Billy Budd

by Herman Melville

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THE WORKS OF

HERMAN MELVILLE

STANDARD EDITION

VOLUME

XIII

This Edition is limited to 750 copies

BILLY BUDD AND OTHER PROSE PIECES

BY

HERMAN MELVILLE

EDITED BY

RAYMOND W. WEAVER

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

‘Billy Budd,’ the title-piece of this volume, is a novel finished by Melville five months before his death in 1891, and never before published. ‘Daniel Orme’ is a sketch ‘omitted from Billy Budd.’ The fourth piece—‘The Two Temples’—was on May 12, 1854, refused by Putnam’s Monthly Magazine out of a fear of offending the religious sensibilities of the congregation of Grace Church, New York. This volume concludes with eight sketches surviving in manuscript, written, in all probability, after Melville’s retirement in 1886, at the age of sixty-seven, from his post as Inspector of Customs in New York City. Except for his letters, journals, and the

juvenile ‘Fragments from a Writing Desk,’ this closes the count of Melville as a writer of prose. The rest of the volume comprises all Melville’s contributions to magazines that he acknowledged but never reprinted.

The text of matter hitherto unpublished has, so far as possible, been printed verbatim from Melville’s manuscript. Here and there, however, owing to the heavily corrected condition of many of the papers, slight adjustments in the interests of grammar or of style have been made in Melville’s wording.

The editor and publishers are indebted to the Princeton University Press for their courtesy in allowing two of the essays included in this volume to be reprinted from The Apple-Tree Table and Other Sketches, a volume of Melville’s prose miscellanea recently issued from Princeton.

CONTENTS

PAGE Billy Budd, Foretopman 1 OTHER PROSE PIECES Daniel Orme 117 Hawthorne and His Mosses, by a Virginian spending a July in Vermont: Literary World, August 17, August 24, 1850 123 Cock-a-doodle-doo! or the Crowing of the noble Cock Beneventano: Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, November-December 1853 144 The Two Temples 173 Poor Man’s Pudding and Rich Man’s Crumbs: Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, June 1854 192 The Happy Failure, a Story of the River Hudson: Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, July 1854 210 The Fiddler: Putnam’s Monthly Magazine, September 1854 220 The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids: Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, April 1855 228 Jimmy Rose: Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, November 1855 255 The ’Gees: Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, March 1856 268 I and My Chimney: Putnam’s Monthly Magazine, March 1856 276 The Apple-Tree Table, or Original Spiritual Manifestations: Putnam’s Monthly Magazine, May 1856 312 Under the Rose 339 The Marquis de Grandvin 346 Portrait of a Gentleman 353 To Major John Gentian,

Dean of the Burgundy Club 358 Jack Gentian 369 Mayor Gentian and Colonel J. Bunkum 373 The Cincinnati 378 Fragment 381 Fragments from a Writing-Desk 382

BILLY BUDD, FORETOPMAN

WHAT BEFELL HIM IN THE YEAR OF

THE GREAT MUTINY, Etc.

Friday, Nov. 16, 1888—begun.

Revision begun—March 2, 1889.

Finished—April 19, 1891.

DEDICATED

TO

JACK CHASE

ENGLISHMAN

WHEREVER THAT GREAT HEART MAY NOW BE

HERE ON EARTH OR HARBOURED IN PARADISE

CAPTAIN OF THE MAIN-TOP

IN THE YEAR 1843

IN THE U.S. FRIGATE

‘UNITED STATES’

PREFACE

The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which, as every thinker now feels, involved a crisis for Christendom, not exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other era whereof there is record. The opening proposition made by the Spirit of that Age,[1] involved a rectification of the Old

World's hereditary wrongs. In France, to some extent, this was bloodily effected. But what then? Straightway the Revolution itself became a wrongdoer, one more oppressive than the kings. Under Napoleon it enthroned upstart kings, and initiated that prolonged agony of continual war whose final throe was Waterloo. During those years not the wisest could have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what to some thinkers apparently it has since turned out to be, a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans.

Now, as elsewhere hinted, it was something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit that at Spithead emboldened the man-of-war's men to rise against real abuses, long-standing ones, and afterwards at the Nore to make inordinate and aggressive demands, successful resistance to which was confirmed only when the ringleaders were hung for an admonitory spectacle to the anchored fleet. Yet in a way analogous to the operation of the Revolution at large, the Great Mutiny, though by Englishmen naturally deemed monstrous at the time, doubtless gave the first latent prompting to most important reforms in the British Navy.

1. Crossed out:

Was one hailed by the noblest men of it.

Even the dry tinder of Wordsworth took fire.

BILLY BUDD, FORETOPMAN

I

(An inside Narrative)

In the time before steamships, or then more frequently than now, a stroller along the docks of any considerable seaport would occasionally have his attention arrested by a group of bronzed marines, man-of-war's men or merchant sailors in holiday attire ashore on liberty. In certain instances they would flank, or, like a bodyguard, quite surround some superior figure of their own class, moving along with them like

Aldebaran among the lesser lights of his constellation. That signal object was the ‘Handsome Sailor’ of the less prosaic time alike of the military and merchant navies. With no perceptible trace of the vainglorious about him, rather with the off-hand unaffectedness of natural regality, he seemed to accept the spontaneous homage of his shipmates. A somewhat remarkable instance recurs to me. In Liverpool, now half a century ago, I saw under the shadow of the great dingy street-wall of Prince’s Dock (an obstruction long since removed) a common sailor, so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterate blood of Ham. A symmetric figure much above the average height. The two ends of a gay silk handkerchief thrown loose about the neck danced upon the displayed ebony of his chest; in his ears were big hoops of gold, and a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band set off his shapely head.

