the boy four shillings stel; and in the hurry he was in, he happened to drap his purse on the ground till he got his plead kilted on him; then we bad fareweel to the boy, and returned in great hast to our smal partie, who partook liberaly of the milk, then proceeded an English mile before we missed the purse, in which was a keeping fourty Luisdors and five shillings in silver, which was all we hade to depend upon for our subsistence; it was determined that Glen and I was to return in search of our smal stock. Found the purse and five shillings in it, in the spot we left it, and none of the gold; proceeded then about midnight to the boy's father's house, who at the time was sound sleeping, called him out, fairly told him what happened; without a minute dela he returned to the house, got hold of a rop hinging there, and griped his son by the arm in great passion, and addressed him in the following words: you damnd scoundrel, this instant get these poor gentlemens mony, which I am certain is all they have to depend upon, or, by the heavens, I'll hing you to that very tree you see this moment. The Boy shivereing with fear went instantly for the

mony, which he had burried under ground about thyrty yards from his Fathers house.

During the time Glen and I spent about recovereing our smal fonds, the Prince and the two persons we left with him saw on the other side of Shiel river an officer to appearance, and three men with him; our smal party hidd themselves by favour of some Aron bushes at the river side, but they were convinced they coud not miss to meet Glenaladil and me, and the consequence would be squabble between us, though he positively refused to inform us of the danger of meeting them, by one of them that was alongst with him, the night being quite clear and a seren sky. Notwithstanding our passing by one an other on each side of the river, neither of use observed the other, nor can I account for it.

Then we proceeded all night throu these muirs till ten of the clock next morning, stopt then till the evening, without meeting with any particular accidents, excepting heareing some firing of guns not at a very greatest distance. The evening being very calm and warm, we greatly suffered by mitches, a species of litle creatures troublesome and numerous in the highlands; to preserve him from such troublesome guests, we wrapt him head and feet in his plead, and covered him with long heather that naturally grew about a bit hollow ground we laid him. After leaving him in that posture, he

uttered several heavy sighes and groands. We planted ourselves about the best we coud.

Finding, then, nothing by appearance to disturb us, or enemie in our way, we proceeded on, and next night arrived in the brays of Glenmorison, called the Corrichido; perceived three or four smal huts in the strath of the corry.

It was then determined upon by us to send Glenaladils brother down to them, to know what they were; and when he understood them to be all M'Donalds, and friends to the cause, except Patrick Grant Crosky, who was with them, and equaly a friend to the cause, he addressed one of them, called John M'Donald, *alias* M'Goule vic Icadui, to goe with a cogfull of milk to Mr M'Donald of Glenaladil and M'Donald of Greenfield, which letter was not there at same time. He instantly complyed with his request; but to his greatest surprise, at the distance of nine yards from us, he knew the Prince to be there, his head bein covered with a whit night cape, and an old Bonet above; at this unexpected sight, the poor man changed collours, and turned as red as blood, and addressed him in the following maner: I am sorry to see you in such a poor state, and hope if I live to see yet in a better condition, as I have seen you before at the head of your armie, upon the green of Glasgow; all I can doe is to continue faithfull to you while I live, and am willing to leave my wife

and children, and follow you wherever you incline goeing. After all this discurse was explained to the Prince, he said, takeing him cheerfully by the hand, As you are a M'Donald, whom I allways found faithfull to my cause, I shall admit you to my smal partie, and trust myself to you; and if ever it should be my lot to enjoy my own, you may depend upon of being equally rewarded. One thing I beg leave to observe to you, says he, there is one large stone in the strath of this corry near these huts you see; under that stone fourty men can accomodate themselves, and the best water in the highland runen throu it, and a large void heather bed in it already made for your reception. I have a three year old stote I may slaughter for provision, till such time you refresh yourself and your partie: there are four more neighbours and contrimen with me, as trusty as I, who can furnish us from the neighboureing countrys with such necessarys of life as can be expected in such distressed time.

His advise was so agreable that we all agreed to it without hesitation, and marched all with cheerfullness in our countenance to this new unexpected mansion, and found ourselves as comfortably lodged as we had been in a Royal pallace. The other four men mentioned above came in, and after a short disscourse, gave all chearfully the oath of allegiance, after which they brought the stote and

killed him; we then fested, and lived there plentifully for three days and nights, till we found ourselves in danger, by one whom they generaly styled the black Campbell, who had a party of militie within six miles to the place we was in; in that event we thought adviseable, to proceed to the Chissolms firr woods, where we and our whole partie spent near a month in pace and plentie. At the root of one large tree we build for the Prince, Glenaladil, and me, one tent of firr branches; at the other side of the tree another one of a larger seize. Two of our party was allways employed in provideing provisions; other two as outpost, enquireing for information. One honest tenant of the name of Chissolm, at the distance of a few miles from us, affoarded us with meal, buter, and cheese, and flesh weekly; neither did we want for Aquavitæ and tobaco, which comodity we all made use of. Nothing particular happened to us dureing our stay there.

But the Prince, anxious to find out Cameron of Lochiel, insisted upon our return towards that parte of his estate called Locharckeig. After a day or twos march, passed by the brays of Glenmorison, and arriveing to the brays of Glengarie about nightfall, the river Garie swelled to such a degree that we thought it unpassable. He still positeivly insisted upon giving it a tryal, which we did, and with the greatest difficulty, at the hasart

of our lifes, succeeded, the night being very dark. Rested near the bank of the river, waet and cold; next day passed throu Glenkeinie, and stopt at a broken shelhouse above Auchnasaul. We then were out of provisions. We sent two of our partie to repair a smal hut, wherein Lochiel scolked for some time, but observing a Deer at the end of the hut, shut both at him at once and killed him. One of them returned to us withe these most agreable news, where we all in a bodie steered our course, and employed the whole night in dressing for him and ourselves parte of the venison. Next day we sent for Mr Cameron of Cluns, and after passing two nights together, went to Torrvullen, opposite to Achnacarrie, Locheils principal place of residence once; killed a good highland cow; then Doctor Cameron and two french officer that landed some time before that in Pollew, in Rossyne, came to us, and Mr Cameron of Cluns; and after passing two nights there, they came to the followeing resolution: viz. that the Prince, accompanied by Doctor Cameron, Glenaladil, the two french officer, with a few more, should be conveyed to Locheil, and that I shoud return to the west coast; and if any frigats from France should appear for the purpose of carreing him, I to goe aboard till he could be found dead or alive, and that Glenaladil is the person to be employed for procureing him, the Glenmorison lads to return home with his promise,

If ever in his power he would make satisfaction for there losses and gratitue; so that very night I and John Glenaladil's brother made of for the west coast, and arrived there two days after, and found all left behind us in the greatest distress for want of all necessarys of life, or houses to shelter us from the inclemency of the weather.

A fourtnight thereafter, in September, two frigats appeared coming to the harbour at Borrodil under English colours. My father and brother Ranald and I immediately hade recourse to the muirs, to avoid being apprehended, and appointed one Donald M'Donald, in whom we hade great confidence, to wait there landing; and after nightfall, twelve french, with two officers at their hade, came to a smal hut we repaired some time before that for our own reception, as all our houses before that were all burned; the names of the officers were jung Sheridan and Capn ONeil, who at there arrival, enquired for us all, as they knew us weel formerly, and wished much to have some disscourse of consequence with us. Upon our being informed of this, we appeared, and after a long conversation, were convinced of there sincerity, and oblidged them to produce there credentials from France, before we revealed any parte of our secrets to them.

Next day I went aboord one of the frigats; and my brother, accompanied by the two french officer, went to Glenaladil to acquaint him of there errand.

After a night's rest, they were desired by Glenaladil to return to there ships, and that he would goe in serch of the person they wanted, which he accordingly did, and in eight days returned with him to Borrodil, where he first landed; and after refreshing himself weel, directly went aboord, and with a fair wind set sail next morning for France, and left us all in a worse state than he found us. Locheil, his Brother Doctor Cameron, John Roy Stuart, the two first mentioned french officers, with one hundred more persons of some distinction, accompanied him, and took there passage alongst with him; he then seemed to be in good spirit, and addressed himself to such as stayed behind to live in good hopes, and that he expected to see us soon with such a force as would enable him to reembures us for our losses and trouble; so that he ended as he began.

One material circumstance I cannot omit acquainting you of; that is, the battle fought between three British frigats and two french ones on the 3d of May after Cullodden batle. The french frigats landed the later end of April fourty thousand Louisdors, with some stand of arms and amunition, at the farm of Borradil; government being informed of the same, despatched three of there own frigats to the place mentioned, in order to capture the Frenchman; present Lord Howe, then captn of the *Grayhound* frigate, was commo-

dore of that smal squadron. They appeared in seight about four in the morning by the point of Ardmuchan, from whence they then visibly saw the french frigats; they were favoured with a favourable wind directly after them, and before the french hade time to rise there ankors, Captn Howe sliped in between the two french frigats, and gave a broadside to each of them with very great execution. The largest of the french frigats was disabled by breaken her ruder, and was oblidged to lay by till seven o'clock in the afternoon: and the smal french frigate, after several attempts of bourding her, fairly escaped till then, and when soon the largest of them repaired the damage, went to her assistance. Captn Howe haveing run out of ammunition, sheered of about nightfall, and the french persued them for a leage, when they thought adviseable to return to there former situation. At two o'clock next morning they steered away for Barra head with a fair wind; the Ducke of Perth, and several other gentlemen, such as Lord John Drumond, Lockard of Carnwath, and many more took there passage to France. The batle leasted twelve hours, and we found on our shores fefteen frenchmen dead, not one Englishman in the number, as they threew none overboard of them till they came the lenth of the point of Ardmurchan. After that the gold was by a partie conveyed to Lochaber, and parte of the arms, by orders of

secretar Morrow, and were then determined to gather and randevou there friends and weelwishers, which never happened since, nor by all appearance will.

Such is John Macdonald's narrative. It has been printed with all its irregularities and peculiarities of style and spelling, so that it now appears just as it left the hands of its author. It does not perhaps contain much that is new, but the romantic character of the adventures narrated, and the honest and unadorned language in which they are told, cannot fail to give it a deep and painful interest. It brings out, in a striking degree, the devoted affection of these loyal Highlanders for their unfortunate Prince—of whom it has been often remarked, that with a price of £30,000 on his head, and whilst the place of his concealment was more than once known to at least one hundred men at the same time, not one of them should ever have thought of securing what would have been affluence to himself, at the expense of treachery to the fugitive. A farther remark is suggested by this narrative. It exhibits in a remarkable way the humble respect and obedience which was felt by these devoted men towards the Prince, even at the lowest ebb of his fortunes. His Highland attendants never allowed themselves to be raised above

the position of subjects and counsellors, although it could not have been thought unnatural had the circumstances led them to do so. From their knowledge both of the country and of the people, they must have known much better than he could how to evade the dangers to which he was exposed, and to elude the strict watch that was kept for him by the patrolling parties of the Government; yet it is plain that he was not only nominally, but actually, the leader of the party. They gave him the fullest information and the best advice they could, but they obeyed his orders whatever they might be.

The only incident of importance in the narrative of which the historians of the period seem to have taken little if any notice is the naval action between Lord Howe's squadron and the two French men-of-war. Such a collision was indeed inevitable in the circumstances, when any of the British vessels which were cruising off the West Highlands to prevent the Prince's escape, fell in with any of the French ships, which were there to facilitate it. That the incidents of the action itself are correctly reported, can hardly be doubted, when it is remembered that the whole took place in the immediate neighbourhood of the residence of the family, who were probably eyewitnesses; and when the circumstantiality of the narrative is further considered, the very number of the dead who were washed on shore being recorded, and the unex-

pected fact that they were all Frenchmen—a fact which the rumour of the country seems to have satisfactorily accounted for.

It may not be uninteresting to give a moment's attention to the subsequent fortunes of those attendants of Prince Charles who are especially mentioned in John Macdonald's narrative. The merciless severity with which the troops of the Government ravaged the territories of the insurgent clans after the defeat at Culloden, is matter of history; and it can excite no surprise that this was especially the case with the lands of the Clan-Ronald. Where the houses of the gentry were situated near the sea-shore, they were destroyed by the cannon of the men-of-war; where they were not accessible in this way, they were burnt by the troops who patrolled the country. The cattle and other property of the inhabitants were carried off, and they themselves were driven to the moors and mountains, to find subsistence if they could, and if they could not, to perish. The house of Borradale was burnt; all the cattle and corn, and everything eatable, was carried off, and the family were compelled to fly to the woods, where they subsisted on nuts, and anything else they could find; and it is still remembered that they even tried to grind the nuts into a kind of meal, that they might at least have something like the oat-cakes and porridge they were accustomed to. It is further related that

John Macdonald's mother, who was a daughter of Macgregor of Glengyle, in the course of the flight of the family from Borradale, was seized by the soldiers, and the wedding-ring torn off her finger. John Macdonald himself, the author of the narrative now published, married Catherine, a daughter of Macdonell of Barrisdale, a cadet of the family of Glengarry. The Macdonells of Barrisdale suffered as much from the Government as their neighbours. Their house at Glenmeddle was the first house in that neighbourhood battered down by the shot from the war-ships. John Macdonald's wife used afterwards to relate that she recollected on this occasion looking from her place of shelter in the woods, and seeing the soldiers kill all the geese and fowls about the place, and carry them off, driving off at the same time all the cows; but that the dairy-maid ran after the party and entreated the officer in command to have mercy on the innocent children at least, and to leave one cow to give milk for them. This he did, and that cow was ever after known by the nickname of "The Trooper." The family of Barrisdale took refuge in a hut built of wattles; and here they were roused early one morning by seeing the muzzles of several muskets projecting through their wattled walls. A party of soldiers immediately entered, who, after searching the hut for the Prince, commanded the family to follow them. In a short time, however, they

seemed to see the uselessness of encumbering themselves with prisoners, and allowed the Macdonells to return to their shelter. John Macdonald was not only considered the most learned man in his clan; he was also reported to possess an unusual amount of energy and cleverness, qualities which he is said to have exhibited in a remarkable manner, by first risking his life many times in attempting to dethrone George II., and subsequently inducing the Government to pay his wife's portion out of her father's sequestrated estate.

