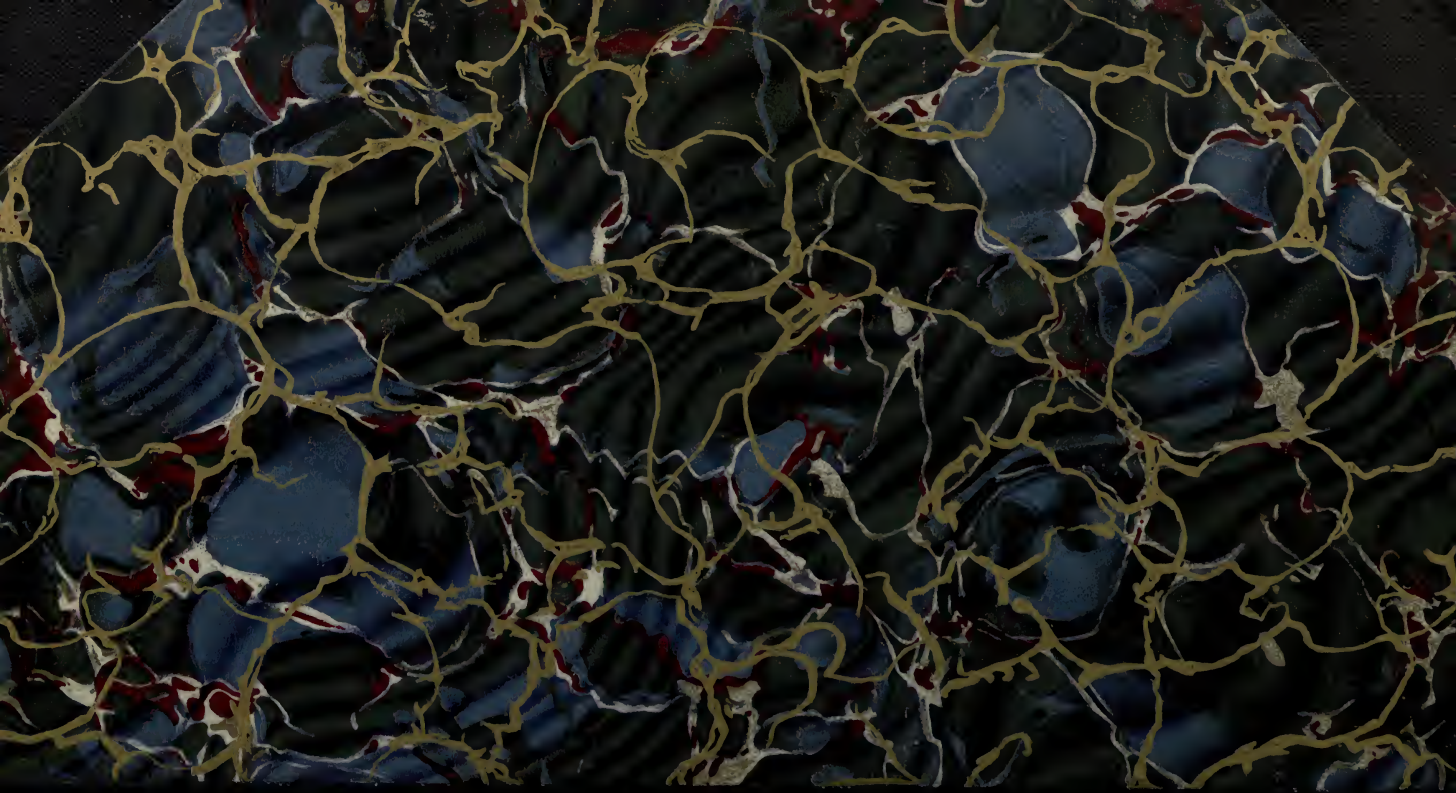

Tales from "Blackwood"

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD"

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

Selected by

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VOLUME VII

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

CHRISTMAS EVE ON A HAUNTED HULK.

BY FRANK COWPER.

I SHALL never forget that night as long as I live. It was during the Christmas vacation 187–. I was staying with an old college friend who had lately been appointed the curate of a country parish, and had asked me to come and cheer him up, since he could not get away at that time.

As we drove along the straight country lane from the little wayside station, it forcibly struck me that a life in such a place must be dreary indeed. I have always been much influenced by local colour; above all things, I am depressed by a dead level, and here was monotony with a vengeance. On each side of the low hedges, lichen-covered and wind-cropped, stretched bare fields, the absolute level of the horizon

being only broken at intervals by some mournful tree that pointed like a decrepit finger-post towards the east, for all its western growth was nipped and blasted by the roaring south-west winds. An occasional black spot, dotted against the grey distance, marked a hay-rick or labourer's cottage, while some two miles ahead of us the stunted spire of my friend's church stood out against the wintry sky, amid the withered branches of a few ragged trees. On our right hand stretched dreary wastes of mud, interspersed here and there with firmer patches of land, but desolate and forlorn, cut off from all communication with the mainland by acres of mud and thin streaks of brown water.

A few sea-birds were piping over the waste, and this was the only sound, except the grit of our own wheels and the steady step of the horse, which broke the silence.

"Not lively is it?" said Jones; and I couldn't say it was. As we drove "up street," as the inhabitants fondly called the small array of low houses which bordered the highroad, I noticed the lack-lustre expression of the few children and untidy women who were loitering about the doors of their houses.

There was an old tumble-down inn, with a dilapidated sign-board, scarcely held up by its rickety ironwork. A daub of yellow and red paint, with a dingy streak of blue, was supposed to represent the Duke's head, although what exalted member of the aris-

tocracy was thus distinguished it would be hard to say. Jones inclined to think it was the Duke of Wellington; but I upheld the theory that it was the Duke of Marlborough, chiefly basing my arguments on the fact that no artist who desired to convey a striking likeness would fail to show the Great Duke in profile, whereas this personage was evidently depicted full face, and wearing a three-cornered hat.

At the end of the village was the church, standing in an untidy churchyard, and opposite it was a neat little house, quite new, and of that utilitarian order of architecture which will stamp the Victorian age as one of the least imaginative of eras. Two windows flanked the front door, and three narrow windows looked out overhead from under a slate roof; variety and distinction being given to the façade by the brilliant blending of the yellow bricks with red, so bright as to suggest the idea of their having been painted. A scrupulously clean stone at the front door, together with the bright green of the little palings and woodwork, told me what sort of landlady to expect, and I was not disappointed. A kindly featured woman, thin, cheery, and active, received us, speaking in that encouraging tone of half-compassionate, half-proprietary patronage, which I have observed so many women adopt towards lone beings of the opposite sex.

"You will find it precious dull, old man," said Jones, as we were eating our frugal dinner. "There's

nothing for you to do, unless you care to try a shot at the duck over the mud-flats. I shall be busy on and off nearly all to-morrow."

As we talked, I could not help admiring the cheerful pluck with which Jones endured the terrible monotony of his life in this dreary place. His rector was said to be delicate, and in order to prolong a life, which no doubt he considered valuable to the Church, he lived with his family either at Torquay or Cannes in elegant idleness, quite unable to do any duty, but fully equal to enjoying the pleasant society of those charming places, and quite satisfied that he had done his duty when he sacrificed a tenth of his income to provide for the spiritual needs of his parish. There was no squire in the place; no "gentlefolk," as the rustics called them, lived nearer than five miles; and there was not a single being of his own class with whom poor Jones could associate. And yet he made no complaint. The nearest approach to one being the remark that the worst of it was, it was so difficult, if not impossible, to be really understood. "The poor being so suspicious and ignorant, they look at everything from such a low standpoint, enthusiasm and freshness sink so easily into formalism and listlessness."

The next day, finding that I really could be of no use, and feeling awkward and bored, as a man always is when another is actively doing his duty, I went off to the marshes to see if I could get any sport.

I took some sandwiches and a flask with me, not intending to return until dinner. After wandering about for some time, crossing dyke after dyke by treacherous rails more or less rotten, I found myself on the edge of a wide mere. I could see some duck out in the middle, and standing far out in the shallow water was a heron. They were all out of shot, and I saw I should do no good without a duck-punt.

I sat down on an old pile left on the top of the sea-wall, which had been lately repaired. The duck looked very tempting; but I doubted if I should do much good in broad daylight, even if I had a duck-punt, without a duck-gun. After sitting disconsolately for some time, I got up and wandered on.

The dreariness of the scene was most depressing: everything was brown and grey. Nothing broke the monotony of the wide-stretching mere; the whole scene gave me the impression of a straight line of interminable length, with a speck in the centre of it. That speck was myself.

At last, as I turned an angle in the sea-wall, I saw something lying above high-water mark, which looked like a boat.

Rejoiced to see any signs of humanity, I quickened my pace. It was a boat, and, better still, a duck-punt. As I came nearer I could see that she was old and very likely leaky; but here was a prospect of adventure, and I was not going to be readily daunted. On examination, the old craft seemed more water-tight

than I expected. At least she held water very well, and if she kept it in, she must equally well keep it out. I turned her over to run the water out, and then dragging the crazy old boat over the line of seaweed, launched her. But now a real difficulty met me. The paddles were nowhere to be seen. They had doubtless been taken away by the owner, and it would be little use searching for them. But a stout stick would do to punt her over the shallow water; and after some little search, I found an old stake which would answer well.

This was real luck. I had now some hope of bagging a few duck; at any rate, I was afloat, and could explore the little islets, which barely rose above the brown water. I might at least find some rabbits on them. I cautiously poled myself towards the black dots; but before I came within range, up rose first one, then another and another, like a string of beads, and the whole flight went, with outstretched necks and rapidly beating wings, away to my right, and seemed to pitch again beyond a low island some half-mile away. The heron had long ago taken himself off; so there was nothing to be done but pole across the mud in pursuit of the duck. I had not gone many yards when I found that I was going much faster than I expected, and soon saw the cause. The tide was falling, and I was being carried along with it. This would bring me nearer to my ducks, and I lazily guided the punt with the stake.

On rounding the island I found a new source of interest. The mere opened out to a much larger extent, and away towards my right I could see a break in the low land, as if a wide ditch had been cut through; while in this opening ever and anon dark objects rose up and disappeared again in a way I could not account for. The water seemed to be running off the mud-flats, and I saw that if I did not wish to be left high, but not dry, on the long slimy wastes, I must be careful to keep in the little channels or "lakes," which acted as natural drains to the acres of greasy mud.

A conspicuous object attracted my attention some mile or more towards the opening in the land. It was a vessel lying high up on the mud, and looking as if she was abandoned.

The ducks had pitched a hundred yards or so beyond the island, and I approached as cautiously as I could; but just as I was putting down the stake to take up my gun, there was a swift sound of beating wings and splashing water, and away my birds flew, low over the mud, towards the old hulk.

Here was a chance, I thought. If I could get on board and remain hidden, I might, by patiently waiting, get a shot. I looked at my watch; there was still plenty of daylight left, and the tide was only just beginning to leave the mud. I punted away, therefore, with renewed hope, and was not long in getting up to the old ship.

There was just sufficient water over the mud to allow me to approach within ten or twelve feet, but further I could not push the punt. This was disappointing; however, I noticed a deep lake ran round the other side, and determined to try my luck there. So with a slosh and a heave I got the flat afloat again, and made for the deeper water. It turned out quite successful, and I was enabled to get right under the square overhanging counter, while a little lane of water led alongside her starboard quarter. I pushed the nose of the punt into this, and was not long in clambering on board by the rusty irons of her fore-chains.

The old vessel lay nearly upright in the soft mud, and a glance soon told she would never be used again. Her gear and rigging were all rotten, and everything valuable had been removed. She was a brig of some two hundred tons, and had been a fine vessel, no doubt. To me there is always a world of romance in a deserted ship. The places she has been to, the scenes she has witnessed, the possibilities of crime, of adventure—all these thoughts crowd upon me when I see an old hulk lying deserted and forgotten—left to rot upon the mud of some lonely creek.

In order to keep my punt afloat as long as possible, I towed her round and moored her under the stern, and then looked over the bulwarks for the duck. There they were, swimming not more than a hundred and fifty yards away, and they were coming towards

me. I remained perfectly concealed under the high bulwark, and could see them paddling and feeding in the greasy weed. Their approach was slow, but I could afford to wait. Nearer and nearer they came; another minute, and they would be well within shot. I was already congratulating myself upon the success of my adventure, and thinking of the joy of Jones at this large accession to his larder, when suddenly there was a heavy splash, and with a wild spluttering rush the whole pack rose out of the water, and went skimming over the mud towards the distant sea. I let off both barrels after them, and tried to console myself by thinking that I saw the feathers fly from one; but not a bird dropped, and I was left alone in my chagrin.

What could have caused the splash, that luckless splash, I wondered. There was surely no one else on board the ship, and certainly no one could get out here without mud-pattens or a boat. I looked round. All was perfectly still. Nothing broke the monotony of the grey scene—sodden and damp and lifeless. A chill breeze came up from the south-west, bringing with it a raw mist, which was blotting out the dark distance, and fast limiting my horizon. The day was drawing in, and I must be thinking of going home. As I turned round, my attention was arrested by seeing a duck-punt glide past me in the now rapidly falling water, which was swirling by the mud-bank on which the vessel lay. But there was

no one in her. A dreadful thought struck me. It must be my boat, and how shall I get home? I ran to the stern and looked over. The duck-punt was gone.

The frayed and stranded end of the painter told me how it had happened. I had not allowed for the fall of the tide, and the strain of the punt, as the water fell away, had snapped the line, old and rotten as it was.

I hurried to the bows, and jumping on to the bitts, saw my punt peacefully drifting away, some quarter of a mile off. It was perfectly evident I could not hope to get her again.

It was beginning to rain steadily. I could see that I was in for dirty weather, and became a little anxious about how I was to get back, especially as it was now rapidly growing dark. So thick was it that I could not see the low land anywhere, and could only judge of its position by remembering that the stern of the vessel pointed that way.

The conviction grew upon me that I could not possibly get away from this doleful old hulk without assistance, and how to get it, I could not for the life of me see. I had not seen a sign of a human being the whole day. It was not likely any more would be about at night. However, I shouted as loud as I could, and then waited to hear if there were any response. There was not a sound, only the wind moaned slightly through

the stumps of the masts, and something creaked in the cabin.

Well, I thought, at least it might be worse. I shall have shelter for the night; while had I been left on one of these islands, I should have had to spend the night exposed to the pelting rain. Happy thought! Go below before it gets too dark, and see what sort of a berth can be got, if the worst comes to the worst. So thinking, I went to the booby-hatch, and found as I expected that it was half broken open, and any one could go below who liked.

As I stepped down the rotting companion, the air smelt foul and dank. I went below very cautiously, for I was not at all sure that the boards would bear me. It was fortunate I did so, for as I stepped off the lowest step the floor gave way under my foot, and had I not been holding on to the stair-rail, I should have fallen through. Before going any further, I took a look round.

The prospect was not inviting. The light was dim; I could scarcely make out objects near me, all else was obscurity. I could see that the whole of the inside of the vessel was completely gutted. What little light there was came through the stern ports. A small round speck of light looked at me out of the darkness ahead, and I could see that the flooring had either all given way or been taken out of her. At my feet a gleam of water showed me

what to expect if I should slip through the floor-joists. Altogether, a more desolate, gloomy, ghostly place it would be difficult to find.

I could not see any bunk or locker where I could sit down, and everything movable had been taken out of the hulk. Groping my way with increasing caution, I stepped across the joists, and felt along the side of the cabin. I soon came to a bulkhead. Continuing to grope, I came to an opening. If the cabin was dim, here was blackness itself. I felt it would be useless to attempt to go further, especially as a very damp foul odour came up from the bilge-water in her hold. As I stood looking into the darkness, a creepy, chilly shudder passed over me, and with a shiver I turned round to look at the cabin. My eyes had now become used to the gloom. A deeper patch of darkness on my right suggested the possibility of a berth, and groping my way over to it, I found the lower bunk was still entire. Here at least I could rest, if I found it impossible to get to shore. Having some wax vestas in my pocket, I struck a light and examined the bunk. It was better than I expected. If I could only find something to burn, I should be comparatively cheerful.

Before reconciling myself to my uncomfortable position, I resolved to see whether I could not get to the shore, and went up the rickety stairs again. It was raining hard, and the wind had got up. Nothing could be more dismal. I looked over the

side and lowered myself down from the main-chains, to see if it were possible to walk over the mud. I found I could not reach the mud at all; and fearful of being unable to climb back if I let go, I clambered up the side again and got on board.

It was quite clear I must pass the night here. Before going below I once more shouted at the top of my voice, more to keep up my own spirits than with any hope of being heard, and then paused to listen. Not a sound of any sort replied. I now prepared to make myself as comfortable as I could.

It was a dreary prospect. I would rather have spent the night on deck than down below in that foul cabin; but the drenching driving rain, as well as the cold, drove me to seek shelter below. It seemed so absurd to be in the position of a shipwrecked sailor, within two or three miles of a prosy country hamlet, and in a landlocked harbour while actually on land, if the slimy deep mud could be called land. I had not many matches left, but I had my gun and cartridges. The idea occurred to me to fire off minute-guns. "That's what I ought to do, of course. The red flash will be seen in this dark night," for it was dark now and no mistake. Getting up on to the highest part of the vessel, I blazed away. The noise sounded to me deafening; surely the whole country-side would be aroused. After firing off a dozen cartridges, I waited. But the silence only seemed the more oppressive, and the

blackness all the darker. "It's no good; I'll turn in," I thought, dejectedly.

With great difficulty I groped my way to the top of the companion-ladder, and bumped dismally down the steps. If only I had a light I should be fairly comfortable, I thought. "Happy thought, make a 'spit-devil!'" as we used when boys to call a little cone of damp gunpowder.

I got out my last two cartridges, and emptying the powder carefully into my hand, I moistened it, and worked it up to a paste. I then placed it on the smooth end of the rail, and lighted it. This was brilliant: at least so it seemed by contrast with the absolute blackness around me. By its light I was able to find my way to the bunk, and it lasted just long enough for me to arrange myself fairly comfortably for the night. By contriving a succession of matches, I was enabled to have enough light to see to eat my frugal supper; for I had kept a little sherry and a few sandwiches to meet emergencies, and it was a fortunate thing I had. The light and the food made me feel more cheery, and by the time the last match had gone out, I felt worse might have happened to me by a long way.

As I lay still, waiting for sleep to come, the absurdity of the situation forced itself upon me. Here was I, to all intents and purposes as much cut off from all communication with the rest of the world as if I were cast away upon a desert island. The

chances were that I should make some one see or hear me the next day. Jones would be certain to have the country searched, and at the longest I should only endure the discomfort of one night, and get well laughed at for my pains; but meanwhile I was absolutely severed from all human contact, and was as isolated as Robinson Crusoe, only "more so," for I had no other living thing whatever to share my solitude. The silence of the place was perfect; and if silence can woo sleep, sleep ought very soon to have come. But when one is hungry and wet, and in a strange uncanny kind of place, besides being in one's clothes, it is a very difficult thing to go to sleep. First, my head was too low; then, after resting it on my arms, I got cramp in them. My back seemed all over bumps; when I turned on my side, I appeared to have got a rather serious enlargement of the hip-joint; and I found my damp clothes smell very musty. After sighing and groaning for some time, I sat up for change of position, and nearly fractured my skull in so doing, against the remains of what had once been a berth above me. I didn't dare to move in the inky blackness, for I had seen sufficient to know that I might very easily break my leg or my neck in the floorless cabin.

There was nothing for it but to sit still, or lie down and wait for daylight. I had no means of telling the time. When I had last looked at my watch, before the last match had gone out, it was not more than

six o'clock; it might be now about eight, or perhaps not so late. Fancy twelve long hours spent in that doleful black place, with nothing in the world to do to pass away the time! I *must* go to sleep; and so, full of this resolve, I lay down again.

I suppose I went to sleep. All I can recollect, after lying down, is keeping my mind resolutely turned inwards, as it were, and fixed upon the arduous business of counting an imaginary and interminable flock of sheep pass one by one through an ideal gate. This meritorious method of compelling sleep had, no doubt, been rewarded; but I have no means of knowing how long I slept, and I cannot tell at what hour of the night the following strange circumstances occurred—for occur they certainly did—and I am as perfectly convinced that I was the oral witness to some ghastly crime, as I am that I am writing these lines. I have little doubt I shall be laughed at, as Jones laughed at me—be told that I was dreaming, that I was overtired and nervous. In fact, so accustomed have I become to this sort of thing, that I now hardly ever tell my tale; or, if I do, I put it in the third person, and then I find people believe it, or at least take much more interest in it. I suppose the reason is, that people cannot bring themselves to think so strange a thing could have happened to such a prosy everyday sort of man as myself, and they cannot divest their minds of the idea that I am—well, to put it mildly—"drawing on

my imagination for facts." Perhaps, if the tale appears in print, it will be believed, as a facetious friend of mine once said to a newly married couple, who had just seen the announcement of their marriage in the 'Times,' "Ah, didn't know you were married till you saw it in print!"

Well, be the time what it may have been, all I know is that the next thing I can remember after getting my five-hundredth sheep through the gate is, that I heard two most horrible yells ring through the darkness. I sat bolt-upright; and as a proof that my senses were "all there," I did not bring my head this time against the berth overhead, remembering to bend it outwards so as to clear it.

There was not another sound. The silence was as absolute as the darkness. "I must have been dreaming," I thought; but the sounds were ringing in my ears, and my heart was beating with excitement. There must have been some reason for this. I never was "taken this way" before. I could not make it out, and felt very uncomfortable. I sat there listening for some time. No other sound breaking the deathly stillness, and becoming tired of sitting, I lay down again. Once more I set myself to get my interminable flocks through that gate, but I could not help myself listening.

There seemed to me a sound growing in the darkness, a something gathering in the particles of the air, as if molecules of the atmosphere were rustling

together, and with stilly movement were whispering something. The wind had died down, and I would have gone on deck if I could move; but it was hazardous enough moving about in the light: it would have been madness to attempt to move in that blackness. And so I lay still and tried to sleep.

But now there was a sound, indistinct, but no mere fancy; a muffled sound, as of some movement in the forepart of the ship.

I listened intently and gazed into the darkness.

What was the sound? It did not seem like rats. It was a dull, shuffling kind of noise, very indistinct, and conveying no clue whatever as to its cause. It lasted only for a short time. But now the cold damp air seemed to have become more piercingly chilly. The raw iciness seemed to strike into the very marrow of my bones, and my teeth chattered. At the same time a new sense seemed to be assailed: the foul odour which I had noticed arising from the stagnant water in the bilge appeared to rise into more objectionable prominence, as if it had been stirred.

"I cannot stand this," I muttered, shivering in horrible aversion at the disgusting odour; "I will go on deck at all hazards."

Rising to put this resolve in execution, I was arrested by the noise beginning again. I listened. This time I distinctly distinguished two separate sounds: one, like a heavy soft weight being dragged along with difficulty; the other like the hard sound

of boots on boards. Could there be others on board after all? If so, why had they made no sound when I clambered on deck, or afterwards, when I shouted and fired my gun?

Clearly, if there were people, they wished to remain concealed, and my presence was inconvenient to them. But how absolutely still and quiet they had kept! It appeared incredible that there should be any one. I listened intently. The sound had ceased again, and once more the most absolute stillness reigned around. A gentle swishing, wobbling, lapping noise seemed to form itself in the darkness. It increased, until I recognised the chattering and bubbling of water. "It must be the tide which is rising," I thought; "it has reached the rudder, and is eddying round the stern-post." This also accounted, in my mind, for the other noises, because, as the tide surrounded the vessel, and she thus became water-borne, all kinds of sounds might be produced in the old hulk as she resumed her upright position.

However, I could not get rid of the chilly horrid feeling those two screams had produced, combined with the disgusting smell, which was getting more and more obtrusive. It was foul, horrible, revolting, like some carrion, putrid and noxious. I prepared to take my chances of damage, and rose up to grope my way to the companion-ladder.

It was a more difficult job than I had any idea of. I had my gun, it was true, and with it I could feel

for the joists; but when once I let go of the edge of the bunk I had nothing to steady me, and nearly went headlong at the first step. Fortunately I reached back in time to prevent my fall; but this attempt convinced me that I had better endure the strange horrors of the unknown, than the certain miseries of a broken leg or neck.

I sat down, therefore, on the bunk.

Now that my own movements had ceased, I became aware that the shuffling noise was going on all the time. "Well," thought I, "they may shuffle. They won't hurt me, and I shall go to sleep again." So reflecting, I lay down, holding my gun, ready to use as a club if necessary.

Now it is all very well to laugh at superstitious terrors. Nothing is easier than to obtain a cheap reputation for brilliancy, independence of thought, and courage, by deriding the fear of the supernatural when comfortably seated in a drawing-room well lighted, and with company. But put those scoffers in a like situation with mine, and I don't believe they would have been any more free from a feeling the reverse of bold, mocking, and comfortable, than I was.

I had read that most powerful ghost-story, 'The Haunted and the Haunters,' by the late Lord Lytton, and the vividness of that weird tale had always impressed me greatly. Was I actually now to experience in my own person, and with no possibility of escape,

the trying ordeal that bold ghost-hunter went through, under much more favourable circumstances? He at least had his servant with him. He had fuel and a light, and above all, he could get away when he wanted to. I felt I could face any number of spiritual manifestations, if only I had warmth and light. But the icy coldness of the air was eating into my bones, and I shivered until my teeth chattered.

I could not get to sleep. I could not prevent myself listening, and at last I gave up the contest, and let myself listen. But there seemed now nothing to listen to. All the time I had been refusing to let my ears do their office, by putting my handkerchief over one ear, and lying on my arm with the other, a confused noise appeared to reach me, but the moment I turned round and lay on my back, everything seemed quiet. "It's only my fancy after all; the result of cold and want of a good dinner. I will go to sleep." But in spite of this I lay still, listening a little longer. There was the sound of trickling water against the broad bilge of the old hulk, and I knew the tide was rising fast: my thoughts turned to the lost canoe, and to reproaching myself with my stupidity in not allowing enough rope, or looking at it more carefully. Suddenly I became all attention again. An entirely different sound now arrested me. It was distinctly a low groan, and followed almost immediately by heavy blows—blows which fell on a soft substance,

and then more groans, and again those sickening blows.