It was a hot noon in July; and his face, lustrous with perspiration, beamed with barbaric good-humour. In jovial sallies right and left, his white teeth flashing into view, he rollicked along, the centre of a company of his shipmates. These were made up of such an assortment of tribes and complexions as would have well fitted them to be marched up by Anacharsis Cloots before the bar of the first French Assembly as Representatives of the Human Race. At each spontaneous tribute rendered by the wayfarers to this black pagod of a fellow—the tribute of a pause and stare, and less frequent an exclamation—the motley retinue showed that they took that sort of pride in the evoker of it which the Assyrian priests doubtless showed for their grand sculptured Bull when the faithful prostrated themselves. To return—

If in some cases a bit of a nautical Murat in setting forth his person ashore, the Handsome Sailor of the period in question evinced nothing of the dandified Billy-be-Dam, an amusing character all but extinct now, but occasionally to be encountered, and in a form yet more amusing than the original, at the tiller of the boats on the tempestuous Erie Canal or, more likely, vapouring in the groggeries along the tow-path. Invariably a proficient in his perilous calling, he was also more

or less of a mighty boxer or wrestler. It was strength and beauty. Tales of his prowess were recited. Ashore he was the champion, afloat the spokesman; on every suitable occasion always foremost. Close-reefing topsails in a gale, there he was, astride the weather yard-arm-end, foot in ‘stirrup,’ both hands tugging at the ‘ear-ring’ as at a bridle, in very much the attitude of young Alexander curbing the fiery Bucephalus. A superb figure, tossed up as by the horns of Taurus against the thunderous sky, cheerily ballooning to the strenuous file along the spar.

The moral nature was seldom out of keeping with the physical make. Indeed, except as toned by the former, the comeliness and power, always attractive in masculine conjunction, hardly could have drawn the sort of homage the Handsome Sailor in some examples received from his less gifted associates.

Such a cynosure, at least in aspect, and something such too in nature, though with important variations made apparent as the story proceeds, was welkin-eyed Billy Budd, or Baby Budd, as more familiarly, under circumstances hereafter to be given, he at last came to be called, aged twenty-one, a foretopman of the fleet toward the close of the last decade of the eighteenth century. It was not very long prior to the time of the narration that follows that he had entered the King’s Service, having been impressed on the Narrow Seas from a homeward-bound English merchantman into a seventy-four outward-bound, H.M.S. Indomitable; which ship, as was not unusual in those hurried days, had been obliged to put to sea short of her proper complement of men. Plump upon Billy at first sight in the gangway the boarding-officer, Lieutenant Ratcliffe, pounced, even before the merchantman’s crew formally was mustered on the quarter-deck for his deliberate inspection. And him only he selected. For whether it was because the other men when ranged before him showed to ill advantage after Billy, or whether he had some scruples in view of the merchantman being rather short-handed; however it might be, the officer contented himself with his first spontaneous choice. To the surprise of the ship’s company, though much to the Lieutenant’s satisfaction, Billy made no demur. But

indeed any demur would have been as idle as the protest of a goldfinch popped into a cage.

Noting this uncomplaining acquiescence, all but cheerful one might say, the shipmates turned a surprised glance of silent reproach at the sailor. The shipmaster was one of those worthy mortals found in every vocation, even the humbler ones—the sort of person whom everybody agrees in calling ‘a respectable man.’ And—nor so strange to report as it may appear to be—though a ploughman of the troubled waters, life-long contending with the intractable elements, there was nothing this honest soul at heart loved better than simple peace and quiet. For the rest, he was fifty or thereabouts, a little inclined to corpulence, a prepossessing face, unwhiskered, and of an agreeable colour, a rather full face, humanely intelligent in expression. On a fair day with a fair wind and all going well, a certain musical chime in his voice seemed to be the veritable unobstructed outcome of the innermost man. He had much prudence, much conscientiousness, and there were occasions when these virtues were the cause of overmuch disquietude in him. On a passage, so long as his craft was in any proximity to land, no sleep for Captain Graveling. He took to heart those serious responsibilities not so heavily borne by some shipmasters.

Now while Billy Budd was down in the forecastle getting his kit together, the Indomitable’s lieutenant, burly and bluff, nowise disconcerted by Captain Graveling’s omitting to proffer the customary hospitalities on an occasion so unwelcome to him, an omission simply caused by preoccupation of thought, unceremoniously invited himself into the cabin, and also to a flask from the spirit locker, a receptacle which his experienced eye instantly discovered. In fact, he was one of those sea-dogs in whom all the hardship and peril of naval life in the great prolonged wars of his time never impaired the natural instinct for sensuous enjoyment. His duty he always faithfully did; but duty is sometimes a dry obligation, and he was for irrigating its aridity whensoever possible with a fertilising decoction

of strong waters. For the cabin's proprietor there was nothing left but to play the part of the enforced host with whatever grace and alacrity were practicable. As necessary adjuncts to the flask, he silently placed tumbler and water-jug before the irrepressible guest. But excusing himself from partaking just then, dismally watched the unembarrassed officer deliberately diluting his grog a little, then tossing it off in three swallows, pushing the empty tumbler away, yet not so far as to be beyond easy reach, at the same time settling himself in his seat, and smacking his lips with high satisfaction, looking straight at the host.

These proceedings over, the Master broke the silence; and there lurked a rueful reproach in the tone of his voice: 'Lieutenant, you are going to take my best man from me, the jewel of 'em.'

'Yes, I know,' rejoined the other, immediately drawing back the tumbler, preliminary to a replenishing; 'yes, I know. Sorry.'