Macdonald of Glenaladale, so often mentioned in the narrative, was succeeded at his death by his son John, who, with all his tenants, emigrated to Prince Edward Island, where they, or their descendants, still remain. Before his emigration, this John Macdonald sold his Highland property to his own near cousin, Alexander Macdonald, who had realised a large fortune in the West Indies. This Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale was succeeded on his death by his son, also named Alexander, who has perpetuated his memory in the Highlands by erecting the monument to Prince Charles still to be seen in Glenfinnan. On his death without issue, the succession to his estates opened to the Borradale branch of the family. The descendants of the elder son of old Angus Macdonald of Borradale added Glenaladale and Glenfinnan to Borradale, which they already possessed;

whilst Archibald, the son of his second son, John, the author of the narrative, got Dalilea on Loch Shiel. This property has now passed into the possession of Lord Howard; but the descendants of John Macdonald still inhabit the house of Dalilea, and it is through their kind permission that their grandfather's narrative has now been given to the public.

A FENIAN ALARM.

IT was eight o'clock on Saturday afternoon. The Rector of Long Slushington sat by his study fire over his modest glass of port. That little seven o'clock dinner, with the occasional concomitant luxury of some of the old St Magnus port, were among the very few indulgences he allowed himself. The latter, indeed, but rarely, commonly on these Saturday evenings; and he enjoyed it all the more. A coarse taste, you may say; but he had been brought up, you will be good enough to remember, in a college where a belief in port wine was a kind of supplement to the Thirty-nine Articles, and he knew no better.

There came a ring at the door-bell, sharp and energetic. The Rector knew instinctively it was a message for him. He was an excellent Christian, in spite of his belief in port; and, like many other excellent Christians, disliked especially the being disturbed after his dinner. Let him not be set down as an indolent man. It was a dark, drizz-

ling, slushy day at the end of this December, and he had been out and about his parish work during most of such daylight as there had been. He had written his sermon for the morrow—short and to the point, as most of his words, written or spoken, were. He might be excused, then, for feeling a placid kind of satisfaction that his day's work was done. He was a good man enough; but not one of those enthusiastic natures in which "the sword outwears the sheath," and who feel that nothing has been done while anything remains to do.

The ring at the door-bell, therefore, somewhat discomposed him. People *did* come at unreasonable hours. "It's that baby of Stubbs's," he said to himself—"they ought to have brought it to church a month ago; I heard it was taken ill with the measles yesterday; and now they want it baptised all in a hurry at this time of night—when they saw me pass the door this morning." And he was proceeding to philosophise, half-unconsciously, upon the unreasonableness of baby existence in general, and its remarkable incongruity with human comfort (it has been already said or implied that he was a bachelor), when the bell rang a second time still more sharply and decidedly. Thought is very rapid: not half a minute had elapsed between the two peals, and there had been scarcely time for a servant to get to the door to answer the impatient visitor in the interval.

"That's a woman," said the Rector to himself, decisively.

He was more happy in this second divination than in his first. In a few moments two female voices were heard in somewhat excited colloquy in the hall. One was Margaret's, the Rectory parlour-maid; and in a much shorter time than messages were usually brought, that discreet young woman was rapping at the study-door.

"Bless you, sir, look here!"

It was so unlike Margaret's usual staid demeanour —so unlike any style of address which the Rector was accustomed to from his domestics—that he, too, turned round with a hurried movement not correspondent to his parochial dignity. This could hardly be Stubbs's baby.

The parlour-maid had in her hand a piece of torn and crumpled paper. He had a notion, now, that it was some banns of marriage to be published suddenly, or the notice of a wedding by licence, not to be confided even to the parish clerk. The female mind, he knew, was apt to be unduly agitated on such occasions.

"A note for me?" he said, holding out his hand for it.

"Bless you, sir! it aint no note for nobody—it's a 'cendary proclamation, Jem says."

"Jem?" said the Rector, who had now got hold of the paper and was deciphering it with apparent

difficulty—"what does Jem know about it? and where is he?"

Jem was the Squire's groom; and he found so many errands to the Rectory (which lay very handy), especially during the Squire's absence in London, that there was a touch of unusual sharpness in the Rector's voice.

The parlour-maid, however, on this particular occasion, was strong in conscious innocence. "It was Keziah, from the Squire's, as brought this paper, and she wouldn't come by herself on no account whatever, she were that frightened, and so Jem, he come across too—he's standing outside now."

It was not often that Jem was left to stand outside at that house, as the Rector knew, and as Margaret remembered now with a touch of compunction. The fact was, that in the excitement of Keziah's communication, both women had forgotten Jem altogether.

"Hm!" said the Rector, musing over the crumpled document in his hand. "Where did this come from? who found it?"

"It were left at the Squire's, sir; but Keziah knows most about it, and that's why she come herself."

"Send Keziah in here to me."

This was the very thing which Keziah had desired. That was why she had undertaken a per-

sonal journey, though her alarm was very genuine, and the groom's escort had no ulterior meaning so far as she was concerned.

Keziah swam into the study in the most approved fashion of modern young ladies who condescend to domestic service. She was the head housemaid at the Hall, rather a dashing young person, of a very different style from Margaret and the cook at the Rectory. These latter looked upon her with feelings of mingled envy and reprobation—envy of her fascinations, and reprobation of "such airs." Crinoline, and hair-nets, and falls, and parasols, they looked upon as very pleasant forms of wickedness.

The Rector returned Keziah's gracious inclination towards him with a curt and business-like nod. "Sit down," said he, briefly. He was neither impressed by the young woman's graces, nor disgusted with them. He had examined her for confirmation a year or two back, and believed the girl to be a good and honest girl in the main, with neither more nor less nonsense in her than in many of her sisters of higher degree. As for her finery, he had found as much evil under a slovenly outside as under a smart one; and for the matter of outrageousness of attire, he was inclined to lay the blame at the door of those whom the catechism called her "betters:" he always longed to utilise such spectacles, as the Spartans did their drunken Helots, in the way of a caution to their superiors.

Perhaps it was some sort of consciousness of this impartial estimate on the Rector's part which made Keziah subside, in his presence, into her normal condition of a quiet, well-behaved young woman. She sat down and told her story quickly, though with some little perturbation. Margaret consoled herself for her own exclusion from the conference by taking Jem—who had waited patiently for his time to come—into the kitchen, where he discharged himself of his own version, with some additions and improvements upon the facts.

The facts were these. Mr Mansel—better known in the village as the Squire—and his wife, Lady Jane, were absent in London. A servants' ball, usually given at Christmas-time by a neighbouring baronet, had taken place the night before, to which such of the upper servants as remained at the Hall had been invited, and the house had been left in charge of the kitchen-maid and an occasional char-woman, who was allowed her on that evening for company. The kitchen-maid, however, had, to use her own expression, "just stepped out," having her own private notions of keeping Christmas; Mrs Tibbits kindly consenting to remain on guard alone, solaced by the society of her youngest child, just old enough to be in mischief, who was, as his mother observed, "the best of company, bless him!" What had taken place during the kitchen-maid's absence was only to be gathered from Mrs Tibbit's

confused narrative, which Keziah did her best to interpret to the Rector. But even the clearest story may become muddled when it is told at second-hand; and all that the Rector could collect as a certainty was that a stranger had called—had asked to see some member of the family—had left a note for somebody, which had disappeared, and a torn fragment of manuscript in a bold hand, which he had just been put in possession of. It ran (what there was left of it, for it seemed to have been torn down the middle) in this fashion:—

Evening
AN BROTHERS!
Redmond O'Halloran,
Gorman Burke,
AND HIS MEN!
Rendezvous
be blown up
Terrific Explosion!
twelve o'clock.

The Rector turned it over once or twice, and pooh-poohed it audibly. He generally did pooh-pooh anything which he did not quite understand, partly because it was an easier way of rising superior to a difficult question than arguing it out, and he was a man who liked to maintain his superiority; and partly because he was a straightforward man, and was not fond either of making difficulties or recognising them. But he could not help remembering that it was a time of considerable excitement—that

they were swearing in special constables in the large manufacturing town three miles off—in which process the Squire, as a county magistrate, had taken an active part,—and that some suspected individuals had been taken into custody that very morning. He had filled up the hiatus in the manuscript pretty satisfactorily to his own mind in a critical point of view. "A stupid hoax!" he said to himself. But he added aloud, "I think I'll step up to the Hall; is this woman Tibbits to be seen there?"

"Oh yes, sir! and you'll get the rights of it out of her; you see it was only to-night as she told us, for she was properly frightened at having lost the note as was left with the paper; and the Squire's expected home by the mail train to-night, and so she was bound to tell."

The Rector rang the bell, and Margaret reappeared in a state of visible tremor.

"I am going up to the Hall," said he; "I shall soon be back."

"Lor, sir!" said the girl—"it aint safe for you —nor for us neither—I don't think I durst stay in the house!"

"Stuff!" said her master, "there's nothing for anybody to be afraid of!"

But in compassion to her pale face and frightened eyes, he promised that Jem the groom should remain in garrison during his own absence. Keziah,

who had a fair amount of pluck for a woman, and unlimited confidence in the Rector's secular as well as clerical protection, gathered up her umbrella and her petticoats, and followed close in his rear.

The scene in the Squire's servants' hall at the Rev. Mr Somers's entrance was one of considerable excitement. Mr Brooks, the butler, who held a very firm sway in the lower domestic kingdom, was on duty with the family in town. Mrs Wilkins, the housekeeper, was a quiet timid woman, and exercised a very limited regency in his absence. In the present emergency she had taken every one into her counsels, and in the multitude of advisers had found anything but wisdom. Mrs Tibbits and her husband had of course spread mysterious hints in the village, and every one who could put in any claim to the *entrée* of the hall or kitchen had come to hear the mysterious story. The word which was in the Rector's thoughts as supplying the missing letters which headed the notice, or memorandum, or whatever it was to be called, was here in everybody's mouth—"FENIANS!" The rest of the fragment was filled up by as many conjectural restorations as if it had been a Greek chorus in the hands of German commentators. Barrels the gamekeeper had been specially summoned to council, being supposed to have a professional readiness in the use of firearms, and a familiarity with the habits and doings of poachers—the class most akin to

Fenians or other banditti within the knowledge of a village population. He boasted, indeed, of having been once actually under fire, and having risked his valuable life in defence of the Slushington pheasants, showing in proof of it a hole in his hat made by the bullet of a cowardly poacher. But upon this scar of honour some ungenerous doubts were thrown by the parish surgeon, who declared the hat must have hung upon a tree and not on the owner's head when the bullet was fired, or else that the shot must have passed in a direct line through such brains as John Barrels possessed, without injury — which also seemed to some a possible alternative. Be that as it may, it was certain that the hole in the hat had been good to the keeper for a couple of sovereigns at the time out of the Squire's pocket, and for very many pints of beer then and since, as often as he had told his story to some new listener in the parlour of the Blue Lion. At the present juncture he was appealed to as an undoubted authority, and even former sceptics as to his exploits practically recanted. He was just replying to some alarmist who had expressed a dread of revolvers, as an unknown and terrible weapon in the hands of modern desperadoes, by declaring that "they was nothing in comparison of a good double breechloader," when the Rector's entrance caused a hush in the conclave. The unwilling Tibbits was led forward to give her

evidence, shaking at once with importance and nervousness; for the Rector was a stern cross-examiner, as she knew by her experience of his sifting the family delinquencies and excuses in the matter of church and school.

"Now just tell me, my good woman, the history of this bit of paper. Where did you get it?"

Mrs Tibbits was beginning a long exordium which she had ready prepared, but which was cut short by anticipation.

"I know the story so far as this: a man came here to the door while you were alone in the house —a stranger; whom did he ask for, or what did he say was his business?"

"Well, fust he asked for the Squire, if he wur at home; and then for Lady Jane, as they both wasn't; and 'tis my belief, if I wur to die this minnit, as he knowed."

"Never mind what *he* knew · *I* want to know what *you* know."

"I begs your pardon, sir, humbly," said Mrs Tibbits, feeling the indulgence of her natural prolixity to be hopeless; "then he asked for Miss Bellew, the nussery-guvness."

"And she's not here. And then?"

"Then he seemed puzzled a bit, and asked me would I do him an arrant—civil like; he wurn't that bad-spoken; and I says as I would; and he gives me that there paper as you has in your hand."

"Anything else?" said the Rector sharply. He had his brief from Keziah.

"And—and a bit of a small note, like," replied the witness, faltering a little.

"And where is the note?"

"Well, sir, that's where's the worst of it. I just laid it down on the table while I goes to boil up the kettle to get a cup of tea comfortable for Betsy, as I knowed would be back in a minute" (a side glance here to the kitchen-maid to secure her sympathy), "when my little boy Samiwell as was with me, and is a deadly child for anything as has writing on, he scraddles to the table, as I supposes, for the first thing as I notices next is that very piece of paper in his blessed mouth. It was, sir, as I'm a living woman."

"And the note?" said the Rector.

"The note, sir, I never set eyes on no more, if I was to be drawed and quarted."

"Then what became of it?"

Mrs Tibbits only shook her head in reply, and showed symptoms of tears.

"It's our belief, sir," interposed the housekeeper, "that the child got hold of it; we found bits of paper that he'd been chewing up."

"That child 'ud heat hanythink," said the kitchen-maid, emphatically.

"Them young things will," said the keeper, "when they has their fust teeth; puppies likeways.