"There must be men here. Where are they? and what is it?" I sat up, and strained my eyes towards where the sound came from. The sounds had ceased again. Should I call out, and let the man or men know that I was here? What puzzled me was the absolute darkness. How could any one see to hit an object, or do anything else in this dense obscurity? It appalled me. Anything might pass at an inch's distance, and I could not tell who or what it was. But how could anything human find its way about, any more than I could? Perhaps there was a solid bulkhead dividing the forecastle from me. But it would have to be very sound, and with no chink whatever, to prevent a gleam or ray of light finding its way out somewhere. I could not help feeling convinced that the whole hull was open from one end to the other. Was I really dreaming after all? To convince myself that I was wide awake, I felt in my pockets for my note-book, and pulling out my pencil, I opened the book, and holding it in my left hand, wrote as well as I could, by feel alone: "I am wide awake; it is about midnight—Christmas eve, 187–." I found I had got to the bottom of the page, so I shut the book up, resolving to look at it the next morning. I felt curious to see what the writing looked like by daylight.

But all further speculation was cut short by the

shuffling and dragging noise beginning again. There was no doubt the sounds were louder, and were coming my way.

I never in all my life felt so uncomfortable—I may as well at once confess it—so frightened. There, in that empty hull, over that boardless floor, over these rotting joists, somebody or something was dragging some heavy weight. What, I could not imagine; only the shrieks, the blows, the groans, the dull thumping sounds, compelled me to suspect the worst,—to feel convinced that I was actually within some few feet of a horrible murder then being committed. I could form no idea of who the victim was, or who was the assassin. That I actually heard the sounds I had no doubt; that they were growing louder and more distinct I felt painfully aware. The horror of the situation was intense. If only I could strike a light, and see what was passing close there—but I had no matches. I could hear a sound as of some one breathing slowly, stertorously, then a dull groan. And once more the cruel sodden blows fell again, followed by a drip, drip, and heavy drop in the dank water below, from which the sickening smell rose, pungent, reeking, horrible.

The dragging shuffling noise now began again. It came quite close to me, so close that I felt I had only to put out my hand to touch the thing. Good heavens! was it coming to my bunk? The thing passed, and all the time the dull drip, as of some

heavy drops, fell into the water below. It was awful. All this time I was sitting up, and holding my gun by its barrel, ready to use it if I were attacked. As the sound passed me at the closest, I put out the gun involuntarily; but it touched nothing, and I shuddered at the thought that *there was no floor over which the weight could be drawn.*

I must be dreaming some terribly vivid dream. It could not be real. I pinched myself. I felt I was pinching myself. It was no dream. The sweat poured off my brow, my teeth chattered with the cold. It was terrific in its dreadful mystery.

And now the sounds altered. The noises had reached the companion-ladder. Something was climbing them with difficulty. The old stairs creaked. Bump, thump, the thing was dragged up the steps with many pauses, and at last it seemed to have reached the deck. A long pause now followed. The silence grew dense around. I dreaded the stillness—the silence that made itself be heard almost more than the sounds. What new horror would that awful quiet bring forth? What terror was still brooding in the depths of that clinging darkness—darkness that could be felt?

The absolute silence was broken,—horribly broken,—by a dull drip from the stairs, and then the dragging began again. Distant and less distinct, but the steps were louder. They came nearer—over my head—the old boards creaked, and the weight was dragged

right over me. I could hear it above my head: for the steps stopped, and two distinct raps, followed by a third heavier one, sounded so clearly above me, that it seemed almost as if it was something striking the rotten woodwork of the berth over my head. The sounds were horribly suggestive of the elbows and head of a body being dropped on the deck.

And now, as if the horrors had not been enough, a fresh ghastliness was added. So close were the raps above me that I involuntarily moved, as if I had been struck by what caused them. As I did so, I felt something drop on to my head and slowly trickle over my forehead: it was too horrible! I sprang up in my disgust, and with a wild cry I stepped forward, and instantly fell between the joists into the rank water below.

The shock was acute. Had I been asleep and dreaming before, this must inevitably have roused me up. I found myself completely immersed in water, and, for a moment, was absolutely incapable of thinking. As it was pitch-dark and my head had gone under, I could not tell whether I was above water or not, as I felt the bottom and struggled and splashed on to my legs. It was only by degrees I knew I must be standing with my head out of the foul mixture, because I was able to breathe easily, although the wet running down from my hair dribbled into my mouth as I stood shivering and gasping.

It was astonishing how a physical discomfort over-

came a mental terror. Nothing could be more miserable than my present position, and my efforts were at once directed to getting out of this dreadful place. But let any one who has ever had the ill-luck to fall out of bed in his boyhood try and recollect his sensations. The bewildering realisation that he is not in bed, that he does not know where he is, which way to go, or what to do to get back again; everything he touches seems strange, and one piece of furniture much the same as any other. I well remember such an accident, and how, having rolled under the bed before I was wide awake, I could not for the life of me understand why I could not get up, what it was that kept me down. I had not the least idea which way to get out, and kept going round and round in a circle under my bed for a long time, and should probably have been doing it until daylight, had not my sighs and groans awoke my brother, who slept in the same room, and who came to my help.

If, then, one is so utterly at fault in a room every inch of which one knows intimately, how much more hopeless was my position at the bottom of this old vessel, half immersed in water, and totally without any clue which could help me to get out! I had not the least idea which was the ship's stern or which her stem, and every movement I made with my feet only served to unsteady me, as the bottom was all covered with slime, and uneven with the great timbers of the vessel.

My first thought on recovering my wits was to stretch my arms up over my head, and I was relieved to find that I could easily reach the joists above me. I was always fairly good at gymnastics, and I had not much difficulty in drawing myself up and sitting on the joist, although the weight of my wet clothes added to my exertions considerably. Having so far succeeded, I sat and drained, as it were, into the water below. The smell was abominable. I never disliked myself so much, and I shivered with cold.

As I could not get any wetter, I determined to go on deck somehow, but where was the companion-ladder? I had nothing to guide me. Strange to say, the reality of my struggles had almost made me forget the mysterious phenomena I had been listening to. But now, as I looked round, my attention was caught by a luminous patch which quivered and flickered on my right, at what distance from me I could not tell. It was like the light from a glow-worm, only larger and changing in shape; sometimes elongated like a lambent oval, and then it would sway one way or another, as if caught in a draught of air. While I was looking at it and wondering what could cause it, I heard the steps over my head; they passed above me, and then seemed to grow louder on my left. A creeping dread again came over me. If only I could get out of this horrible place—but where were the stairs? I listened. The footfall seemed to be coming down some steps; then

the companion-ladder must be on my left. But if I moved that way I should meet the Thing, whatever it was, that was coming down. I shuddered at the thought. However, I made up my mind. Stretching out my hand very carefully, I felt for the next joist, reached it, and crawled across. I stopped to listen. The steps were coming nearer. My hearing had now become acute; I could almost tell the exact place of each footfall. It came closer—closer,—quite close, surely—on the very joist on which I was sitting. I thought I could feel the joist quiver, and involuntarily moved my hand to prevent the heavy tread falling on it. The steps passed on, grew fainter, and ceased, as they drew near the pale lambent light. One thing I noticed with curious horror, and that was, that although the thing must have passed between me and the light, yet it was never for a moment obscured, which it must have been had any body or substance passed between, and yet I was certain that the steps went directly from me to it.

It was all horribly mysterious; and what had become of the other sound—the thing that was being dragged? An irresistible shudder passed over me; but I determined to pursue my way until I came to something. It would never do to sit still and shiver there.

After many narrow escapes of falling again, I reached a bulkhead, and cautiously feeling along it, I came to an opening. It was the companion-lad-

der. By this time my hands, by feeling over the joists, had become dry again. I felt along the step to be quite sure that it was the stairs, and in so doing I touched something wet, sticky, clammy. Oh, horror! what was it? A cold shiver shook me nearly off the joist, and I felt an unutterable sense of repulsion to going on. However, the fresher air which came down the companion revived me, and, conquering my dread, I clambered on to the step. It did not take long to get up-stairs and stand on the deck again.

I think I never in all my life experienced such a sense of joy as I did on being out of that disgusting hole. It was true I was soaking wet, and the night wind cut through me like a knife; but these were things I could understand, and were matter of common experience. What I had gone through might only be a question of nerves, and had no tangible or visible terror; but it was none the less very dreadful, and I would not go through such an experience again for worlds. As I stood cowering under the lee of the bulwark, I looked round at the sky. There was a pale light as if of daybreak away in the east, and it seemed as if all my troubles would be over with the dawn. It was bitterly cold. The wind had got round to the north, and I could faintly make out the low shore astern.

While I stood shivering there, a cry came down the wind. At first I thought it was a sea-bird, but it

sounded again. I felt sure it was a human voice. I sprang up on to the taffrail, and shouted at the top of my lungs, then paused. The cry came down clearer and distinct. It was Jones's voice—had he heard me? I waved my draggled pocket-handkerchief and shouted again. In the silence which followed, I caught the words, "We are coming." What joyful words! Never did shipwrecked mariner on a lonely isle feel greater delight. My misery would soon be over. Anyhow, I should not have to wait long.

Unfortunately the tide was low, and was still falling. Nothing but a boat could reach me, I thought, and to get a boat would take some time. I therefore stamped up and down the deck to get warm; but I had an instinctive aversion for the companion-ladder, and the deep shadows of the forepart of the vessel.

As I turned round in my walk, I thought I saw something moving over the mud. I stopped. It was undoubtedly a figure coming towards me. A voice hailed me in gruff accents—

"Lily, ahoy! Be any one aboard?"

Was any one aboard? What an absurd question! and here had I been shouting myself hoarse. However, I quickly reassured him, and then understood why my rescuer did not sink in the soft mud. He had mud-pattens on. Coming up as close as he could, he shouted to me to keep clear, and then threw first one, then the other, clattering wooden board on to the deck. I found them, and under the instructions

of my friend, I did not take long in putting them on. The man was giving me directions as to how to manage; but I did not care how much wetter I got, and dropped over the side into the slime. Sliding and straddling, I managed to get up to my friend, and then together we skated, as it were, to the shore—although skating very little represents the awkward splashes and slips I made on my way to land. I found quite a little crowd awaiting me on the bank; but Jones, with ready consideration, hurried me off to a cart he had in a lane near, and drove me home.

I told him the chief points of the adventure on our way; but did not say anything of the curious noises. It is odd how shy a man feels at telling what he knows people will never believe. It was not until the evening of the next day that I began to tell him, and then only after I was fortified by an excellent dinner, and some very good claret. Jones listened attentively. He was far too kindly and well bred to laugh at me; but I could see he did not believe one word as to the reality of the occurrence. "Very strange!" "How remarkable!" "Quite extraordinary!" he kept saying, with evident interest. But I was sure he put it all down to my fatigue and disordered imagination. And so, to do him justice, has everybody else to whom I have told the tale since.

The fact is, we cannot, in this prosaic age, believe in anything the least approaching the supernatural.

Nor do I. But nevertheless I am as certain as I am that I am writing these words, that the thing did really happen, and will happen again, may happen every night for all I know, only I don't intend to try and put my belief to the test. I have a theory which of course will be laughed at, and as I am not in the least scientific, I cannot bolster it up by scientific arguments. It is this: As Mr Edison has now discovered that by certain simple processes human sounds can be reproduced at any future date, so accidentally, and owing to the combination of most curious coincidences, it might happen that the agonised cries of some suffering being, or the sounds made by one at a time when all other emotions are as nothing compared to the supreme sensations of one committing some awful crime, could be impressed on the atmosphere or surface of an enclosed building, which could be reproduced by a current of air passing into that building under the same atmospheric conditions. This is the vague explanation I have given to myself.

However, be the explanation what it may, the facts are as I have stated them. Let those laugh who did not experience them. To return to the end of the story. There were two things I pointed out to Jones as conclusive that I was not dreaming. One was my pocket-book. I showed it him, and the words were quite clear—only, of course, very straggling. This is a fac-simile of the writing, but I cannot account for the date being 1837—

I am under
way it is about
midnight Christmas
Eve 1887

The other point was the horrible stains on my hands and clothes. A foul-smelling dark chocolate stain was on my hair, hands, and clothes. Jones said, of course, this was from the rust off the mouldering iron-work, some of which no doubt had trickled down, owing to the heavy rain, through the defective caulking of the deck. The fact is, there is nothing that an ingenious mind cannot explain; but the question is, Is the explanation the right one?

I could easily account for the phosphorescent light. The water was foul and stagnant, and it was no doubt caused by the same gases which produce the well-known ignis-fatuus or Will-o'-the-wisp.

We visited the ship, and I recovered my gun. There were the same stains on the deck as there were on my clothes; and curiously enough they went in a nearly straight line over the place where I lay, from the top of the companion to the starboard bulwark.

We carefully examined the forepart of the ship: it was as completely gutted as the rest of her. Jones was glad to get on deck again, as the atmosphere was very unpleasant, and I had no wish to stay.

At my request Jones made every inquiry he could about the old hulk. Not much was elicited. It bore an evil name, and no one would go on board who could help it. So far it looked as if it were credited with being haunted. The owner, who had been the captain of her, had died about three years before. His character did not seem amiable; but as he had left his money to the most influential farmer in the district, the country-people were unwilling to talk against him.

I went with Jones to call on the farmer, and asked him point-blank if he had ever heard whether a murder had been committed on board the Lily. He stared at me, and then laughed. "Not as I know of" was all his answer—and I never got any nearer than that.

I feel that this is all very unsatisfactory. I wish I could give some thrilling and sensational explanation. I am sorry I cannot. My imagination suggests many, as no doubt it will to each of my readers who possesses that faculty; but I have only written this to tell the actual facts, not to add to our superabundant fiction.

If ever I come across any details bearing upon the subject, I will not fail to communicate them at once.

The vessel I found was the Lily of Goole, owned by one Master Gad Earwaker, and built in 1801.

DICKY DAWKINS: OR, THE BOOKMAKER OF THE OUTER RING.

A TRUE STORY.

BY JACK THE SHEPHERD.

"I LIKES a cart colt a bit sour-headed, a' loves a bull-calf with a good brazen head, and a' likes a man with a bit of the devil in him, and, darn ye, Squire, we likes you a sight better 'cause we knows you ha' had a good bit of the old gentleman about you in times gone by; so here's your very good health, and long life to you."

It was my last rent-dinner at the dear old place, and the speaker was my oldest tenant; and though little Johnny Stranks—who held forth at the meeting-house every Sunday, and had a reputation for being "powerful in prayer," though he robbed me all the week—cast up his eyes and said, "Gently, Tummas, *gently;* you be a-going a bit too far, Tummas,"—

honest Thomas Tiller had struck a true chord, his speech *told*, and my health went down "with loud and reiterated applause," as the reporters would say.

Happy days! Happy times now passing away, perhaps, but not so quickly as Messrs Labouchere, Bradlaugh, & Co. profess to believe. Here was honest Thomas Tiller, who, with his family before him, had rented of me and my forebears, father and son, for over 150 years, with only the slender thread of a yearly agreement — "six months' notice to quit or of quitting"—between us, and yet he would tell his landlord the truth to his face, whether warmed at my table with a bottle of his favourite "black strap,"[1] or with cool morning head, as he started his labourers to their daily work.

Do any of our land-reformers really believe, I wonder, that by land courts, or the nationalisation of the land, or by whatever nostrum they seek to upset the old order of things, they will make this land of ours better worth living in, or do they wilfully seek to darken counsel, and mislead the fickle multitude? It looks so well on paper, it is so pretty to talk about that time

> "Ere England s woes began,
> When every rood of soil maintained its man."

But when was that wonderful time? Goldsmith was both an Irishman and a poet,—truly from such a

[1] Old port.

combination we do not look for facts. And if it *were* possible to root up all the old kindly relations that have existed for generations between the classes that live by the land, will it be a change for the better? Will it not rather change us all into mere money-grubbing machines, all equally sordid, equally selfish, equally ignoble?

But this speech of my honest tenant's set me thinking the next morning, as trivial words *do* set a man thinking, who is used to be much alone, and instead of talking to others, to "commune with his own heart and be still."

"Have I a bit of the devil in me, and is there any good in him; has he ever done me any good?" So the thoughts chased each other through my brain, as I took my early walk under the old elms, among the clear songs of the birds, the sweet scent of the lilac-bushes, and of the new-mown grass—in fact, surrounded by such divine joys of nature as only early morning in spring or summer bestow, and nowhere bestow in such beauty or in such wealth as in the midland counties of England. Well, the devil! perhaps hardly a suitable subject of thought on such a lovely morning as this, but the vulgar devil, the Old Nick of the common people, the prince of the powers of darkness, I renounce him and all his works with my whole heart,—would that he and all his crew were as easily discarded in all actions of life, as they can be renounced in thought or story! But there is another

devil—an imaginary spirit, full of daring, full of dogged perseverance—the Prometheus of Æschylus, the Satan of 'Paradise Lost,' with a bit of whose qualities I do not mind being credited. Milton is fairly to be charged with having given us a totally wrong idea of the Prince of Evil. The Satan of 'Paradise Lost' is a bold, fierce, untamed spirit, with whose woes and misfortunes we cannot help sympathising, as unlike the sly, sneaking, sneering devil of Holy Writ as it is possible to conceive. And as, by some curious contradiction in our nature, lies and false notions take deeper root than simple truths—a fact well known and useful to unscrupulous politicians—a false conception of the devil is widely spread abroad, and anything bold, daring, out of the common line, is often *most erroneously* called after the devil's name. So we get devil's dykes, devil's peaks, devil's gorges, and, as applied to man, the pluck of the devil, devil's daring, a bit of the devil, and so on.

Well, has a bit of this kind of devil, to which I plead guilty, ever done me any good? Ah! that is a question, and is perhaps best answered by another, What is doing any good?

It seems generally to mean nowadays making money. Well, a bit of the devil once *did* obtain for me a small sum of money, of which I still am proud. But it has done me more good than this. It has given me remembrances of many a stirring scene, which I would not willingly lose; recollections which

bring *no* feelings of remorse, *no* painful sense of irreparable wrong done to others. On the contrary, when "Winter bellows from the north," and fear of divers pains and rheumatic aches keeps the invalid close to his library chair, these old scenes, still so vivid, bring back the days long gone by, and many a hearty laugh have I enjoyed when thinking of Dicky Dawkins and his crew, and how I bearded him in his den, and by mere force of will, by mere devilment an you will, extracted from him, as he sat enjoying the fruit of the spoils won from the foolish ones, the mighty sum of ten pounds ten.

And thus it happened.

I had so long been living a highly decorous life among squires, squarsons, and parsons, that the "bit of the devil" in me broke out, and I longed again to have a sight of human life, not as I saw it among my worthy neighbours, but among classes not perhaps so respectable, but yet infinitely more amusing. I longed, too, to see if I could get on with the οἱ πολλοὶ of England as well as I used to with my old mates of the diggings and the bush; or whether a few years of living in clover, and "faring sumptuously every day," had emasculated me somewhat, and unfitted me to face my poorer brother, humbly but boldly, as man to man.

So, carrying no longer the dear old swag, but a knapsack (much too new, I carefully mudded it in the first dirty ditch), I started on the tramp from a town

where I was not much known, in my oldest breeks and shabbiest coat.

Though I shaved not at all, and did not wash *too* much, though I tried broadest Berkshire by turns with colonial slang, it must be confessed that the experiment did not answer over well. Tramps with whom I wished to fraternise called me "sir" and begged of me. At wayside inns of the humblest order I was ushered into a stuffy best parlour, with horrible china ornaments, often with fearful pictures of Boniface and his wife,—the former in his best clothes and a pipe in his mouth; the latter smirking inanely, with a long greasy curl on each side of her ruddy—far too ruddy—cheeks, arrayed in a black satin robe,—whereas I longed for the bar-room and settles, where drank the honest, or dishonest, customers with whom I wished to be "Hail-fellow well met!" Food that, "on the swag," I would have jumped at, seemed nauseous. I was always a good boy at my beer; but I like some small modicum of malt and hops in its composition, and their absence was conspicuous in the wayside ales offered to me, and thirsty as I often was, I could hardly swallow the filthy heady mixtures, though they boasted of four big X's in a row.

And so, with little adventure, little profit, and not much pleasure, I wandered along. There was something unreal about it. It was not like swagging with an empty pocket. The scenery, however, was Eng-

land in her fairest garb of early summer. There were no flies to drive one wild by day; no 'possums to screech one out of one's sleep by night; but it was only a walking tour, without adventure, until I reached the old cathedral town of the Wiltshire downs. The only tramp I met who was in the least interesting was a hedger and ditcher who was wheeling his wife and infant in a wheelbarrow. I trust the children's song did not come true:

> "The wheelbarrow broke, and the wife had a fall,
> Down came wheelbarrow, wife, and all!"

I liked this man; it was so kind in a tramp to wheel his wife; so unlike the tramping lord of creation, who stalks along unburdened, the woman following with children and bundle. But this man was not a real tramp, for he really was on the look-out for work, which your true English tramp never is.

But when Salisbury was reached, my unshaven face, my soiled clothes, and dirty hands made me look somewhat like a good honest rough again, and there I heard that the races were going on, or rather were to begin on the next day. So, eager for adventure, I started early the next morning for the course.

I had known the excellent landlord of my hotel "at home" as we used to say at Eton, and he had a portmanteau of mine, full of clothes, duly forwarded to him for my use whenever I should like to make myself a "worthy man" again.

"'Scuse me, sir," he had said the night before the races, "you looks a trifle travel-stained, but you'll have lots of time to get shaved and cleaned up before our drag starts for the race-course. Four horse, sir; quite tip-top gents a-going, and I'll be proud to drive you, squire, along of 'em."

But my mind inclined not to tip-top gents, and I was away long before the "noble sportsmen," or even

"The Goths of the gutter and Huns of the turf,"

had broken their first slumber. And it was still early dawn when I reached the race-course.

Ah! how little you know, how little you see, of the backstairs, the underground of the race-course, my noble patrons of the turf ("petty larceny lads" though many of you *may* be, as honest John Jorrocks calls you),—you who arrive in your drags and your carriages just as the bell rings for the first race, and promptly take your places in the grand stand! But if you want to study your brother of the turf; the hangers-on of your royal sport; your brother in villany —not the black man and brother of the missionary deputation's lecture, nor the brother in slavery of the Radical carpet-bagger's thrilling address, but *your own* brother of this our own little island,—come with Jack the Shepherd to the course at early dawn, and see the outcasts, the wanderers, the Bohemians, rising from their caravans, their tents, or from the bare ground, to assist at your noble sport.

Years fell from my shoulders as I trod the sweet crispy turf in the early morning. I sang, I ran, I lived my life again; once again I felt myself a boy watching ill-fated Umpire from Ten Broecks stable, or admiring Gardevisure and Lord Lyon bounding away over the Berkshire downs. In my youth I had once ridden, by the kind permission of the trainer, the wonderful Caractacus, who rolled over the Epsom hills, so they said, like a cricket ball, and won the Derby with long odds against him; and much evil as I have seen from the turf, my spirit still kindles when I see a race or a race-horse. But the sight on the course at this early hour was not inspiring. Men, all shaky from last night's debauch, red-nosed and cursing; women, draggle-tailed, dirty, and wanton-looking; a few early policemen; a smell like fried fish—a stronger and more unpleasant smell of my brethren if I got too close to them; dirty scraps of paper flying about; general blackguardism rampant, though not yet obtrusive,—and I was glad to get away and see a few nobler animals at their morning exercise.

And so the day wore on; and first by twos and threes, then by companies, arrive the patrons of this noble sport. The bell rings. I wend my way to the enclosure. "Five shillings entrance." "Not for Jack," say I to myself; but I catch sight of an old trainer whom I knew well in years gone by. I buy a card, and hail him through the narrow openings of the paling fence. He looks astonished.

"What! you, squire? what the—well, what are you up to? You always were a rum un; come inside —only five bob; but, bless me!" and he looked at my clothes, "what ever," and he relapsed into good old Berkshire—"what ever beest thou arter?"

"Too dirty," said I, "for the grand stand or enclosure; but, look here—for auld lang syne, mark the winners on my card; p'raps I'm hard up, anyhow I want to bet, so just—— I've not deserted my wife and children, I've not mortgaged my lands, but I'm just on the spree."

"Always *was* as mad as a hatter from a boy," he audibly muttered; but he took the card, marked it very carefully, slowly, and deliberately, and returned it. "There you are, squire; I've done more for you than I would for any blessed man on this course, but——" and then came

"Some parting injunction bestowed with great unction,"

which afterwards

"I strove to recall, but forgot like a dunce,"

and off I went studying the card.

A man—his name I *can* recall, for it was on his hat, "Dicky Dawkins, Bookmaker"—was shouting the odds. "Six to one *bar* one for the first race!" he cried. His dress was strange; his hat was tall and white, *bar* his name and titles inscribed on it in large black letters; his coat was in stripes of red and white, eke so his nether garments.

"Who d'you bar?" I shouted.

"The Fotheringay Colt, captain, and three to one against *'im.*"

I looked at my card. Fotheringay Colt marked. "I'm on for five shillings." I dubbed down the dust, got my ticket, and ah! bless my honest old friend the trainer! the colt won in a canter. And so on all through the day—almost always winning, thanks to my good old friend, until the last race, and then my modest adventures had resulted in a gain of ten guineas. My card was consulted again; Maid of Perth marked for the last—a selling race. "What against Maid of Perth, Mr Dawkins?"

"Evens, my noble general;" how quickly I got promotion!

"Done," said I; money and ticket quickly followed.

She won; but only by a short head, and I rushed towards the stand of the man in motley. But what a crowd was there!

A specious, civil kind of rascal made for me, touching his hat.

"A heavy settling, sir. It may be," confidentially, "the last comers *may* have to whistle for their money, for the bookmakers are hit devilish hard; but if you'll give me your ticket; I know Mr Dawkins, sir, right well, sir; believe I have the honour, sir, to know you, sir, also from Loamshire, sir; mum's the word, sir; no offence, I hope. A small commis-

sion, sir, and you shall have your money, sir, before you can say Jack Robinson."

Oh, what a fool I was! I have a temptation to swear even now when I think of it; I gave him my ticket and half-a-crown, and before *I* could say Jack Robinson he was gone—never, oh never, to return

He was gone!—*abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit.* Gone also was my ticket, lost my half-crown.

I waited till all the crowd round Dicky were paid, and then, feeling like a most awful fool, approached the great man.

"You will quite remember," said I, "our last bet; evens you laid against Maid of Perth. A friend of yours took my ticket, ten guineas, but he has not come back."