'Beg pardon, but you don't understand, Lieutenant. See here now. Before I shipped that young fellow, my forecastle was a rat-pit of quarrels. It was black times, I tell you, aboard the Rights here. I was worried to that degree my pipe had no comfort for me. But Billy came; and it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy. Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular; but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sour ones. They took to him like hornets to treacle; all but the bluffer of the gang, the big, shaggy chap with the fire-red whiskers. He indeed, out of envy, perhaps, of the newcomer, and thinking such a "sweet and pleasant fellow," as he mockingly designated him to the others, could hardly have the spirit of a game-cock, must needs bestir himself in trying to get up an ugly row with him. Billy forbore with him, and reassured with him in a pleasant way—he is something like myself, Lieutenant, to whom aught like a quarrel is hateful—but nothing served. So, in the second dog-watch one day the Red Whiskers, in presence of the others, under pretence of showing Billy just whence a

sirloin steak was cut—for the fellow had once been a butcher—insultingly gave him a dig under the ribs. Quick as lightning Billy let fly his arm. I dare say he never meant to do quite as much as he did, but anyhow he gave the burly fool a terrible drubbing. It took about half a minute, I should think. And, Lord bless you, the lubber was astonished at the celerity. And will you believe it, Lieutenant, the Red Whiskers now really loves Billy—loves him, or is the biggest hypocrite that ever I heard of. But they all love him. Some of 'em do his washing, darn old trowsers for him; the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd; and it's the happy family here. Now, Lieutenant, if that young fellow goes, I know how it will be aboard the Rights. Not again very soon shall I, coming up from dinner, lean over the capstan smoking a quiet pipe—no, not very soon again, I think. Ay, Lieutenant, you are going to take away the jewel of 'em; you are going to take away my peacemaker.' And with that the good soul had really some ado in checking a rising sob.

'Well,' said the Lieutenant, who had listened with amused interest to all this, and now waxing merry with his tipple, 'well, blessed are the peacemakers, especially the fighting peacemakers! And such are the seventy-four beauties, some of which you see poking their noses out of the port-holes of yonder warship lying-to for me,' pointing through the cabin windows at the Indomitable. 'But courage! don't look so downhearted, man. Why, I pledge you in advance the royal approbation. Rest assured that His Majesty will be delighted to know that in a time when his hard-tack is not sought for by sailors with such avidity as should be; a time also when some shipmasters privily resent the borrowing from them of a tar or two for the service; His Majesty, I say, will be delighted to learn that one shipmaster at least cheerfully surrenders to the King the flower of his flock, a sailor who with equal loyalty makes no dissent. But where's my Beauty? Ah,' looking through the cabin's open door, 'here he comes; and, by Jove! lugging along his chest—Apollo with his portmanteau! My man,' stepping out to him, 'you can't take that big box aboard a

warship. The boxes there are mostly shot-boxes. Put your duds in a bag, lad. Boot and saddle for the cavalryman, bag and hammock for the man-of-war's man.'

The transfer from chest to bag was made. And, after seeing his man into the cutter, and then following him down, the Lieutenant pushed off from the Rights-of-Man. That was the merchant ship's name; though by her master and crew abbreviated in sailor fashion into the Rights. The hard-headed Dundee owner was a staunch admirer of Thomas Paine, whose book in rejoinder to Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution had then been published for some time, and had gone everywhere. In christening his vessel after the title of Paine's volume, the man of Dundee was something like his contemporary shipowner, Stephen Girard of Philadelphia, whose sympathies alike with his native land and its liberal philosophies he evinced by naming his ships after Voltaire, Diderot, and so forth.

But now when the boat swept under the merchantman's stern, and officer and oarsmen were noting, some bitterly and others with a grin, the name emblazoned there; just then it was that the new recruit jumped up from the bow where the coxswain had directed him to sit, and, waving his hat to his silent shipmates sorrowfully looking over at him from the taffrail, bade the lads a genial good-bye. Then making a salutation as to the ship herself, 'And good-bye to you too, old Rights-of-Man!'

'Down, sir,' roared the Lieutenant, instantly assuming all the rigour of his rank, though with difficulty repressing a smile.

To be sure, Billy's action was a terrible breach of naval decorum. But in that decorum he had never been instructed; in consideration of which the Lieutenant would hardly have been so energetic in reproof but for the concluding farewell to the ship. This he rather took as meant to convey a covert sally on the new recruit's part, a sly slur at impressment in general, and that of himself in especial. And yet, more likely, if satire it was in effect, it was hardly so by intention, for Billy, though

happily endowed with the gaiety of high health, youth, and a free heart, was yet by no means of a satirical turn. The will to it and the sinister dexterity were alike wanting. To deal in double meaning and insinuations of any sort was quite foreign to his nature.

As to his enforced enlistment, that he seemed to take pretty much as he was wont to take any vicissitudes of weather. Like the animals, though no philosopher he was, without knowing it, practically a fatalist. And, it may be, that he rather liked this adventurous turn in his affairs which promised an opening into novel scenes and martial excitements.

Aboard the Indomitable our merchant-sailor was forthwith rated as an able seaman, and assigned to the starboard watch of the foretop. He was soon at home in the service, not at all disliked for his unpretentious good looks, and a sort of genial happy-go-lucky air. No merrier man in his mess; in marked contrast to certain other individuals included like himself among the impressed portion of the ship's company; for these when not actively employed were sometimes, and more particularly in the last dog-watch when the drawing near of twilight induced revery, apt to fall into a saddish mood which in some partook of sullenness. But they were not so young as our foretopman, and no few of them must have known a hearth of some sort, others may have had wives and children left, too probably, in uncertain circumstances, and hardly any but must have acknowledged kith and kin; while for Billy, as will shortly be seen, his entire family was practically invested in himself.