The last spannel pup as ever we reared ate the innards out of my missis' Common-Prayer Book, as lay in the window-seat, right down to Gunpowder Plot."

"What was this man like?" inquired the Rector, sternly recalling the house to business.

It was impossible to extract any further intelligible account from Mrs Tibbits in her present state of emotion. But from what she had previously told the servants, it appeared that the visitor had somewhat the appearance of a shabby gentleman, and spoke like a Scotchman or an Irishman, or at any rate not with the native tongue of Slushington. Further, a stable-boy reported that an individual answering to this description had been seen in company with another, earlier in the day, inquiring for the Squire's house; and that it was said by certain patrons of the Blue Lion that Johnson of the Swan could tell more about the parties if he would. But Johnson was a Radical, and bitterly opposed to all the traditions of the Hall, and a very likely person—so the household averred—if there was any mischief afoot, to be at the bottom of it.

Having obtained all the reliable evidence which seemed to be forthcoming, Mr Somers gave a pretty distinct hint to the hangers-on in the kitchen that their presence was no longer necessary nor desirable.

"It's all a piece of foolishness, no doubt—a joke,

if it's anything at all. My advice to you all is to say as little about it as possible. You know there are fools in this parish, as well as in others, who will believe anything; and you'll frighten some old woman into fits, if you go on talking about blowing-up, and such nonsense."

Slowly, though not silently, the out-door retinue took their departure, unconvinced by the Rector's appeal to their superior good sense. That something or somebody was to be "blown up"—that there was to be a "terrific explosion" somewhere —and explosion was a terrific word in itself—this much was certain. And at "twelve o'clock"—at night of course; but what night? That was the momentous question. Not last night, at all events —that was happily over; the more probability that it would be *this* night—Saturday night,—a somewhat favourite night, indeed, for deeds of lawlessness; or, perhaps, on Sunday night, when all was quiet—nothing more likely. They parted on their different roads, ostensibly to go home to bed; but the men of the party found themselves very soon drawn together again at the Lion, determined at least to see twelve o'clock safely over in good company.

The Rector accompanied Mrs Wilkins for a few minutes into the housekeeper's room. "When is the Squire expected home, did you say?"

"There is orders to meet him at a quarter to twelve to-night, sir, by the mail train."

"Does Lady Jane come down with him?"

The housekeeper believed not.

"Nor the children? and the new nursery governess — what did you say was her name — Miss Bellew?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is she an Irishwoman, do you happen to know?"

Mrs Wilkins did happen to know. She was — a young person recommended by some Irish friends of Lady Jane's, who, as the Rector might remember, were on a visit in the summer. "An orphan young lady she is, sir, as I hear,—and an uncommon nice young lady, as I can say; and the dear children have taken to her mightily, and for that matter, my lady too. But — oh dear! sir, what is to be done about this business? What do you think it all means?"

"I don't think it means anything at all, Mrs Wilkins; but as the Squire won't be home till so late, and you may be nervous, I'll take care you have sufficient protection. I must go home for half an hour, but I shall come back here again —possibly may even ask you to make me up a bed. Meanwhile, perhaps you may as well let one or two of the out-door men keep in the way. Mind, — it's all stuff and nonsense; still, you women may be frightened."

He returned to his own house, and desired to see

Jem the groom. Jem was very anxious to tell his story and give his opinion, but that was by no means what the Rector wanted.

"Jem," said he at once, "I think you are a man that may be trusted?"

"Well," said Jem, smiling, "I won't make no boasts."

"Very good; now, you see, your master is from home, and I'm going to give you orders. I want you to ride over at once to Fordington, with a note to the inspector of police there. And you are not to talk to the women about it," added the Rector, with a smile.

"Bless you, sir, it's they as talks to me."

"Well,—keep out of their way just now, there's a good fellow. Wait—here's the note: take it, and bring me back the answer. Or you had better take the dog-cart, in case Mr Brown thinks well to come over. I shall be at the Hall."

He let the groom out himself through the front door, out of the way of any temptations from Margaret or others. And it is fair to Jem to say that he justified the implied confidence in his discretion by going straight to his stables and getting out the dog-cart without further communication with anybody.

The Rector of Long Slushington was a magistrate, and his note to the police inspector commanded immediate attention. In five minutes Mr

Brown was seated by the groom's side; and, diverging from the road a little to pick up one of his men, a brisk drive of some three miles soon landed him at the Hall, where Mr Somers was prepared to receive him.

Inspector Brown scanned the fragment of manuscript with professional deliberation. He turned it over twice, and then held it up to the lamp to see if there was any water-mark. This he understood to be the regular detective business with all legal, or illegal, documents.

"This here may be a do, or it may not," he remarked, when he had finished his manipulations.

"That's very much my own conclusion," said the Rector.

"Yes, sir," said Mr Brown, briefly, not conscious of any irony on the Rector's part, but not quite approving of any conclusion at all having been come to in his absence. "I should wish, sir, if you please, to see the party as this was given to."

"You will exercise your own judgment, of course," said the Rector, "but I think it might be as well to wait Mr Mansel's arrival — he is expected home by the mail train, which will bring him here now in less than an hour. Suppose in the meantime you were to make some inquiries at the Swan: there is some talk — I don't attach much credit to it — that there have been some

suspicious-looking people seen hanging about there for the last day or two."

"Well, sir," said the inspector, "we will wait for the Squire, if you think well, before we hear what the servants has to say. I'll step up and see Johnson at once." He was not altogether sorry to look up the landlord of the Swan, who gave a good deal of trouble at Christmas time, and other drinking seasons.

Mr Johnson received the policeman with the scrupulous courtesy in use between recognised enemies in times of truce.

"Walk in, Mr Brown, walk in," said the landlord—"always glad to see you here, sir, at any time. You'll find the taproom full, it being Saturday night; and if you've any particular business, you'd best step in here to the parlour. But we're all very quiet and regular here, as you may see" —pointing through the open door of the room, where a very comfortable circle might be seen round a blazing fire—"I keeps a respectable house, as none knows better than yourself."

"I've no complaint to make, Johnson. I've called just to ask you a question which you'll answer, no doubt, to oblige me. Have you had any strangers in particular lodging here, or have you served any within the last day or so?"

"I don't entertain no tramps, Mr Brown."

"I didn't say tramps, as I remember," said the

officer — "I said strangers. Any Irish, for example?"

"Well, so long as a man pays for what he has, I never asks if he's an Englishman, or an Irishman, or a Dutchman, for that matter. Will you take anything yourself, Mr Brown? you're as welcome as the flowers in May?—No?" (Mr Brown shook his head.) "Well—you're right to be particular—you knows your duty, and I knows mine."

"You don't choose to tell me what I want to know," said the inspector. "Well — you aint obligated."

"If you'll tell me any one you're looking after as you think I'm a-'arbouring, I'll tell you whether he's in the house or no. But you can't expect me to tell you where all my customers was born. I aint the Registrar-General."

There was an uncalled-for tinge of defiance in the landlord's tone, which awakened the inspector's suspicions that he really had something to conceal. It would be waste of time, however, to try to extract from so unwilling a witness information which he was not bound to give, and which might probably be obtained more easily from other quarters. Mr Brown had not felt his visit to be quite of such a friendly character as would justify him in sitting down, and the door of the little parlour still stood half open, as he turned round with a ceremonious "good evening" to the landlord.

At that moment a man came leisurely in through the open street-door along the passage, and after glancing into the taproom opposite, passed upstairs. The light of the candle which the landlord held in his hand shone quite full on the newcomer's face as he went by.

"*Good* evening, Mr Johnson," said the officer for the second time, with a slight emphasis which might be taken to express nothing more than politeness.

"Good evening, Mr Brown," replied the landlord, a little more sullenly and less jauntily than before.

The inspector had made a rapid mental note of the stranger, for a stranger he certainly was, and apparently a lodger at the Swan. Slight, and somewhat foreign-looking, closely shaven, with the exception of a small imperial on the chin, dressed, so far as could be seen in the dusk, in the questionable broadcloth which may mark either the superior artisan or the faded gentleman. Such a "party," in fact, as might answer very fairly to the description which had been given of the visitor to the Hall.

"That Johnson's a greater fool than I took him for," said Mr Brown to himself. "I must have that party watched."

He strolled leisurely along the village street, feeling pretty sure, as was the fact, that Johnson was watching his movements. When he had

turned the corner towards the Hall, out of sight of any curious eyes at the Swan, he stopped, and struck one of the little matches known as "Vesuvians" against the wall. But Mr Brown was not thinking of lighting a pipe; he would no more have dreamed of smoking on duty than the Rector would have taken a cigar into the pulpit. The little spitfire blazed and sputtered in the dark night for a few seconds, and then Mr Brown tossed it into the gutter. A figure came out from somewhere in the darkness, and lounged along the other side of the street until the inspector crossed over. It was the sergeant whom he had called on his way to pick up.

Drawing out of the sight of any casual passer-by through the gateway leading to the Hall stables, he gave the sergeant some brief instructions to watch the back premises of the Swan, in case the suspected individual should make an exit that way. If there *was* anything wrong, Johnson would be too cautious now to let him out at the front.

"You'll be relieved at two o'clock, Jones—look out for a man in a smock-frock about then—that'll be Robinson."

The police-sergeant went upon his tedious watch in the contented spirit which, happily, accompanies most of us to our regular duties, however disagreeable. The inspector walked back to the Hall.

The Rector, meanwhile, had been sent for in another direction. At the other end of the village there was living an elderly maiden lady, somewhat of a character in her way, exceedingly charitable and kind-hearted, and therefore popular in spite of considerable prejudices and some eccentricities. She was an excellent mistress, liberal and indulgent to her domestics on every point but one. She was inflexible in allowing no "followers," and no "leave out." Her kitchen was like the Happy Valley in 'Rasselas,'—full of all manner of good things, but there was no getting out of it. Its attractions, however, were too great to be rashly forfeited: so Miss Bates's two maids in turn, after dusk, took their stand at that lady's back door, where they could hear her bell ring, and be summoned back to their posts in the kitchen at a moment's warning; and there, in their smartest caps, they received the attentions of all the idle young men in the parish, and discussed village events and scandals. So that the old lady's domestic discipline had the result of making her servants the greatest flirts and gossips in the whole neighbourhood. Even Keziah at the Squire's had declared herself scandalised at such "goings-on." The Rector himself had more than once, in his way home about dusk, remarked these rendezvous at Miss Bates's back door, and had half felt it his duty to call her attention to the fact, but his gentlemanly instincts

shrunk from undertaking the office of informer. The alarm at the Squire's had been discussed with much unction that evening at one of these out-door parties; and even at the risk of betraying their own secret, the servants could not resist hurrying to their mistress with the last improved edition of so choice a bit of news. Miss Bates was by no means a coward; but she had known the Rector ever since he was a schoolboy—indeed there was some kind of cousinship between them—and she took advantage of this, as on the present occasion, to claim his aid and advice under all circumstances. Besides, she had something to tell him.

When the Rector had given her his calmer statement of the facts, so far as they were known, Miss Bates spoke.

"George Somers" (it was so she commonly addressed him), "I know I'm a foolish old woman, but I don't think folks can say I'm fond of mischief-making."

"No, indeed," said Mr Somers, very sincerely.

"Well, there's a little thing which I should like to tell you, just because I don't care to tell anybody else; and you always had some sense, from a boy."

Mr Somers only smiled at this moderate compliment, and Miss Bates went on.

"Do you know that Miss Bellew who has lately come to the Hall?"

"The governess? yes."

"Who is she, and where does she come from?"

"Heaven knows; she's one of Lady Jane's last whims."

"Well, last Thursday evening, just as I was coming home to dinner, I saw that young lady come out of the little gate that leads into the wood. She jumped when she saw me, and well she might, for there was a man with her, or rather, behind her, George Somers."

"Ah!" said the Rector.

"Yes, and it was just such a man as you say brought this note to the Hall."

"Slight and dark; rather foreign-looking?"

"With a little tuft of black hair on his chin."

"Hm!" said Mr Somers, varying his interjection.

"Well! why, you seem to make nothing of it, George Somers," said the spinster, half-vexed at having produced so little impression, and half-ashamed in her kind heart at having told what might seem an ill-natured story.

"I saw him too," said the Rector, gravely.

"With her?"

"Yes; I had been walking that way, and came round into the bridle-road just behind them. They could not have seen me, and I did not know any one else had seen them. It's very disagreeable altogether."

"And what do you think it all means?"

"Really, Miss Bates, I can't pretend to say. But for this little circumstance (which may have nothing at all to do with the other matter, after all) I should have set down the letter, or paper, or whatever it was, as a palpable hoax—meant most likely to frighten the Squire's maids while he was from home. But the man whom I saw speaking to Miss Bellew, whoever he was, was a stranger; and certainly answered rather remarkably to the description which that woman Tibbits gave of the person who called with the note. More than this,—I feel sure that the note itself was for Miss Bellew, and that the woman knows it. I shouldn't have thought it worth while to send for the police, I assure you, if I had not seen—what we both saw. But such improbable things do happen in these days that, as a certain responsibility seems to rest on me now that Mansel is away, I think it right to take some precautions."

"Most certainly," said the lady; "but it's horrid, not to feel safe in one's own house, in this stupid village."

"I've been thinking of you, Miss Bates; your house is rather isolated—we shall have four or five of the county police here to-night, and if you like it, a couple of them can sit up in your kitchen or anywhere else; they can take a turn up the village now and then during the night, and the inspector

will know where to find them if they should be wanted, which is not at all likely."

"Two policemen in my kitchen! I think I see them there. No, thank you, George Somers: I'd take my chance of these Fenians, just as soon. It's well known I keep no money in the house—and no gunpowder, I hope: and they won't hurt an old woman."