A volley of oaths was my answer; no longer was I a noble general or a gallant captain. I was,—but "words are wanting to say what; what a man shouldn't be, I was that." Our voices rose; a crowd collected, and as I had no wish to get into a disreputable row, I said: "Well, at least give me the name of the hotel where you put up at in Salisbury." A hotel card was flung to me with an oath, and I walked away and bided my time. As I tramped into Salisbury, Dicky and his friends passed me in an open waggonette, and placed their fingers in that objectionable way to their noses whereby the noble Briton signifies that he holds you in contempt.

"Tout vient à qui sait attendre," said I to myself; and at length I reached my hotel, got shaved, washed, opened my portmanteau, arrayed myself in my best clothes, got out my card-case, and proceeded, strong in temper, strong in sense of injury done to me, to seek the redoubtable Dicky Dawkins. Arrived at his hotel, I sent up my card.

"Cannot see you, sir," said the grinning waiter; "Mr Dawkins is dining—never does business after seven P.M., sir."

I brushed past him. I found Mr Dawkins's room by the smell of dinner; there he was with some dozen of the gang dining *so* well, and I was *so* hungry.

"Ten guineas, sir, if you please, that I won of you on Maid of Perth, and before you swallow another morsel," I said.

He looked at me—some of the gang rose up with oaths and threatening aspect.

"Oh, sir, I don't like to be disturbed at my meals, but sit down, sir, take a bite and a drink with us, and we shall wash out the debt; you were the gentleman who gave up his ticket, so you said—old dodge that—but I'll give you a good dinner, and your whack of liquor; but if I pay you one farthing I'll be——"

"Mr Dawkins," I interrupted, "I'll eat with you, drink with you, or fight with you; but first," and I came up close to him, "I'll have ten pounds ten shil-

lings out of you. Now, look here! I saw that rascal who took my ticket—ah! by heavens, there he is *now*, trying to slink off! Sit down, sir, sit down, or it will be the worse for you. Well, I saw *him* on the course talking to you; but here is better proof, he is eating at *your* table—one of *your* respectable friends. Now, unless you fork out the ten guineas, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go and swear a conspiracy to defraud against you and your gang; and that rascal knows me if you don't, and knows that I am a man of my word, and also a magistrate for two counties. So which is it to be? Ten guineas down on the nail, or a warrant applied for. Possibly you yourself or some of your friends know the inside of a cell already."

Well, sometimes brag is a good dog, but only if it is not brag, solely, purely, and simply, but has something stronger behind.

Telegraphic winks, nods, and signs passed between Dicky and his confederates, and he caved in.

"Pay the gentleman the money," he cried to a man with a leather bag on his shoulders; and forthwith I took, counted carefully, and pocketed my lawful dues.

"And now, Mr Dawkins," I said, "as you have made me too late for my own dinner, I will accept your kind offer of hospitality," and I took a chair and seated myself; and though the company was rather silent at first, as the hock and champagne went round they gradually thawed.

"Are you really a beak?" whispered my right-hand neighbour.

"Really," I replied.

"I got two years last time," he said, sadly. "If ever I get in trouble and come before you, draw it mild, you know. There's more than one chap here would have knifed you as soon as look at you; and how the devil you made Dicky cave in beats me hollow! so bless your stars, and don't forget me."

"My dear friend," I said, "a Government that does not duly appreciate the wonderful genius of the great unpaid, strictly limits our powers. Only in quarter sessions, as one of many, can I bestow on you the wholesome dose of two years' imprisonment. But in petty sessions we can still inflict six months, with hard labour; and in spite of this excellent dinner, for which I *am* really obliged, I can only advise you, Don't try on any of your little games in my neighbourhood."

I much enjoyed my dinner, which was most excellent: the wines were unexceptionable; but when bowls of punch were brought in with the walnuts, I beat a somewhat hasty retreat, fearing that as Dutch courage arose in the gang, they would set on me and strip me of my precious ten guineas, which I had won simply by having "a bit of the devil" in me.

I am glad to say that I never have had the painful task of requiting any of my friends' hospitality by inflicting incarceration on them, *even* for a limited

period; in fact, I have never set eyes on them since, but possibly they still haunt the race-course.

And so my story ends, but surely with many a moral.

First—Avoid betting.

Secondly—But if you *will* bet, you know, avoid the Bookmaker of the Outer Ring.

Thirdly—But if you *will* be a fool in spite of all my warning, well, then, if you get a winning ticket, don't be such an extra particular fool as to part with it, except for £ s. d.

And, lastly—"A bit of the devil in you" is not always such a bad thing after all!

AIRY NOTHING.

BY M. H. DZIEWICKI.

I TEACH English, my native language, in a small Austrian town. Having no competitor, I give a good many lessons, especially during the winter season. People here are very eager for the study of languages, provided that the terms are moderate; meaning by moderate terms, eighteenpence or two shillings at the utmost per lesson. Fortunately living is cheap enough in this country, and I somehow or other manage both to pay my own way and to provide for my wife Lisbeth into the bargain. And by carefully abstaining from all pleasures, and eschewing plays, concerts, and excursions, we even find means to lay by about ten pounds a-year; which will enable me to retire from my labours with a capital of £500, at the ripe age of eighty. By that time I think I shall have had enough of teaching Ollendorff.

When I said that we enjoy no pleasures, I meant no costly ones. Lisbeth, my little German "Frau,"

has her knitting at home, and an occasional walk abroad in the public gardens with me; not to mention a few visits now and then from her female friends. And I,—well, my hobby is philosophy. From Kant to Fichte, from Fichte to Hegel, and then back again to Kant; such is my way of spending my leisure hours. I am of course an Idealist, a Transcendentalist;—the doctrine has something inexpressibly soothing to my mind. To think that all things are identical with me, and that I am identical with everything else, takes away the sting from poverty, and the shame from humiliation. "Think of the Non-Ego," says the Master, "you have it at once in your own mind; it is *you*. Think of your Ego, and it is no longer the subject, but the object of thought, the Non-Ego." When Count Donnerwetter again and again forgets to pay the few florins that he owes me, and of which I stand in need, is it not a sweet consolation to reflect that want, florins, lessons, and Count Donnerwetter himself, are all just such modifications of me, as any fancy that might flash through my brain? And when Frau Brummer, with her sour smile, reminds me that I came last time five minutes too late, by setting a watch on the table, and saying how highly her daughters appreciate my teaching, and how vexed they would be to lose even the smallest part of it, why should I bite my lips and feel the smart so keenly? Having created Frau Brummer, my mind naturally makes her act in

accordance with her character; and I ought to feel pleased at having struck her off so well. Unluckily I do not realise all this deeply enough. In time, perhaps, I may. Still, after the occurrences that I have now to relate, I really do not think that I ever shall.

I generally have plenty of lessons from November till the beginning of May; after which date they begin to fall off, because of the successive departure of most families to their country seats. This year it was not so. I had about ten hours daily, well taken up by my work, until the very end of May; but I could not give up Hegel on that account. Strong black coffee acts most powerfully against sleep; and every night I continued my intellectual revels long after my dear little brown-eyed Lisbeth had sunk into slumber. Nothing, as may be conceived, was better fitted to refresh me after the weary dreary hours spent over Ollendorff and Ahn. Strange to say, even this did not quite succeed in refreshing me. In spite of the calming influence of idealism, I was fast growing more and more nervous. The slightest noise upset me, the veriest trifle irritated me; and more than once I started up in the dead of night, fancying myself called by an awful voice. But June was at hand; and we had already decided that, as soon as my last lessons came to an end, Lisbeth and I should spend the holidays with a friend who lived in the country.

One day I was walking out with a pupil, to give him an hour of English, of fresh air, and of exercise at the same time, when I suddenly heard my name, and saw a young student, whom I knew, running towards me. "Herr Professor," said he, "would you kindly step in at my uncle's for a minute? There is an English gentleman who has just come, and would like to be shown through the town." I knew what this meant; but such an invitation to "do the honours" of the place was not to be refused. I found that the gentleman particularly wished to see the mine of rock-salt, which is not far off, and is certainly the most extensive and the oldest one in the world; and having never seen it myself, was much delighted at the idea of going. But it was not the visitors' day; so I had to run to the telegraph office, and wire a request for admission, Mr —— being unable to remain with us longer than one day. I note all this down, in order to point out that I had a great deal of trouble and worry about it, and was quite as much tired and heated as pleased, when we finally got into the carriage, and drove off to the mines. Indeed I remember that I had a sort of dizzy feeling, with flashes before my eyes.

Of course we both very much admired the chapel, hewn entirely out of rock-salt, with its salt statues of saints, kings, and queens, all sparkling in the light of the torches or the Bengal fires; the long corridors, all of massive salt, supported upon pillars of salt; and

the immense hall where, on stated festivals, hundreds of couples dance to the music of the orchestra, or to the sound of the miners' voices. But what struck us most of all was the lake—the dim, dark, mysterious lake, at the very bottom of the mine; a true "Stygian pool"; over which we were ferried in the blaze of three successive Bengal fires—red, green, and dazzling white.

And here, upon this weird expanse, began the astonishing—the word "astonishing" is too weak, I ought almost to say "incredible"—chain of adventures which I have to relate.

I was bending down over the water to calculate its depth at the spot where we were, as well as I could guess by the white flame of the Bengal fire, when all at once I saw, at the bottom of the lake, *a face looking upwards at me.* A female face; wonderful in its classic beauty. It was quite plainly to be seen; and yet it was not out of the deep shadow that the side of our boat cast on all that part of the lake. The light that shone upon its features evidently came from elsewhere. It looked up at me; its eyes shone into mine. I had never seen nor dreamed of such eyes before. Such an earnest yet passionless expression! such depth of thought! such calm sublimity of intellectual life! One instant more, and we had passed the spot. A mad desire sprang up within me, as we swept by, and I with difficulty restrained myself from plunging into the water. No wonder that I was ex-

cessively absent-minded all the way home; no wonder that my curt replies were noticed by my companion, so different was my behaviour now from the awkward self-consciousness with which I had at first spoken to him—for my recluse habits give me a very embarrassed demeanour with those whom I do not know. But the face was alone in my thoughts now, and I was so absorbed as even to seem unpolite. I remarked a certain degree of stiffness in his manner as we shook hands at parting; he was no doubt offended. But how could I apologise without telling him what had happened? and how could I tell him or anybody *that?*

Could it have been all a delusion? a hallucination? A *hallucination;* what does that word mean? Are there any hallucinations? They consist in taking a subjective for an objective appearance, you will say. But, according to the Master, subjective and objective appearances are identical. And, setting his theory aside, what could possibly distinguish this vision from reality? Was it credible that my fancy could have made out of a few ripples on a white stone the superhuman beauty which I beheld, and the glance of intelligence that she fixed upon me? for of this last point I am absolutely sure. Take any hypothesis, and you must admit that what I saw was as real as any reality could be.

Telling Lisbeth that my head ached, I went to bed —slept, and dreamed of that face. Night after night

I dreamed of it; day after day it came between me and my pupils' compositions and the list of English irregular verbs. In order to keep it away, I tried to plunge deeper still into philosophy; but the strange expression in the eyes of the Vision was ever present, ever full of meaning, ever seeming to take in the signification of all that I read. As the days went by, the desire to see it, if possible, once again, grew stronger and stronger, more and more overwhelming. I at last resolved to return to the mine.

But how could I possibly go there? What pretext on earth had I for visiting a mine more than twelve miles away, and in which I had no business whatever? Necessity has no law; my determination was paramount,—I descended to falsehood; and my poor unsuspicious Lisbeth never had the slightest idea that I was deceiving her. I secreted an important letter, and told her that it was lost; that I knew it was in my pocket on the day I went down into the mine; and that I now remembered how a paper, which I then thought of no consequence, had fallen to the ground in the "dancing-room"; I even recollected the exact spot where it had fallen. In short, my stratagem enabled me to go to the mine again; again I went down into that splendid and murky region of crystals and darkness; again I set foot on the ferry-boat; with what mingled feelings of hope and fear, strained to the highest pitch, I shall not attempt to describe. Now we are nearing the spot. Here we

are! Nothing, alas! nothing. Yes! there she is, looking up from the depths; and the attraction that sways me becomes ten times more irresistible at the sight. And now we are passing—passing by; shall I lose her for ever?

No!

Hardly aware of what I was doing, I had plunged into the intensely salt water and struck the bottom, which was as smooth as glass—it was, in fact, a mirror of black rock-salt, as I afterwards learnt. I am a good swimmer, but some drops of the intolerable brine had entered my mouth and nostrils, and I was suffocating; so I struck out, intending to rise to the surface, and in another second was standing upright, half out of the water, that proved much shallower than I at first thought. My eyes smarted from the salt bath, and it was for some time in vain that I tried to open them. When at length able to do so, I opened them wide indeed with wonder and amazement. I was no longer in the mine, but in an adjoining cavern, not of salt, but of grey sandstone rock; a misty light, that came from a sort of luminous cloud hanging close to the vaulted roof, enabled me to discover the harsh angular outlines and crudely shadowed tints of the stone walls of the grotto. I was plunged to my waist in a small pool or well of salt water that communicated with the lake on the other side, by a very large outlet, I suppose, or how could I have passed through so easily? And above,

seated on a rude throne of the same grey rock, was the very Being whose face I had already beheld, fixing her calm steady gaze upon me, and seeming to read all my thoughts.

I do not believe in descriptions. The best word-painting is a wretched daub, and the best description can at most make the reader regret that there is not an illustration in its place; if it awakens that feeling in him, it has attained its highest perfection. Still, so long as we have to use words, we must depict objects by their means, and descriptions are necessary evils. Besides, though I cannot hope to convey the slightest conception of what this unknown one's beauty precisely was, I yet may give a faint idea as to the sort of beauty; and a few lines will suffice.

Her shape was the pure classical, immortalised by Grecian art; as was the face, so was the whole body: nothing could be more perfect. Her colour corresponded in perfection to her shape; it was everywhere just what it should be, blending the varied intensity of each hue into the grand harmony of the whole: from the faint pink dye and the blue veins of her nude feet to the ripe rosy tint of her lips and the dark azure of her eyes, it would be impossible to conceive of anything more ideally right. And her movements! Few people are aware (though all must feel it more or less instinctively) how great a charm accrues even to plainness itself, when set off by graceful motions. And she was all grace. Her garment,

a long mantle of some unknown silvery-white tissue, was almost always moving, now covering one part and now another, but ever with such exquisite ripples and undulations, with such a combination of elegance and artlessness, that even those attitudes which would have appeared affected in any other, seemed natural and were pleasing in her. But, above all, there was that characteristic I had seen in the mirror at the bottom of the salt lake: the intellect—keen, strong, and astonishingly sublime—that shone with such intense splendour on every feature of her countenance. Had she been deformed in shape and faded in colour; had even her movements been ungraceful and awkward, I verily believe that I should still have thought her supremely beautiful while that expression remained.

And nevertheless, though in all the glow of my first enthusiastic admiration, I felt that there was something wanting.

I of course took in at a few glances the details of this description, which, with all my endeavours to be short, has occupied so many lines. She manifested neither surprise nor anger, nor indeed any kind of emotion whatever. I durst not address her, but slowly crept out of the briny pool, knowing not what awaited me. She spoke: in what soft, clear, full tones! With what perfection the sound bore out the meaning of each word! It was a true delight to hear her

"You need not tell me who you are; I know. I was expecting you: I am Calypso."

Instinctively I raised my hand to my forehead, with a stupefying sense of bewilderment. "Could this be all a dream? Was it a reality? Or, if neither, was I . . ."

"No," she replied to my own inward question; "no, you are not mad. Far from it; you are a highly favoured mortal. I am Calypso—the *hidden one*. Since Ulysses of Ithaca, no one has ever seen me as you see me now. For when the race of men multiplied above ground so exceedingly that solitude in my isle of Ogygia became impossible, I departed thence, and have ever since dwelt here. Neither do the miners disturb me; I am near them, yet alone. Well do they know that their vein of salt is exhausted where this rock begins."

I had recovered enough courage by this time to gaze steadily and scrutinisingly upon her. Lisbeth, my dear little, brown-eyed, soft-hearted wife, had lately been reading the adventures of Telemachus with breathless and *naïve* interest in my company; and now these words occurred to my recollection: "Elle se trouvait malheureuse d'être immortelle." But neither on her lofty brow nor in the sombre azure of her eyes, nor round her finely chiselled lips, could I discern the trace of aught like love or sorrow, or anything but Thought.

"So," continued she, answering as though she read

into my soul, "I do not seem to you to be wretched because I am immortal. And you are right. I never loved Odysseus. Fate brought him to me, fate took him away; even as fate has led you hither, and will also take you away. For my nature is such that it allows of neither love, nor hate, nor admiration, nor contempt, nor fear, nor anger, nor of any passion whatsoever: only of undying contemplation—contemplation of all that is, of all that was, and also of many things that will be."

A short space of silence ensued. The words of Calypso tempted me to speak; but I feared. "Perhaps," said I to myself, "she will again answer my thought as she has already done;" but she was silent. At last, making an effort, I said with a faltering voice—

"Did Homer lie, then, O Calypso?" The words rang strangely and harshly in the hollow grotto, after the sound of her own melodious voice.

"No; but he was misled. That tradition which told him of Odysseus' intercourse with me, had taken it to be of a nature very different from what it was in truth. What else could be expected from men? I indeed was not even interested in the hero, except in so far as I take interest in all things that are."

"And are you not at least curious to *know?*" I inquired, now less timid. My analytical and sceptical temperament had begun to be roused. I expected to find in her, if nothing else, one desire;

and if one desire, one love; and if one love, one passion.

"To know? But I do know. I know all that is and all that was. All.'

I believed her. Incredible as her assertion may appear, I had gone too far not to believe her. Besides, what she said was in such perfect harmony with what she appeared to be, that I scarcely felt any surprise. Still, I determined to dispute: I had not graduated in a German university for nothing, and I had many a time disputed even in my dreams.

"Do you know all that is to be?" I asked.

"No. The future is in itself nothing but a sequence, more or less closely connected with the present and the past. Who knows these last perfectly, knows, it is true, all their relations. And could I penetrate infinitely into all I know of what is and what was, I then should behold clearly the whole of the eternal future. But the sight of my mind is not infinite."

"With you," I retorted, "life is made up of thought and contemplation. Do you, then, never wish for a higher life? for the power of penetrating into the future more perfectly than now?"

"There are other beings," she replied, "that only differ from myself by that degree of thought which they possess, and I do not. Were I to be changed, I could no more continue to exist than the number 8, if it were to become 9. Men can change: their life

comprises many things that come and go. With our race, all things are essential."

By this time I had recovered from my fear. Had she taken another tone, or even spoken on a different theme, I might still have been cowed in her presence; but this was one of the subjects that I loved best. I glanced at her body, so beautiful in all its delicate curves and soft wave-like movements. Was it a fantastic body, or a real one? She at once replied to my unuttered question, and to the chain of arguments to which it led.

"You think that a body such as mine must, if real, have sensations, and so feel pleasure and pain, and therefore flee pain and seek pleasure. Well argued —for a mortal. But what if my sensations are only the means of conveying to my mind the whole of what takes place in the universe? What if the thrill of my optic nerves, interpreted by intellect, gives me to know all visible appearances in the world, even to the very uttermost regions of space? What if my senses are all-perfect, but *mere instruments of thought?* . . . I cannot enjoy pleasure; neither can I suffer pain."

"Then—then you can know neither!" I exclaimed, pleased at having found, as I thought, that she had contradicted herself. I was disappointed, for she answered—

"You do not understand. I know the feeling by which pleasure or pain is caused to you mortals; but

I am free from that irresistible attraction or shrinking which accompany them for you, and which you therefore include in the sensation itself. Strike me."

I stood aghast. I would as readily have committed sacrilege.

"Touch me," she said; "if you fear to strike, touch me."

I laid my hand upon her satin-white shoulder. It was warm, soft, and in all things like a real human body. *Did* she feel?

"I do; and if you struck at me, I should be aware of all the violence of the blow, but this violence would cause me no pain."

Reader, excuse me, for I must tell the truth. I am intensely curious, and unlike most men in more than one respect; and here, I confess, my curiosity got the better of me. I struck her twice—the first time vigorously enough, and again with all my force. Such a blow, levelled at a man, might have felled him to the ground. Calypso sat unmoved, and went on speaking in her sweet, full voice—

"Now you know who I am and what I am. But your visit to me ought to be of some avail; so the Fates have decreed it. Take, then, my advice: let philosophy alone; that way madness lies. Do not seek to find out the *how* and the *why* of everything—or of anything. Above all, be sure you understand Hegel when you read him, or else do not read him at all."

"But," I exclaimed, "how is it possible to make sure of that?"

"Then he is not for you. Take to mathematics, physics, science, art, anything—but let alone what you do not understand."

"O Calypso!" said I, "instead of this cold advice, help me to understand him. My greatest difficulty——"

"I know it well. 'How can the Ego and the Non-Ego be one, when you cannot help distinguishing them, and setting them one against the other?' To this question I could easily reply, but only by an experiment—an experiment that might possibly render you miserable for life."

"Try any experiment! Let me undergo any ordeal, provided it brings me nearer to the goal!" I exclaimed, suddenly raised to enthusiasm at the prospect before me.

"Hear me. This experiment will indeed be not without sweetness; you will have to take both sweetness and bitterness as they come. You are well aware how impossible it is for any man to find his ideal of sympathy in this world—to discover another nature in absolutely perfect agreement with his own. I am not your ideal. The attraction you felt for me was merely very highly wrought curiosity. No mortal could love an absolutely passionless being, such as I am. No; there must be something that answers back from one to the other; contrast amidst har-

mony, and harmony in the very midst of contrast, is essential to love. You know how beautiful the red poppies look in the bright green corn-fields; these colours sympathise. Between them they would make up *white*—the perfect colour. And so of any two mortals that love each other; one must be the other's counterpart, so that their union may form one complex but perfect being. Now this can never take place. As there are no perfect spheres, nor squares, nor straight lines, so there are no perfect sympathies in this world."

I sighed. How true were the words she spoke! How often had I quarrelled with my dear little wife, my own Lisbeth! and yet I had never known any one whose disposition was so completely congenial with mine. Alas! in every terrestrial harmony there must be some discord now and then; the happiest are only those with whom it is rarest, and the most wretched those with whom it is most frequent.

"But," Calypso went on to say, after a pause, very slowly and deliberately, "I have the power to . . . all but create a being with whom you would be in absolutely perfect sympathy—sympathy of mind and heart and fancy, and, in short, of all things."

These were startling words. If it could be so! If it only could be so! But what did that mean, "*all but* create"? And how could such a creation be possible, when she had just affirmed the contrary?

Wondering and questioning, hoping and doubting, I looked into her impassible face.

"Can you not imagine a voice that does not exist otherwise than in your sensation, and yet that you cannot distinguish from a real external sound?"

"I can; and indeed I have heard such sounds very frequently of late."

"Can you not fancy a colour or a shape that is in your eye alone, and invisible to any but yourself?"

"I can."

"Extend this to all other sensible appearances, and admit that I can act upon your senses, so that you may see, hear, and touch a being that has no existence whatever outside of you. And this being—a fair and comely maiden—will be in all things your exact, perfect, and ideal counterpart: so that you cannot choose but love her, and love her as you never have loved before, and never will love again."

"Do this, O Calypso, and I will adore you!" cried I, falling on my knees.

"Your adoration is a quite irrelevant matter, and I am, as I said, absolutely indifferent to it. I do these things, not to please you, but because it is written that it will be so, if you choose. Do you choose?"

I believe that, had I ever seen the slightest touch of anything human in this Calypso, I should have fallen madly in love with her. Happily for my peace, she was utterly superhuman in all things,

and thus dead to me. There was an odour of death in her wisdom, in her grace, in her very beauty itself. I admired indeed, but love was impossible. Ashamed to have knelt before her, I rose and answered—

"Yes, I choose. Let it be so."

"And you take the consequences upon yourself?"

"I do; whatever those consequences may be."

"Turn towards the far end of this cavern," said she, rising from her seat as she spoke. I obeyed. Only the wall, a wall of grey sandstone, was to be seen. Laying her hand upon my head, she commanded me to look steadfastly, and to desire mightily; and as her delicate fingers pressed downwards, I felt an unknown force pervade all my frame. All grew darker and darker around me; still I continued to look towards the farther end of the cave, though I could scarcely see it for the gathering shadows. Suddenly, springing forth out of the thickest blackness, there appeared a white-robed form. It approached.

"I come; for you have called me."

What a strange sensation, not unlike an electric shock, though infinitely pleasing, shot through me as I heard that voice, as I saw that shape! Yet she was *not* beautiful. At least the classic splendour of Calypso's form cast her entirely into the shade. The features were all a little—a very little—irregular; and I had just gazed with such admiration upon faultless regularity! There was, besides, a slight

want of harmony in the colour of her cheeks, in the movements of her limbs.

Her eyes were grey—deep and dreamy one minute, lively and laughing the next; her thick hair, arched eyebrows, and long eyelashes were of a very dark brown, almost black. Altogether she was rather an enigmatical sort of person, from an æsthetic point of view; for in every part of her there was something wanting, though so little that it was hard to say what. But this little lack of harmony with the absolute fitness of things was in such perfect agreement with my own imperfect nature, that one glance at her sufficed to kindle a fire in my heart. As she came towards me, she blushed slightly; and then—perhaps this was the cause of what I felt—her eyes flashed as she glanced at me; only for one instant, however — the next, they were hidden under her drooping lids. Here, O here, was life! Here, O here, was love!

Calypso said: "Come hither, Psychè, for by this name shall we henceforth call you;—because in truth, soul and body, you are nothing but the soul of this man that stands here. Such you are, such you remain; and if you vanish, you vanish into his soul, even as the morning cloud melts into the morning air, out of which it has come forth."

Psychè smiled. Lost memories of the past! And I shall never see that smile again!

She said: "Most happy am I to be of him, to belong

to him, and to vanish into him, if ever I must vanish." Sweet confidence, sweet love—sweet, above all, after the calm, unchangeable, thoughtful face of Calypso! I already thought her less beautiful than Psychè. My reason told me I was wrong; but the heart is stronger than the mind at times, and has reasons of its own that Reason itself cannot comprehend.

"Give me your right hand, each of you," said Calypso. "As it is written, so let it be. She is yours, and you are hers: be it as the Fates have spoken, and as you yourself have freely willed. Be happy in each other, you who are not other, but only one being; be happy until this fiction of otherness shall disappear—disappear for ever! And now, see; I make for you other appearances—the vision of a paradise, wherein you may live." Waving her hand, she sat down.