II

Though our new-made foretopman was well received in the top and on the gun-decks, hardly here was he that cynosure he had previously been among those minor ships' companies of the merchant marine, with which companies only had he hitherto consorted.

He was young; and despite his all but fully developed frame, in aspect looked even

younger than he really was. This was owing to a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face, all but feminine in purity of natural complexion, but where, thanks to his sea-going, the lily was quite suppressed, and the rose had some ado visibly to flush through the tan.

To one essentially such a novice in the complexities of factitious life, the abrupt transition from his former and simpler sphere to the ampler and more knowing world of a great warship—this might well have abashed him had there been any conceit or vanity in his composition. Among her miscellaneous multitude, the Indomitable mustered several individuals who, however inferior in grade, were of no common natural stamp, sailors more signally susceptive of that air which continuous martial discipline and repeated presence in battle can in some degree impart even to the average man. As the Handsome Sailor Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the high-born dames of the court. But this change of circumstances he scarce noted. As little did he observe that something about him provoked an ambiguous smile in one or two harder faces among the blue-jackets. Nor less unaware was he of the peculiar favourable effect his person and demeanour had upon the more intelligent gentlemen of the quarter-deck. Nor could this well have been otherwise. Cast in a mould peculiar to the finest physical examples of those Englishmen in whom the Saxon strain would seem not at all to partake of any Norman or other admixture, he showed in face that humane look of reposeful good-nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his heroic strong man, Hercules. But this again was subtly modified by another and pervasive quality. The ear, small and shapely, the arch of the foot, the curve in mouth and nostril, even the indurated hand dyed to the orange-tawny of the toucan's bill, a hand telling of the halyards and tar-buckets; but, above all, something in the mobile expression, and every chance attitude and movement, something suggestive of a mother eminently favoured by Love and the Graces; all

this strangely indicated a lineage in direct contradiction to his lot. The mysteriousness here, became less mysterious through a matter of fact elicited when Billy at the capstan was being formally mustered into the service. Asked by the officer, a small, brisk little gentleman as it chanced, among other questions, his place of birth, he replied, ‘Please, sir, I don’t know.’

‘Don’t know where you were born? Who was your father?’

‘God knows, sir.’

Struck by the straightforward simplicity of these replies, the officer next asked, ‘Do you know anything about your beginning?’

‘No, sir. But I have heard that I was found in a pretty silk-lined basket hanging one morning from the knocker of a good man’s door in Bristol.’

‘Found, say you? Well,’ throwing back his head, and looking up and down the new recruit—‘well, it turns out to have been a pretty good find. Hope they’ll find some more like you, my man; the fleet sadly needs them.’

Yes, Billy Budd was a foundling, a presumable by-blow, and, evidently, no ignoble one. Noble descent was as evident in him as in a blood horse.

For the rest, with little or no sharpness of faculty or any trace of the wisdom of the serpent, nor yet quite a dove, he possessed a certain degree of intelligence along with the unconventional rectitude of a sound human creature—one to whom not yet has been proffered the questionable apple of knowledge. He was illiterate; he could not read, but he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song.

Of self-consciousness he seemed to have little or none, or about as much as we may reasonably impute to a dog of St. Bernard’s breed.

Habitually being with the elements and knowing little more of the land than as a beach, or, rather, that portion of the terraqueous globe providentially set apart for

dance-houses, doxies and tapsters, in short, what sailors call a ‘fiddlers’ green,’ his simple nature remained unsophisticated by those moral obliquities which are not in every case incomparable with that manufacturable thing known as respectability. But are sailor frequenters of fiddlers’ greens without vices? No; but less often than with landsmen do their vices, so-called, partake of crookedness of heart, seeming less to proceed from viciousness than exuberance of vitality after long restraint, frank manifestations in accordance with natural law. By his original constitution, aided by the co-operating influences of his lot, Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company.

And here be it submitted that, apparently going to corroborate the doctrine of man’s fall (a doctrine now popularly ignored), it is observable that where certain virtues pristine and unadulterate peculiarly characterise anybody in the external uniform of civilisation, they will upon scrutiny seem not to be derived from custom or convention but rather to be out of keeping with these, as if indeed exceptionally transmitted from a period prior to Cain’s city and citified man. The character marked by such qualities has to an unvitiated taste an untampered-with flavour like that of berries, while the man thoroughly civilised, even in a fair specimen of the breed, has to the same moral palate a questionable smack as of a compounded wine. To any stray inheritor of these primitive qualities found, like Caspar Hauser, wandering dazed in any Christian capital of our time, the poet’s famous invocation, near two thousand years ago, of the good rustic out of his latitude in the Rome of the Cæsars, still appropriately holds:—

‘Faithful in word and thought,

What hast Thee, Fabian, to the city brought.’

Though our Handsome Sailor had as much of masculine beauty as one can expect anywhere to see; nevertheless, like the beautiful woman in one of Hawthorne’s

minor tales, there was just one thing amiss in him. No visible blemish, indeed, as with the lady; no, but an occasional liability to a vocal defect. Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be, yet under sudden provocation of strong heart-feeling his voice, otherwise singularly musical, as if expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy,—in fact, more or less of a stutter or even worse. In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch-interpreter, the envious marplot of Eden still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth. In every case, one way or another, he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us—I too have a hand here.

The avowal of such an imperfection in the Handsome Sailor should be evidence not alone that he is not presented as a conventional hero, but also that the story in which he is the main figure is no romance.