"I have not a doubt but that you'll be quite safe as you are," said the Rector, smiling and taking his leave, "only it seemed right to offer you some kind of protection."

Miss Bates's servants probably were not made aware of the Rector's liberal proposal. They gathered some courage, however, from their mistress's composure, and from the knowledge that Inspector Brown and his men had the safety of the parish in charge. Still, they made up their minds to sit up all night; and it was currently reported afterwards that the cook declined to wash up either the parlour or kitchen tea-things, on the ground that "if they was to be blowed up, they might as well be blowed up dirty as clean."

The mail train was punctual, and brought the Squire: Mr Somers driving down in the carriage which met him at the station, not choosing that any exaggerated report should reach him before he could himself explain the real facts of the case. The Squire was in high good-humour, and rather

inclined to treat the fears of his household, and the Rector's precautionary measures, as a good joke.

"Let's have some supper, parson," said he, as they walked into the house together, "and then we'll send for these old women and hear their tale. Bless you, my good fellow, the London police are plagued to death by this kind of thing, now, every hour of their lives."

Mr Mansel ate his supper with as hearty an appetite as if Fenianism had never been invented. Not a word of business would he listen to until he had finished. Then Mrs Wilkins the housekeeper was sent for, and came in with her usual curtsies, and in more than her usual state of incapacity.

"Sit down, my good soul," said the Squire, "here's a glass of sherry. Why, you're trembling all over."

"Here's your very good health, sir, and my lady's —my lady's not coming home, then, sir?"

"Lady Jane remains in town, I am thankful to say," replied the Squire. "I mean, of course" (this was rather in answer to a perceptible look of amusement on Mr Somers's face)—"I mean, Mrs Wilkins, that if there is anything to cause alarm, I'm extremely glad that Lady Jane should be out of the way of it."

"Of course, sir."

"I don't attach the least importance to this foolish thing," said the Squire, taking up the torn paper contemptuously; "but the Rector was quite

right to send for Mr Brown—quite right—you'll see that he's made comfortable, Mrs Wilkins; and now just let him know I should like to speak with him for five minutes."

"There's one thing, Squire, I should like you to know before you see Brown," said the Rector, with some hesitation, as Mrs Wilkins withdrew. "I did not think it right to mention it to him, but you can do as you please." And he related the circumstances of the interview between Miss Bellew and the stranger in the Home Wood, of which he had been the accidental witness. "I must say, however," he added, "I saw no love passages between them: it rather seemed to me as if they had been quarrelling."

"D—— these governesses!" exclaimed the Squire "(I beg a hundred pardons, Rector; and I do believe it's Sunday morning, too) but they're enough to make a better man swear. They're all of them tarred with the same brush, I do declare! I'd sooner take a she-toad into my house than any one of the lot, if I'd my own choice. Why, Somers, a governess very nearly married me, when I was about eighteen—she was eight-and-twenty, and wore a wig too, and my poor little brother Tom pulled it off one day, God bless him! What an escape I had! Ah! you never heard that story. Fenians! bless you, parson, Fenianism is innocence compared with their goings-on."

"No—you're too hard, Squire," said the Rector —"much too hard."

"Am — You never was hooked by one of that sort?"

No. The Rector thought in his heart it would have taken some very fine fishing on the part of any governess to hook *him*. But what was to be done? What connection could the governess's flirtations (if such they were) have with the mysterious paper left at the Hall? Inspector Brown was summoned to a strictly private consultation, but even his practised ingenuity was at fault. He humbly confesssed that, when a woman was in the "job," the ordinary rules of art failed to apply. The awkward fact was present to the mind both of Mr Somers and the inspector, that this young lady was Irish, and so far as they could understand, her connections and antecedents were entirely unknown to her present employers.

"Some pet or *protegée* of Lady Cardross's, a mad friend of my wife's," said the Squire. "That's the sum total of what I know about her. A deuced fine-looking girl, though, parson, you must allow, eh!"

The Rector made some qualified admission on the subject.

"These Irish hang together wonderfully," said Mr Brown, "and they do say there's gentry as is as deep as any in it."

"I'll tell you what," said the Squire, looking at his watch, "it's too late to do anything to-night, and I'm confoundedly tired, and it's far on into Sunday morning too, parson. You'll keep a good look-out, Brown, if you really think there's anything in it, and to-morrow morning we'll have this woman —Tibbits, is it?—and we'll try and get the truth out of her."

The result of a long interview on the Sunday morning was to extort a confession, scarcely intelligible through floods of tears, from the unfortunate Mrs Tibbits, who stood in greater awe of the Squire than even of the inspector, that the letter left at the Hall *was* for Miss Bellew; that she, Mrs Tibbits, tempted by the bribe of a shilling, had promised to forward it to her address in London; that she had laid it on the table, and that the child (as was supposed) had torn it open and abstracted from inside the paper a portion of which only had been found; that she herself had re-sealed the letter in some sort, and taken it to her husband (who was a scholar, as she observed—more was the pity) to address and post. It was not until some hours afterwards that she had found the remains of the abstracted document, and her natural alarm and compunction, when her husband acquainted her with its contents, had led to the imperfect and garbled confession which she had made next evening in the servants' hall.

These further results of the domestic investigation were not reassuring. When the penitent Tibbits had been dismissed with a caution to hold her tongue, and a promise of indemnity from unknown pains and penalties on that sole condition, the authorities civil and ecclesiastical held another consultation. It was clear that Miss Bellew possessed the key to the mystery, if mystery there were. But she was in London with Lady Jane and the children.

"I'll tell you what," said the Squire, who was sufficiently decided in his movements whenever any excitement shook off his natural indolence, "I'll telegraph for the young baggage to come down direct."

The Rector looked up. He was questioning in his own mind whether Lady Jane was likely to let her obey the summons.

"Can she leave the children?" he asked.

Possibly the Squire saw the real doubt in his look.

"By George! if she don't come at once, I'll fetch her!"

The result was shortly this, that the Squire was absent that day from morning service—a most unusual circumstance when he was resident at the Hall. Instead of taking his place in his pew, he rode his cob down to the railway station, and telegraphed his own message up to town. What the

terms of that message were, were known to himself, the telegraph officials, to Miss Bellew, and perhaps to Lady Jane. The result was that, while the Squire and the Rector were sitting together at dinner, a telegraphic despatch arrived, which Mr Mansel opened with a little nervousness. It was —"A. B. comes by next train."

The Sunday slowly passed: but it was very unlike an ordinary Sunday at Slushington. Not that there was much outward difference. The services in the parish church went on as usual, and the Rector went through his duties in the same methodical and irreproachable manner as he had done for the last ten years. Something had been expected from the sermon, and the afternoon congregation was increased in consequence by a few curious listeners; but the sermon had been written and finished, as we have seen, before any alarm had been given, and the Rev. Mr Somers was not a man to be driven into writing a special discourse, any more than he would have been driven from writing what he meant to write, or delivering what he had written, for all the Fenians or other evil powers which Slushington could hold. Some imaginative persons conceived that he laid a special emphasis on the sentence in the Litany about "sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion;" and the response, "Good Lord, deliver us," came so emphatically from some quarters of the church, that the clerk looked round in profes-

sional indignation. An awkward Sunday-school girl let a book fall from the gallery, in the quiet just before the sermon, with a bang which startled some few nervous hearers from their knees; but with these trifling exceptions everything passed off quite uneventfully. It was in the little knots of people who gathered together at street corners, and at the two churchyard gates, when afternoon service was over, that the tokens of some unusual stir was manifest. Instead of the cheerful greetings of neighbours, enlivened by just so much quiet laughter as Sunday decorum would allow, grave faces and ominous shakes of the head and half-whispered utterances were to be seen and heard in every group. A stolid-looking individual, wearing for this occasion the quiet dress of a country farmer—but known to the initiated, through this mortal disguise, as Inspector Brown—was leaning against a corner of the churchyard wall, having just come out of church with the rest of the congregation. His own devotions had been performed, however, among the bell-wheels and the jackdaws in the church tower, where two small windows commanded a convenient view of the back premises of the Hall in one direction, and the main street of the village, where the sign of the Swan hung creaking in the wind, in another. The landlord, Mr Johnson (who was not a church-goer), might have been seen at his door, pipe in hand, most of

the day, defying public opinion more openly than usual. One or two of the higher dignitaries of the parish ventured to approach the disguised official, and were graciously received — on the understanding, however, that all such interviews must be brief, and that no questions could possibly be answered on his part — his especial business being, as he observed, to ask them.

"You see, gents," said the inspector to two smart young farmers, who were pressing small hospitalities upon him in the hope of some exclusive information,—"we sees a good deal, and we hears a good deal; but our rule is, we says nothing." Mr Brown had seen several miles of open country during his afternoon watch, and heard a good deal of conversation among the jackdaws. But many of the public, who are not police inspectors, might enjoy a reputation for sagacity almost equal to Mr Brown's, if they were only careful to observe his rule.

The early winter evening closed in upon this unusual state of excitement. As the village clock struck five, two men came out of the front door of the Swan. One of them was slightly built, dark, and of middle height; the other a short, stout, coarse-looking personage. They looked about them for a few seconds, and then leisurely took the road which led out of Slushington to the town of B——. Mr Brown was at that moment enjoy-

ing a special cup of tea in the housekeeper's room —a slight refreshment to which he was fully entitled after his day's work. But Sergeant Jones was on the watch, and striking off by a field-path at a rapid pace, presented himself before the two men as they turned an angle of the turnpike road. A glance was enough to assure him that one of the two was the suspected guest of the Swan whom they had watched so perseveringly. Acting on his instructions, he at once accosted him with some commonplace remark, to which the stranger showed no unwillingness to reply. His accent was Irish—palpable enough even to the sergeant's not overdelicate ear. Acquaintanceship between a Hibernian who is ready to talk and an inquisitive person who is specially anxious to talk to him ripens very rapidly; and after a stroll of a mile or so, the strangers proposed, much to the officer's satisfaction, to return to the village, where, as they informed him, they meant again to pass the night. He on his part suggested a cheerful glass at the Blue Lion, by way of cementing friendship, which was unanimously agreed to. Within a few yards of the inn door, by happy accident, they met a plain-looking farmer—*alias* Inspector Brown—with whom the sergeant immediately claimed acquaintance. The party sat down together in the Lion parlour: and though nothing could be more apparently open and unsuspicious than the manner

and conversation of the two strangers, there was evidently something mysterious in the object of their present visit to Slushington. No leading questions on the inspector's part met with any satisfactory response on this head: in fact, they did not attempt to conceal that they had a secret of some kind, and that they meant to keep it. In other respects, the strangers were by no means bad company. The Irishman had seen many cities and men, had a fund of anecdotes which he told capitally, and the unflagging good spirits common to his countrymen. His companion was more silent, but made an occasional shrewd remark; and the other hinted that if it had not been Sunday evening, his friend could have obliged the company with a comic song.

"Well, gents," said Mr Brown at last, when all his resources had been exhausted, and the glasses had been more than once emptied, "I'm uncommon sorry to spoil good-fellowship, but business is business. I'm inspector of the county police, and this here's one of my men. I'll be plain with you. I've nothing against you, and you've no call to come with me, if you object. But these is curious times, you see, and there's curious people about. If you two gents will just walk down with me to the Squire's here—he's a magistrate,—and give an account of yourselves, well and good, and no doubt as things will turn out agreeable to all parties: if

not, why I shall have the duty of keeping a watch on you—a thing as can't be pleasant to any gentlemen, and not in noways to me."

The younger and slighter of the two strangers looked at the speaker for an instant with considerable surprise. Then he turned to his companion.

"Upon my word, Slocum," said he, with the Irish accent which had struck both the officers, "this is what I may call a situation."

"Rapid transformation—respectable British farmer by inspector of police," replied the other.

"Faith, you're civil-spoken enough, for a Peeler, if it's a Peeler you are," said the first, after a moment's hesitation; "and I'm not sure but we'll pay the Squire a visit, since you've kindly invited us; what say ye, Slocum?"

"You'll be good enough to remember, Mr Inspector," said the person so addressed, "that we go with you quite on the footing of gentlemen?"

"Quite so," said Mr Brown, gravely, whose official politeness had been acknowledged gratefully by many "gentlemen" in similar circumstances. "You'll allow me to settle the little bill."

"Certainly, if you insist," said the Irish stranger, with equal politeness. "And now, if you'll be good enough to show us the way. Come, Slocum."

"Go on—I'll follow thee," said his companion, solemnly.

The inspector looked behind him with professional caution as they passed out of the public-house door.

"Honour bright," added Mr Slocum, laying his hand on his heart with emphasis.

So they walked on towards the Squire's; the inspector and the Irishman side by side on the narrow pavement, keeping up a lively conversation, and the other following close behind. The sergeant kept out of sight, but he, too, followed the party at some distance in the rear.

"If you'll just sit down here a minute, gents," said Inspector Brown, when they had been admitted by a footman with a face of awe-stricken curiosity,—"I'll let the Squire know as you're here." He had become on terms of almost intimacy with the Irishman, and forgot at the moment that they were, in a certain sense, prisoners in custody. But Thomas the footman expostulated, as strongly as gestures could do it, with much horror and indignation, at the idea of being left alone in such company. This recalled Mr Brown to a proper sense of the situation.

"You just step in to Mr Mansel, James"—(the inspector assumed to know the names of all the servants, male and female, in his district, and occasionally made mistakes, as in the present instance). "Tell the Squire there's two gents here with me wants to see him on a little business."

Thomas delivered himself of his message, and then went to report progress in the kitchen. The whole establishment crept up to the entrance-hall, and opened the door of communication slightly, to get a sight of the captured Fenians.

"I call 'im 'andsome, I do,—'im with the dark 'air," said the cook, in an audible whisper.

"But that's a horful-looking villin, that one with the red neckerchief," remarked one of the housemaids to the other.