I looked around me. All was changed—all but Calypso and the rock on which she sat enthroned, and the briny well into which she gazed with such untiring steadfastness. On all sides spread a vast landscape, fertile as the Garden of Eden, with vast groves of fruit-trees, verdant grassy swards, hills, and valleys: there were sinuous brooks at our feet, warm balmy breezes around us, and a blue sky overhead. But all that was to my bliss only as the golden frame of some great masterpiece of art; for my own Psychè was by my side, and we wandered forth together hand in hand.

By degrees we began to hold converse with each other. She indeed seemed somewhat shy at first—not so very shy, however. For when I asked her if she feared me, she looked up and answered, with a sly sidelong glance—

"Calypso says that I am you; and how, then, could I be afraid of myself?"

I am very brusque in manner, and little versed in the gentle art of courtship. My next question was, point-blank—

"Do you love me?"

"I must love myself. I cannot help it."

"With all your heart?"

"With all my heart."

I was sitting on the grass, with her hand still in mine, whilst she reclined her head on my shoulder, and looked up into my eyes with such rapture beaming from hers, that I was ten times more happy to think that I was the cause of such bliss. And yet, I musingly said to myself, *is* she happy? Is all this but a seeming? This hand that I clasp, and that clasps mine so lovingly; this heart that I feel, that I FEEL! beating against my heart; these lips that answer my questions with sweet replies, and my kisses with tender—oh, so tender!—kisses; this delicious delicacy and modesty, so wonderfully blended with the strongest and most overwhelming passion,—is all this a mere vision, a delusion, a phantom of my brain? I will not believe it. I cannot believe it.

And yet, thought I, what is the alternative, if she be anything more than this? I have duties to fulfil, I have made vows that I must keep; I may love no other being, as I have sworn to love my Lisbeth. Whatever I do, that let me do in all honour. I must think this over more deeply. Is not all that I now experience mysterious and supernatural? Is it not possible that so wonderful a being as she who calls herself Calypso—a being whom I know to be more than mortal—may really possess those occult powers which she professes to employ? And if so, Psychè is . . . nothing! Nothing? And can I love *Nothing?*

"Dearest," said I, aloud, "tell me the truth: I must know it. I cannot bear the thought that you are only an appearance — an unreal ghost. Is this not a trick played upon me by Calypso? Were you not somewhere before you came up out of the darkness that environed me?"

"Indeed I do speak the truth," she answered, simply. "As for me, I can well bear the thought of being only an appearance, so long as that appearance is a part of you. I love you so dearly!" she added, blushing and hiding her face for an instant. "But," continued she, suddenly raising her head, while her features were lit up with a radiant expression that I have rarely seen on any other face, and never to such advantage as on hers; "but I really was — I must have been — somewhere before

I was called up out of the darkness. I have a vague knowledge of having existed, and of having somehow been present at many scenes. How else could I remember so well such a number of events and places that crowd to my memory while I speak with you?"

"What events, dear Psychè? And what places?" I asked, much surprised and interested.

She then described to me many scenes and persons, all of whom, to my great astonishment, I perfectly recognised as scenes and persons I had known or seen during my past life. She did not know every one, however, as became plain to me by questioning her discreetly; and I found that nothing was present to her memory of that which I myself wished to forget. With this exception, her reminiscences were, in every case, the supplements of mine. When I had thus found out that her recollections were so abundant and so vivid, we often had long conversations together about times gone by. She always took great interest in whatever I told her, and said that when I spoke I always recalled half-forgotten incidents to her mind, which was the exact description of the effect that her own conversation produced upon me. We never could speak of anything that was entirely unknown and totally strange to either of us. Our talk combined the pleasure of recalling what was familiar with the charm of learning what was new. I shall never forget how we enjoyed piecing together our

reminiscences of those novels which "we" (or I?) had read in old days. When they had been perused slowly, or read several times over, we could remember nearly all; but when read very fast, or without interest, our joint endeavours could only reproduce a very faint outline.

Shall I say a word of our discussions? She enjoyed philosophy exceedingly—and how could it have been otherwise?—but mostly took the opposite view to mine; and I always found that the objections which she brought forward had been, at some time or other, uppermost in my own mind. Sometimes she ended by acquiescing in my views—sometimes she demurred. Often enough she held her ground tenaciously to the very last, and I invariably found that at the bottom of my heart my opinion was not very different from hers. And not unfrequently, tired with the dryness of the dispute, she would start up and run away to hide in the nearest orange-grove, and when I came in pursuit, pelt me—the saucy Psychè!—with a volley of the oranges that she had plucked, taking good care all the time, however, to send them wide of the mark.

Oh, these were happy times—happy, happy times! Were they perfectly happy? the reader may perhaps inquire. Most undoubtedly they were. What more could I wish for? She had just that beauty which I loved above all, if I did not admire it most. She loved me—unaffectedly, fondly, ardently. Her mind

was a treasure to mine, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that mine was a treasure to hers: my very character and temperament was the converse of hers, and our mutual defects counterbalanced one another. For instance, I am slowly roused; but when roused, I easily carry things to excess. Whereas a trifle sufficed to put her spirits in motion; but she never went too far. And yet, such is the perversity of human nature, that I sometimes fancied myself not quite happy. What, then, did I regret? I ought to blush while I record it, but I regretted my little quarrels with Lisbeth, her pouts, my fits of sulkiness, and the bliss of our reconciliations. All this I knew was impossible with Psychè. My humours varied, so did hers; but in such a manner that there was always a "perfect accord." Now, just as the modern theory of music brings in occasional discords as essential to the most interesting compositions, so I—through sheer perversity, I confess—would have liked a little bickering now and then. If the Israelites, instead of hankering after the flesh-pots when in the desert, had sighed for the bricks and taskmasters of Egypt after their arrival in the Promised Land, they would hardly have been more unreasonable than I. So it was, notwithstanding.

Psychè never knew it, though—never dreamed of such a thing. And, in fact, it was only a passing pang that sometimes shot through my heart, at the memory of my wife. This memory was a source of

other troubles besides. It reminded me of the dilemma which I had never solved, and which again and again rose before me, as insoluble as ever. If Psychè was myself, I could not—if not myself, I might not—love her as I did. We often talked about this subject in our philosophical discussions. I well remember how one day—but it was eternal day in that Eden—sitting by the side of a brook, with a white sandy bed and daisied banks, we came to the conclusion that men did not properly know either what "otherness" or what "identity" was: and that it was therefore useless to dispute about mere words. This satisfied me, and quieted my doubts; unfortunately, not for long.

This morbid craving to solve an insoluble mystery grew upon me as time flew by. Problems multiplied, and were soon numberless. If Psychè was I, was she "I" before the apparition, or afterwards? Which of the two was the real being? Had she not as much right to affirm her reality as I mine? Instead of showing me that Hegel was right to identify the Ego with the Non-Ego, Calypso's magic had only convinced me that what I saw was distinct from myself. Was there any criterion of truth other than this one: *I cannot help believing it?* If not, Psychè's separate existence *was* the truth. Here again conscience tormented me with scruples. All the innocence, all the candour of my loved one could not efface the remembrance of Lisbeth, and the same reasoning returned

once more to torture me. These sufferings, of course, were, or ought to have been, very easy to bear; but to those that have nothing to suffer, every trifle becomes intolerable. The Sybarite, sleepless on his bed of roses, is a trite example of what I say; and, on the other hand, one of the merriest races that ever existed was that of the American negro slaves. I was spoiled by happiness: a mere riddle, taken from the cloudiest dreamland of speculation, was the turned-up rose-leaf that interfered with my bliss. This went so far at last that I decided to go with Psychè to the briny well where Calypso sat, and question her, once for all, and for ever.

To my surprise, my loved one hesitated to accompany me. "Let her alone," said she; "let her alone, sitting and thinking by that bitter pool; we do not need her. Are we not happy here?"

"Yes; but I want my doubts solved."

"And will she, can she solve them? You already have her word, telling you what I am. Will you believe her if she merely repeats it? If she can lie or err once, she can do so a second time; and should she now contradict herself, you will have no proof that what she says is true this time, and that it was false before."

"Be that as it may," I muttered, "she may explain things so as to set my doubts at rest; and if so, I shall be happier."

"Then let us go," she said, in a tone of sudden

decision, adding more tenderly, "O my beloved one! it was only for a moment that I hung back. Your happiness is mine; and as for me, I do not fear the worst that may befall me. For that worst is the best after all: it is to be dissolved and melt into your being."

"Which I firmly believe to be impossible," answered I. Our eyes met, and we both laughed.

Calypso was in her usual attitude of meditation. She only raised her dark-blue eyes when we stood before her, and quietly said, "I know what you wish to ask; you may hear my answer at once. Ought not this experiment to have taught you the one great lesson that I thought it would teach? Your philosopher has raised an insuperable difficulty—a difficulty which it is beyond the power of mortal man to solve. Can any proof of the unreality and consequent non-existence of your Psychè be more conclusive than that which I have given you? Yet such is the power of your sensations, such is the weakness of your reason, that its strongest arguments are met by an invincible movement of revolt. And if so, how can you possibly believe of the whole universe, on the strength of a mere speculation, what you cannot admit even in one single case, though experimentally convinced of my powers? I neither grant nor deny the force of Hegel's reasoning; but that you, made as you are, should think yourself able to decide the question, is flat absurdity."

"Then . . . my Psychè does exist!" I exclaimed, more and more excited; for the question was no longer one of mere philosophical interest, it was now interwoven with my very heart-strings. If I could not think of her as not existing, surely she must exist!

"She does . . . for you."

"And for herself?"

Calypso was silent.

"O Psychè!" said I, wildly; "if *she* will not answer me, *you* will: for I cannot bear this state of suspense, and I must have some reply."

"I exist for you, and for you alone," she answered, looking at me, with deep love beaming from beneath her long eyelashes. "I do not even think of myself or of my own pleasure; only of you. My happiness is bound up in yours. My existence is yours! Yes; I feel I could no more exist without you than a shadow could have being apart from the tree that throws it."

"Listen," interrupted Calypso. "The Fates have decreed that I warn you both. One of you may, at no distant time, wrongly, madly, infatuated by the excess of his passion, utter a certain word. But should this word be uttered, all separate existence would at once be at an end, and you would again be united—this time, for ever!"

"O my only one! O my Psychè!" I exclaimed, heedless of the warning, and worked up both by the

cold gravity of the one and by the impassioned love of the other, into a state bordering upon frenzy; "you have heard what she has just said. But is it not idle folly in her to menace us with a catastrophe that neither can conceive? No; you are mine, and I am yours: still you are not I, nor am I you. United, and yet not one; two in all things, save in our perfect love; existing both out of and in each other—we can and we will defy fate. You supply all that I want—all—all—all! And I likewise to you. And thus we are independent of the universe. We are greater than the universe; we are *infinite*, O Psychè!—infinite in our all-sufficiency, infinite in our bliss. Yes, Psychè, WE ARE GOD!" I cried, clasping her to my breast.

I heard a low wail; I felt a shudder; and my arms closed upon . . . nothing. Nothing absolutely. There was not the slightest vestige of anything remaining. All had gone as suddenly as it had come. As the excitement of my momentary and blasphemous intoxication subsided, I saw around me the bare rocks of the cavern, and before me Calypso, serene, beautiful, and thoughtful as ever.

"It was to be," said she.

"What was to be? . . . Where—where is Psychè? Do not conceal her. Bring her back. . . . She must be near me; I touched her but now."

"There never was any such thing," said Calypso.

"I pray you, do not quibble. Thing or appear-

ance, bring it back; it matters little, so that it returns."

"That appearance does not exist anywhere now."

"But it will appear again, will it not? Oh, you have brought it forth out of utter nothingness: do so once more! Calypso, see! I am at your feet; I beg you, I entreat you, restore her to me!"

The void in my heart was awful. I would not admit the thought that I should see her no more. That Calypso would resist my tears and my prayers never entered my mind; and I knelt, and wept, and kissed her feet, grovelling like a worm. For I felt as if I were guilty of having slain her whom I loved; her low wail still rang in my ears, and I still felt the shudder with which she passed out of the world.

Long, long did I thus pour out my passionate supplications at her feet. But when I glanced upwards, all exhausted, but hoping for some word, to say that in the distant future I might perhaps again clasp Psychè in my arms, Calypso looked into my face with those dark-blue eyes of hers, and said—

"It was to be. Do not fatigue yourself with entreaties that have no force. Or do as you choose. I warned you of everything beforehand, merely because it was written that you were to be warned. Your misery cannot touch me in the least. Know that the apparition has as certainly gone from you for ever, as it has come to you for a time."

So it was all true, and irrevocable! Lost, lost, and

never more to return during all eternity! Lost! I felt my heart turning into stone. Lost! What was life worth, after that awful blow? . . . Lost! And could not I be lost too? Could I not provoke that terrible Power, that had made and annihilated Psychè, into annihilating me likewise? I would arouse her anger against me, and perish execrating her.

"May the most frightful curses of hell light upon you, infamous demon that you are!" I shrieked. "Fiend! fiend! fiend! May every one of your cold thoughts be cursed! Cursed be your knowledge of the present and of the past; blasted be your beauty, and withered your mind! May whatever there is of evil in the wide world come upon you, overwhelm, and destroy you! . . ."

I went further; much further and much lower. But I must forbear to transcribe the rest of my "wild and whirling words." It is enough to say that the most degraded of womankind would have been roused to fury by the epithets that I heaped upon her. She remained perfectly calm. Once before in my life I was present at a somewhat similar scene. It was a glorious river, with picturesque banks, and glittering in the silvery moonlight. A young man, while bathing, had got out of his depth; and before I could come to the rescue, he was drowned. And the river still flowed on as before, glittering in the silvery moonlight. I fled from the spot in horror; so cruel a thing as death was doubly and monstrously hide-

ous to me, when surrounded and caused by such beauty.

Something of the same sort of horror seized me, when, in the transports of my rage, and reckless of consequences, I advanced towards her—to do I knew not what; for I had not forgotten that she was invulnerable. She gazed full into my face. So repulsively beautiful was she at that moment, that I could have endured anything rather than that look. I could not bear to live in her presence; if I had been armed, the unutterable loathing that I felt would most certainly have made me commit suicide. As it was, I only turned away in disgust. Turning, I saw before me the briny pool. A wild longing for death took possession of my soul. Anything, rather than to be with Her! And I plunged into the waters headlong. As they closed over me, I became insensible. I thought it was death, and felt pleased at the thought. The troubled wave of Becoming was subsiding at last into the unruffled surface of Being.

. . . . . .

I woke—not at once, but by slow degrees—to the surprise of finding myself still existing, and lying comfortably in a large bed. The morning radiance of the warm sun shone through the curtains, for the room where I was looked towards the east. As consciousness returned, I became aware of something strange in my surroundings. I soon saw that the room was not mine; that I had never been there be-

fore. Birds were twittering outside, and the branches of the trees, waving in the wind, cast their moving shadows on the panes. I hastily rose and went to the window, but could not recognise the landscape that met my view. All at once the memory of my past happiness and the consciousness of my present desolation flashed upon me. Had Calypso thrown another spell, and was this but a second phantasmagoria of my brain? Why not? My curiosity was roused, and I proceeded to examine the room.

It was quite bare. The walls were neatly but very simply papered, and there was not the least attempt at ornamentation in the shape of engravings or pictures. On a small stand in one corner were several bottles of medicine. The windows were strongly barred outside. I tried the door and found it locked. What did all this signify?

There was a small hand-bell on a table by my bedside; I mechanically pressed the knob down, and it sounded. In a few seconds I heard steps outside; a small wicket that I had not noticed opened in the door, and a pair of hard inquisitive eyes peered in at me from underneath bushy eyebrows and a shaggy fell of hair, belonging apparently to a stalwart man.

"What does this mean?" I asked, returning stare for stare.

When I spoke I saw the expression of his eyes change from curiosity to astonishment. He seemed rather abashed, but answered nothing.

"Are you deaf?" I said. "Where am I? and why am I here? Open the door at once—at once!" I repeated very firmly and sternly.

"Perhaps you would like to see the Herr Director, sir?" muttered the man. "I am only a servant, and know nothing."

"Let the Herr Director come, then, and explain matters," answered I, wondering who this "Herr" could be, and of what he was a director. I got into bed again, musing over the strange break that I found in the series of my conscious acts. My last movement before had been a plunge into a cold lake; my next, immediately afterwards—so it seemed at least—was a leap out of a warm bed. But I soon heard the footsteps of the man who was going to account for everything.

The Herr Director came in—a tall man, of a decidedly Jewish cast of face, wearing spectacles, and stooping considerably. He introduced himself as Herr Kornblum. "Herr Professor," said he, "I am most happy to see you looking so well, and so little in need of my services."

"May I ask, Herr Director, what those services have been?"

"Most certainly; but will you permit me, first of all, to send a telegram to your *gnädige Frau?* She is anxious on your account, and will be most pleased to hear such good news."

He went out, and I remarked that he did not lock

the door after him. I had been ill, as it appeared. But what could have been the nature of my ailment? Perhaps it had been caused by my excitement, and my leap into the waters of the lake. I had been found somehow or other by the miners, and taken to this doctor's private establishment, or *Heilanstand*. Poor Lisbeth! How much she must have suffered!

I was frequently interrupted in my surmises by peals of hysterical laughter, that seemed to proceed from an adjoining room: sometimes they sank into chuckles, sometimes they rose to yells. The effect was on the whole very disagreeable, and I wondered what on earth the man could have to laugh at so violently. Presently Herr Kornblum returned, very polite, and almost obsequious in his manner; though I noticed that at first he seemed trying to stare me out of countenance; an attempt which, I need not say, failed completely. Questioned about my illness, he told me it was not easy to give me a correct idea of what it was; it occurred so rarely that it had no popular name. He could only state that there had been a severe affection of the nervous centres, together with delirium; but that it was impossible to go into details without using highly technical terms, unintelligible to such as did not know medicine thoroughly. With this explanation I had to be satisfied.

"But, Herr Director," said I, "how did it come on? What was the cause of my malady?"

He shook his head. "That I cannot tell. Your *gnädige Frau* will perhaps be more communicative with you than she has been with myself."

"Well, I shall speak with her. But I suppose I am well enough to get up and walk about."

"Indeed you are. And, in fact, you may go home this very day, if convenient; the crisis of your illness has passed, and has not left you in a weak state of convalescence, as is the case for some distempers. You are well and strong again."

It was a most extraordinary establishment, this *Heilanstand.* At the end of every passage there were locked doors, and it was very difficult indeed to go about the house. Near a room by which we passed, I heard a noise as of some one leaping about; the Director hurried past, and replied to my glance of inquiry by the words, "Gymnastic exercise." I wondered who could take such violent exercise as this appeared to be; but not wishing to criticise his way of dealing with the patients, I preferred to ask him why he kept the doors locked. He answered me with a feeble smile, "I am afraid I must confess that I have a weakness—some would even call it a touch of mental derangement—but the fact is that I cannot bear the least draught. I used to have doors with springs, that closed immediately by themselves; but one day a patient of mine set a stone in the door to get fresh air. A case of pneumonia, which proved fatal, was the result. I have had the doors locked

ever since. Only I and the servants, who are responsible for any irregularity, have the keys."

Odd as it was to hear a doctor accusing himself of a weakness that almost amounted to a craze, I had no time to think of it, for my wife came in just that minute. She was an energetic little woman in her way. I was cured, and could bear the journey; there was nothing more to detain me. So, in a quarter of an hour's time, a carriage was at the door; and after slipping a closed envelope into the hand of the Herr Director, who acknowledged it with a very low bow, she stepped in with me, and away we drove.

It was then that I remarked how much she was changed; she seemed at least several years older. Even her joy at seeing me recovered could not efface certain marks that proved how much she had had to bear; and now that the first excitement was over, and she leaned back on the cushions, I saw at one glance all that she had gone through. I wanted to question her, but she stopped me at the very outset.

"Dearest, let us not think of the past. It would be painful—painful to you, painful to me. Doubly painful, if——" Here she broke off abruptly, and tears rose to her eyes.

"But I must know——"

"You must know that you have been very ill, and very carefully tended."

"But when did my illness begin? and how?"

She shook her head and pressed her lips firmly

together, with so sorrowful an expression that I did not venture to insist. In an hour's time we were at home.

At home! Ah me! how dreamy I felt, looking around me at the dear old home with its ancient pictures and its quaint furniture, and its canary that trilled out a carol of joy as I entered, and the thick-furred Angora cat that advanced, purring softly, to greet me! All these things had been half effaced from my memory by a host of images that were still vividly present to my mind. My little brown-eyed Lisbeth was sitting beside me, and Psychè was no longer there! Psychè was no longer there, and I scarcely felt the bitterness of her loss. Instead of golden apples, culled from the garden of the Hesperides, I was presently discussing cold veal and bread-and-butter; instead of quaffing the water of the limpid brook, with Psychè sipping at the same iris-tinted shell that contained it, Lisbeth and I were both drinking the hot, black, aromatic beverage that flowed from the *Kaffee-machine*, and was abundantly tempered with rich fresh cream. And Psychè scarcely ever took notice whether I ate or not; while Lisbeth was continually as intent upon my having the best of everything, as if that was my be-all and my end-all here. So I sat and ate and mused, dazed by the contrast. Were both of these scenes dreams? Was only one of them true? And if so, which? Or were both realities?

"You are tired, Heinrich," said Lisbeth.

No. I was not tired, but . . . Well, if she had her secret, I would have mine too. I was thinking of some very strange things that had befallen me.

"Oh, tell them to me, Heinrich!"

"Then tell me what you know about my illness."

"Never, never!"

"Very good. I am not curious. But you must not desire to get anything out of me, either."

"No, I do not care. Only . . . one thing, dear Heinrich. That I must know."

"Well?"

"Have you ever . . . loved any one else but me?"

"Never. I swear it."

And then she came, tearful but smiling, and threw her arms round my neck . . . and we kissed again, after so long a lapse of time! For it was now August, and my fatal visit to the mine took place before Midsummer's Day.

"Never?" Had I spoken the truth? It was a questionable matter, and much might be said on both sides. If Calypso had not lied; if Calypso herself was a dream, and Psychè the dream of a dream; if Herr Director Kornblum, with his locked doors and barred windows, and patients hysterically laughing or indulging in outrageous gymnastics, had concealed the real name of my illness under polite phrases? . . .

If? But even then, supposing Hegel's system to

be true, I had as truly loved *another*, when I loved Psychè, as now, when I pressed Lisbeth to my bosom. In both cases the "otherness" is only in appearance; it is a Non-Ego, which is the Ego after all!

Calypso was right. That way madness lies. And since I can understand Hegel to no better purpose, I must leave off trying to understand him at all. To-morrow morning I start for the country. No books shall go with me; at least no philosophical books. I sold them all just now to a Jew, who gave me one florin for the lot. And now for two months of fresh air, liberty, and happiness!

CHAPTER FROM AN UNKNOWN LIFE.

BY CAPTAIN MORRIS BENT.

I HAVE always thought, despite the frowning negative which Fate ultimately pronounced upon his name, that there was something remarkable in him who is the subject of this reminiscence.

My friend—I may call him so, now he is no more—Merryman had joined the regiment some eighteen months previous to myself, and was therefore, to eyes prone to take the *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, a man of standing and experience in ways military and other. When I was left a recruit upon the barrack-square, Merryman was proudly marching out to the field-day with the Queen's colour on his shoulder: he was a member of court-martial, while I, as an officer under instruction, was writing a copy of the proceedings: he commanded the guard when I, the supernumerary, was initiated into the sacred mysteries attending the inspection of reliefs, and the sitting all day and all night in a tight tunic and belt. A man

of standing and experience — we called him the "Maestro."

If there be little in a name, there is generally much in a nickname, especially, though not always obviously, in such as brother officers bestow on one another. A man without a nickname is either unknown or unpopular, and the *sobriquet*, like the apparel, oft proclaims the man. Merryman's title was the outcome of his suspected rather than known musical talent, his unusual physiognomy, and his habitual reserve. Up to a certain point no man was so easily read—beyond it, and none was so unreadable; hence, among many well-wishing acquaintances, Merryman had no friend. I remember seeing his answer to a comrade's letter, when, after entering with apparent interest into all the topics of his correspondent, the Maestro had signed himself "as truly yours as any one's—ANDREW MERRYMAN." He was for ever thus, as by an after-thought, repelling the advances of the would-be friendly, and yet, as we now know, no man ever more ardently craved friendship.

Poverty may well be termed "essentially comparative"; and Andrew was the superlatively "poor man," whose want of means, among the richer or less scrupulous, is so often parent to pride and sensibility. As far as in him lay, he kept pace with others for the credit of the regiment, and the *res angusta*, if it existed, was confined to the self-denial of his personal habits. No one suspected that for years Merryman

was doing the impossible and living on his pay. He was commonly supposed indifferent or superior to comfort.

The Maestro's quarters, at the time of which I am thinking, and when first I was admitted to them, presented in a curious degree the odd mixture of a former and a present life imperfectly assimilated. On the walls hung his bookshelves, stuffed chiefly with old school prizes and note-books more or less dilapidated; six pictures of the sea; and his coat of arms, crested with a rising sun and the motto "Nondum," in a frame that had once been gilt. The centre of the floor was covered by a faded square of drugget in which but little perceptible pattern remained, and on it stood the regulation table and two chairs; one angle of the room contained his sword, another a guitar, and against the sides were ranged a soldier's chest of drawers and sundry smaller boxes. The table sustained pocket editions of various professional books, securely tied together as they had been returned to him after the general's inspection a month ago—a large portfolio, and a pile of nondescript papers; a single photographic group was over the mantelpiece, and upon it five confidential pipes, with their adviser, the portly tobacco-jar.

If you would see the proprietor of these details at home, imagine a man of something more than middle height, clad in coarse blue serge dressing-gown and red girdle, his feet in slippers, his head in an ancient

cap, seated before a laid but unlighted grate in an iron convertible bed-chair, and reading the 'Citizen of the World.'

"Come in," in reply to my rap; "sit down—fill your pipe."

And so I sought to improve my acquaintance with Merryman.

Of this particular interview I remember little, nor is it of consequence save as the first of a series in which our intimacy, such as it was, cemented itself. We were in England at the time, and I grew to know and appreciate my comrade's versatility; but of himself, except that he had a mother and had had a brother, I remained as ignorant on the last as on the first day of our meeting.

The will of Andrew Merryman was a curiosity: informal and bearing only his own signature, it began by stating that he only made it "to save trouble to the Adjustment Committee, for what he had to leave would perhaps amuse a lawyer,—he hoped it would be taken as sufficient evidence of the wishes of a sane man." He bequeathed his brains to the regiment, his body to the doctors, his pipes and guitar to his servant, his uniform to the Jews, his papers and journal to myself, and all other effects to his mother; and concluded trusting a sufficient balance would be found to his credit in the agent's hands to pay his last mess-bill, and the regimental workshops for his coffin.