III

At the time of Billy Budd's arbitrary enlistment into the Indomitable that ship was on her way to join the Mediterranean fleet. No long time elapsed before the junction was effected. As one of that fleet the seventy-four participated in its movements, though at times on account of her superior sailing qualities, in the absence of frigates, dispatched on separate duty as a scout, and at times on less temporary service. But with all this the story has little concernment, restricted as it is to the inner life of one particular ship and the career of an individual sailor.

It was the summer of 1797. In the April of that year had occurred the commotion at Spithead, followed in May by a second and yet more serious outbreak in the fleet at the Nore. The latter is known, and without exaggeration in the epithet, as the Great Mutiny. It was indeed a demonstration more menacing to England than the contemporary manifestos and conquering and proselytising armies of the French Directory.

To the Empire, the Nore Mutiny was what a strike in the fire-brigade would be to London threatened by general arson. In a crisis when the Kingdom might well have anticipated the famous signal that some years later published along the naval line of battle what it was that upon occasion England expected of Englishmen; that was the time when at the mast-heads of the three-deckers and seventy-fours moored in her own roadstead—a fleet, the right arm of a Power then all but the sole free conservative one of the Old World, the blue-jackets, to be numbered by thousands, ran up with hurrahs the British colours with the union and cross wiped out; by that cancellation transmuting the flag of founded law and freedom defined, into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames.

The event converted into irony for a time those spirited strains of Dibdin—as a song-writer no mean auxiliary to the English Government—at this European conjuncture, strains celebrating, among other things, the patriotic devotion of the British tar—

'And as for my life, 'tis the King's!'

Such an episode in the Island's grand naval story her naval historians naturally abridge; one of them (G. P. R. James) candidly acknowledging that fain would he pass it over did not 'impartiality forbid fastidiousness.' And yet his mention is less a narration than a reference, having to do hardly at all with details. Nor are these readily to be found in the libraries. Like some other events in every age befalling states everywhere, including America, the Great Mutiny was of such character that national pride along with views of policy would fain shade it off into the historical background. Such events cannot be ignored, but there is a considerate way of historically treating them. If a well-constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous in his family, a nation in the like circumstance may

without reproach be equally discreet.

Though after parleyings between Government and the ringleaders, and concessions by the former as to some glaring abuses, the first uprising—that at Spithead—with difficulty was put down, or matters for a time pacified; yet at the Nore the unforeseen renewal of insurrection on a yet larger scale, and emphasised in the conferences that ensued by demands deemed by the authorities not only inadmissible but aggressively insolent, indicated, if the red flag did not sufficiently do so, what was the spirit animating the men. Final suppression, however, there was; but only made possible perhaps by the unswerving loyalty of the marine corps, and a voluntary resumption of loyalty among influential sections of the crews. To some extent the Nore Mutiny may be regarded as analogous to the distempering irruption of contagious fever in a frame constitutionally sound, and which anon throws it off.

At all events, among these thousands of mutineers were some of the tars who not so very long afterwards—whether wholly prompted thereto by patriotism, or pugnacious instinct, or by both—helped to win a coronet for Nelson at the Nile, and the naval crown of crowns for him at Trafalgar. To the mutineers those battles, and especially Trafalgar, were a plenary absolution, and a grand one; for that which goes to make up scenic naval display is heroic magnificence in arms. Those battles, especially Trafalgar, stand unmatched in human annals.

IV

Concerning ‘The greatest sailor since the world began.’—

Tennyson.

In this matter of writing, resolve as one may to keep to the main road, some by-paths have an enticement not readily to be withstood. Beckoned by the genius of Nelson I am going to err into such a by-path. If the reader will keep me company I shall be glad. At the least we can promise ourselves that pleasure which is wickedly said to

be in sinning, for a literary sin the divergence will be.

Very likely it is no new remark that the inventions of our time have at last brought about a change in sea warfare in degree corresponding to the revolution in all warfare effected by the original introduction from China into Europe of gunpowder. The first European firearm, a clumsy contrivance, was, as is well known, scouted by no few of the knights as a base implement, good enough peradventure for weavers too craven to stand up crossing steel with steel in frank fight. But as ashore knightly valour, though shorn of its blazonry, did not cease with the knights, neither on the seas, though nowadays in encounters there a certain kind of displayed gallantry be fallen out of date as hardly applicable under changed circumstances, did the nobler qualities of such naval magnates as Don John of Austria, Doria, Van Tromp, Jean Bart, the long line of British admirals and the American Decaturs of 1812 become obsolete with their wooden walls.

Nevertheless, to anybody who can hold the Present at its worth without being inappreciative of the Past, it may be forgiven, if to such an one the solitary old hulk at Portsmouth, Nelson's Victory, seems to float there, not alone as the decaying monument of a fame incorruptible, but also as a poetic reproach, softened by its picturesqueness, to the Monitors and yet mightier hulls of the European ironclads. And this not altogether because such craft are unsightly, unavoidably lacking the symmetry and grand lines of the old battle-ships, but equally for other reasons.

There are some, perhaps, who while not altogether inaccessible to that poetic reproach just alluded to, may yet on behalf of the new order be disposed to parry it; and this to the extent of iconoclasm, if need be. For example, prompted by the sight of the star inserted in the Victory's deck designating the spot where the Great Sailor fell, these martial utilitarians may suggest considerations implying that Nelson's ornate publication of his person in battle was not only unnecessary, but not military, nay, savoured of foolhardiness and vanity. They may add, too, that at Trafalgar it

was in effect nothing less than a challenge to death; and death came; and that but for his bravado the victorious admiral might possibly have survived the battle, and so, instead of having his sagacious dying injunctions overruled by his immediate successor in command, he himself when the contest was decided might have brought his shattered fleet to anchor, a proceeding which might have averted the deplorable loss of life by shipwreck in the elemental tempest that followed the martial one.