Mr Slocum, the subject of this last very personal remark, was sitting nearest to the door. He probably overheard it. At all events he turned his head towards his critics, and made so extremely comical a face, that the two young women retreated with sobs of stifled laughter — somewhat to the bewilderment and disturbance of Mr Brown, who was chatting pleasantly with the Irishman, and saw nothing of this by-play. He glanced at Mr Slocum, but that gentleman's face showed nothing but a melancholy resignation.

But in a very few minutes they were summoned into Mr Mansel's library. The situation was somewhat embarrassing to all parties. The inspector was divided between the excitement of what might turn out to be a clever capture, the fear of exceeding his duty, and a newly-awakened dread of being made the subject of a hoax. The situation was not improved by an indisputable grin on the part

of Thomas, as he shut the library door, occasioned by another irresistible grimace which Mr Slocum, with his back to the rest, had put on for his special entertainment.

Inspector Brown respectfully explained the circumstances of his meeting with the "parties," as he carefully termed the strangers, and especially drew attention to the fact that they had come with him voluntarily. The Squire looked to the Rector, in hopes that he would take upon himself the office of counsel for the prosecution. But Mr Somers knew better. He was a cautious and prudent man; the Squire was the senior magistrate, and he tacitly voted him into the chair.

"There have been some suspicious circumstances which have come to our knowledge in this place, within the last few days," Mr Mansel began, "and the police have orders to watch all strangers carefully. Persons have been seen about my grounds, and a letter has been sent to a young person living in my family — a letter which has fallen into my hands."

"Your honour's far too much of a gentleman to read it, anyhow," said the younger stranger.

The Squire cleared his throat, and coloured—so far, at least, as any additional colour could find its way into his florid face; he had made a false move at the outset.

"I have not read the letter," said he, recovering

his ground; "but I am acquainted with some of its contents."

"And I think I am not wrong in saying that I saw you speaking to the young lady in question in Mr Mansel's grounds," added the Rector, coming to the rescue. He had recognised Miss Bellew's companion in the wood.

"With the greatest respect to you, gentlemen both, I trust an acquaintance with a lady is not an offence within the cognisance of the police?"

"No; but Mr Mansel is perfectly justified in preventing any surreptitious correspondence with a young person who is under his protection."

"Faith, you'll have to protect 'em with lock and key, if they're not to speak to the men."

"And that won't do it," added Mr Slocum, solemnly.

At this moment there came a knock at the library door.

"Come in," said the Squire, not altogether sorry for the interruption.

"If you please, sir, Miss Bellew has arrived."

"Ask her to be good enough to walk in here," said the Squire, after a brief conference with his companion. The younger of the two strangers had visibly started at the announcement; and both had interchanged glances which for the first time betokened some uneasiness on their parts.

All eyes were turned to the door as it again

opened, and a tall girl in travelling dress entered the room not ungracefully. She had dark and very luxuriant hair, fine eyes, a good figure, and was altogether what is usually termed striking; but there was something in her style and expression which it might be hard measure to call vulgar, but which diminished her attractions to a severely critical eye, and would lead an experienced and dispassionate observer (like the Rector, for instance) to class her at once as "second-rate." She was pale, and showed evident symptoms of agitation. A sudden journey, undertaken in obedience to a telegram so imperative as the Squire had probably sent, was quite sufficient to account for it. But she fronted the two gentlemen boldly enough, as they rose with natural politeness at her entrance, and returned Mr Mansel's awkward greeting with more composure than he showed himself. Then she threw her eyes round the room, and caught sight of the faces of its other occupants.

"Redmond!" she exclaimed, springing back a step or two, and clasping her hands, while the colour rushed back to her cheeks—"What means this intrusion?"

"Good!" said Mr Slocum softly, in half soliloquy, rubbing his hands and patting them together in a kind of suppressed applause—"Good! *very* good!"

"In this presence at least, sir," continued the

lady, "I might have hoped to have been safe from your persecution!"

"Watch her! watch her!" said Slocum in a whisper to the inspector — "watch her! it's a study."

Inspecter Brown hastily moved a step forward. He thought the lady might have a knife somewhere about her.

"Calm yourself, my darling," said the gentleman who had been addressed as Redmond; "don't excite yourself—pray don't."

"Dastard! to pursue me even into this place of refuge—to seek to deprive me even of the bread of honest dependence! And you, sir," she continued, turning her fine eyes full upon the Squire,—"you, sir, an English gentleman, have you lent yourself to this?"

"Mark her emphasis—it's a study, I tell you," said Mr Slocum in an aside, nudging the inspector again.

Mr Brown jumped up from the seat he had just resumed, and watched both the lady's hands, but he did not see anything to warrant his interference. The Squire looked perfectly helpless, transfixed, as it were, by Miss Bellew's eyes; and even the Rector did not seem to know what to make of it.

"I appeal to you, sir, for protection from this man," said the governess, drawing closer to the Squire, with her hands beautifully clasped, and

looking very much as though she was going up to throw herself into his arms.

"Nobody will hurt you here, my good girl," said the Squire in a kind voice, but drawing back a little. He was terribly puzzled, and a little impressed; he was very soft-hearted.

"Don't be a fool, Angelina," said the young man; "no one wants to hurt you. I have nothing to do with this meeting. I hadn't a notion you were in the house. If you'd only held your tongue, I'd never have betrayed ye. But you've done your business now in the governess line, I fancy, and you'd better come back to the arms that's open for ye." And with Hibernian warmth he half suited the action to the words.

Miss Bellew threw her fine eyes up to the ceiling and ejaculated — "Never!" But the tone was faint.

"Come," said he, "let bygones be bygones."

"Oh, Redmond!" she exclaimed, and dashed into his arms, with an impetuosity which threatened to be overwhelming.

"Good again!" said Slocum. "The benevolent father's out of my line, and I an't tall enough to do it," as he tried to raise his arms in an attitude of benediction over the pair.

"What the devil's all this?" said the Squire.

"She's my wife," said the Irishman.

"And who on earth are you?"

"My name's Redmond O'Halloran, gentlemen, at your service; some time manager of the Theatre Royal, Bally-na-keery, and at present on an experimental tour in the English provinces. My wife, Mrs O'Halloran—allow me to introduce her—in a moment of weakness ran away from me"—there was an appealing gesture from the lady—"well, we parted—incompatibility of temper; we had only been married six weeks. Judge of my surprise and delight, sir, when, wandering here by chance, I find her engaged in this generous establishment; though in a character, I must add, very inferior to her great capabilities. Till this blissful moment, all my affectionate endeavours to win her back to the path of duty had been ineffectual. She's a treasure, gentlemen; a real treasure, Mr Brown; worth, in a good season and to a discriminating public, to say the very least, five guineas a-week."

"More," interposed Mr Slocum,—"more; and to think that such a voice and figure should be lost to the boards, and sacrificed to teaching the rudiments——"

"Be quiet, Slocum," said O'Halloran. "My friend here, gentlemen, does the comic business, and is a universal public favourite."

Mr Slocum made a face and a bow.

"But what on earth does this mean?" said the Rector, producing the torn paper which had been

the original cause of excitement; "what has this to do with it all?"

He held it up as he spoke for Mr O'Halloran's inspection.

"Allow me," said that gentleman, taking it from Mr Somers's hands. He looked at it for an instant, and then passed it on to his friend with a smile.

Mr Slocum read it with much gravity, and then produced from his pocket a dirty and ill-printed bill, which he presented to the Rector with a smile. It's contents were these :—

MR O'HALLORAN'S THEATRE.

On Evening

THE CORSICAN BROTHERS!

Characters by Messrs Redmond O'Halloran, Haines, Slocum, and Gorman Burke.

After which

THE MILLER AND HIS MEN!

The Robbers' Rendezvous!
Discovery of the Plot! The Mill blown up with a Terrific Explosion!!!

The whole to conclude at twelve o'clock.

"You see, Mr Brown," said the comic gentleman, "in addition to my more special range of characters, I am also author and printer to my friend Mr

O'Halloran's establishment — when he has one. Times have been not so prosperous with us as might be wished. The legitimate drama is not patronised as it should be, and we had hoped to give a little performance or two in the village, under the patronage of that honourable gentleman and his family. We were even in treaty with Mr Johnson of the Swan for the use of his barn."

"And when Mrs O'Halloran cruelly refused to return to my humble roof——"

"Where is it?" asked Angelina in a stage whisper, with those appealing eyes.

"(Hush my angel!) When she warned me off your grounds as a trespasser—when she spoke of sending for a constable—when she even threatened to set the dogs at me (O, Angelina!)—I wrote at least to solicit her kind interest with you, sir, and enclosed the rough draft of our intended performance."

"Well, well," said the Squire, "we can't stay discussing play-bills here on Sunday evening. You don't go back to London, I conclude, Miss Bellew?"

"Mrs O'Halloran will remain and share my fortunes," said the husband with dignity.

"You'd better share that, for the present," said Mr Mansel, as he handed O'Halloran a bank-note. "There's some salary, you know, coming to Miss—to your wife. And—if you'll both take my advice—since you are married, you'll try to make the

best of a bad job; that is,—of course I don't mean marriage *need* always be a bad job, you know."

"I'll tell you what, Rector," said he to Mr Somers, as the others left the room, "it's all Lady Jane's folly from beginning to end, for listening to that confounded old Lady Cardross, who thinks that to be Irish is character enough in itself. She'll be recommending her a real Fenian for a butler, next."

THE PHILOSOPHER'S PENDULUM:

A TALE FROM GERMANY.

BY RUDOLPH LINDAU.

I.

DURING many long years Hermann Fabricius had lost sight of his friend Henry Warren, and had forgotten him.

Yet when students together they had loved each other dearly, and more than once they had sworn eternal friendship. This was at a period which, though not very remote, we seem to have left far behind us—a time when young men still believed in eternal friendship, and could feel enthusiasm for great deeds or great ideas. Youth in the present day is, or thinks itself, more rational. Hermann and Warren in those days were simple-minded and ingenuous; and not only in the moment of elation, when they had sworn to be friends for

ever, but even the next day, and the day after that, in sober earnestness, they had vowed that nothing should separate them, and that they would remain united through life. The delusion had not lasted long. The pitiless machinery of life had caught up the young men as soon as they left the university, and had thrown one to the right, the other to the left. For a few months they had exchanged long and frequent letters; then they had met once, and finally they had parted, each going his way. Their letters had become more scarce, more brief, and at last had ceased altogether. It would really seem that the fact of having interests in common is the one thing sufficiently powerful to prolong and keep up the life of epistolary relations. A man may feel great affection for an absent friend, and yet not find time to write him ten lines, while he will willingly expend daily many hours on a stranger from whom he expects something. None the less he may be a true and honest friend. Man is naturally selfish; the instinct of self-preservation requires it of him. Provided he be not wicked, and that he show himself ready to serve his neighbour—after himself—no one has a right to complain, or to accuse him of hard-heartedness.

At the time this story begins, Hermann had even forgotten whether he had written to Warren last, or whether he had left his friend's last letter un-

answered. In a word, the correspondence which began so enthusiastically had entirely ceased. Hermann inhabited a large town, and had acquired some reputation as a writer. From time to time, in the course of his walks, he would meet a young student with brown hair, and mild, honest-looking blue eyes, whose countenance, with its frank and youthful smile, inspired confidence and invited the sympathy of the passer-by. Whenever Hermann met this young man he would say to himself, "How like Henry at twenty!" and for a few minutes memory would travel back to the already distant days of youth, and he would long to see his dear old Warren again. More than once, on the spur of the moment, he had resolved to try and find out what had become of his old university comrade. But these good intentions were never followed up. On reaching home he would find his table covered with books and pamphlets to be reviewed, and letters from publishers or newspaper editors asking for "copy"—to say nothing of invitations to dinner, which must be accepted or refused; in a word, he found so much *urgent* business to despatch that the evening would go by, and weariness would overtake him, before he could make time for inquiring about his old friend.

In the course of years, the life of most men becomes so regulated that no time is left for any-

thing beyond "necessary work." But, indeed, the man who lives only for his own pleasure—doing, so to speak, nothing—is rarely better in this respect than the writer, the banker, and the *savant*, who are overburdened with work.

One afternoon, as Hermann, according to his custom, was returning home about five o'clock, his porter handed him a letter bearing the American post-mark. He examined it closely before opening it. The large and rather stiff handwriting on the address seemed familiar, and yet he could not say to whom it belonged. Suddenly his countenance brightened, and he exclaimed, "A letter from Henry!" He tore open the envelope, and read as follows:—

"My dear Hermann,—It is fortunate that one of us at least should have attained celebrity. I saw your name on the outside of a book of which you are the author. I wrote at once to the publisher; that obliging man answered me by return of post, and, thanks to these circumstances, I am enabled to tell you that I will land at Hamburg towards the end of September. Write to me there, *Post Restante*, and let me know if you are willing to receive me for a few days. I can take Leipzig on my way home, and would do so most willingly if you say that you would see me again with pleasure.
—Your old friend, Henry Warren."

Below the signature there was a postscript of a single line: "This is my present face." And from an inner envelope Hermann drew a small photograph, which he carried to the window to examine leisurely. As he looked, a painful impression of sadness came over him. The portrait was that of an old man. Long grey hair fell in disorder over a careworn brow; the eyes, deep sunk in their sockets, had a strange and disquieting look of fixity; and the mouth, surrounded by deep furrows, seemed to tell its own long tale of sorrow.

"Poor Henry!" said Hermann; "this, then, is your present face! And yet he is not old; he is younger than I am; he can scarcely be thirty-eight. Can I, too, be already an old man?"

He walked up to the glass, and looked attentively at the reflection of his own face. No! those were not the features of a man whose life was near its close; the eye was bright, and the complexion indicated vigour and health. Still, it was not a young face. Thought and care had traced their furrows round the mouth and about the temples, and the general expression was one of melancholy, not to say despondency.