There was little enough mirth in all this, yet the honest president of the Committee was not quite clear whether the dead man was laughing at him and his colleagues or not. Major ——, however, did his best to see these wishes carried out—those, at least, which were not on the face of them lunatic—and duly handed me as my share Merryman's portfolio and seven volumes of a closely written journal, which, commencing some time previous to his entering the service, was carried to the brink of his final strange resolution. Inside the cover of the first of these volumes I found myself briefly addressed :—

"Dear ——, make what use you will of these—turn a penny in a magazine or enrich the waste-paper basket: I had other thoughts once.

> 'Life is a treasure-chest whereof the key
> Ycleped in Heaven is opportunity.'

I never found it.—Yours, A. M."

The papers which thus fell into my hands presented a strange medley: here a scrap of verse, there a sentiment; here some professional note, and next it a relapse into verse: there were the outlines of two plays with a few scenes written, several essays, and the first two parts of an epic poem—but all incomplete. A promise unfulfilled, no less a promise. The journals deeply affected me, and in their perusal I learned to respect and love the man who thus late

vouchsafed his confidence. My offer to the reader here is "a chapter" from this unknown life, and in extracting as follows, the selection is made more from its possibly general than from its particular interest. A love episode may at least be laughed at.

To follow the thread, it is, of course, necessary to eliminate the foreign details which surround it in the daily jottings of the original. I have therefore preferred compressing the story into the form of continuous narrative, and quoting the Maestro's words wherever the sequence admits.

"*Malta*, 1*st May* 18—. Leave granted and an indulgence passage. It is best so: 'chaque chose s'arrange,'" says the journal.

The previous season, ending as is its wont with the Carnival ball, had been an unusually gay one in the island: the regular visitors, whom quarantine had deterred from fulfilling their customary southerly flitting the winter before, had returned this year, bringing many fresh importations with them, and the "*pis-aller* for battered belles," as Fior del Mondo has been irreverently termed, was well filled, and ripe for fun and frolic. General Sir George and Lady Grandon, retired, had taken their usual apartments in Strada Mezzodi; Mr, Mrs, and the Misses White-Stratton were to be found in the Grand Hotel; Lady Mendip and her daughter were in Valetta. Each fresh arrival of the "P. and O." added its

quota to the throng, and the first Club ball was promised a large attendance. Three of the regiments, our own among them, catching the infection, had a society fit, and vied with each other for the honour of giving the best ball known since the famous occasion when the Royal —— reared the grotto of solid ice-slabs wherein heated beauty might cool itself after the dance.

Nor had *al fresco* entertainments been wanting: Boschetto, Delamara, Selmund, and even Gozo, had all in turn been laid under contribution, and many sweet scenes had the sweet moon beheld among the errant and belated picnickers.

It was on one of these occasions apparently that Merryman and Lucy Hartell first became acquainted. The daughter of English parents long resident there, Lucy, as an adopted child of the island, combined to a remarkable extent the softness of the southern European with the frankness of our own maidens. In stature she was somewhat below the average feminine standard, of a fresh complexion, with honest blue eyes and nut-brown hair, a gentle voice, and that ready sympathy of manner which is grateful to all men, and irresistible to some.

Merryman at this time was, or fancied he was, proof against all allurements of the sex: "The slings and arrows of outrageous nymphs are for others. I am no first-class target, no golden bull's-eye." Yet, with all his introspection, the Maestro must have

been curiously ignorant of himself; and the vainglory of his "Le roi s'amuse," which here concludes a notice of an excursion in Lucy's company, is sufficiently inconsistent with the sequel.

Chance, or that "divinity which shapes our ends" for us, hereupon threw the pair frequently together. If on his part Merryman did not seek, Lucy on hers did not shun, the contact; and the garrison tattlers and professional busybodies were soon attracted. "Vultures to carrion?" asks the Maestro. He was an honourable man, and could not long be uncertain as to the views of others on the subject of this picturesque intimacy. Innuendo was constantly at work; hints were dropped in his presence. "So little have their empty heads to think of; but why should I of all men have the honour of filling them?"

At length one day the proverbially good-natured friend, who is ever found to put a delicate question with delicacy, inquired of Andrew point-blank if it were true that he was engaged to marry Miss Hartell?

Marry Miss Hartell! Lucy Hartell! Was it possible his innocent liking had gone so far? Was he to be made a trifler in spite of himself? She was a charming little girl, and he was fonder of her than she could be of him; but marry her—he had no intention of marrying her, and if he had he *could* not. Merryman reasoned with himself, and his reason seemingly prompted him as follows in rhyme:—

"LINES FOR MY LADYE'S ALBUM.

"My little ladye owns no sort of dread
That things are other than they seem to be,
Because her heart is guileless, and her head
Is crowned with maiden truth and modesty;
Yet, yet she wonders that he hath not spoken
The one brief word whose word was never broken.

My little ladye's nature is to love;
Ivy her name, if his the Ruin be;
For on the front of care she thinks to prove
That opposites may some time well agree.
Thus, thus she argues with herself: at most
'Tis only reckoning without the host.

My little ladye's life is like the brook
Which runs and sparkles now, nor deepens yet;
Her face he reads; it is his open book,
Few pages to remember, few forget.
But 'tis a pretty tale; the tale which told
Sighs that such light shall smileless grow and old.

My little ladye will not droop nor die;
She is no fabled heroine, if this
Which now she watches with too favourite eye
Should quit for what may be the thing that is—
She'll cut her wisdom teeth upon the matter,
And sooner wed her mother's brother's hatter!"

Now, lest it be thought that too much is assumed in the tone of these verses, it is only just to say that

whatever his sentiments towards the young lady might be, her preference for the Maestro, if it did not exist, was so admirably simulated as to deceive others less immediately concerned. I for one, who knew the family, had no doubt that Lucy was attached, and deeply attached, to him: and as to simulation, she was incapable of it. So when Merryman called the next day, and announced that he was proceeding to England on urgent private affairs, Lucy said nothing; till presently, bringing an album from her room, she begged him to write something—anything—before going; and he entered the above lines, said good-bye, and was gone. Would she take the hint? And was he the stoic he imagined himself?

The leave season of Malta in those days was generally quoted as the prime advantage of the station. "Capital place—you can get away from it;" and four months and a half was an allowance as generously granted as it was gratefully received.

Merryman accordingly went home, and his doings there do not touch the present chapter: whether he was recalled or not I forget, but it is certain that before the expiration of his leave my friend was again among us. The journal of the period contains more than one allusion to "the girl he left behind him" in Malta; and dated 30th June 18—, is the following characteristic entry:—

"Why will she write to me thus? I cannot bear it: 'The flowers that once were yours are crying for

their owner; I water them daily, but they will droop, the weather is so hot. When are you coming back?' Iron to the magnet, the moth to the candle! Stick to your old coat, my moth; the candle will gutter without your help. Oh Lucy,—

"Be not so kind, for here is Passion's slave,
Whom Pity long hath viewed with alien face,
Lest he, returning more than all you gave,
Establish Love in Kindness' yielded place;
Not long a stranger Love contents to sit,
For all a native in that other's breast,
His new home learned, he will nor stay nor quit,
Denying to the heart that craves it, rest.
Smile not so sweetly, in its ripple lies
The two-edged potence of Excalibur,
And stanch the shaded softness of those eyes,
Or be for ever left a questioner.
He loves—ay, as the wind doth love the rose,
That comes the tempted but the tempter goes."

And Lucy Hartell received this. I doubt if the man who speaks in riddles has more than half a wish to be understood; but Love and Duty were ever at odds.

Winter was coming on again: the weather had broken in one of those tumultuous storms with which Malta is accustomed to hail a cooler season, and already the *sombrero* and white clothing had given place to the civilised garb of ordinary England. On the Marsa, polo ran its daily course, rejoicing in the softer ground; and enthusiasts were arranging, if they had not begun, the various football matches of the

year which so astound the native mind. The yachts, cutters, and mudians had for the most part run to snug moorings, and with folded wings calmly awaited the wrath to come; while smaller boats, at home in either element, were hauled ashore ready to take the water again on any fair occasion. Such occasions are by no means rare, and late autumn or earliest spring—even mid-winter—not seldom beholds an improvised water-party making its way to one of the many uninviting spots with which the coast abounds. To a day of this kind the story now leads me.

It happened that November 18— was an unusually fine month. Without its heat, the weather for nearly three weeks had possessed the stillness of June; and the radiant sea, flashing daily an ingenuous answer to the sun, declared its turbulence as essentially of the past.

An excursion arranged by the Hartells, but for some reason postponed during the summer, now saw its way to execution, and as follows: This party, which grouped itself according to inclination into land and sea divisions, was to meet at St Paul's Bay, and to picnic beneath the statue of the great apostle, whose tutelary presence resides at the western point of the inlet, and emphasises the spot where "two seas met."

Merryman and myself, our movements being a little uncertain, had agreed to join these friends in the course of the afternoon; and soon after

mid-day we were on board my own small boat, gliding with loose sheet down the coast. The Merry Andrew—such was her name—was a whaler in miniature, stiff enough for sailing, and light enough for rowing under ordinary conditions; but owing to her tapered ends, there was only room for one in the stern-sheets, and I had found this on more than one occasion no disadvantage.

In something less than two hours we reached our port, and found our entertainers and several of their guests already hard at work in the unloading of good things. We were told to consider ourselves on leave till five o'clock; and our offers of service being satisfactorily declined, each proceeded to amuse himself according to his own ideas. I found the lady who, of all, was perhaps least likely to assist geological research, and set off to geologise; others of the party were similarly or dissimilarly disposed of and dispersed: Merryman had taken Lucy's hand, and the two had disappeared.

An hour was, I think, gone, and I was beginning to realise that possibly the proper study of mankind is not geology, nor even exactly man, when my companion, looking out to sea, suddenly exclaimed—

"Oh, what a pretty little boat! Why haven't you got a boat like that? We might go out in her."

"I *have* got a boat very like that," I replied; "in fact that is my boat Merry Andrew. The

gentleman whose head you see above the gunwale came with me in her from St Elmo, and has mistaken her for his own; and the lady——"

"Has made a like mistake in his case, I see," laughed my temporary divinity with feminine sweetness. "What a *dear* girl Lucy Hartell is! She is a great friend of mine."

I was inclined to feel annoyed with Merryman for a moment; but the damsel effected a diversion in his favour, as she continued enigmatically—

"I have always been sorry for Adam; it is so hard to be tempted, you know."

How should I know? But the boat was now out of hail, heading west, so I merely remarked, "Yes, poor Eve," and sought a less speculative topic.

Any one at all acquainted with the Mediterranean is aware how treacherous and passionate are its blue waters. How well expressed in the lines of the poet—

> "Not seldom clothed in saffron vest,
> Deceitfully goes forth the morn;
> Not seldom evening in the west
> Sinks smilingly forsworn"—

are the unexpected changes of temper exhibited on its shores! He has learned to be surprised at nothing, and to take the freaks of nature as he would the caprices of spoiled beauty, for what they are worth. I may therefore be trusted in relating

that about four o'clock on this merry afternoon the more observant of the party were struck by the sudden stillness of the air; the breeze before which Merryman and I had run from Valetta, after blowing fitfully for a time, had ceased altogether; it was dead calm, and by-and-by, with a moon nearly at the full, the return voyage would be delightful. In less than half an hour the sky was black, the wind had shifted, short angry gusts from the northward swept the surface of the water, and lightning, more vivid with each succeeding flash, played eagerly along the contracted horizon. Those of our pleasure-seekers who had preferred to pass the interval on the water were seen making for the cove, and soon the whole party, with the exception of Merryman and Miss Hartell, were once more gathered at the rendezvous beneath the statue. The absentees were at first unnoticed, and it had been suggested that there was yet time for some slight refreshment, before the storm, now seen to be inevitable, should require the retreat of all hands to shelter on the main shore. It was not till this retrogression had commenced that Mrs Hartell betrayed her uneasiness. Lucy's non-arrival with the rest had not escaped her; but her confidence in Merryman was unbounded, and perhaps she was unwilling to call attention to a folly condoned by her own attitude towards it. She now approached me, and with a smile that failed to conceal anxiety, inquired if I

had seen Mr Merryman. I told her where I had last seen him, and added that, in view of the approaching storm, he had no doubt landed farther on rather than risk return, and that the pair must now be on their way to rejoin the party on foot. The lady was, I hoped, reassured, and I kept my own doubts to myself. It is time to follow the truants, and I cannot do better than take the journal, from whose text personal recollection has perhaps led me too far, and quote Merryman's entry verbatim:—

"*Friday*, 25*th Nov.* 18—,
9 A.M.

"'Who spilled the salt at table,
Next day he broke his neck;
And the ship that sailed of a Friday
Became the fated wreck.'

"'A good day for a water-party.'
—GAMMER GURTON.

"*Saturday*, 26*th Nov.*, 10 P.M.—Joined the Hartells' picnic at St Paul's Bay yesterday afternoon; about fifty strong. The little ladye admired ——'s boat, and was persuaded to make a short trial of her with me. Short trial proved longer than reckoned. We got a good offing, and I then ran up the mainsail and stood for the Comino Strait. Breeze failed about four o'clock, when we were abreast of Selmund. Noticed clouds gathering to the northward, but no wind yet. Lucy anxious now

to see the Strait; so took the paddles and entered it. Made fast in a small bay and landed. Scrambled to the top of some neighbouring rocks to gain a good view. View unsatisfactory. Storm coming up hand over hand. Must run for shelter, or let boat be smashed. Lucy knew no danger, had no fear, and insisted on coming with me. Remembered a landslip three-quarters of a mile to leeward, where the boat, at least, might lie secure; and let the worst come to the worst, we could leave her there and return to our friends on foot. Shoved off; but after a few strokes the starboard paddle broke in my hand. It was now blowing very fresh, but with a leading wind we had little to fear. Reefed down the sail, hoisted it, and took the helm. Lucy —little heroine—sat in the bottom of the boat covering her light dress from the spray with my coat. The sea had risen as if by magic, and any one of the crested surges that followed was enough to swamp the little craft which staggered before them—on her beam, and the boat was lost. No alternative, therefore, but to pass the friendly landslip and make for the lee of the island. The day had grown wonderfully dark, but the flashes made amends with thunder,—

> 'Thunder that stammers forth its tale,
> Lightning that wakes far momentary miles,'

added strange grandeur to the scene.

"Scudding thus, we were not long in reaching the south-western point of the island. The rocks, sheeted in foam, forbade approach; but I kept the boat as close as possible, so as to round sharp into the smooth water on the other side. The contrast there was sufficiently striking, and the relief immediate. Lucy gave one long sigh; and this was the only sign of emotion that escaped the brave girl, who, since the broken paddle, had spoken no word. Now she said calmly, 'Where will you land? Geneina is the best place. My poor mother will be very anxious!'

"'It will be night before we get there,' I said. 'You are not frightened?'

"'Not with you. But how wet you are without your coat! Here's rain, too; you must put it on.'

"I wrapped her again in it, and the boat crept silently beneath the sheltering cliffs.

"It must have been ten o'clock or more when the moon, which for some time past had been wrestling with the scud, suddenly shone forth, and the outlet of the rocky valley of Geneina was plainly visible a little ahead, with two or three peasants' cottages dotted against the slope of the hill. I ran the boat's nose into a creek beside the shingle, and the little ladye was once more on *terra firma*. We walked towards the cottages, and she took my arm. Was ever man so tempted to make a fool of himself,—no, not of himself—of the creature he loved best in the world? How can I ask her to share misfortune?

"Lucy spoke the language with facility, and we had little difficulty in persuading a kind-hearted countrywoman to give her lodging for the rest of the night. I returned to the boat, and after a pipe and examination of ——'s flask, happily left on board, slept, and did not dream.

"Made my way early to the cottage. The occupants were astir, and a simple breakfast preparing. Lucy had already arranged with her landlady for a cart, and in this primitive vehicle we were to make our way to Valetta. A small consideration induced the son 'Joe' (every good Maltee answers to the name) to take the boat round to St Elmo when the weather should moderate. All's well that ends well. The Colonel requires my reasons in writing for absenting myself from kit-inspection. I hope they may satisfy him better than they do me."

Poor Merryman was a bad hand at excuses. Believing and acting up to the principle, "Qui s'excuse s'accuse," he more often than not did himself little justice when a case demanded explanation. In the present instance he was fortunate, at least from the official point of view. With Mrs Hartell more difficulty was experienced. The good lady had been really frightened, and the recovered Lucy was made to feel the effects of her mother's mental reaction. It was said that she was suffering from the exposure, had a severe cold, was naturally delicate, and so on; wherefore dance, picnic, afternoon party, and all the

uses of society, were for the present tabooed, and the little ladye was more or less like a caged bird in her home. The Maestro's visits, too, were received with a certain coldness which he was not long in perceiving. They became constrained, rare, and presently ceased.

"*Monday*, 15*th January* 18—. Read a good definition of the word flirtation, 'attention without intention.' Does the cap fit? A most unsuitable headpiece. *Alter ego*, good friend, is it not hard to kick against the pricks — to be for ever Fortune's opponent? Show me the turning in my long lane.

"I watched thee worship in thy purity,
When vespers bade the faithful with their rhyme
Of pious bells, methinking it no crime
Were faithlessness but justified by thee;
Sweet sponsor, thy meek head once turned to me,
And the blush mantled to thine eyes, then fled,
As fearing half it said and left unsaid,
'Love is not yet divine by one degree.'
I turned and looked upon my own sad heart,
And questioned as of yore, but none replied;
The feeble actor had forgot his part,
And on my lips the unanswered sophism died—
'C'est dieu l'amour'—then is not Love divine?
And what are blushes but Love's countersign?"

Merryman became about this time, as implied, very regular in his attendance on the Church's evening service, and it was noticed that he always occupied the same seat, a little to the right and rear of the Hartells' pew. He was far from being an irre-

ligious man, but, like many others, he respected the Church chiefly in the abstract as the representative of the Great Unknown; and I think, perhaps from this very respect, he was apt to be hypercritical of those whom conviction and the bishop have ordained leaders of men.

"Their soulless accents do deny my soul."

Clearly the service or its exponent was not the attraction here.

One evening soon after the above date, Merryman, whose custom it was to wait till the church had nearly emptied itself, saw Lucy Hartell return alone to her seat and take up a book she had left there. He rose and joined her at the door.

"Shall I see you to your people?" he said.

She did not answer, but led the way outside, then turning sharp to the right, the girl moved quickly along a side street; presently she slackened her pace and looked round. Merryman was at her side in an instant.

"I wanted to see you," she said, as they proceeded. "Why do you never call? Where have you been all this time?"

These simple questions were more easily asked than answered, since, according to Merryman's peculiar creed, particulars were to be avoided; therefore—

"I wanted to see *you*," he rejoined; "that's why I came to the church."

Lucy did not pretend to be shocked: she continued, and her voice had a touch of reproach in it—

"You might have called. You knew I was a prisoner. 'Dissipation of all kinds' is forbidden by the doctor, but I have told him I *will* be well by Tuesday week. Are you going to the dance on board the flag-ship?"

"R.S.V.P., I suppose. Yours is my invitation. Lieutenant Merryman has the honour to——"

"Oh, stop!" cried Lucy; "don't say I asked you. But haven't you an invitation, really?"

"I expect one has reached the mess," said Merryman.

She was silent for a while, and they walked on; then, speaking very quietly, "We are getting near home. I have taken you too far. Is it true your regiment is leaving?"

"Yes, I think so."

"And going on active service?"

"Yes."

"And you will go too, and I shall be very sorry." She held out her hand. "Good night."

Merryman could not trust his tongue. He took the little hand in both his own, and kissed it twice.

An extraordinary lover surely. Poor Lucy! poor Andrew!

The chapter draws towards conclusion. Rumour has many tongues, but the above had been imparted in confidence to the regiment, and we fondly imagined

it had not gone beyond our own circle. How Lucy Hartell had heard it remains her own secret, but

> "Lover's eyes are sharp to see,
> And lover's ears in hearing."

Still the "shave" needed confirmation, and meantime, as our orders had not come, things went on as usual at St Elmo.

The dance on board the flag-ship was the coming event in the little whirligig society of the island, and anticipation hung joyfully upon the 30th January, when the ship would be draped in flags, and electric light was to turn night into day. All the regiments were likely to be well represented on the occasion, and it is well known that ladies will brave any amount of squeezing in the boats to enjoy the variety of dancing on a deck instead of the ordinary ball-room floor; so, as the time drew on, Captain —— and the officers of the ship had as many acceptances as they could wish. The dance was destined to be remembered by two at least of their guests.

On the morning of the day preceding it, Merryman had accidentally met Lucy in Valetta, and ascertained that she was going, chaperoned by an irreproachably short-sighted duenna. "And you?" she asked.

"I am looking out for a keeper, and you may see an individual with a chain round his neck: I give you my word he can dance—like a bear."

Lucy laughed, but there was a tone of unconscious

sadness in the words. She checked herself, and was passing on when he stayed her.

"If I go will you give me two consecutive valses?"

Lucy blushed. "You shall have three."

"Thank you," said Merryman; "say, then, numbers ten to twelve? *Auf wiedersehen.*"

The same evening we were seated over the wine after mess, when the Colonel was called from the table, and presently all officers were summoned to the anteroom by him.

"Gentlemen," he said, holding a telegram in his hand, "the orders have come: this is Monday night, the regiment embarks on Wednesday; look to your companies. The mess will close after breakfast to-morrow."

The time was short, and though the news was not unexpected, every one understood that for the next six-and-thirty hours his hands would be pretty full. The greater part of this night must be spent among us in separating and packing personal effects, the morrow would be devoted to the men, and the evening—well, the dance afforded a good opportunity for saying the too familiar good-bye to friends on whom it was impossible to call.

It was 9 P.M. on Tuesday, and our work was done. Merryman and I stood together on the Custom-house steps as one of the ship's boats for the conveyance of guests ranged alongside.

"A veritable 'Duchess of Richmond' this," some

one remarked; "you know the —— embark to-morrow for the seat of war?"

"Do they?" observed the Maestro, as though it were news to him; "then no doubt there'll be 'a sound of devilry' to-night; Rachel weeping for her children—in-law. A most popular corps, I assure you, sir,—most popular, and greatly beloved."

It is not the part of the sober chronicler to enter upon the details of frivolity; he has been and is doubtless frivolous enough himself at times, but this was not one of his nights, nor is the reader expected to be interested in him save as the mouthpiece of one who never again can speak for himself. I quitted the scene early, and slept as righteous men should, till *réveillé*. Let me once more, and for the last time, turn to the journal:—

"*Transport Fayal, at Sea*, 1*st Feb.* 18—.

"'Sic transit gloria.'

"St Elmo's gleam is fitful grown and pale,
And Delamara flickers far a-lee.
God keep thee, darling, night is on the sea
That bears the secret of an untold tale.
The breeze, a traitor turned, in irony
Whips the curled wave and beckons to the course,
While the good ship, unwitting of remorse,
Speeds but a widening gulf 'twixt him and thee—
'Twixt his and thine, two hearts and unconfessed,
Whose only tongue spake haply in a flower;
Whose only thought saw love in fancy dressed;
Whose only sight o'erlooked the flying hour.
For Present flies, and Past—the Past is flown—
God keep thee, but the future is His own.

"Why should I pin my faith to the future—why should I not? There's something tells me it is all over. Three valses, the echo of the 'Soldaten Lieder' the last in my ears—the flowers she wore. Beggar, what have you to do with love? A girl cannot afford to wait; are you so selfish as to detain her?"

My tale is told. Reader, if it be too short, blame the executor, who would prefer to disappoint rather than weary you with his subject. If it be too long, believe that an unfledged pen knows no better than to imagine that even though feeble, a truthful picture of a human life is never wholly without interest to the generous and sympathetic mind.

If ever man loved woman, Merryman was he: if ever sacrifice was made to an ideal honour, or, if you will, to common-sense, it was made (rightly or wrongly) by the man who, rejecting the present, refused, and well, to trust his future for the happiness of another dearer to him than himself.

MAR'SE DAB AFTER THE WAR.

A VIRGINIA REMINISCENCE.

BY A. G. BRADLEY.

COLONEL DABNEY CARTER DIGGES was a Virginia landowner and farmer. Certain of his neighbours used to say "he'd a heap too much name," but it was the matter and not the extent of the patronymic of which, I fancy, they were jealous. Indeed one of these was called Thomas Jefferson Smith, and the other George Washington Brown, so it would have been manifestly absurd for either to criticise the taste of the Colonel's godfathers and godmothers.

Whether our frien possessed, or did not possess, too much name for one or two of his republican friends is a matter of no import. We shall briefly allude to this further on. One thing is quite certain, —the names he usually answered to in everyday life were, as regards brevity, far out of reach of the most

captious criticism. Of these "the Cunnel" was the most formal and dignified, and was used only by comparative strangers or inferiors of his own colour. For the rest, he submitted without a murmur to the monosyllabic abbreviation of "Dab,"—a capital name to shout at an unruly pointer or a headstrong setter on a windy day, no doubt, but a queer name for a gentleman of unquestioned position and weighing over 200 lb.

Fortunately it was almost always "Uncle Dab," or "Cousin Dab," among his friends; while by nearly the whole of the negro population, in spite of the tendency to drop, after the war, old *ante-bellum* terms that denoted servitude, he was still, for some reason or other, universally spoken of and to as Mar'se Dab. This was partly, no doubt, an unconscious tribute to the local fame of his family, as if, perhaps, it were due to these latter not to snap the old ties quite so abruptly as in ordinary cases, and partly, no doubt, to accident. Nor, indeed, was this a unique survival of old habits; it was simply a rather exceptional one. So I think the reason that made those of us who were the Colonel's immediate friends and neighbours speak of him generally, and in frivolous moments to him, as "Mar'se Dab," must be sought for in the humorous contrast between that great man's impressive personal appearance and the curt juvenility of this particular *sobriquet*. At any rate, it is as "Mar'se Dab" that my old friend's image comes most forcibly

to my recollection, and it seems natural to recall his peculiarities, or to attempt to do so, with the familiar appellative upon the title-page. With regard to the subject of this sketch, I have so far used and shall continue to use the past tense. I don't wish the reader to suppose Mar'se Dab is dead. Far from it. But because the industrial system he pursued with such vigour proved so much less profitable than picturesque, he is, I regret to say, now an exile from his native land. The paternal acres, fortunately for them I fear it must be added, know him no more.