Well, should we set aside the more than disputable point whether for various reasons it was possible to anchor the fleet, then plausibly enough the Bethamites of war may urge the above.

But he might have been is but boggy ground to build on. And certainly in foresight as to the larger issue of an encounter, and anxious preparations for it—buoying the deadly way and mapping it out, as at Copenhagen—few commanders have been so painstakingly circumspect as this reckless declarer of his person in fight.

Personal prudence, even when dictated by quite other than selfish considerations, is surely no special virtue in a military man; while an excessive love of glory, exercising to the uttermost the honest heart-felt sense of duty, is the first. If the name Wellington is not so much of a trumpet to the blood as the simpler name Nelson, the reason for this may perhaps be inferred from the above. Alfred in his funeral ode on the victor of Waterloo ventures not to call him the greatest soldier of all time, though in the same ode he invokes Nelson as ‘the greatest sailor since the world began.’

At Trafalgar Nelson on the brink of opening the fight sat down and wrote his last brief will and testament. If under the presentiment of the most magnificent of all victories, to be crowned by his own glorious death, a sort of priestly motive led him to dress his person in the jewelled vouchers of his own shining deeds; if thus to have adorned himself for the altar and the sacrifice were indeed vainglory, then affectation and fustian is each truly heroic line in the great epics and dramas, since in such lines the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a

nature like Nelson, the opportunity being given, vitalises into acts.

V

The outbreak at the Nore was put down. But not every grievance was redressed. If the contractors, for example, were no longer permitted to ply some practices peculiar to their tribe everywhere, such as providing shoddy cloth, rations not sound, or false in the measure; not the less impressment, for one thing, went on. By custom sanctioned for centuries, and judicially maintained by a Lord Chancellor as late as Mansfield, that mode of manning the fleet, a mode now fallen into a sort of abeyance but never formally renounced, it was not practicable to give up in those years. Its abrogation would have crippled the indispensable fleet, one wholly under canvas, no steam-power, its innumerable sails and thousands of cannon, everything in short, worked by muscle alone; a fleet the more insatiate in demand for men, because then multiplying its ships of all grades against contingencies present and to come of the convulsed Continent.

Discontent foreran the Two Mutinies, and more or less it lurkingly survived them. Hence it was not unreasonable to apprehend some return of trouble sporadic or general. One instance of such apprehensions: In the same year with this story, Nelson, then Vice-Admiral Sir Horatio, being with the fleet off the Spanish coast, was directed by the admiral in command to shift his pennant from the Captain to the Theseus; and for this reason: that the latter ship having newly arrived in the station from home where it had taken part in the Great Mutiny, danger was apprehended from the temper of the men; and it was thought that an officer like Nelson was the one, not indeed to terrorise the crew into base subjection, but to win them by force of his mere presence back to an allegiance, if not as enthusiastic as his own, yet as true. So it was, that for a time on more than one quarter-deck anxiety did exist. At sea precautionary vigilance was strained against relapse. At short notice an engagement might come on. When it did, the lieutenants assigned to batteries felt it

incumbent on them in some instances to stand with drawn swords behind the men working the guns.

But on board the seventy-four in which Billy now swung his hammock very little in the manner of the men and nothing obvious in the demeanour of the officers would have suggested to an ordinary observer that the Great Mutiny was a recent event. In their general bearing and conduct the commissioned officers of a warship naturally take their tone from the commander, that is if he have that ascendency of character that ought to be his.

Captain the Honourable Edward Fairfax Vere, to give his full title, was a bachelor of forty or thereabouts, a sailor of distinction, even in a time prolific of renowned seamen. Though allied to the higher nobility, his advancement had not been altogether owing to influences connected with that circumstance. He had seen much service, been in various engagements, always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline; thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so. For his gallantry in the West Indian waters as flag-lieutenant under Rodney in that admiral’s crowning victory over De Grasse, he was made a post-captain.

Ashore in the garb of a civilian, scarce anyone would have taken him for a sailor, more especially that he never garnished unprofessional talk with nautical terms, and grave in his bearing, evinced little appreciation of mere humour. It was not out of keeping with these traits that on a passage when nothing demanded his paramount action, he was the most undemonstrative of men. Any landsman observing this gentleman, not conspicuous by his stature and wearing no pronounced insignia, emerging from his retreat to the open deck, and noting the silent deference of the officers retiring to leeward, might have taken him for the King’s guest, a civilian aboard the King’s ship, some highly honourable discreet envoy on his way to an

important post. But, in fact, this unobtrusiveness of demeanour may have proceeded from a certain unaffected modesty of manhood sometimes accompanying a resolute nature, a modesty evinced at all times not calling for pronounced action, and which shown in any rank of life suggests a virtue aristocratic in kind.

As with some others engaged in various departments of the world's more heroic activities, Captain Vere, though practical enough upon occasion, would at times betray a certain dreaminess of mood. Standing alone on the weather-side of the greater deck, one hand holding by the rigging, he would absently gaze off at the black sea. At the presentation to him then of some minor matter interrupting the current of his thoughts, he would show more or less irascibility; but instantly he would control it.