"Well, well, we have grown old," said Hermann, with a sigh. "I had not thought about it this long while; and now this photograph has reminded me of it painfully." Then he took up his pen and

wrote to say how happy he would be to see his old friend again as soon as possible.

The next day, chance brought him face to face in the street with the young student who was so like Warren. "Who knows?" thought Hermann; "fifteen or twenty years hence this young man may look no brighter than Warren does to-day. Ah, life is not easy! It has a way of saddening joyous looks, and imparting severity to smiling lips. As for me, I have no real right to complain of my life. I have lived pretty much like everybody; a little satisfaction, and then a little disappointment, turn by turn; and often small worries: and so my youth has gone by, I scarcely know how."

On the 2d of October Hermann received a telegram from Hamburg announcing the arrival of Warren for the same evening. At the appointed hour he went to the railway station to meet his friend. He saw him get down from the carriage slowly, and rather heavily, and he watched him for a few seconds before accosting him. Warren appeared to him old and broken-down, and even more feeble than he had expected to see him from his portrait. He wore a travelling suit of grey cloth so loose and wide that it hung in folds on the gaunt and stooping figure; a large wideawake hat was drawn down to his very eyes. The new-comer looked right and left, seeking no doubt to discover

his friend; not seeing him, he turned his weary and languid steps towards the way out. Hermann then came forward. Warren recognised him at once; a sunny youthful smile lighted up his countenance, and, evidently much moved, he stretched out his hand. An hour later, the two friends were seated opposite to each other before a well-spread table in Hermann's comfortable apartments.

Warren ate very little; but, on the other hand, Hermann noticed with surprise and some anxiety that his friend, who had been formerly a model of sobriety, drank a good deal. Wine, however, seemed to have no effect on him. The pale face did not flush; there was the same cold fixed look in the eye; and his speech, though slow and dull in tone, betrayed no embarrassment.

When the servant who had waited at dinner had taken away the dessert and brought in coffee, Hermann wheeled two big arm-chairs close to the fire, and said to his friend—

"Now, we will not be interrupted. Light a cigar, make yourself at home, and tell me all you have been doing since we parted."

Warren pushed away the cigars. "If you do not mind," said he, "I will smoke my pipe. I am used to it, and I prefer it to the best of cigars."

So saying, he drew from its well-worn case an old pipe, whose colour showed it had been long used, and filled it methodically with moist, blackish

tobacco. Then he lighted it, and after sending forth one or two loud puffs of smoke, he said, with an air of sovereign satisfaction—

"A quiet, comfortable room—a friend—a good pipe after dinner—and no care for the morrow. That's what I like."

Hermann cast a sidelong glance at his companion, and was painfully struck at his appearance. The tall gaunt frame in its stooping attitude; the greyish hair, and sad fixed look; the thin legs crossed one over the other; the elbow resting on the knee and supporting the chin,—in a word, the whole strange figure, as it sat there, bore no resemblance to Henry Warren, the friend of his youth. This man was a stranger, a mysterious being even. Nevertheless, the affection he felt for his friend was not impaired; on the contrary, pity entered into his heart. "How ill the world must have used him," thought Hermann, "to have thus disfigured him!" Then he said aloud—

"Now, then, let me have your story, unless you prefer to hear mine first."

He strove to speak lightly, but he felt that the effort was not successful. As to Warren, he went on smoking quietly, without saying a word. The long silence at last became painful. Hermann began to feel an uncomfortable sensation of distress in presence of the strange guest he had brought to his

home. After a few minutes, he ventured to ask for the third time, "Will you make up your mind to speak, or must I begin?"

Warren gave vent to a little noiseless laugh. "I am thinking how I can answer your question. The difficulty is that, to speak truly, I have absolutely nothing to tell. I wonder now—and it was that made me pause—how it has happened that, throughout my life, I have been bored by—nothing. As if it would not have been quite as natural, quite as easy, and far pleasanter, to have been amused by that same nothing—which has been my life. The fact is, my dear fellow, that I have had no deep sorrow to bear, neither have I been happy. I have not been extraordinarily successful, and have drawn none of the prizes of life. But I am well aware that, in this respect, my lot resembles that of thousands of other men. I have always been obliged to work. I have earned my bread by the sweat of my brow. I have had money difficulties; I have even had a hopeless passion—but what then? every one has had that. Besides, that was in bygone days; I have learned to bear it, and to forget. What pains and angers me is, to have to confess that my life has been spent without satisfaction and without happiness."

He paused an instant, and then resumed, more calmly—"A few years ago I was foolish enough to believe that things might in the end turn out

better. I was a professor with a very moderate salary at the school at Elmira. I taught all I knew, and much that I had to learn in order to be able to teach it—Greek and Latin, German and French, mathematics and physical sciences. During the so-called play-hours I even gave music lessons. In the course of the whole day there were few moments of liberty for me. I was perpetually surrounded by a crowd of rough, ill-bred boys, whose only object during lessons was to catch me making a fault in English. When evening came, I was quite worn out; still, I could always find time to dream for half an hour or so with my eyes open before going to bed. Then all my desires were accomplished, and I was supremely happy. At last I had drawn a prize! I was successful in everything; I was rich, honoured, powerful—what more can I say? I astonished the world —or rather, I astonished Ellen Gilmore, who for me was the whole world. Hermann, have you ever been as mad? Have you, too, in a waking dream, been in turn a statesman, a millionaire, the author of a sublime work, a victorious general, the head of a great political party? Have you dreamt nonsense such as that? I, who am here, have been all I say—in dreamland. Never mind; that was a good time. Ellen Gilmore, whom I have just mentioned, was the elder sister of one of my pupils, Francis Gilmore, the most undisciplined boy of the

school. His parents, nevertheless, insisted on his learning something; and as I had the reputation of possessing unwearying patience, I was selected to give him private lessons. That was how I obtained a footing in the Gilmore family. Later on, when they had found out that I was somewhat of a musician—you may remember, perhaps, that for an amateur I was a tolerable performer on the piano—I went every day to the house to teach Latin and Greek to Francis, and music to Ellen.

"Now, picture to yourself the situation, and then laugh at your friend as he has laughed at himself many a time. On the one side—the Gilmore side—a large fortune and no lack of pride; an intelligent, shrewd, and practical father; an ambitious and vain mother; an affectionate but spoilt boy; and a girl of nineteen, surpassingly lovely, with a cultivated mind and great good sense. On the other hand, you have Henry Warren, aged twenty-nine; in his dreams the author of a famous work, or the commander-in-chief of the Northern armies, or, it may be, President of the Republic—in reality, Professor at Elmira College, with a modest stipend of seventy dollars a-month. Was it not evident that the absurdity of my position as a suitor for Ellen would strike me at once? Of course it did. In my lucid moments, when I was not dreaming, I was a very rational man, who had read a good

deal, and learned not a little; and it would have been sheer madness in me to have indulged for an instant the hope of a marriage between Ellen and myself. I knew it was an utter impossibility — as impossible as to be elected President of the United States; and yet, in spite of myself, I dreamed of it. However, I must do myself the justice to add that my passion inconvenienced nobody. I would no more have spoken of it than of my imaginary command of the Army of the Potomac. The pleasures which my love afforded me could give umbrage to no one. Yet I am convinced that Ellen read my secret. Not that she ever said a word to me on the subject; no look or syllable of hers could have made me suspect that she had guessed the state of my mind.

"One single incident I remember which was not in accordance with her habitual reserve in this respect. I noticed one day that her eyes were red. Of course I dared not ask her why she had cried. During the lesson she seemed absent; and when leaving she said, without looking at me, 'I may perhaps be obliged to interrupt our lessons for some little time; I am very sorry. I wish you every happiness.' Then, without raising her eyes, she quickly left the room. I was bewildered. What could her words mean? And why had they been said in such an affectionate tone?

"The next day Francis Gilmore called to inform me, with his father's compliments, that he was to have four days' holidays, because his sister had just been betrothed to Mr Howard, a wealthy New York merchant, and that, for the occasion, there would be great festivities at home.

"Thenceforward there was an end of the dreams which up to that moment had made life pleasant. In sober reason I had no more cause to deplore Ellen's marriage than to feel aggrieved because Grant had succeeded Johnson as President. Nevertheless you can scarcely conceive how much this affair—I mean the marriage—grieved me. My absolute nothingness suddenly stared me in the face. I saw myself as I was—a mere schoolmaster, with no motive for pride in the past, or pleasure in the present, or hope in the future."

Warren's pipe had gone out while he was telling his story. He cleaned it out methodically, drew from his pocket a cake of Cavendish tobacco, and after cutting off with a penknife the necessary quantity, refilled his pipe and lit it. The way in which he performed all these little operations betrayed long habit. He had ceased to speak while he was relighting his pipe, and kept on whistling between his teeth. Hermann looked on silently. After a few minutes, and when the pipe was in good order, Warren resumed his story.

"For a few weeks I was terribly miserable; not

so much because I had lost Ellen—a man cannot lose what he has never hoped to possess—as from the ruin of all my illusions. During those days I plucked and ate by the dozen of the fruits of the tree of self-knowledge, and I found them very bitter. I ended by leaving Elmira, to seek my fortunes elsewhere. I knew my trade well. Long practice had taught me how to make the best of my learning, and I never had any difficulty in finding employment. I taught successively in upwards of a dozen States of the Union. I can scarcely recollect the names of all the places where I have lived—Sacramento, Chicago, St Louis, Cincinnati, Boston, New York; I have been everywhere—everywhere. And everywhere I have met with the same rude schoolboys, just as I have found the same regular and irregular verbs in Latin and Greek. If you would see a man thoroughly satiated and saturated with schoolboys and classical grammars, look at me.

"In the leisure time which, whatever might be my work, I still contrived to make for myself, I indulged in philosophical reflections. Then it was I took to the habit of smoking so much."

Warren stopped suddenly, and looking straight before him, appeared plunged in thought. Then, passing his hand over his forehead, he repeated, in an absent manner, "Yes, of smoking so much. I also took to another habit," he added, somewhat

hastily — "but that has nothing to do with my story. The theory which especially occupied my thoughts was that of the oscillations of an ideal instrument of my own imagining, to which, in my own mind, I gave the name of the *Philosopher's Pendulum*. To this invention I owe the quietude of mind which has supported me for many years, and which, as you see, I now enjoy. I said to myself that my great sorrow—if I may so call it without presumption—had arisen merely from my wish to be extraordinarily happy. When, in his dreams, a man has carried presumption so far as to attain to the heights of celebrity, or to being the husband of Ellen Gilmore, there was nothing wonderful if, on awaking, he sustained a heavy fall before reaching the depths of reality. Had I been less ambitious in my desires, their realisation would have been easier, or, at any rate, the disappointment would have been less bitter. Starting from this principle, I arrived at the logical conclusion that the best means to avoid being unhappy is to wish for as little happiness as possible. This truth was discovered by my philosophical forefathers many centuries before the birth of Christ, and I lay no claim to being the finder of it; but the outward symbol which I ended by giving to this idea is—at least I fancy it is—of my invention.

"Give me a sheet of paper and a pencil," he

added, turning to his friend, "and with a few lines I can demonstrate clearly the whole thing."

Hermann handed him what he wanted without a word. Warren then began gravely to draw a large semicircle, open at the top, and above the semicircular line a pendulum, which fell perpendicularly and touched the circumference at the exact point where on the dial of a clock would be inscribed the figure VI. This done, he wrote on the right-hand side of the pendulum, beginning from the bottom and at the place of the hours V, IV, III, the words *Moderate Desires — Great Hopes, Ambition — Unbridled Passion, Mania of Greatness.* Then, turning the paper upside-down, he wrote on the opposite side, where on a dial would be marked VII, VIII, IX, the words, *Slight Troubles—Deep Sorrow, Disappointment—Despair.* Lastly, in the place of No. VI, just where the pendulum fell, he sketched a large black spot, which he shaded off with great care, and above which he wrote, like a scroll, *Dead Stop, Absolute Repose.*

Having finished this little drawing, Warren laid down his pipe, inclined his head on one side, and raising his eyebrows, examined his work with a critical frown. "This compass is not yet quite complete," he said; "there is something missing. Between *Dead Stop* and *Moderate Desires* on the right, and *Slight Troubles* on the left, there is the beautiful line of *Calm and Rational Indifference.*

However, such as the drawing is, it is sufficient to demonstrate my theory. Do you follow me?"

Hermann nodded affirmatively. He was greatly pained. In lieu of the friend of his youth, for whom he had hoped a brilliant future, here was a poor monomaniac!

"You see," said Warren, speaking collectedly, like a professor, "if I raise my pendulum till it reaches the point of *Moderate Desires*, and then let it go, it will naturally swing to the point of *Slight Troubles*, and go no further. Then it will oscillate for some time in a more and more limited space on the line of *Indifference*, and finally it will stand still without any jerk on *Dead Stop*, *Absolute Repose*. That is a great consolation!"

He paused, as if waiting for some remark from Hermann; but as the latter remained silent, Warren resumed his demonstration.

"You understand now, I suppose, what I am coming to. If I raise the pendulum to the point of *Ambition* or *Mania of Greatness*, and then let it go, that same law which I have already applied will drive it to *Deep Sorrow* or *Despair*. That is quite clear, is it not?"

"Quite clear," repeated Hermann, sadly.

"Very well," continued Warren, with perfect gravity; "for my misfortune, I discovered this fine theory rather late. I had not set bounds to my dreams and limited them to trifles. I had wished

to be President of the Republic, an illustrious *savant*, the husband of Ellen. No great things, eh? What say you to my modesty? I had raised the pendulum to such a giddy height that when it slipped from my impotent hands it naturally performed a long oscillation, and touched the point *Despair*. That was a miserable time. I hope you have never suffered what I suffered then. I lived in a perpetual nightmare—like the stupor of intoxication." He paused, as he had done before, and then, with a painfully nervous laugh, he added, "Yes, like intoxication. I drank." Suddenly a spasm seemed to pass over his face, he looked serious and sad as before, and he said, with a shudder, "It's a terrible thing to see one's self inwardly, and to know that one is fallen."