Yes, Mar'se Dab "burst all to pieces" many years ago, as his neighbours, with that kindly interest people take in their friends' futures, used always to prophesy he would. Not a fragment even from this aforesaid explosion remained wherewith to start him in a new land-killing enterprise. So he, poor man, scarcely past the prime of life, had to accept an offer from his wife's brother, who kept a store far away in Western Kansas. The Colonel was not, I think, a proud man. He had not so much pride in matters of this kind as most of his class. But what he had he was compelled to swallow, when circumstances forced him behind the counter of a western country store. Whether he took the dose in one gulp, or whether it took some time going down,—and, above all, whether it agreed with him afterwards,—I never heard. For those, however, who had known Mar'se Dab on his

ancestral acres, it required a mental effort of no ordinary kind to imagine him tying up packets of sugar and coffee for Teutonic or Scandinavian "home-steaders." Indeed it is distressing even to think of the Colonel in such a place or at such an occupation. It is the firm conviction that my old friend would be positively grateful to me if I would consider him as defunct, that decided me in using the past tense in everything relating to him.

To attempt a Virginia sketch without at least a genealogical allusion would not merely be unpardonable,—it would be impossible. It was an instinctive feeling that this had to come which I think prompted me to open this paper with the Colonel's full baptismal name. For the English ear, neither the names of Dabney, of Carter, or of Digges have any particular significance. Distinguished individuals may possibly have borne them, but the names themselves are by no means distinguished. In Virginia, however, it is otherwise; for they are all three written large upon the pages of her past. There are, no doubt, plenty of people in Virginia possessing one or other of these names who are no connection whatever to the old colonial families who have given to them their local lustre. The Colonel, however, was a representative of the main stock of these three illustrious houses, respectively. For his mother was a Carter of Birley, and his grandmother had been a Dabney from the shores of the Rappahannoc, while as for the Diggeses,

are they not written in the chronicles of Berkeley county from generation to generation?

Mar'se Dab himself, however, never appeared to take much stock in the genealogical advantages he enjoyed. In many respects indeed—more particularly in the superficialities of life—he by no means did credit to his courtly progenitors. It used to be a common matter of whispêr in the more aristocratic circles of Berkeley county—among the ladies particularly—that "Cousin Dab was a mighty rough man for his raising." But then, as these fair critics would go on to relate, it was not so much to be wondered, seeing of what "very ordinary stock" his wife came. Now, as I have said, the Dabneys, the Carters, and the Diggeses were among the very first families in the State. If all their members were not educated and polished men, they ought to have been. But the Thackers, from whose family the Colonel took his wife, neither were, nor ever had been, people of education and polish. They were not, it must be understood, mere common farmers. They owned plenty of land, and before the war had acquired almost as many negroes as the Diggeses themselves. Nevertheless they were upon quite another social plane.

The Thackers, in short, belonged to that large class which came between the real gentry of the south and the poor non-slaveholding whites. Politically a part of the great compact "slavocracy," numerically too

its greater part, but socially, and for obvious reasons, inferior. Not a harshly defined inferiority, it is true; that would never have done among people whose somewhat precarious interests were identical, and who were all members of a dominant political caste, with most of the world against them. But the division was the unavoidable one between people with the traditions, habits, and customs of gentlefolk, and those whose existence was quite devoid of such refinements—were, in short, solid intelligent farmers, and nothing more. These things were managed very well. The Diggeses and the Thackers had been accustomed to interchange calls regularly every year. The phraseology of the most perfect equality had always been maintained when they met, but there the fiction ended. Human nature could do no more, as I am sure you would have said if you had paid a visit first to the old Digges's homestead, and then gone on to the family mansion of the Thackers; and the Diggeses and the Thackers were only types, and very good ones, of what, to apply English terms, we may call the old gentry and the old yeomanry of the south.

So when the war was over—though old prejudices and social barriers were a good deal shaken—Mar'se Dab was looked upon as having rather let himself down when he married Amanda Thacker. Southern rural society, however, though by no means destroyed in that district, was greatly shattered. People were

too poor and too busy, and too sore with the outside world, to be very ill-natured about such trifles. Still, social traditions that are founded upon common-sense and natural forces cannot be destroyed in a moment. So, as I have already remarked, the ladies of Berkeley county used to say in after years, that it was not altogether to be wondered at "Cousin Dab had got so rough."

Mar'se Dab's social position is then, I think, sufficiently well depicted. I once heard him airily described, by a jocose Canadian who was staying in the neighbourhood, as a "dilapidated blood." The Colonel's friends rather resented the *sobriquet;* but when he heard it himself some time afterwards, he laughed so loud that you could have heard him all over the plantation, and so long that his wife got anxious about him,—Uncle Ephraim, however, who was standing by at the time, reassuredly remarking, "That's 'zactly how Mar'se Dab useter laff befo' the wah."

When I first knew the Colonel, soon after the close of the war, he might have been five-and-forty. He weighed 16 stone, and "stood 6 feet 3 in his stockings." His lung-power was tremendous. The negroes on the place used to declare that "Mar'se Dab could go in two hollers to Shucksville." Now Shucksville was the county town, and as it was thirteen miles off, this remark must of course be regarded as an Ethiopian illustration of a purely allegorical nature.

Mar'se Dab's title of Colonel, I may as well here

remark, was a purely honorary one. A captain, however, he most certainly had been. A very different sort of a one, too, from Captain Topfodder, who kept the store at Digges's Mills, and took his rank from a freight barge he had skilfully navigated for many years on the James River Canal. That the Colonel was in any sense a false pretender to military honours was the very reverse of truth. Indeed, it was his valour that may be said to have actually proved in this respect his stumbling-block. If valour alone—and of course I allude to the Civil War—could have regulated rank, my old friend should by rights have been a general of division at the very least. For it was always said—said, that is to say, in Berkeley county—that Dab Digges was the bravest soldier in the whole Southern army. His valour, however, was of such a hopelessly reckless kind, and his contempt of discipline so profound, that even the command of a regiment would have been out of the question. So as a captain he started in the 20th Virginia Cavalry; and a captain he remained till the second year of the war, when he was taken prisoner. Those of his brother officers who survived the struggle used to say it was extraordinary that Cousin Dab (for the regiment was raised in Berkeley, and most of the officers were his relations) succeeded in escaping death or captivity, or even a wound, so long. "There was no man in the war," they said, "that tried so hard to get killed as Cousin Dab, and that wrought

such havoc in the ranks of the enemy; or," they sometimes added in the strictest confidence, "'got his men so often into 'tight places.'"

I gathered that it was upon the whole considered by no means an irreparable calamity when Mar'se Dab, the fire-eating captain, was harmlessly removed in the second year of the war. The climax came about in this wise. It was in one of the great battles of that year, I forget which, that the 20th Virginia Cavalry were ordered to charge a regiment of Massachusetts infantry. It was a misty day, and it was not till the horsemen were within a couple of hundred yards of the enemy that an overwhelming body of cavalry was discovered to be drawn up in their rear. At any rate the retreat was sounded, and the 20th Virginia wheeled about. Not so, however, Mar'se Dab! That big voice which the negroes declared would go in two holloas to Shucksville, was heard sounding through the fog and smoke that its owner would be d——d if he'd retreat. And that was the last that was seen of Mar'se Dab for two years.

From evidence that filtered out afterwards, it appeared that the Yankee infantry were amazed upon that day to receive the charge of a solitary horseman, who came down upon them out of the fog, from whence they never rightly knew. They supposed it to be a runaway horse till it got so close they could see that the rider was spurring for all he was worth and shouting like a madman, as they then took him

to be. Not a rifle was raised, but when Mar'se Dab arrived among the enemy's ranks, so far from appreciating the forbearance, he laid about him with such zest that if his sword had had an edge on it, several people would have been badly hurt. As it was, he was knocked off his horse with the butt-end of a musket, and sent to the Federal prison on Lake Erie.

Here Mar'se Dab chafed for nearly two years, picking up various and useful accomplishments, hardly worthy, perhaps, of a Digges. Among these he learnt how to bake bread, to cut hair, and to pull teeth—studies forced upon him partly by the *ennui* of his position, and partly by the necessities for making a little money out of his fellow-prisoners, with which to procure those cakes of chewing-tobacco which were the solace of his life. Again and again, in the piping times of peace, has Mar'se Dab joked to me of these accomplishments. Two of them at any rate he carried with him into private life, and practised (in a friendly way of course) during his few spare moments, with an enthusiasm that I am afraid somewhat victimised his neighbours. As for hair-cutting, it was at least a harmless if a somewhat singular hobby. The Colonel was indeed in great request in the neighbourhood as a trimmer of locks. As a puller of teeth, Mar'se Dab's popularity was nothing like so great. He used an old-fashioned key, and for the rest trusted only to his herculean

strength; so the hesitating attitude of the neighbourhood towards him on the tooth question may be partially understood. There were some people of an economical turn of mind who were tempted to call in once the gratuitous services of the Colonel. But I never heard that the most desperate sufferer from toothache or the most penurious individual ever repeated the experiment. Living near, as I did, I have heard sounds occasionally proceeding from Clover Hill that the negroes declared was Mar'se Dab at work upon some confiding countryman's jaw.

I was only once, however, a witness to one of these dental operations. If, as the negroes said, Mar'se Dab "could go to Shucksville in two hollers," I am prepared to swear his patient upon that occasion would have reached the local metropolis in one.

When I first knew the Colonel he had just come to live at Clover Hill. This was not actually at the close of the war, but it was at the close of that three or four years of chaos—political, social, and financial—which ensued in war-worn Virginia after the surrender of Lee and the abolition of slavery; the period which marked the first conflict of new conditions with old ideas—that reluctant struggle of an old civilisation, based on a kindly picturesque domestic slavery, to adapt itself to an altered state of affairs; a change from the obligation for food, clothing, lodging, and protection, to a business com-

pact between master and servant, terminable at any moment.

Clover Hill was an average Virginia homestead of the better class. It had no pretension, of course, to compare to "Newtown," the old Digges place at the other end of the county, where the Colonel's eldest brother still lived at that time. There, indeed, at Newtown were *bric-à-brac*, and old sideboards, and antediluvian bedsteads, and a good deal of old silver and family portraits that, whatever their defects may have been as works of art, represented at any rate ladies and gentlemen. Newtown was quite a famous place in Virginia; but Clover Hill was nothing of the kind. For that reason, perhaps, it was all the more typical. The place, till the Colonel took possession, had been occupied only by a better-class overseer. Seed-wheat had been stored in the parlour. The best bedchamber had been for years devoted to the storage of dried apples and washed wool, and the walls were coated thick with entomological specimens that had danced in the sunny rays of a half-score of departed summers.

With the Digges advent this was of course all changed. But the house was furnished distinctly upon Thacker and not upon Digges lines. As Amanda Digges was an only daughter of old man Hiram Thacker, she had inherited his household gods. Among these, too, there were family portraits of a kind—portraits of individuals, however, that suggested the sign-painter's

art in execution and the cattle-show in design. Admirable men and women, no doubt, these two generations of Thackers that blew about in gilt frames upon the walls. There were few men in Middle Virginia that knew the exact value of a negro so well as Hiram Thacker. There were none whose "shipping" tobacco brought higher prices in Shucksville than that of his brother Moses. But the portraits, however faithful to nature, were not of a kind to give an aristocratic tone to a family picture-gallery.

The house at Clover Hill, though not so venerable nor so large nor so hallowed by traditions as Newtown, had still been built as distinctly a gentleman's residence in the early part of the century. The Colonel's great-uncle, Randolph Digges, somewhat prominent in his day as a Whig politician, had been its founder and its occupant for a great number of years. The instalment of Amanda Thacker and her family household gods at Clover Hill was an improvement on the overseer interregnum. Still it did very little, I am afraid, to restore to Clover Hill the aristocratic tone that was said by old people to have marked it when that venerable patriarch "Uncle Ran" used to make its walls echo to post-prandial denunciations of Jefferson, infidels, and Frenchmen.

The house was of red brick; it was two stories high and perfectly square. A wide corridor ran

straight through it below, and another with the same direct simplicity pierced it above. Upon the ground-floor there were three rooms upon each side of the corridor, all exactly the same size and exactly alike. Upon the upper floor, too, there were three rooms upon each side of the corridor, also all of the same size and exactly alike.

It had never been rightly decided which was the back and which the front of the Clover Hill house, for at either end of the corridor there were big porticoes, supported by the same number of high white fluted columns, and approached by the same number of half-decayed wooden steps. The up-stair corridor led through doors on to the roofs of these porticoes, from whence, under the overarching leaves of aged oaks, could be seen glorious views of woodlands, fields, and distant mountains. It was a pity that these imposing props and qualifiers of the otherwise astonishing rectangularity of the house should have had their classic beauty marred by their application to domestic uses. In Uncle Ran's time, you may be sure, no such things would have happened; but in the utilitarianism of Thacker tradition it was no uncommon thing, after washing-day, to see the family linen hanging in graceful festoons over the carved railings, and fluttering in the wanton wind.

The doors and the windows of the Clover Hill mansion may possibly one day have fitted tolerably, though even in an old Virginia house of the most

approved kind such a condition would have been hardly orthodox. Now, however, they had sprung at their lintels and gaped at their hinges to such an extent, that Mar'se Dab used to swear that the house was not merely not weather-proof, "but it warn't hardly dog-proof."

As for the winter wind! The hurricanes that blew down these corridors had one advantage, at any rate, for there was nothing about them of the nature or character of a draught. They were real honest broad-volumed gales, which blew not only down the corridors, but under the closed doors and out of the rattling windows with a force that made the Thacker portraits flap against the whitewashed walls till you trembled for the safety of those great works of art. Half a waggon-load of oak-logs might blaze in the huge draughty chimney, but six feet away from the blaze you were practically out of doors, and had to act accordingly.

From the early spring to the late fall of the year, however, there were few more charming spots in all Virginia than Clover Hill. Mar'se Dab could then boast with justice that "ther was 'ar stirrin' thar" (for he had dropped hopelessly, I am sorry to say, into the vernacular), "when the heat elsewhere was enough to kill a mule."

To nature's charms, however, I fear Mar'se Dab was almost insensible. He was not devoid of sentiment of a kind. Indeed it was partly that, I think, that made him so reactionary. But it was a sentiment

that hugged insensibly all time-honoured Virginia rural customs—a sentiment that made him cling obstinately to old-fashioned ways, to be happy among big gangs of negroes, to love the very sight of a tobacco-field, to put up almost cheerfully with roads bottomless for mud, with gates that would not swing, with barns through which the rain-storms soaked, with houses through which the winter winds blew.

When the Colonel took up his abode at Clover Hill, the land was in very fair condition. The overseer, who had had it in charge so long for the Digges family, had been a skilful and thrifty farmer. Being too old to be drafted for the army, he had remained at home all through the war. The estate had never been too heavily stocked with negroes, and had been seeded largely to grass and clover, the very acme of high farming in the South of those days.

When slavery and capital together were swept away by the war, and the conditions of Southern life practically revolutionised, most sensible men recognised that a different system of farming must be pursued. Numbers of the upper class flinched from the prospect, and went into business. Others set to work with good resolutions, and kept them. Many, again, made the resolutions, but did not keep them. Mar'se Dab, however, when he came to Clover Hill after the war, not only showed no inclination whatever towards agricultural reform, but he did not even make any profession of such intentions. He did even

more than this. He openly and emphatically repudiated any such course, and declared that the style of farming that had been good enough for his fathers was good enough for him. He was too old, he said, to start raising clover and grass, when he'd been all his life trying to kill it in the corn rows. So Mar'se Dab "went into terbaccer." He collected double as many free negroes on the place, both renters and hired hands, as there had been slaves before the war, and commenced that enlightened course which finally reduced Clover Hill from tolerable fertility to absolute barrenness.

Mar'se Dab, moreover, was more fortunate than many of his neighbours; for when he married, he got with his wife five thousand dollars of hard money, which, in old man Thacker's thrifty hands, had somehow or other survived the general wreck of war.

Clover Hill was a picturesque property, undulating enough to give happy variety to the landscape, without too great abruptness for cultivation. The prevailing colour of the soil was red, which gives such a warm look to fallowed hillsides when contrasted with the green of woodlands and growing crops. Of meadow-land there was plenty in former days—snug flats of rich alluvial soil between the hills, whose fertility was sufficient to resist, without deterioration, the average treatment of the old Virginia "rip and tear" system, which was saying much. In the overseer's time, and probably in the time, too, of old

Uncle Ran, waving timothy grass and rank clover had flourished there and glistened in the heavy dews of the bright June mornings. When I first knew the place the backs of the negroes in hay time used to bend low, and the perspiration pour from their ebony faces as they swished their mowing-blades through the heavy growth. Little tinkling streams, all overgrown with alders and grape-vines, coursed their way down the valleys; and very troublesome they grew in flood times if treated, as Mar'se Dab used to treat them, with contemptuous neglect.

At the far end of the place where Buffalo Creek, which bounded it on one side, crossed the highroad to Shucksville, which bounded it on the other, there stood a venerable wooden edifice which, together with the hamlet attached, was known as Digges' Mills. Here the corn and wheat of the neighbourhood had been ground ever since there had been any to grind, which was a good long time. From an Old World standpoint, perhaps, it was not very ancient. At any rate it looked it. While the hum and drone of the wheel and the flashing of the waters over its black and sodden timbers, and the spray that sparkled on the mossy rocks beneath, and the rustic bridge of chestnut trunks that crossed the stream, and the huge weeping-willow from which it swung, made a picture that on sunny summer days it was both cool and pleasant to behold. Besides the mill there was a store, where Mar'se Dab had, in his earlier prosperous days,

a ready and extensive credit with Captain Topfodder the merchant. In the days of his too evident decline, he had an account even greater still, whose remote settlement agitated greatly the waking hours of that worthy ex-commodore of canal boats. Mar'se Dab's wages to his hired hands, and the advances to his tenants, came more and more, as time went on, in the shape of little notes on the torn leaf of a pocket-book, written in pencil, to the long-suffering Captain. There were whole files of these scrubby little remnants stored away in the desk behind the counter, running after this fashion mostly:—

"To Cap. TOPFODDER.—Please supply Chris' Johnson with goods to amt. $1.75.—Yr. friend,

"D. DIGGES."

The Captain began to wish he hadn't been quite such a friend to Dabney Digges. As he sat tilted back in his straw-bottomed chair on the store porch, squirting tobacco-juice over the railing and calling to his customers as they rode past to "lite and set awhile," he ruminated over the possibilities of how upon earth at this late date he could alter matters without appearing unneighbourly. The Captain did get so far as to say in public that "Dab Digges was the hardest man to git money out of in North Berkeley." Besides the mill and the store there was a wheelwright's shop, whither ploughs and waggon bodies and dilapidated

buggies retired for repair for indefinite periods, and grew weather-scarred and almost mossy from long hope deferred. There was the forge, too, of a blacksmith, who was always out of coal or "gone away to 'tend his crap," and an Episcopal church, that had of late years found it exceedingly difficult to procure, or at any rate to retain, the services of a parson.

Mar'se Dab was a man rough of speech, as has been implied. He didn't say negro, nor even nigro, but always used the word "nigger," which is a variety that, strange as the statement may appear to outsiders, is seldom used by well-bred Southern men, and never by ladies. "Those durned niggers!" Mar'se Dab used to be fond of saying, "ought to be put right back in slavery,—a triflin', no 'count parcel of scoundrels."

This was mere verbosity. The Colonel would have been miserable if he had not been surrounded by them. Most people in the neighbourhood agreed, in a great measure, with the sentiments so badly expressed by Mar'se Dab; but they acted up to their opinions, and dispensed as much as possible with Ethiopian assistance. But the Colonel did nothing of the kind. As I have already stated, he collected all he could lay hands on, and established them upon the Clover Hill plantation. When he was remonstrated with upon the African centre he had set up, he used to reiterate the vices and the worthlessness of the dusky race with much greater warmth of feeling than the other would think of doing. But he

used to say, "Dawg my skin! I must have a big force of these scoundrels, if I am going to make any terbaccer worth speaking about. I tell you, sir, folks may talk about grass, and stock, and fruit, and such-like. Terbaccer made old Virginia, not termaters, and, by golly! I'm goin' to hold on by it any way."

Now Mar'se Dab did really understand the science of tobacco growing and curing. It was the management of free labour, and the keeping in heart, by judicious cultivation, a limited amount of land, that beat him.

Now, in Virginia, it is generally estimated that a labourer is required for every 20,000 hills of tobacco. As the Colonel used to aim at planting 400,000 hills, or about 80 acres, it will be understood that he was compelled to have about him what was a large force of hands for *ante-bellum* days and a limited estate. For it was not only the tobacco, but the 300 or 400 acres of maize, not to speak of the wheat he had to grow "to bread his folks," as he would have said, and to keep his horses and mules, and milch-cows and hogs.

To describe the nature of the resettlement of Clover Hill when the Colonel went there, we should have to enter into abstract disquisitions regarding the war and the negro question, for which there is here no space. We should have to describe how the negroes, in the first burst of freedom, generally moved off the old plantations,—not from dislike to their former

homes, but, as it were, to give themselves a shake, to show that they were free. How, with all this, they generally stuck to their old counties, and to a great extent even to their old neighbourhoods. This subject is such a wide one, the only thing to be done with it here is to drop it at once and revert to the subject of the sketch.

When I first knew the Colonel intimately his system was in full blast. I have mentioned that he recommenced his life with some ready money, as he did also free from debt.

There were two or three years, moreover, about that period when prices were exceptionally high, for artificial reasons that traced themselves to the war. Mar'se Dab's credit was good, and he seemed for a time to be actually prospering in spite of his defiance of economic laws. He came to believe in himself more than ever. He ridiculed his neighbours who sowed clover and agitated themselves on the subject of the improvement of stock. His loudest and most tremendous laughs were got off at the expense of a cousin of his wife's, who had set out fifty acres of apple-trees in the mountains. When I last saw that cousin he was netting 4000 dollars a-year from his orchards, and poor Mar'se Dab was in Western Kansas! Well, as I was saying, a great crop was the idea in those days, not only on Clover Hill, but on many other plantations too. The negroes in the neighbourhood would flock to Clover Hill before

Christmas-time to try and rent a bit of land or hire out to Mar'se Dab. Many of the regular old Digges servants from Newtown again united their fortunes with the family in this manner.

It was noticed, however, that these last seldom stayed more than a year. The true reason of this may perhaps best be given in the words of old Uncle Ephraim, one of the most attached of the bunch. It was a confidential communication, it is true, and delivered across the boundary fence which separated my own woodland from the tobacco patch on Mar'se Dab's land, which old Ephraim was working. After all these years, however, there could, I think, be no sort of objection to recalling some of the old man's remarks.

"Mar'se Dab," said the patriarch, "is a mighty good man, but he ain't like his pa. I bin raised with quality folks, and knows what they is. Thar ain't no fambly in the State as held therselves higher or more 'sclusive than our folks done useter. But Mar'se Dab! Lor'! he don't seem to have no respect for hisself or fambly. It make me feel mighty bad to hear him cutt'n up, a rippin' and a swarin' an a hollerin' roun' like the ordinary white folks at this upper 'een of the county, that ain't had no raisin' wuth speakin' 'bout. I was a bit of a chap down at the big house when Mar'se Dab wur borned, an' when I heern him lettin' hisself down an' gwine on in sich a way, I feel powerfully moved to say suthin. But

he's a rough man, Mar'se Dab, an' like as not to burst me all to pieces. It 'ud go mighty hard with the ole Miss' if she wur alive and know'd. She'd get after me, too, for cert'n and sho', if she thote I 'lowed Mar'se Dab to run on without speakin' any. I'll be powerful oneasy when I see ole Miss' at de judgment, when de hearts of all men * * *."

The asterisks represent one of those exhortations to which Uncle Ephraim, since he took religion, had been addicted. But sound as was his doctrine, and eloquent as was his language, there is no space for even a sample of it. Upon this occasion, however, it was cut short, and the venerable man's attention turned somewhat abruptly to earthly things, by his mule, which he had left standing in the tobacco-rows, getting his leg over the trace-chain, and showing a disposition to leave the field, plough and all.

"Stan' still, sah! What you warnt to be cutt'n up fo'. It look like to me yo' oughter hev movin' roun' enough, and be prepar'd to stay quiet once in a while, an' study over yo' foolishness."

Unc' Ephraim's mind, however, was not yet unburdened, for he returned upon another count.

"It aint Mar'se Dab only. 'Spite of the rumpus and fuss he raises 'roun him, thar aint no kinder-hearted man north of Jeems river, or dis side of the Blue Ridge. I could put up with his rearin' an' pitchin' roun', for the 'spect I bar to the fambly, but, bless grashus! the niggers that Mar'se Dab's c'llected

on this yer place! No one ever heern' me say a word 'gainst nobody; but I swar de solemn truth that the cull'd folks on dis yer plantation is de meanest, no 'countest, crowd of niggers that Gord ever made. I aint *all*together 'sprised, for I know'd whar this yer north end of the county wur befo' the war. I don't hold as what some o' these yer plain white folks warn't mighty good masters to their servants; but then a cull'd man as aint belonged to a good fambly, whar is he? He don't know nuthin' 'bout manners or 'spect for hisself. Now, sah, I bin *raised*, I has! I bin *raised!* I aint growed up like a sassafras bush in a ole turn'd-out field anyhow! Thar's a heap o' difference 'tween white folks, an' thar's a heap o' difference 'tween cull'd folks, too. Fur a gen'leman as has bin raised among cull'd folks, Mar'se Dab beats anythin' I ever seed. He don't seem to know more 'bout 'em than ef he wur a Northern man. He don't study neither character nor princerples. Everybody layed out to git on this yer place, as they know'd it war a good plantation, an' that Mar'se Dab had right smart money by his wife an' a good force of mules. Dis yer nigger or dat ar nigger cum 'long about hirin'-time, an' talks big to Mar'se Dab 'bout the wuk he'll do if de boss 'll guv him a house an' land for de comin' year. He runs on mightily maybe about how he's bin mindin' a team for his ole mar'se since de s'render, an' how as his ole mar'se was jes fit to kill himself at losin' sich a good hand; but how

his wife took sorter ailin, an' a whole parcel of foolishness which Mar'se Dab takes stock in. Den dis yer nigger tells Mar'se Dab he'll be satisfied with half the terbaccer an' a third of the corn; an' as Mar'se Dab's bin givin' half the corn, he thinks he's makin' the finest kind of agree*ment*, not studyin' neither character nor princerples.