In the Navy he was popularly known by the appellation—Starry Vere. How such a designation happened to fall upon one who, whatever his sturdy qualities, was without any brilliant ones, was in this wise: a favourite kinsman, Lord Denton, a free-handed fellow, had been the first to meet and congratulate him upon his return to England from the West Indian cruise; and but the day previous turning over a copy of Andrew Marvell's poems had lighted, not for the first time however, upon the lines entitled 'Appelton House,' the name of one of the seats of their common ancestor, a hero in the German wars of the seventeenth century, in which poem occur the lines,

'This 'tis to have been from the first

In a domestic heaven nursed,

Under the discipline severe

Of Fairfax and the starry Vere.'

And so, upon embracing his cousin fresh from Rodney's victory, wherein he had played so gallant a part, brimming over with just family pride in the sailor of their house, he exuberantly exclaimed, 'Give ye joy, Ed; give ye joy, my starry Vere!'

This got currency, and the novel prefix serving in familiar parlance readily to distinguish the Indomitable's captain from another Vere, his senior, a distant relative, an officer of like rank in the Navy, it remained permanently attached to the surname.

VI

In view of the part that the commander of the Indomitable plays in scenes shortly to follow, it may be well to fill out that sketch of him outlined in the previous chapter. Aside from his qualities as a sea-officer Captain Vere was an exceptional character. Unlike no few of England's renowned sailors, long and arduous service with signal devotion to it, had not resulted in absorbing and salting the entire man. He had a marked leaning toward everything intellectual. He loved books, never going to sea without a newly replenished library, compact but of the best. The isolated leisure, in some cases so wearisome, falling at intervals to commanders even during a war-cruise, never was tedious to Captain Vere. With nothing of that literary taste which less heeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle, his bias was toward those books to which every serious mind of superior order occupying any active post of authority in the world, naturally inclines; books treating of actual men and events, no matter of what era—history, biography, and unconventional writers who, free from cant and convention, like Montaigne, honestly, and in the spirit of common sense, philosophise upon realities.

In this love of reading he found confirmation of his own more reserved thoughts—confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse, so that as touching most fundamental topics, there had got to be established in him some positive convictions which he felt would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired. In view of the humbled period in which his lot was cast, this was well for him. His settled convictions were as a dyke against those invading waters of novel opinion, social, political, and otherwise, which

carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them not alone because they seemed to him incapable of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the world and the peace of mankind.

With minds less stored than his and less earnest, some officers of his rank, with whom at times he would necessarily consort, found him lacking in the companionable quality, a dry and bookish gentleman as they deemed. Upon any chance withdrawal from their company one would be apt to say to another something like this! ‘Vere is a noble fellow, “Starry Vere.” ’Spite the Gazettes Sir Horatio is at bottom scarce a better seaman or fighter. But between you and me now, don’t you think there is a queer streak of the pedantic running through him? Yes, like the King’s yarn in a coil of navy-rope.’

Some apparent ground there was for this sort of confidential criticism, since not only did the captain’s discourse never fall into the jocosely familiar, but in illustrating any point touching the stirring personages and events of the time, he would cite some historical character or incident of antiquity with the same easy air that he would cite from the moderns. He seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such allusions, however pertinent they might really be, were altogether alien to men whose reading was mainly confined to the journals. But considerateness in such matters is not easy in natures constituted like Captain Vere’s. Their honesty prescribes to them directness, sometimes far-reaching like that of a migratory fowl that in its flight never heeds when it crosses a frontier.

VII

The lieutenants and other commissioned gentlemen forming Captain Vere’s staff it is not necessary here to particularise, nor needs it to make mention of any of the

warrant-officers. But among the petty officers was one who, having much to do with the story, may as well be forthwith introduced. This portrait I essay, but shall never hit it.

This was John Claggart, the master-at-arms. But that sea-title may to landsmen seem somewhat equivocal. Originally, doubtless, that petty officer's function was the instruction of the men in the use of arms, sword, or cutlass. But very long ago, owing to the advance in gunnery making hand-to-hand encounters less frequent, and giving to nitre and sulphur the pre-eminence over steel, that function ceased; the master-at-arms of a great warship becoming a sort of chief of police charged among other matters with the duty of preserving order on the populous lower gun-decks.

Claggart was a man of about five-and-thirty, somewhat spare and tall, yet of no ill figure upon the whole. His hand was too small and shapely to have been accustomed to hard toil. The face was a notable one; the features, all except the chin, cleanly cut as those on a Greek medallion; yet the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's, had something of the strange protuberant heaviness in its make that recalled the prints of the Rev. Dr. Titus Oates, the historical deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II., and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot. It served Claggart in his office that his eye could cast a tutoring glance. His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect; silken jet curls partly clustering over it, making a foil to the pallor below, a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber akin to the hue of time-tinted marbles of old.

This complexion singularly contrasting with the red or deeply bronzed visages of the sailors, and in part the result of his official seclusion from the sunlight, though it was not exactly displeasing, nevertheless seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood. But his general aspect and manner were so suggestive of an education and career incongruous with his naval function, that when not actively engaged in it he looked like a man of high quality, social and

moral, who for reasons of his own was keeping incognito. Nothing was known of his former life. It might be that he was an Englishman; and yet there lurked a bit of accent in his speech suggesting that possibly he was not such by birth, but through naturalisation in early childhood. Among certain grizzled sea-gossips of the gun-decks and forecastle went a rumour perdue that the master-at-arms was a chevalier who had volunteered into the King's Navy by way of compounding for some mysterious swindle whereof he had been arraigned at the King's Bench. The fact that nobody could substantiate this report was, of course, nothing against its secret currency. Such a rumour once started on the gun-decks in reference to almost anyone below the rank of a commissioned officer would, during the period assigned to this narrative, have seemed not altogether wanting in credibility to the tarry old wiseacres of a man-of-war crew. And indeed a man of Claggart's accomplishments, without prior nautical experience entering the Navy at mature life, as he did, and necessarily allotted at the start to the lowest grade in it; a man, too, who never made allusion to his previous life ashore; these were circumstances which in the dearth of exact knowledge as to his true antecedents opened to the invidious a vague field for unfavourable surmise.