After this he remained long silent. At last, raising his head, he turned to his friend and said, "Have you had enough of my story, or would you like to hear it to the end?"

"I am grieved at all you have told me," said Hermann; "but pray go on; it is better I should know all."

"Yes; and I feel, too, that it relieves me to pour out my heart. Well, I used to drink. One takes to the horrid habit in America far easier than anywhere else. I was obliged to give up more than one good situation because I had ceased to be *respectable*. Anyhow, I always managed to find

employment without any great difficulty. I never suffered from want, though I have never known plenty. If I spent too much in drink, I took it out of my dress and my boots.

"Eighteen months after I had left Elmira, I met Ellen one day in Central Park, in New York. I was aware that she had been married a twelvemonth. She knew me again at once, and spoke to me. I would have wished to sink into the earth. I knew that my clothes were shabby, that I looked poor, and I fancied that she must discern on my face the traces of the bad habits I had contracted. But she did not, or would not, see anything. She held out her hand, and said in her gentle voice—

"'I am very glad to see you again, Mr Warren. I have inquired about you, but neither my father nor Francis could tell me what had become of you. I want to ask you to resume the lessons you used to give me. Perhaps you do not know where I live? This is my address,' and she gave me her card.

"I stammered out a few unmeaning words in reply to her invitation. She looked at me, smiling kindly the while; but suddenly the smile vanished, and she added, 'Have you been ill, Mr Warren? You seem worn.'

"'Yes,' I answered, too glad to find an excuse

for my appearance—'yes, I have been ill, and I am still suffering.'

"'I am very sorry,' she said, in a low voice.

"Laugh at me, Hermann—call me an incorrigible madman; but believe me when I say that her looks conveyed to me the impression of more than common interest or civility. A thrilling sense of pain shot through my frame. What had I done that I should be so cruelly tried? A mist passed before my eyes; anxiety, intemperance, sleeplessness, had made me weak. I tottered backwards a few steps. She turned horribly pale. All around us was the crowd—the careless, indifferent crowd.

"'Come and see me soon,' she added hastily, and left me. I saw her get into a carriage, which she had doubtless quitted to take a walk; and when she drove past, she put her head out and looked at me with her eyes wide open—there was an almost wildly anxious expression in them.

"I went home. My way led me past her house—it was a palace. I shut myself up in my wretched hotel-room, and once more I fell to dreaming. Ellen loved me; she admired me; she was not for ever lost to me! The pendulum was swinging, you see, up as high as *Madness*. Explain to me, if you can, how it happens that a being perfectly rational in ordinary life should at certain seasons, and, so to speak, voluntarily, be bereft of reason.

To excuse and explain my temporary insanity, I am ready to admit that the excitement to which I gave way may have been a symptom of the nervous malady which laid hold of me a few days later, and stretched me for weeks upon a bed of pain.

"As I became convalescent, reason and composure returned. But it was too late. In the space of two months, twenty years had passed over my head. When I rose from my sick-bed I was as feeble and as broken-down as you see me now. My past had been cheerless and dim, without one ray of happiness; yet that past was all my life! Henceforward there was nothing left for me to undertake, to regret, or to desire. The pendulum swung idly backwards and forwards on the line of *Indifference*. I wonder what are the feelings of successful men—of men who *have* been victorious generals, prime ministers, celebrated authors, and that sort of thing! Upheld by a legitimate pride, do they retire satisfied from the lists when evening comes, or do they lay down their arms as I did, disappointed and dejected, and worn out with the fierce struggle? Can no man with impunity look into his own heart and ask himself how his life has been spent?"

Here Warren made a still longer pause than before, and appeared absorbed in gloomy thought. At last he resumed in a lower tone—

"I had not followed up Ellen's invitation. But in some way she had discovered my address, and knew of my illness. Do not be alarmed, my dear Hermann; my story will not become romantic. No heavenly vision appeared to me during my fever; I felt no gentle white hands laid on my burning brow. I was nursed at the hospital, and very well nursed too; I figured there as 'Number 380,' and the whole affair was, as you see, as prosaic as possible. But on quitting the hospital, and as I was taking leave of the manager, he handed me a letter, in which was inclosed a note for 500 dollars. In the envelope there was also the following anonymous note:—

"'An old friend begs your acceptance, as a loan, of the inclosed sum. It will be time enough to think of paying off this debt when you are strong enough to resume work, and you can then do it by instalments, of which you can yourself fix the amount, and remit them to the hospital of New York.'

"It was well meant, no doubt, but it caused me a painful impression. My determination was taken at once. I refused without hesitation. I asked the manager, who had been watching me with a friendly smile while I read the letter, whether he could give the name of the person who had sent it. In spite of his repeated assurances that he did not know it, I never doubted for a single instant that

he was concealing the truth. After a few seconds' reflection I asked if he would undertake to forward an answer to my unknown correspondent; and, on his consenting to do so, I promised that he should have my answer the next day.

"I thought long over my letter. One thing was plain to me—it was Ellen who had come to my help. How could I reject her generous aid without wounding her, or appearing ungrateful? After great hesitation I wrote a few lines, which, as far as I can recollect, ran thus:—

"'I thank you for the interest you have shown me, but it is impossible for me to accept the sum you place at my disposal. Do not be angry with me because I return it. Do not withdraw your sympathy; I will strive to remain worthy of it, and will never forget your goodness.'

"A few days later, after having confided this letter to the manager, I left New York for San Francisco. For several years I heard nothing of Ellen; her image grew gradually fainter, and at last almost disappeared from my memory.

"The dark river that bore the frail bark which carried me and my fortunes was carrying me smoothly and unconsciously along towards the mysterious abyss where all that exists is engulfed. Its course lay through a vast desert; and the banks which passed before my eyes were of fearful sameness. Indescribable lassitude took possession of

my whole being. I had never, knowingly, practised evil; I had loved and sought after good. Why, then, was I so wretched? I would have blessed the rock which wrecked my bark so that I might have been swallowed up and have gone down to my eternal rest. Up to the day when I heard of Ellen's betrothal, I had hoped that the morrow would bring happiness. The long-wished-for morrow had come at last, gloomy and colourless, without realising any of my vague hopes. Henceforward my life was at an end."

Warren said these last words so indistinctly that Hermann could scarcely hear them; he seemed to be speaking to himself rather than to his friend. Then he raised the forefinger of his right hand, and after moving it slowly from right to left, in imitation of the swing of a pendulum, he placed it on the large black dot he had drawn on the sheet of paper exactly below his pendulum, and said, "*Dead Stop, Absolute Repose.* Would that the end were come!"

Another and still longer interval of silence succeeded, and at last Hermann felt constrained to speak.

"How came you to make up your mind," he said, "to return to Europe?"

"Ah yes, to be sure," answered Warren, hurriedly; "the story—the foolish story—is not ended. In truth it has no end, as it had no beginning; it is

a thing without form or purpose, and less the history of a life than of a mere journeying towards death. Still I will finish—following chronological order. It does not weary you?"

"No, no; go on, my dear friend."

"Very well. I spent several years in the United States. The pendulum worked well. It came and went, to and fro, slowly along the line of *Indifference*, without ever transgressing, as its extreme limits on either hand, *Moderate Desires* and *Slight Troubles*. I led obscurely a contemplative life, and I was generally considered a queer character. I fulfilled my duties, and took little heed of any one. Whenever I had an hour at my disposal, I sought solitude in the neighbouring woods, far from the town and from mankind. I used to lie down under the big trees. Every season in turn, spring and summer, autumn and winter, had its peculiar charm for me. My heart, so full of bitterness, felt lightened as soon as I listened to the rustling of the foliage overhead. The forest! There is nothing finer in all creation. A deep calm seemed to settle down upon me. I was growing old. I was forgetting. It was about this time that, in consequence of my complete indifference to all surroundings, I acquired the habit of answering 'Very well' to everything that was said. The words came so naturally that I was not aware of my continual use of them, until one day one of my fellow-teachers

happened to tell me that masters and pupils alike had given me the nickname of Very well.' Is it not odd that one who has never succeeded in anything should be known as 'Very well'?

"I have only one other little adventure to relate, and I will have told all. Then I can listen to your story.

"Last year, my journeyings brought me to the neighbourhood of Elmira. It was holiday-time. I had nothing to do, and I had in my purse a hundred hardly-earned dollars, or thereabout. The wish seized me to revisit the scene of my joys and my sorrows. I had not set foot in the place for more than seven years. I was so changed that nobody could know me again; nor would I have cared much if they had. After visiting the town and looked at my old school, and the house where Ellen had lived, I bent my steps towards the park, which is situated in the environs—a place where I used often to walk in company of my youthful dreams. It was September, and evening was closing in. The oblique rays of the setting sun sent a reddish gleam through the leafy branches of the old oaks. I saw a woman seated on a bench beneath a tree on one side of the path. As I drew near I recognised Ellen. I remained rooted to the spot where I stood, not daring to move a step. She was stooping forward with her head bent down, while with the end of her parasol she traced lines upon the gravel.

She had not seen me. I turned back instantly, and retired without making any noise. When I had gone a little distance, I left the path and struck into the wood. Once there, I looked back cautiously. Ellen was still at the same place, and in the same attitude. Heaven knows what thoughts passed through my brain! I longed to see her closer. What danger was there? I was sure she would not know me again. I walked towards her with the careless step of a casual passer-by, and in a few minutes passed before her. When my shadow fell on the path, she looked up, and our eyes met. My heart was beating fast. Her look was cold and indifferent; but suddenly a strange light shot into her eyes, and she made a quick movement, as if to rise. I saw no more, and went on without turning round. Before I could get out of the park her carriage drove past me, and I saw her once more as I had seen her five years before in Central Park, pale, with distended eyes, and her anxious looks fixed upon me. Why did I not bow to her? I cannot say; my courage failed me. I saw the light die out of her eyes. I almost fancied that I saw her heave a sigh of relief as she threw herself back carelessly in the carriage; and she disappeared. I was then thirty-six, and I am almost ashamed to relate the schoolboy's trick of which I was guilty. I sent her the following lines—'A devoted friend,

whom you obliged in former days, and who met you yesterday in the park without your recognising him, sends you his remembrances.' I posted this letter a few minutes before getting into the train which was to take me to New York; and, as I did so, my heart beat as violently as though I had performed a heroic deed. Great adventures, forsooth! And to think that my life presents none more striking, and that trifles such as these are the only food for my memory!

"A twelvemonth later I met Francis Gilmore in Broadway. The world is small—so small that it is really difficult to keep out of the way of people one has once known. The likeness of my former pupil to his sister struck me, and I spoke to him. He looked at me at first with a puzzled expression, but after a few moments of hesitation he recognised me, a bright smile lighted up his pleasant face, and he shook hands warmly.

"'Mr Warren,' he exclaimed, 'how glad I am to see you! Ellen and I have often talked of you, and wondered what could have become of you. Why did we never hear from you?'

"'I did not suppose it would interest you.' I spoke timidly; and yet I owed nothing to the young fellow, and wanted nothing of him.

"'You wrong us by saying that,' replied Francis; 'do you think me ungrateful? Do you

fancy I have forgotten our pleasant walks in former days, and the long conversations we used to have? You alone ever taught me anything, and it is to you I owe the principles that have guided me through life. Many a day I have thought of you, and regretted you sincerely. As regards Ellen, no one has ever filled your place with her; she plays to this day the same pieces of music you taught her, and follows all your directions with a fidelity that would touch you.'

"'How are your father and mother, and how is your sister?' I inquired, feeling more deeply moved than I can express.

"'My poor mother died three years ago. It is Ellen who keeps house now.'

"'Your brother-in-law lives with you, then?'

"'My brother-in-law!' replied Francis, with surprise; 'did you not know that he was on board the Atlantic, which was lost last year in the passage from Liverpool to New York?'

"I could find no words to reply.

"'As to that,' added Francis, with great composure—'between you and me, he was no great loss. My dear brother-in-law was not by any means what my father fancied he was when he gave him my sister as a wife. The whole family has often regretted the marriage. Ellen lived apart from her husband for many years before his death.'

"I nodded so as to express my interest in his communications, but I could not for worlds have uttered a syllable.

"'You will come and see us soon, I hope,' added Francis, without noticing my emotion. 'We are still at the same place; but to make sure, here is my card. Come, Mr Warren—name your own day to come and dine with us. I promise you a hearty welcome.'

"I got off by promising to write the next day, and we parted.

"Fortunately my mind had lost its former liveliness. The pendulum, far from being urged to unruly motion, continued to swing slowly in the narrow space where it had oscillated for so many years. I said to myself that to renew my intimacy with the Gilmores would be to run the almost certain risk of reviving the sorrows and the disappointments of the past. I was then calm and rational. It would be madness in me, I felt, to aspire to the hand of a young, wealthy, and much-admired widow. To venture to see Ellen again was to incur the risk of seeing my reason once more wrecked, and the fatal chimera which had been the source of all my misery start into life again. If we are to believe what poets say, love ennobles man and exalts him into a demi-god. It may be so, but it turns him likewise into a fool and a madman. That was my case. At any cost I

was to guard against that fatal passion. I argued seriously with myself, and I determined to let the past be, and to reject every opportunity of bringing it to life again.