"Gord knows whar sich niggers wur raised—up in de mount'ns as like as not." (The supreme contempt at such a source of origin, expressed by Uncle Ephraim's shrug of the shoulders, could only be thoroughly appreciated by a local expert.) "Dar's bin a heap o' folk an' a heap o' house-buildin' on dis yer *plan*tation since de war. Dar soon won't be a house-log left or a board-tree left in the woods. Dar's bin land clur'd so nat'ral po' it 'ud skeercely sprout a black-eyed pea in the first crap. I mind the time when I usetest to come up yer in busy times. It wur a fine place, an' de craps wur powerful heavy den. The wheat wuz so rank I jes told the Jedge—Mar'se Dab's pa—that ef he warnted me to go up cradlin' wheat to Clover Hill, he'd jes have to trade me away fur some one who could do it; for my rheumatics was too bad, an' I couldn't an' I warn't agwine ter do it, not if he cut me in pieces fur it. Now, bless grashus! the heads aint within hollerin' distance of one another.

"Yes, sah, dar's a heap too many folk on this yer plantation, an' mighty po' kind of folk, too. It look

like to me as if Mar'se Dab had been ridin' roun' the country fo' a yer or two an' skeered up all the meanest niggers 'twixt here an' the big mount'ns, an' sot 'em plum' down in a muss. Sich a stealin' an' lyin' an' cussin' an' rippin' an' rarin' an' tramplin' roun' never wur seed, an' yet thar's mo' talk 'bout 'ligion here than most anywhar. To see 'em scufflin' up to the mourners'-bench on preachin' Sundays—O-o-o-o-ēē!

"I laffed fit to kill myself las' Sunday when Brer Moses from Poplar Creek was guvin' a open-ar preachin' for the noo church fund. Well, sah, when Unc' Mose' had got through de preachin' he tuk off his felt hat, an' axed me to sukkerlate it roun' for the c'lection. Fo' Gord, sah, that ar ole hat of Brer Mose' passed aroun' from han' to han' o' that bowdaciously 'ligious crowd, and nar a quarter nor a ten-cent peece, nor even a nickel, wur drapped in the crown of it. I saw Brer Mose' face wukin' powerfully as the empty ole hat wur comin' roun' to him again, an' I could see he wur pretty mad. When it got to the man as wur stanin' next him, he reached out his han' and grabbed dat ar hat in de biggest kind of a hurry—sorter makin' out as if he wur skeered he wouldn't han'le it agin. Well, sah, Brer Mose' in front o' all de folks fust looked at one side o' de hat an' den at de other, an' den he crams it on his head an' hollered out, 'Well, bredren, you isn't showin' yo'selves by yo' deeds 'preciative of all de blessin's showered upon yo', but

tank de Lord I'se got my ole hat back anyway,—dat's somethin' in these yer hard times.' In all yo' born days, sah, you never seed a crowd of niggers look so mean. No, sah; I reckon I'll git on down to the ole place agin. Mar'se Ran, so long as he's thar, 'll give me a house an' terbaccer-patch. I aint suited to these times nohow. A heap a hurrain' an' fuss was made 'bout dis yer friddom[1] an' that; but I b'lieve I'd as lief things had stayed as they wur."

Uncle Ephraim was, of course, a privileged person. His years, loyalty, respectability, and "dignified manners" procured for him a licence and liberty of speech that are submitted to, the world over, in ancient and faithful domestics.

"Durn that old man Ephraim!" said Mar'se Dab to me one day not long after this.

"What's he been up to?" said I. "He's the best hand you've got."

"Oh, Lord, yes! He's a good enough hand; but I'm blamed if I stand his nonsense any more! He's just been spoiled down at home by our folks, and got to think I can't live without him. What d'ye think he did yesterday? He came up to the house 'bout sundown and said he wanted to speak to me. I thought, of course, a horse was sick or something, and went out to him; and I'll be dorgonned if he didn't stand and lecture me for a half hour, and would have gone on for two hours if I'd 'a let him.

[1] Freedom.

He run on about my cut'n har, and said no Digges had ever cut har before; and that my pa and ma would get up out o' their graves and ramble roun' in 'straction if they thote I was goin' on so. As sure as I stand here, if the old scamp didn't go on to tell me he was afeared I hadn't any o' the old Digges dignity, and Lord knows what, till I took up a swingle-tree and told the old scoundrel I'd burst his head open if he gave me any more of his sass! 'Oh, that's right —that's right, Mar'se Dab,' says he. 'Kill me, sah —for Gord's sake kill me! I bin yer in this wicked world long 'nuff anyway. I'se made my peace, an' am ready to go right away. I'll suttenly go straight to the old mar'se and missus, an' tell them how yo' cutt'n up an' swarin' an' rippin' aroun'. Yes, knock me on de head, Mar'se Dab; I ain't keerin' much anyway. Folk's ways these times aint my ways. I nussed you, Mar'se Dab, when you was so small you hadn't hardly commenced to notice. I shuk down apples for you, Mar'se Dab, befor' ever you put pants on. Go on, Mar'se Dab; kill me, sah! You're mad now, an' jes' think I'm sassin'. One d'ese yer fine days you'll say old man Ephraim warn't sich a fule as I thote.' If you'd heard the old fellow, you'd have been powerfully tickled. I shouldn't have cared, but the old man raised such a fuss, a lot of the hands came round to listen."

So old Ephraim, the last of the old stock, went, and Clover Hill continued on its downhill course.

The Colonel's notions of the capacity of land were drawn from no human standpoint. He ploughed up the hillsides; he ploughed up the bottoms. Noble groves of oak and chestnut fell before the destroying axe on ridges unfertile for cultivation, and that the common-sense of two centuries had left intact. So it was year after year, red-land and grey-land, up-land and bottom, turned and heaved unceasingly beneath the recklessly driven ploughs. Year after year the axe rang, and the toppling trees crashed for new tobacco-ground. The negroes sang and shouted, and Mar'se Dab holloaed and stormed, happy in the pandemonium he had created, and hugging even closer, as their evil fruit became apparent, the worst traditions of the past.

Tobacco, tobacco, wheat, wheat, maize, oats, wheat, oats, maize, maize—— This, I think, would fairly have described Mar'se Dab's method of rotation. This amazing tax upon the soil was not modified by any outside assistance. Some phosphate or stimulating fertiliser of some kind was dropped in the hill with the second crop of tobacco; but the Colonel's favourite dictum was that "commercial fertilisers would break any man." There was, however, an immense bank of barnyard manure accumulated round the stables, scorched by the suns and bleached by the rains, it is true, of many years, but still by no means valueless. Never, Mar'se Dab declared, when twitted by his friends upon the subject, could he find time to

devote his waggons and horses to such a secondary matter.

The rotation above formulated with tolerable accuracy covers, it will be noticed, some ten years. This was about the length of Mar'se Dab's reign at Clover Hill, the year of collapse, when the long-suffering soil at last gave out in indignation, and absolutely refused to bear further the burden so unjustly laid upon it, and Clover Hill, in the estimation even of the most reactionary Ethiopians, was "run clean out." The corn-stalks had shrunk to the size of your little finger, and, save in the rich hollows by the streams, produced nothing but "nubbins."[1] The wheat-straw was so miserably short, and the ears so scanty, that Uncle Ephraim's forcible illustration as to their being scarcely within hollerin' distance of one another, was by no means so far-fetched. The oat-crops had grown so weak that the briers and bushes, rioting in the filthy soil, simply choked them out of existence; while the fierce winter rains had cut gullies down the hillsides, which the thunderstorms of summer rent into ravines so deep that men and mules nearly disappeared from sight when they floundered through them.

Mar'se Dab "died fighting." It was the extraordinarily dry year of 187— that finished him. The sight of the crops on Clover Hill that year made venerable agriculturists weep who remembered the glories

[1] Short deformed heads.

of the past. Mar'se Dab believed in tobacco till the last, nor was there anything unreasonable in his faith, considered in the abstract. It was his mode of applying it that was wrong. His tobacco he managed admirably. His plant-beds were burnt in good season. When the spring frosts cut other folks' young plants, or the fly got them in cold dry weather, Mar'se Dab had always a plentiful supply. When "planting out" came in June, the Colonel always had his land ploughed, harrowed, and hilled up, ready for the first good "season," and everybody in the plantation had ample warning of the coming rain. For so long as Uncle Ephraim was there, he was better than fifty barometers. The signs had never been known to fail. When "de mis'ry" took that venerable henchman "in de left shoulder, ther'd be fallin' wedder befo' day, cert'n and sho'."

No growing crop was better 'tended than Mar'se Dab's tobacco; and if some of the tenants' houses "cured up a little blotchy or ran some" during that critical period, it was because the boss, "rustler" though he was, couldn't be everywhere at the same time. But while Mar'se Dab's tobacco was well done by, everything else was neglected; and economical laws were defiantly and aggressively flouted. Clover Hill was not quite in the real tobacco-belt, —that group of counties where the highest grade of leaf is produced, and where other crops may be safely made subservient to tobacco culture. These are

technicalities, however, that would only bore the non-agricultural reader. I will simply quote once more that oracle Uncle Ephraim, who was fond of declaring that "any one who put his main 'pendance on terbaccer in North Berkeley, 'ud git inter the porehouse sho'." Mar'se Dab put his 'pendance on tobacco. He didn't go to the poorhouse, because he had a brother-in-law in Western Kansas of a kindly turn of mind; but the latter alternative was, I fear, only one degree removed from the former in the Colonel's mind.

I can recall his figure, as it were but yesterday, sitting on the roadside fence on a hot June morning, looking wistfully towards the west for the long-expected rain that will enable him to plant out his tobacco.

One glance at Mar'se Dab is sufficient to discover that he ignores the assistance of the tailor even more completely than he does that of the manure-merchant. But there is method and not madness in this. In his patriotic fervour, Mar'se Dab swore that he would wear nothing the material of which was not manufactured in old Virginia. To a man who was fastidious about his personal appearance, such a resolution would have amounted (in those days anyhow) to an astonishing pitch of self-denial. It was very praiseworthy in Mar'se Dab, no doubt, but I don't think it weighed oppressively upon him.

He had yellow homespun pants, the cloth of which

had been woven by an old lady of colour up on the mountain, who still possessed that disappearing art. The cut suggested Mrs Digges's sewing-machine. His boots were made by Uncle Ephraim, who solaced himself in his cabin during the long winter evenings with shoemaking and the weaving of baskets. I once had a pair of boots from Uncle Ephraim myself; but we will draw a veil over the recollection, and hasten on. Mar'se Dab despised a waistcoat even in cold weather. His coat was always out at both elbows: whether this was because he got the cloth by the piece from the new woollen mills at Barksville or not, I can't say. It was, I think, a kind of defiant tatterdemalionism that the Colonel liked to hug as a sort of mute undying protest against the forcible disruption of the South's old institutions. For however great his financial difficulties might have been, they were not on a scale so trifling as to necessitate an exposure of both elbows. When his neighbours joked with him about his ragged edges, he used to say, "times were too durned hard for fancy dressin'." Mar'se Dab's hatred of Yankees was conspicuous even at a period when sectional bitterness was extreme. It made your flesh creep to hear the pains and penalties to which Mar'se Dab consigned in fancy his fellow-citizens north of Maryland. At election times he was the terror of Republican stump-orators and carpet-baggers. At the same time I am perfectly sure that if a Connecticut man, even though he were

loaded down with wooden nutmegs, stood in need of a dinner, and Mar'se Dab had only a crust, he would have shared it with him.

There is something, I think, in the culture of tobacco, as pursued from time immemorial in the old Dominion, that appeals to the patriarchal instincts of the conservative Virginian. The unnumbered waggon-loads of wood that are set to blaze upon the new plant-beds in midwinter, to kill the germs of weeds and prepare the woodland soil for the tender seed; the crashing and tumbling of the forest-trees when "new grounds" are being opened; the cheery shouting of the negroes, and the unwonted energy that any momentous undertaking, more especially if it is connected with tobacco, calls forth; the excitement and rush of transplanting from the beds to the field in early summer, when the necessary rain, perhaps, is scarce, and opportunities consequently few.

Then there is the pleasure of watching, through the hot days of July and August, the gradual growth and expansion of the broadening gummy leaves to the sun, and all the risks of shattering hailstorms and of early night-frosts catching the "crinkley" ripening plants before they are fit to cut. Then the critical period of curing; and lastly, the long journey, plunging through the mud to the market, where the interests of master and man, of landlord and tenant, are absorbed for a short and exciting period in the yellow-labelled heaps upon the warehouse floor, which

the auctioneer is knocking down to local and foreign buyers, at figures which vary so much from day to day as to impart a flavour of speculation to tobacco-raising that may perhaps be one of its attractions.

Everything to do with tobacco Mar'se Dab loved with a hereditary devotion to the time-honoured product of his native land. Still tobacco-"making," in his estimation, had gone to the dogs. The very seasons had altered since the war; the sun seemed to shine less brightly; the moon to shed a dimmer light (and Mar'se Dab believed in the moon); the summer dews to fall more sparingly than of yore. So at any rate Mar'se Dab was thinking, when we left him just now sitting upon the roadside, looking westward at the thunder-clouds.

The tobacco-land is hilled up, but scarcely half of it as yet planted. The young plants in the beds are pushing one another out of the ground from their size and vigour, however. The earth is dry and parched, and in two weeks it will be July—and upon July-planted tobacco, as everybody in Virginia knows, no 'pendance, as old Ephraim would say, can be placed. The great black cloud comes nearer and nearer; woods and mountains are absorbed, and vanish into the approaching gloom, while from the inky void there breaks gradually upon the silent air the hoarse roar of waters dashing upon a myriad leaves. Mar'se Dab's hopes have ceased to have even that slight element of uncertainty that is inseparable

from the word. "It's come this time, any way," says he, as he turns homeward, full in his mind of the big crop he will now pitch. The very spray of the coming storm scuds on the newly awakened breeze that is flying before it; and the red dust of the turnpike, as if its last chance for a frolic had come, whirls this way and that in the changing currents of the thunder-laden air. Everywhere there is the hurry of preparation for the coming storm. The Clover Hill domestics are hard at work rushing the family linen and mattresses off the front portico. Aunt Judy is racing after the young turkeys; the negroes have unyoked their teams from the corn-rows, and are hastening up to the barnyard, singing tearful dirges for joy at the "prospec' of a season." The spring calves in the yard are galloping hither and thither with their tails in the air, like quadrupeds demented; and old Uncle Ephraim, at his cabin-door, is reminding Aunt Milly that "he'd bin lookin' fur weather" (inspired of course by the sensations in his shoulder), "but hardly reckoned it would cum befo' sundown."

Here, happy in the prospect of at any rate planting out his tobacco-crop, we must leave Mar'se Dab. If he was obstinate and prejudiced, there was no kinder-hearted man, as Uncle Ephraim said, "north of Jeems river." If he was loud-mouthed and boisterous, and stormed at his hands in a way that made him conspicuous in a place where these peculiarities

are uncommon, it was, at the same time, the confiding fashion in which he supplied these very dependants with the necessaries of life in advance from year to year that hastened his downfall. His inability to refuse security for all the bacon and corn-meal, the cotton dresses and "pars o' shoes" that the inmates of the twenty cabins on Clover Hill wanted, or thought they wanted, at Captain Topfodder's, no doubt swelled greatly the obligations that finally crushed Mar'se Dab. How the gallant Captain came out among the creditors I never heard, for I left the neighbourhood before the great crisis occurred, and was most happily spared the harrowing spectacle of the sale. The details of this great occasion, however, were of course fully communicated. There was twelve months' credit given, and the prices were accordingly quite fabulous. How much was actually collected at that remote future period is of course a matter I know nothing about. But, so far as paper went, the bidding was so brisk and the prices so unprecedented that Major Hogshead, the famous auctioneer from Shucksville, had twice to go behind the stable for a drink — his feelings were so much overcome.

Poor Mar'se Dab, however, benefited from none of these things. His chief creditor, a local Jew with a Scotch name, took over the place, and here is the advertisement of sale, cut out of the local newspaper of that date, and kept all these years as a memento :—

FOR sale, on terms to suit purchaser, 13 miles from Shucksville and 1 from school, store, and mill, situate on the old Richmond Pike, 924 acres of fine rolling land, 100 acres original forest, 50 acres bottom-land; fine brick Mansion, with all necessary Outbuildings, and 16 Cabins. Price $9500. Apply at the Office of this Paper.

A Philadelphia man bought Clover Hill and commenced to farm the property. A supreme belief in himself, a boundless contempt for everything Southern, so far as business was concerned, and a repudiation of all advice from his neighbours, had the usual result. The place is now in the hands of a practical Virginian of the reformed school. Clover once again, I have heard, has been induced to spring upon its hillsides—or, at any rate, some of them. The wayward courses of Buffalo Creek and its little feeders have been checked with banks and walls; the deep gullies have been filled with logs and pine-brush. In the bottom-lands the horse-mower goes "clicking" on June mornings through grass as heavy almost as that which bent the negroes' backs in old slavery days. There are not, I hear, half-a-dozen negroes on the place, and those that are there have got to "work or quit." There is nothing left of Mar'se Dab's reign but the gullies, a few tenantless rotting cabins, the log walls of the negro church that, in spite of preacher Moses' endeavours and sarcasm, never achieved a roof for want of funds, and the old coloured burying-ground at the corner of the broom-sedge pasture above the mill.

"UNFATHOMED MYSTERIES."

BY C. F. GORDON CUMMING.

UNDER such titles as "Thought-Reading," "Brain-Waves," &c., we have recently heard much free discussion of that strange and utterly incomprehensible influence which we are driven to assume must be exerted by certain minds on those which (from some affinity as yet unexplained) are subject to their power.

I suppose there are few persons who have failed to remark how often they have turned to a friend to make some comment totally irrelevant to the subject which may have been under discussion, and are startled by hearing the very words they meant to utter addressed to themselves. Hence the saying, "You have taken the words out of my mouth." Or again: how often we are seized by a sudden impulse to write to some far-away, long-neglected friend, and lo! our letter crosses one from him, perhaps in mid-

ocean, proving that the same impulse must have impelled him to write at the same time.

To whatever cause we must ascribe this unsolved problem — whether electricity, magnetism, or any kindred agency—the reality of these influences appears to be beyond question. Whether it may in any way account for such very puzzling "lucky hits" as are occasionally made by the "spiritualists," I am utterly at a loss to discover. Yet it seems possible that, in some inexplicable manner, some of these persons may have acquired a power (which might prove a very inconvenient one) of reading their neighbours' innermost thoughts—thoughts so deeply buried that they themselves are scarcely conscious of their existence.

A lady has just been describing to me a *séance* at which she was recently present in a London drawing-room. It was given by a gentleman who wished simply to prove the power of thought-reading, without making any claim whatever to supernatural power. Calling up a girl, who was a total stranger to him, but a friend of my informant, he told her that he was going out of the room, and she was to take two slips of paper, write a name on each, and fold them up neatly, before his return. The girl being an American, wrote the names of two of her countrywomen—one in the United States, the other present at the *séance*.

The gentleman immediately returned, blindfold.

He bade the girl take one of the folded papers, and press it in the palm of his hand with her own finger, while with her other hand she was to press his finger upon his own brow, as if helping him to intensify his power of thought-reading. Presently he said, "This is a very uncommon name: it is troublesome to read." Then he spelt MARY GREENHOWE, without any mistake whatever. Then he said, "This lady is in America. She is very ill. You are in great trouble about her." Strange to say, the young lady had just received a letter to say that her friend was suffering from a serious attack of fever, and she certainly was in considerable anxiety about her.

The second slip of folded paper was then produced, on which was written the name of my friend Mrs S——s; but the blind reader at once said,—"Why, you have written 'Mrs' instead of putting a Christian name." He then read the surname without hesitation (also an uncommon name), and immediately added,—"Why, this lady is present in the room," so he would say nothing more concerning her. The lady in question was my informant. She had no acquaintance whatever with the thought-reader.

He then left the room, leaving those in it to agree on some object which he was to touch. He returned, blindfold as before, and a gentleman, not known to him, was deputed to walk beside him, pressing one finger on his brow, but in no way guiding him. The seeker several times remonstrated with this gentleman,

saying that he felt he was inimical to him—was resolving not to think of the object; that if he would do so, he could find it far more rapidly; that he made no pretence to any supernatural power, but wished simply to show the power of thought-reading. All this time he slowly advanced from point to point, now and again pausing before some object, but always saying "No, it was not this," till at length he suddenly seemed satisfied, and actually did touch the thing selected. He gave various other tests of his power, which excited considerable wonder in those who beheld them.

As all well-authenticated evidence in any way bearing on the subject must possess a certain value in the eyes of those who are seeking a solution of the question, I may be excused for describing an incident of so personal a character that I should otherwise shrink from relating it. I have been told that what seemed to me a very strange experience, was really nothing out of the common, but would appear a perfectly natural incident to those who are in the habit of dabbling in spiritualism.

Probably, however, there are multitudes of persons who, like myself, have always rather avoided the subject. For my own part, I have always had the greatest dislike to everything connected with it, and to all the *séances* in which "darkened rooms," "soft touches of spirit hands," "table-rappings," "chair-liftings," "sounds of low music," &c., &c., formed

items, which, to say the least of it, are suggestive of some form of deception.

In the beginning of 1880, however, I chanced to find myself in Boston (Massachusetts), the fortunate guest of one whose hospitable home has for many years been the centre of the most delightful society in that literary city. Knowing Boston to be a centre of so-called spiritualism, I remarked to a friend of my host that it was really quite wrong that travellers should be there and not see something of the spiritualism for which it is so famous. He replied that he himself knew nothing whatever about it, but that if I cared to interview a medium, he would find out how to arrange the meeting, and would be glad to escort me. Of course I agreed, and he went off to ask an acquaintance learned in such matters how he was to set about it.

His friend told him that it was the simplest thing in the world. He had only to go to a central office, called "The Banner of Light," and there he would obtain all necessary information. To this office he accordingly proceeded, and was received in the most business-like manner. "He wished to see a medium?" Certainly. He had only to select the one he preferred. Thereupon a large book of reference was produced, like a servants' register, in which were entered the names and addresses of a multitude of professional mediums, on any one of whom he was at liberty to call and make his own arrangements.

Quite at random he took note of several addresses and drove off to the first on his list. He was received by an unpleasant-looking woman, in a dingy house, and resolved to try his luck elsewhere. At the next house he was received in a pretty room by an attractive little lady of fragile and delicate appearance. She consulted her list of engagements, and said she could spare an hour on the following day, when she would expect us.

Three other ladies had by this time expressed a wish to accompany us. The medium, Mrs N. W., made some demur to the presence of so many, on the score that it was much more fatiguing to her. However, she waived this objection, and on the following morning we proceeded to her house. We were a party of five, almost strangers one to another—certainly not knowing one incident in one another's lives. Mrs N. W. did not know even our names. Had she done so, they could certainly have conveyed nothing to her mind.

We started immediately after breakfast, on a brilliant winter's morning, cold and crisp, with bright sunshine. We were all in the most mirthful frame of mind—amused by the novelty of the proceeding, and certainly without one thought of anything serious in the matter. The only definite idea we had concerning the coming interview was, that we would ask the medium to tell us about a packet of papers which I had lost and could not trace,—not that we for one

moment expected her to throw any light on the subject.

On arriving at her house, we were received by a tidy little maid, and were shown into a little drawing-room, into which the full sunlight poured, lighting up every corner. There was no question of darkened rooms or mysticism of any sort: only the simplest furniture—a few pretty cane chairs adorned with blue ribbons. We all carried large bunches of most fragrant winter violets; and when, after a few moments, Mrs N. W. entered the room, we offered her a bunch, which she accepted pleasantly, observing, "All good spirits love flowers." Though our friend had prepared us to see a very fair, delicate little lady, we were all startled by the unnatural pallor of her wax-like complexion—due, we supposed, to passing so large a portion of her life in some unnatural condition.

After a few words of greeting, during which our previous levity was considerably toned down by her evident earnestness in the matter on hand, she asked us to sit in a small circle, holding hands, for about one minute (all in full sunshine). Then she said, "I must sleep;" and passing her hand a few times across her own face, she went off into a sort of waking trance. Then, much to our amazement, in a strange, unnatural voice, she began to pray a simple and most earnest prayer to the Great Spirit of all good and holiness, that He would bestow upon us all goodness, and grant us a closer union with the spirits of all His

children; and especially she prayed that none but good spirits might be allowed to communicate with us. I must confess that we were all utterly taken aback—so entirely incongruous was this solemn appeal with the spirit in which we had sought the interview.

Ere we had recovered from our astonishment, our medium commenced talking in a shrill child's voice. (The idea seems to be, that during the trance the medium is no longer himself or herself, but is merely a passive agent, of whose faculties some spirit present takes the mastery, while acting as spokesman for all others present.)

Turning to one of the ladies, she told her that several of her near relations, who were what we call dead, were present, and desired her to deliver certain messages. Knowing nothing about the lady in question, I took little interest in what was said, but I saw that she did so, and that she seemed very much surprised.

Suddenly turning to the gentleman who had brought us, she told him that his father was standing beside him. She proceeded to describe him minutely, and said he bade her tell his son that his blessing rested on him because of his lifelong devotion to his invalid sister. This was startling: and I learned subsequently that the invalid sister and the brother's devoted care were prominent facts in his life's history. Then she told him that a young girl —"Nelly"—was coming close up to speak to him;

that she said how bitterly she had grieved at having to leave him, for she had been so happy with him that she had no wish to enter the spirit-world. Then turning aside, as if speaking to the girl, she said: "Now, Nelly, you must not cry; for if you do so, I cannot hear what you say." A few moments later she said, "Nelly bids me tell you that you are not to trust George so thoroughly. You know who I mean by George. A man who transacts business for you, —no relation, only a business friend. She says he is not acting well for you. Those last shares he bought are not good. You had better look after that matter."

Throughout this communication,—of which I omit many details,—our friend was evidently much astonished; and though, of course, I could not venture to make any inquiry concerning his lost love, I did ask if there was such a person as "George," and was told in a whisper that there was, and that in every particular the medium had rightly described their relations.

Suddenly Mrs N. W. turned to me, saying that a spirit was pressing forward to get close to me,—"a short, thick-set man; he has been an old-fashioned-looking fellow ever since his boyhood." She then proceeded to give a most minute description of various physical peculiarities, so very marked as to be quite unmistakable. Yet so little had I dreamt of harbouring one thought concerning the sacred dead at

such a time, that I could scarcely believe I heard aright when she added, "He says he is your brother! —his name is JOHN. That is John." She again commented freely on his personal appearance, adding, "But what a good companion he is; and how he does love sport!" Then suddenly pressing her hand on her head, she said, with a look of great pain, "Oh, poor fellow! how dreadfully he suffered here before he died!"