"A few days before my meeting with Francis, I had received tidings of the death of an old relative, whom I scarcely knew. In my childhood I had, on one or two occasions, spent my holidays at his house. He was gloomy and taciturn, but nevertheless he had always welcomed me kindly. I have a vague remembrance of having been told that he had been in love with my mother once upon a time, and that on hearing of her marriage he had retired into the solitude which he never left till the day of his death. Be that as it may, I had not lost my place in his affections, it seems: he had continued to feel an interest in me; and on his deathbed he had remembered me, and left me the greater part of his not very considerable fortune. I inherited little money; but there was a small, comfortably-furnished country-house, and an adjoining farm let on a long lease for £240 per annum. This was wealth for me, and more than enough to satisfy all my wants. Since I had heard of this legacy I had been doubtful as to my movements. My chance meeting with Francis settled the matter. I resolved at once to leave America, and to return to live in my native country. I knew your address, and wrote to you at once. I trusted that the sight

of my old and only friend would console me for the disappointments that life has inflicted on me—and I have not been deceived. At last I have been able to open my heart to a fellow-creature, and relieve myself of the heavy burden which I have borne alone ever since our separation. Now I feel lighter. You are not a severe judge. Doubtless you deplore my weakness, but you do not condemn me. If, as I have already said, I have done no good, neither have I committed any wicked action. I have been a nonentity—an utterly useless being; 'one too many,' like the sad hero of Tourgueneff's sad story. Before leaving, I wrote to Francis informing him that the death of a relative obliged me to return to Europe, and giving him your address, so as not to seem to be running away from him. Then I went on board, and at last reached your home. *Dixi!*"

Warren, who during this long story had taken care to keep his pipe alight, and had, moreover, nearly drained the bottle of port placed before him, now declared himself ready to listen to his friend's confession. But Hermann had been saddened by all he had heard, and was in no humour for talking. He remarked that it was getting late, and proposed to postpone any further conversation till the morrow.

Warren merely answered, "Very well," knocked the ashes out of his pipe, shared out the remainder

of the wine between his host and himself, and raising his glass, said, in a somewhat solemn tone, "To our youth, Hermann!" After emptying his glass at one draught, be replaced it on the table, and said complacently, "It is long since I have drunk with so much pleasure; for this time I have not drunk to forgetfulness, but to memory."

II.

Warren spent another week in Leipzig with his friend. No man was easier to live with: to every suggestion of Hermann's he invariably answered, "Very well;" and if Hermann proposed nothing, he was quite content to remain seated in a comfortable arm-chair by the fireside, holding a book which he scarcely looked at, and watching the long rolls of smoke from his pipe. He disliked new acquaintances; nevertheless the friends to whom Hermann introduced him found in him a quiet, unobtrusive, and well-informed companion. He pleased everybody. There was something strange and yet attractive in his person; there was a "charm" about him, people said. Hermann felt the attraction without being able to define in what it consisted. Their former friendship had been renewed unreservedly. The kind of fascination that Warren exercised over all those who approached him, often led Hermann to think that it was not unlikely that

in his youth he had inspired a real love in Ellen Gilmore.

One evening Hermann took his friend to the theatre, where a comic piece was being performed. In his young days Warren had been very partial to plays of that kind, and his joyous peals of laughter on such occasions still rang in the ears of his friend. But the attempt was a complete failure. Warren watched the performance without showing the slightest interest, and never even smiled. During the opening scenes he listened with attention, as though he were assisting at some performance of the legitimate drama; then, as if he could not understand what was going on before his eyes, he turned away with a wearied air and began looking at the audience. When, at the close of the second act, Hermann proposed that they should leave the house, he answered readily—

"Yes, let us go; all this seems very stupid—we will be much better at home. There is a time for all things, and buffoonery suits me no longer."

There was nothing left in Warren of the friend that Hermann had known fifteen years before. He loved him none the less; on the contrary, to his affection for him had been superadded a feeling of deep compassion. He would have made great sacrifices to secure his friend's happiness, and to see a smile light up the immovable features and the sorrowful dulness of the eye. His friendly

anxiety had not been lost upon Warren: and when the latter took his leave, he said with emotion—

"You wish me well, my old friend. I see it and feel it; and, believe me, I am grateful. We must not lose sight of each other again—I will write regularly."

A few days later, Hermann received a letter for his friend. It was an American letter, and the envelope was stamped with the initials "E. H." They were those of Ellen Howard, the heroine of Warren's sad history. He forwarded the letter immediately, and wrote at the same time to his friend—"I hope the inclosed brings you good news from America." But in his reply Warren took no notice of this passage, and made no allusion to Ellen. He only spoke of the new house in which he had just settled himself—"to end," as he said, "his days;" and he pressed Hermann to come and join him. The two friends at last agreed to pass Christmas and New Year's Day together; but when December came, Warren urged his friend to hasten his arrival.

"I do not feel well," he wrote, "and am often so weary that I stay at home all day. I have made no new acquaintances, and, most likely, will make none. I am alone. Your society would give me great pleasure. Come; your room is ready, and

will be, I trust, to your liking. There is a large writing-table and tolerably well-filled book-shelves; you can write there quite at your ease, without fear of disturbance. Come as soon as possible, my dear friend. I am expecting you impatiently."

Hermann happened to be at leisure, and was able to comply with his friend's wish, and to go to him in the first week of December. He found Warren looking worn and depressed. It was in vain he sought to induce him to consult a physician. Warren would reply—

"Doctors can do nothing for my complaint. I know where the shoe pinches. A physician would order me probably to seek relaxation and amusement, just as he would advise a poor devil whose blood is impoverished by bad food to strengthen himself with a generous diet and good wine. The poor man could not afford to get the good living, and I do not know what could enliven or divert me. Travel? I like nothing so well as sitting quietly in my arm-chair. New faces? They would not interest me—yours is the only company I prefer to solitude. Books? I am too old to take pleasure in learning new things, and what I have learned has ceased to interest me. It is not always easy to get what might do one good, and we must take things as they are."

Hermann noticed, as before, that his friend ate

little, but that, on the other hand, he drank a great deal. The sincere friendship he felt for him emboldened him to make a remark on the subject.

"It is true," said Warren, "I drink too much; but what can I do? Food is distasteful to me, and I must keep up my strength somehow. I am in a wretched state; my health is ruined."

One evening, as the two friends were seated together in Warren's room, while the wind and sleet were beating against the window-panes, the invalid began of his own accord to speak about Ellen.

"We now correspond regularly," he said. "She tells me in her last letter that she hopes soon to see me. Do you know, Hermann, that she is becoming an enigma for me? It is very evident that she does not treat me like other people, and I often wonder and ask myself what I am in her eyes? What does she feel towards me? Love? That is inadmissible. Pity, perhaps? This, then, is the end of my grand dreams—to be an object of pity? I have just answered her letter to say that I am settled here with the fixed intention of ending my useless existence in quiet and idleness. Do you remember a scene in Henry Heine's 'Reisebilder,' when a young student kisses a pretty girl, who lets him have his own way and makes no great resistance, because he has told her—'I will be gone

to-morrow at dawn, and I will never see you again'? The certainty of never seeing a person again gives a man the courage to say things that otherwise he would have kept hidden in the most secret depths of his being. I feel that my life is drawing to a close. Do not say no, my dear friend; my presentiments are certain. I have written it to Ellen. I have told her other things besides. What folly! All I have ever done has been folly or chimera. I end my life logically, in strict accordance with my whole Past, by making my first avowal of love on my deathbed. Is not that as useless a thing as can be?"

Hermann would have wished to know some particulars about this letter; but Warren replied, somewhat vaguely, "If I had a copy of my letter, I would show it to you willingly. You know my whole story, and I would not be ashamed to lay before you my last act of folly. I wrote about a fortnight ago, when I felt sure that death was drawing near. I was in a fever, not from fear—Death gains but little by taking my life—but from a singular species of excitement. I do not remember what were the words I used. Who knows? Perhaps this last product of my brain may have been quite a poetical performance. Never mind! I do not repent of what I have done; I am glad that Ellen should know at last that

I have loved her silently and hopelessly. If that is not disinterested, what is?" he added with a bitter smile.

Christmas went by sadly. Warren was now so weak that he could scarcely leave his bed for two or three hours each day. Hermann had taken upon himself to send for a doctor, but this latter had scarcely known what to prescribe. Warren was suffering from no special malady; he was dying of exhaustion. Now and then, during a few moments, which became daily more rare and more brief, his vivacity would return; but the shadow of Death was already darkening his mind.

On New Year's eve he got up very late. "We will welcome in the New Year," he said to Hermann. "I hope it may bring you happiness; I know it will bring me rest." A few minutes before midnight he opened the piano, and played with solemnity, and as if it had been a chorale, a song of Schumann's, entitled, "To the Drinking-cup of a departed Friend." Then, on the first stroke of midnight, he filled two glasses with some old Rhenish wine, and raised his own glass slowly. He was very pale, and his eyes were shining with feverish light. He was in a state of strange and fearful excitement. He looked at the glass which he held, and repeated deliberately a verse of the song which he had just been playing. "The

vulgar cannot understand what I see at the bottom of this cup." Then, at one draught, he drained the full glass.

While he was thus speaking and drinking, he had taken no notice of Hermann, who was watching him with consternation. Recovering himself at length, he exclaimed, "Another glass, Hermann! To friendship!" He drained this second glass, like the first, to the very last drop; and then, exhausted by the effort he had made, he sank heavily on a chair. Soon after, Hermann led him, like a sleepy child, to his bed.

During the days that followed, he was unable to leave his room; and the doctor thought it right to warn Hermann that all the symptoms seemed to point to a fatal issue.

On the 8th of January a servant from the hotel in the little neighbouring town brought a letter, which, he said, required an immediate answer. The sick man was then lying almost unconscious. Hermann broke the seal without hesitation, and read as follows:—

"My dear Friend,—A visit to Europe which my father had long planned, has at last been undertaken. I did not mention it to you, in order to have the pleasure of surprising you. On reaching this place, I learn that the illness of which you

spoke in your last letter has not yet left you. Under these circumstances, I will not venture to present myself without warning you of my arrival, and making sure that you are able to receive me. I am here with my brother, who, like myself, would not come so near to you without seeing you. My father has gone on to Paris, where Francis and I will join him in a few days. ELLEN."

Hermann, after one instant's thought, took up his hat and dismissed the messenger, saying he would give the answer himself. At the hotel he sent in his card, with the words, "From Mr Warren," and was immediately ushered into Ellen's presence.

She was alone. Hermann examined her rapidly. He saw an extremely beautiful woman, whose frank and fearless eyes were fixed on him with a questioning look.

Hermann had not frequented the society of women much, and was usually rather embarrassed in their presence. But on this occasion he thought only of his friend, and found no difficulty in explaining the motive of his visit. He told her his friend was ill —very ill—dying—and that he had opened the letter addressed to Warren. Ellen did not answer for some time; she seemed not to have understood what she had heard. After a while her eyes filled

with tears, and she asked whether she could see Mr Warren. On Hermann answering in the affirmative, she further inquired whether her brother might accompany her.

"Two visitors might fatigue the invalid too much," said Hermann; "your brother may come later."

"Are you not afraid that my visit may tire him?"

"I do not think so; it will make him very happy."

Ellen only took a few minutes to put on her hat and cloak, and they started. The short journey was accomplished in silence. When they reached the house, Hermann went in first to see how the dying man was. He was lying in his bed, in the delirium of fever, muttering incoherent sentences. Nevertheless he recognised Hermann, and asked for something to drink. After having allayed his thirst, he closed his eyes, as if to sleep.

"I have brought you a friend," said Hermann; "will you see him?"

"Hermann? He is always welcome."

"No; it is a friend from America."

"From America? . . . I lived there many years. . . . How desolate and monotonous were the shores I visited! . . ."

"Will you see your friend?"

"I am carried away by the current of the river. In the distance I see dark and shadowy forms; there are hills full of shade and coolness, . . . but I will never rest there."

Hermann retired noiselessly, and returned almost immediately with Ellen.

Warren, who had taken no notice of him, continued to follow the course of his wandering thoughts.

"The river is drawing near to the sea. Already I can hear the roar of the waves. . . . The banks are beginning to be clothed with verdure. . . . The hills are drawing nearer. . . . It is dark now. Here are the big trees beneath which I have dreamed so often. A radiant apparition shines through their foliage. . . . It comes towards me. . . . Ellen!"

She was standing beside the bed. The dying man saw her, and without showing the least surprise, said with a smile, "Thank God! you have come in time. I knew you were coming."

He murmured a few unintelligible words, and then remained silent for a long while. His eyes were wide open. Suddenly he cried "Hermann!"

Hermann came and stood beside Ellen.

"The pendulum. . . . You know what I mean?" A frank childish smile—the smile of his student days—lighted up his pallid face. He raised his

right hand, and tracing in the air with his forefinger a wide semicircle, to imitate the oscillation of a pendulum, he said, "Then." He then figured in the same manner a more limited and slower movement, and after repeating it several times, said, "Now." Lastly, he pointed straight before him with a motionless and almost menacing finger, and said, with a weak voice, "Soon."

He spoke no more, and closed his eyes. The breathing was becoming very difficult.

Ellen bent over him, and called him softly, "Henry, Henry!" He opened his eyes. She brought her mouth close to his ear, and said, with a sob, "I have always loved you."

"I knew it from the first," he said, quietly and with confidence.

A gentle expression stole over his countenance, and life seemed to return. Once more he had the confident look of youth. A sad and beautiful smile played on his lips; he took the hand of Ellen in his, and kissed it gently.

"How do you feel now?" inquired Hermann.

The old answer, "Very well."

His hands were plucking at the bed-clothes, as if he strove to cover his face with them. Then his arms stiffened and the fingers remained motionless.

"Very well," he repeated.

He appeared to fall into deep thought. There was a long pause. At last he turned a dying look, fraught with tender pity and sadness, towards Ellen, and in a low voice, which was scarcely audible, he said these two words, with a slight emphasis on the first—"*Perfectly* well."