Now I am positively certain that it was not till nearly all these details had been minutely described that my own thoughts definitely recurred to the brother who, of all the dear ones gone hence, would, I think, draw nearest to me, were it in his power; the one brother who, in bodily presence, differed so strangely from all his stalwart brethren, though excelled by none in his skill as a mighty hunter; the brother who, after long years of toil in Ceylon, had died of a sudden and agonising pressure on the brain, at the very moment when he had definitely decided on returning home—so that the same ship which was to have brought him back to England brought the tidings of his death.

Ere I had fully realised what had been said, the medium resumed. "There is a dark-complexioned woman standing beside him, who loves you both dearly." Then she minutely described her, adding, "she is your sister." She took my hand, and wrote three letters so plainly that there could be no mis-

take, saying each as she did so—I D A. Doubtless the name had risen to my mind, so that thought-reading might account for this. But certainly not one soul in all America knew any one of the facts which Mrs N. W. told me that day; so that by no possible means could she have obtained any information concerning my family, even had she known my name, which she did not.

Then, apparently as a means of identification, and although my own thoughts had most certainly not turned to the subject, she went on to say how terribly this spirit had suffered in her last long illness,—how the internal complaint had puzzled and baffled all the doctors, whereas she (the medium) saw plainly that the cause of death had been different from what they imagined, and she named another malady.

Feeling these revelations to be terribly painful, and being, moreover, determined that neither by look nor word would I allow any one present to detect how strangely true was every syllable spoken, I tried to turn the subject; but the medium went on—as if analysing some curious case—to describe various prominent features of a character which, in its various moods, was more strongly marked than that of any other woman I have ever known.

"Oh," she said, "how full of fun and mischief she is! What a capital racy story she can tell, and how witty she is! But some days, when she is in great pain, you know, she is so low and depressed that for

days together she can scarcely speak. And then the moment she is a little better she is as full of wit and frolic as ever."

All this (with other strangely accurate details) was so startlingly exact a description of one endowed with most rare conversational powers, and a fund of mother-wit which bubbled to the surface whenever the pressure of great physical pain was removed for a little season, that I could scarcely credit my hearing (especially as ten years had elapsed since those days of alternating mirth and suffering). But a moment later the medium added, "She wants me to tell you, that you need fear nothing in coming to the spirit-world, for there are so many there who love you, and wait to welcome you."

The medium added, "There is a young man standing close to your sister; she is speaking to him." She went on to describe one who was buried on the field of Alma in 1854; and as I plainly recognised her description, I asked, with carefully assumed indifference, what was his name? In my own mind I thought of the name by which we always addressed him. She replied, "I will tell you when I hear it." A moment later, to my amazement, she uttered, not the name that was in my mind, but that by which his wife *alone* called him! Then she said, "There is another lady with them—also a sister; she is taller, and has smooth dark hair. She has an uncommon name—S E Y—— I cannot make out the

last syllable." I need scarcely say that the name of my eldest sister, Seymour, had presented itself vividly to my mind, yet she could not make this out. This, then, was clearly not thought-reading.

She did not lose more than a few seconds in this effort. Then turning from me to a lady who sat opposite, she said, "I have much to tell you—from Annie, your sister-in-law." She then described the spirit in question, and, correcting herself, said, "Oh! her name is not Annie—it is Fanny. I had not heard rightly at first." Then she said, "Come close, that I may tell you in a whisper, for you will not like the others to hear what I have to say, and it is no concern of theirs."

She spoke for some minutes in a whisper, quite inaudible to the rest of the party; but I watched the lady who was thus addressed start, as if utterly amazed by what was said, and she appeared more and more perplexed as she listened. She told us afterwards that she could not possibly repeat what had been said to her, but that it had reference to strictly private family affairs, which she was convinced that no one outside of her own domestic circle could possibly know. On returning home, she told her relations what had been said, and all were alike perplexed. She said her father had the greatest horror of spiritualism, and had never allowed any of them to dabble in it; and evidently this revelation confirmed his objections.

As soon as this private aside was ended, I asked Mrs N. W. whether she could tell anything about people who were still alive, in the ordinary acceptation of the word. She replied in the affirmative; whereupon I said there were two men concerning whom I should like to have information. I certainly did not expect to receive any, but my thoughts turned to my brother and my half-brother, both in Afghanistan.

She said, "Tell me in what sort of country to look for them—a hot country or a cold one?" It was in the depth of winter, so I replied, "A cold country."

After a moment's pause, she said, "I see them both. One is more nearly related to you than the other. He is your brother. His name is FRANK. I think he must be some sort of merchant, for he has long trains of animals carrying heavy burdens. There are strange wild-looking people about him—something like our wild Indian tribes, but different. I think there must be some disturbance or trouble in the country, for he seems to be anxious for peace,—something like what was going on where the poor Prince Imperial was killed."

Strange to say, this brother was then in charge of a land-transport corps, oppressed by the amount of work thrown on his shoulders, in organising means of transporting all stores to the front, and personally inspecting every detail. The long caravans of laden camels and pack-horses might well have seemed suggestive of trains of merchandise.

I asked her to tell me the name of the other man. At first she could not, for she said he was ill—not seriously ill, but that somehow she could not make out his name. Some minutes later she said, "The name of that other man—the one who is not so closely related to you—is FRED. They will both come home safely."

So far all she had said was extraordinarily accurate. Now, however, she seemed to be exceedingly weary, and as if speaking at random. I asked if she could tell me about a lost packet of papers. She replied, "Oh yes; they are lost to you for ever. You need take no further trouble to recover them." (I did recover them a few days later.) She then volunteered to tell me that I should very soon go "across the pond" (*Anglicé*, return to England, which, in fact, I did a week later); that an old friend would come to welcome me, but that within ten days he would die suddenly. Her description of this gentleman so far resembled a friend who actually did most unexpectedly come to meet me, that I frankly confess to having been unable to shake off an uneasy qualm till the allotted ten days were well over. But I am thankful to say that in this case also, our medium proved herself quite unable to prophesy, for my friend continues to this day in perfect health.

The fragile little woman now said she was very tired, and must awaken. She passed her hand over her face, shivered, and seemed by a voluntary effort

to come out from her trance. She appeared utterly exhausted, and confessed to feeling so. The death-like pallor which had at first struck us so painfully, seemed even more ghastly than before. Strange to say, all this had occurred within the hour which she had previously allotted to us—for a specified pecuniary consideration. Throughout the *séance* she had continued to speak in a strained unnatural voice, purporting to be that of the child who was supposed to be speaking through her agency. We were glad once more to hear her speak in her natural voice. She told us she had other appointments in the course of the day, and must rest; so we left her, and passed out into the crisp sunlight of the New England winter, and went on our way, feeling considerably bewildered by our interview.

Much of what she had said was so utterly unaccountable, that I, for one, could not put it from me for days. It really seemed as if, but for lack of time, and the presence of others all claiming their share of one short hour, she might have gone on speaking consecutively, as one who had something definite to tell; or else, if there were any fraud in the matter (which seemed quite impossible), I might have obtained some clue to it.

I could not attribute her words to thought-reading; for in almost each case the thoughts were entirely of her suggestion: and in several instances where she addressed the others, she had to explain something

of which she had to remind them; saying, "Don't you remember?" and they answered, "Yes; but I had forgotten."

I confess to having felt the strongest wish to repeat the interview, but I had arranged to leave Boston on the following morning, so had no further opportunity. All my friends there assured me that it was just as well, as many of them had been tempted for a while to attend similar *séances*, either seeking a solution of the matter, or in the *bonâ fide* hope of obtaining messages from the silent land. All agreed in assuring me that they had never arrived at anything satisfactory, and had only been led to disquiet themselves in vain. They said it was very unusual for any medium to be as definite in her statements as the lady we had visited. Altogether, they strongly recommended me to be content with this glimpse from the threshold of spiritualism, and to let it alone.

From whatever point I considered the question, it appeared equally incomprehensible. Strange enough that a totally unknown girl, in a foreign land, should, without any bidding of ours, be able minutely to describe the frail bodies which, so many years previously, had been laid beneath the sod, in lands so widely separated. But stranger still, that if the spirits of our loved ones were indeed now around us, and had found a voice capable of whispering their messages, the first impression they should seek to convey should have reference to the physical pain which we so fondly

believe is all forgotten when the spirit forsakes its mortal body. This, however, seems to be an unvarying feature in all these manifestations, as they are called. Various people subsequently described to me their experiences of similar phenomena (if such they be) but in every case the medium, almost as a matter of course, began by describing the symptoms of the disease which had caused the spirit to forsake its house of clay.

One gentleman told me how he, like ourselves a total stranger in Boston, had, from the merest curiosity, sought an interview with a medium, selected quite at random. She at once proceeded, unasked, and greatly to his distress, minutely to describe his dead father and brother, and other kinsfolk who had passed over "to the majority." Anxious to turn her attention from topics which he felt to be at once too sacred and too painful to be touched upon under such circumstances, he asked if she could give him any particulars concerning an absent friend. He gave her no clue whatever to the person of whom he was thinking; and, much to his astonishment, she almost immediately proceeded to describe him, and the room in which he was sitting; also two ladies who were present,—one elderly and grey-haired, who sat in a corner of a sofa—the other young and handsome, a Spanish-looking girl, with glossy raven-black hair. The gentleman was sitting at the piano. When asked whose music he was playing, the medium re-

plied, "His own." She was asked his name, and replied that she could not tell till she heard it mentioned. Soon afterwards she mentioned a very uncommon name by which he was very rarely addressed, and said it was the name by which the grey-haired lady called him. She then added his surname.

A few days later our traveller returned to the town where his friend lived, and made a point of going to see him as soon as possible. He inquired where he had been the previous week? His friend replied that he had been absent, but had been obliged to return unexpectedly on a certain day (the very day in question). "Who had he found on his return?" "Only his mother." "No one else?" "Oh yes; late in the afternoon Miss —— chanced to arrive." (Then the accuracy of the medium was undoubted. Her description of the handsome Spanish-looking girl, with glossy raven-black hair, exactly answered to the lady in question.) "And what were they all doing at sunset?" "Nothing special. He was playing the piano, and they were listening." "Whose music was he playing?" "Oh, he was improvising." "Might he see the room in which they were sitting?" "Why, certainly."

So he led the way to a room exactly answering to that described by the medium, and the grey-haired mother pointed out the corner of the sofa which was her accustomed seat in the twilight, and the chair

occupied by the dark-haired girl; and the picture was recognised as being altogether accurate.

On leaving Boston, I remained for some days in New York, where, on my happening to refer to this subject, a lady asked if I should care to attend a spiritualist meeting on the following Sunday morning. On the principle that travellers must see all things, I assented; and we found our way to a large crowded hall, where a great congregation had assembled, as if for a religious service. A good choir of six or eight well-trained voices sang very pretty semi-sacred anthems at intervals; and copies of 'Progressive Hymns' were freely distributed in the hall. These were sung in parts by the whole congregation, with that peculiar harmonious faculty which appears to be the birthright of our American cousins, though known to us chiefly in connection with the teaching of Messrs Moody and Sankey. Almost all these hymns had reference to our union and communion with those who have crossed the narrow stream of death. Some were prayers to the Father of all spirits,—the great undivided family which includes all, whether still clothed in flesh or emancipated from its bondage. Others were appeals to the spirits of the departed, assumed to be present, and full of sympathy with all concerns of those we call living.

But the main feature of the meeting was what we may call the sermon—a remarkable and very eloquent address on "The Spiritualism of the Bible." The

speaker (who had hitherto borne the title of Reverend in some branch of the Christian Church, but had lately "advanced" so far as to become a leader in "Progressive Religion") was well versed in the sacred Scriptures; and (being thoroughly master of that torrent of words, which seems, in America, to be the natural talent of the majority, instead of a special gift to a very few, as with us), moreover, not being withheld by any reverent shrinking from introducing the most sacred topics in connection with the most questionable events of the moment, his discourse was certainly as startling as can well be imagined.

To our ears this method of treating sacred subjects could not but sound painfully irreverent,—to many it would appear almost blasphemous. But this was evidently not the intention of the speaker, nor the impression produced on his hearers. His one object was to prove that the reality of spiritualism rests on evidence of precisely the same character as that of Christianity—namely, the indubitable testimony of a certain number of chosen witnesses. As in the days of old, spiritual revelations were never made to "all the people," but only to a select few, whose testimony others have ever since been required to accept in faith, so, he maintained, it is now in this present time. The supernatural is ever around us, though our ordinary human eyes are not capable of discerning it. They need some special enlightenment, which in certain cases has been bestowed, as when, in an hour of

imminent danger, when the King of Syria had sent horses and chariots, and a great host to encompass the city of Dothan, that he might capture Elisha the prophet, and the servant of the prophet was distraught with fear, his master said to him, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, *open his eyes, that he may see.* And the Lord *opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire* round about Elisha."

The invisible protectors were there already. All that was needed was that the eyes of the young man should be made capable of discerning them.

Again, when the angel of the Lord stood in the pathway of Balaam, "for an adversary against him," neither the prophet nor his two servants discerned his presence. At three points in the road the angel stood in the way, and the ass, beholding him, turned aside, and where the path was so narrow that she could not turn aside, she fell; but not until the Lord *opened the eyes* of Balaam did he recognise the Presence in which he stood. Apparently his servants never saw the angel at all, any more than did the men which journeyed with Saul of Tarsus, when there shone around him a light from heaven, so radiant that for three days he was left without sight, and the Lord Himself spoke with him. But his companions stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man.

When, in consequence of this marvellous manifestation, Saul the persecutor had been transformed into Paul the apostle, it was probably in no merely symbolic sense that, referring to the long array of saintly dead, he implied their present interest in the living, as an incentive to holiness of life, when, addressing the Hebrews on their life-warfare, he encouraged them to earnestness, by the recollection that they are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.

Referring to the fact that every medium is supposed to be simply the agent whom some emancipated spirit adopts as his representative, so that in spiritualistic circles every communication is said to be made, not by the medium, but by the spirit whom he represents, and the medium, while under this influence, speaks, and is spoken of, as being that spirit, —the lecturer quoted the concluding words of the Old Testament, promising the return of Elijah the prophet. These he took in connection with St John the Baptist's declaration that he was *not* Elias; whereas the Master, in speaking of him, said plainly, "If ye will receive it, this *is* Elias, which was for to come."

Rapidly quoting one case after another of recent so-called spiritual manifestations, sworn to on oath by a given number of eminent spiritualists (some of whom were citizens of note then present, and all of which were instances apparently fully believed in by

the large assemblage whom he addressed), he turned to the sacred page, and thence read some story of supernatural interest, supported by apparently very similar evidence to that brought forward to prove the case in question. So he ran through the various Scriptural books, always speaking of the favoured kings and prophets as "mediums."

He made no allusion to Saul's interview with the witch at Endor, probably because of the distinct references there made to the Divine prohibition of all manner of witchcraft; to the penalty of death awarded under the Levitical law to the man or the woman that hath a familiar spirit, and the strict prohibition to consult wizards, or witches, or necromancers, or such as have familiar spirits, or use divination, as the heathen do—but concerning which, the chosen people are told that, "As for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord; and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

In glancing at the old story, however, and considering it in its relation to the spiritualism of the present day, it struck me very forcibly that no manner of doubt is thrown on the reality of the supernatural power possessed by certain persons, whether called witches or mediums. In fact, the story of Saul's visit to the witch reads strangely like that of a nineteenth century spiritualistic *séance*. He says to his

servants, "Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her." A little while previously he might have chosen his medium from a list as long as the register of "The Banner of Light" at Boston in the year of grace 1882. But he had recently, probably at the bidding of Samuel, caused all such to be put to death, in obedience to the Levitical law. So his servants had to inquire diligently. Then they came and told him, "Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor." He goes to her disguised, that she may not know him. She says, "Whom shall I bring up to thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel." It does not appear certain that he said this name aloud. Probably he only willed it, for the moment the woman perceived that it was Samuel who appeared to her, she cried with a loud voice in sore fear. Then the king said to her, "Be not afraid. What sawest thou? What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle; and Saul perceived [from her description] that it was Samuel. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" Then he told him of the certain punishment that must fall on him, because he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord; and how he must be delivered into the hand of the Philistines; and that he and his three sons were to be slain. "To-morrow," he said, "shalt thou and thy sons be with me."

This witch, or medium, must have been a woman well to do, and probably of good social standing, to have escaped detection in the recent witch-persecution; and, moreover, there is nothing about her suggestive of claptrap incantations or other modes of mystifying her visitors. On the contrary, she seems to have been a good housewife and a hospitable soul; for when she perceived Saul lying prone on the earth, in anguish of spirit, she suspected the truth—that he was also weak through fasting. So she persuaded him to rest on her bed, while she hasted to kill a fat calf and cooked it, and made cakes of flour, and set meat before Saul and before his servants; and so she strengthened them ere they went forth to the fatal battle-field.

The lecturer dwelt especially on various recent cases of apparitions evidently familiar to all his hearers—of spirits having appeared to mediums in various parts of the country, desiring them to go and deliver certain messages to other persons. These he did not hesitate to support by Scriptural parallels, as when the angel of the Lord appeared to Ananias, bidding him go and minister to Saul in his blindness, and lay his hand on him that he might receive his sight. He quoted various instances of persons who, having quite recently been charged with such messages, had actually been suddenly transported, by some means totally unknown to themselves, from the place where they were, to some distant spot, where

they were to do the special work assigned to them. He described several such incidents as having occurred within his own knowledge; and his congregation apparently accepted his statements as gospel. But, lest any unbeliever should cavil, he reminded his hearers of how St Philip was commanded to go into the desert between Jerusalem and Gaza, there to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, and to interpret the Scriptures which he was reading; how, so soon as the new convert had been baptised, as they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more. *But Philip was found at Azotus*—a distance, said the preacher, of about thirty-seven miles. It was customary, he said, in the Christian world to accept this statement; and why should they deem it incredible that mediums should be similarly transported in this present age?

He swore positively to having himself seen a visible hand appear in the night, and write on the wall in letters of light a message from one of his kinsfolk concerning certain family matters. "You say you cannot believe this? Then turn to Daniel, and read of the Hand that wrote on the wall at Belshazzar's feast." The magnitude of the one cause, and the triviality of the other, seemed a matter of no moment in his estimation.

Then he spoke of the petition of Elisha the prophet, that a double portion of Elijah's spirit

might rest upon him; and his master's reply—"Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, *if thou see me when I am taken from thee*, it shall be so unto thee. And, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. *And Elisha saw it.*" With reference to this subject, the lecturer affirmed positively that he himself, in common with other mediums, had *often* stood by deathbeds, and had actually beheld a radiant spirit float upward from the body at the moment of death, clothed in transcendent light.

He quoted a multitude of cases in rapid succession of recent spirit apparitions, where the dead had suddenly and distinctly become visible in a company of mediums. In some instances he referred by name to the citizens who had been the honoured mediums to whom special revelations had been made. I cannot say that the substance of these revelations appeared in any case to have been worthy of note, or to have required special messengers. Nevertheless he did not scruple to claim credence for every statement he brought forward, on the ground that the evidence adduced was precisely similar to that on which we accept the fundamental truths of the New Testament; and he thereupon proceeded to quote every instance in which our Lord appeared to His disciples.

Such a method of handling sacred subjects was, I

need scarcely say, most painfully jarring to the ear of those who were not "Progressive Religionists"; and if I venture to quote one more illustration from this singular discourse, I do so solely as a characteristic American expression of contempt for their own Government. The speaker told us how he knew, beyond all doubt, that what we call death was merely passing from one condition of life to another That he had proved it in the case of his own mother, because she had not only frequently appeared to him, but also, on various occasions, to many friends; and he could summon fifty different men, all well known in this city of New York, who would swear to having seen her after she was said to have died. Turning to the Epistles, he read of One who was seen by His disciples—sometimes when they were alone, sometimes in company, in open air, or within closed doors; and at one time He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.

"I should like to know," said the lecturer, "where (*out of Congress*) you would find five hundred men who would agree to tell a lie, or fifty either—especially when, as in each case I have quoted, they could only gain opprobrium thereby?"

After more hymn-singing and anthems, the crowded congregation dispersed; and as we passed through an outer hall we saw large book-stalls, where books, periodicals, and a great variety of newspapers were offered for sale—all treating solely of spiritualism.

That so large a literature on such a subject could exist, was in itself a new revelation to me, and spoke volumes for the number of persons who must take a certain definite interest in the matter. I was, however, by no means prepared to learn that the avowed spiritualists in the United States are estimated at ten millions—so says Judge Edmunds of America.

Still more startling is it to be told that "there is scarcely a city in Europe where spiritualists are not reckoned by hundreds, if not by thousands; that regularly established communities habitually meet for 'spiritual' purposes, and that they reckon among them individuals of every class and avocation, nominal members of all branches of the Christian Church."[1]

The learned Jesuit, Father Perrone, tells us that upwards of two thousand treatises in defence of this system have been published since the year 1860, and that he believes these modern professors of divination to be undoubtedly working by diabolic agency. He shows that their whole system is identical with the prohibited necromancy, or "art of communicating with devils"; and declares his conviction that at these *séances* evil spirits may truly personify the souls of the departed, but that for all Catholic Christians such commerce with the emissaries of evil is without excuse.

We further learn that London itself supports no

[1] 'Scepticism and Spiritualism.'

less than five spiritual papers—at least it did so in the year 1871.[1] Whether their number has increased or diminished since that date, I cannot tell. But in looking over some extracts from those, I am struck by finding that they assume as acknowledged facts various manifestations similar to those alluded to by the lecturer in New York. For instance, in a paper read by Mr T. Grant to the Maidstone Philosophical Society in 1872, as being "A Scientific View of Modern Spiritualism," he describes various classes of mediums, one of which he calls the missionary medium, because it is irresistibly compelled to go on some given errand, without knowing why or whither, wherever the spirit guides him. Mr Grant asserted that he was acquainted with a medium of this class in Maidstone, who, though too weak to walk far under ordinary circumstances, was nevertheless, when under this influence, enabled to walk long distances without feeling fatigue, at the most unreasonable hours of day or night; and *has several times been instantaneously transported from one place to another, miles apart.*

Again, we were struck by the exceedingly practical nature of the communication which we heard the Boston medium make to my companion respecting certain business transactions. It would appear, however, that such revelations are not without parallel in Britain. Thus, in a singular record of a multitude of

[1] The Debateable Land, p. 175. R. Dale Owen.

strange and unaccountable facts, collected by the Rev. F. G. Lee,[1] he quotes the following story, giving the name and address of his informant:—

"A commercial firm at Bolton in Lancashire had found that a considerable sum of money, which had been sent to their bank by a confidential clerk, had not been placed to their credit. The clerk remembered the fact of taking the money, though not the particulars; but at the bank nothing was known of it. The clerk, feeling that he was liable to suspicion in the matter, and anxious to elucidate it, sought the help of a spirit medium. The medium promised to do her best. Having heard the story, she presently passed into a kind of trance. Shortly after, she said: 'I see you on your way to the bank. I see you go into the bank. I see you go to such and such part of the bank. I see you hand some papers to a clerk. I see him put them in such and such a place under some other papers. And I see them there now.' The clerk went to the bank, directed the cashier where to look for the money, and it was found,—the cashier afterwards remembering that in the hurry of business he had there deposited it."

The gentleman who narrated this story stated that a relation of his had written to the commercial firm in question, to ask whether the facts here stated had actually occurred, and he had received a reply in the affirmative. Mr Lee applied to this gentleman for a

[1] Glimpses of the Supernatural. Henry S. King & Co.

corroboration of the story, and in due course received the following answer: "Nov. 9, 1874.—Your account is correct. I have the answer of the firm to my inquiry at home now."

When mediums develop such very useful talents, it might appear desirable to cultivate their acquaintance, unless indeed it be true that they obtain their knowledge through dark trafficking with spirits of evil.

We know that the existence of such a possibility has never been denied, and as the magicians and necromancers of pre-Christian ages were always spoken of as possessing actual but unlawful powers, so all the early Christian writers plainly declare their full belief in the reality of the mystic incantations and supernatural powers of sorcerers, and also of their sinfulness—as, for instance, in the case of the damsel of Thyatira, who, being possessed of a spirit of divination, brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. When the apostles came to Thyatira, this woman followed them, proclaiming to all around that these were the servants of the Most High God, who would show them the way of salvation.

We might surely suppose that none save a good spirit would bear such witness to the Truth, but we read that St Paul, being grieved, turned, and said to the spirit: "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her," and he came out of her the same hour. But when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they stirred up the multitude,

and dragged the apostles before the magistrates, and caused them to be beaten and thrust into prison. There was evidently something very real in the powers of which this medium had been so summarily deprived, and the loss of which was such a serious matter to her employers.

The advance of modern science has taught us to despise the superstitions of the dark ages. Necromancy and witchcraft are deemed things of the past. Yet under new names, and with refinements better suited to this nineteenth century, the same beliefs would seem to be at work. A few years ago, a simple little heart-shaped piece of wood, called "Planchette," running on wheels, and pierced by a pencil, became a favourite drawing-room plaything, and was required to act the part of the divining-rod in the hand of the Eastern magicians. So eerie were the answers thus obtained to various questions, that in many cases the inquirers took alarm, and solemnly condemned their "Planchette" to an *auto da fé*. We know of one which was deliberately sunk in the Nile, and another in the Thames, as being decidedly "uncanny."

Then we have had the whole array of evidence concerning table-turning and spirit-rapping, which for so many years formed a fruitful topic of conversation and wonder. Add to these, numerous indisputable stories of unaccountable apparitions, such as those vouched for by Mr Lane and his sister during their

residence in Egypt;[1] and also such mysterious rappings as continued for years to disturb the pious home of the Wesleys; and many other instances equally well authenticated.

Undoubtedly there is a wondrous fascination in all such suggestions of the great unexplored land which lies beyond the narrow border of our bounded lives; nevertheless all I can learn on this subject, and its effect on those who have gone most deeply into its study, inclines me to believe that it is one which it is well to leave untouched, and so my inquiries have gone no further. From what I can gather, I infer that the whole question of Spiritualism is full of difficulty; that those who start on the endeavour to follow it out soon find themselves plunged in an intricate labyrinth, from which escape becomes more and more hopeless the further they advance,—a labyrinth in which light becomes darkness, and in which they who once enter are beguiled ever onward, in the vain hope of grasping something tangible, which for ever eludes their quest.

[1] Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians. E. W. Lane.