But the sailors' dog-watch gossip concerning him derived a vague plausibility from the fact that now for some period the British Navy could so little afford to be squeamish in the matter of keeping up the muster-rolls, that not only were press-gangs notoriously abroad both afloat and ashore, but there was little or no secret about another matter, namely, that the London police were at liberty to capture any able-bodied suspect, and any questionable fellow at large, and summarily ship him to the dock-yard or fleet. Furthermore, even among voluntary enlistments, there were instances where the motive thereto partook neither of patriotic impulse nor yet of a random desire to experience a bit of sea-life and martial adventure. Insolvent debtors of minor grade, together with the promiscuous lame ducks of morality, found in the Navy a convenient and secure refuge. Secure,

because once enlisted aboard a King's ship, they were as much in sanctuary as the transgressor of the Middle Ages harbouring himself under the shadow of the altar. Such sanctioned irregularities, which for obvious reasons the Government would hardly think to parade at the time, and which consequently, and as affecting the least influential class of mankind, have all but dropped into oblivion, lends colour to something for the truth whereof I do not vouch, and hence have some scruple in stating; something I remember having seen in print, though the book I cannot recall; but the same thing was personally communicated to me now more than forty years ago by an old pensioner in a cocked hat, with whom I had a most interesting talk on the terrace at Greenwich, a Baltimore negro, a Trafalgar man. It was to this effect: In the case of a warship short of hands, whose speedy sailing was imperative, the deficient quota, in lack of any other way of making it good, would be eked out by drafts called direct from the jails. For reasons previously suggested it would not perhaps be easy at the present day directly to prove or disprove the allegation. But allowed as a verity, how significant would it be of England's straits at the time, confronted by these wars which like a flight of harpies rose shrieking from the din and dust of the fallen Bastille. That era appears measurably clear to us who look back at it, and but read of it. But to the grandfathers of us graybeards, the thoughtful of them, the genius of it presented an aspect like that of Camoens' 'Spirit of the Cape,' an eclipsing menace mysterious and prodigious. Not America was exempt from apprehension. At the height of Napoleon's unexampled conquests, there were Americans who had fought at Bunker Hill who looked forward to the possibility that the Atlantic might prove no barrier against the ultimate schemes of this portentous upstart from the revolutionary chaos, who seemed in act of fulfilling judgment prefigured in the Apocalypse.

But the less credence was to be given to the gun-deck talk touching Claggart, seeing that no man holding his office in a man-of-war can ever hope to be popular with the crew. Besides, in derogatory comments upon one against whom they have a grudge,

or for any reason or no reason mislike, sailors are much like landsmen, they are apt to exaggerate or romance.

About as much was really known to the Indomitable's tars of the master-at-arms' career before entering the service as an astronomer knows about a comet's travels prior to its first observable appearance in the sky. The verdict of the sea-quidnuncs has been cited only by way of showing what sort of moral impression the man made upon rude uncultivated natures, whose conceptions of human wickedness were necessarily of the narrowest, limited to ideas of vulgar rascality—a thief among the swinging hammocks during a night-watch, or the man-brokers and land-sharks of the seaports.

It was no gossip, however, but fact, that though, as before hinted, Claggart upon his entrance into the navy was, as a novice, assigned to the least honourable section of a man-of-war's crew, embracing the drudges, he did not long remain there.

The superior capacity he immediately evinced, his constitutional sobriety, ingratiating deference to superiors, together with a peculiar ferreting genius manifested on a singular occasion, all this capped by a certain austere patriotism, abruptly advanced him to the position of master-at-arms.

Of this maritime chief of police the ship's corporals, so called, were the immediate subordinates, and compliant ones; and this, as is to be noted in some business departments ashore, almost to a degree inconsistent with entire moral volition. His place put various converging wires of underground influence under the chief's control, capable when astutely worked through his understrappers of operating to the mysterious discomfort, if nothing worse, of any of the sea-commonalty.

VIII

Life in the foretop well agreed with Billy Budd. There, when not actually engaged on the yards yet higher aloft, the topmen, who as such had been picked out for youth

and activity, constituted an aerial club, lounging at ease against the smaller stun'-sails rolled up into cushions, spinning yarns like the lazy gods, and frequently amused with what was going on in the busy world of the decks below. No wonder then that a young fellow of Billy's disposition was well content in such society. Giving no cause of offence to anybody, he was always alert at a call. So in the merchant service it had been with him. But now such punctiliousness in duty was shown that his topmates would sometimes good-naturedly laugh at him for it. This heightened alacrity had its cause, namely: the impression made upon him by the first formal gangway-punishment he had ever witnessed, which befell the day following his impressment. It had been incurred by a little fellow, young, a novice, an afterguardsman absent from his assigned post when the ship was being put about, a dereliction resulting in a rather serious hitch to that manœuvre, one demanding instantaneous promptitude in letting go and making fast. When Billy saw the culprit's naked back under the scourge gridironed with red welts, and worse; when he marked the dire expression in the liberated man's face, as with his woollen shirt flung over him by the executioner he rushed forward from the spot to bury himself in the crowd, Billy was horrified. He resolved that never through remissness would he make himself liable to such a visitation, or do or omit aught that might merit even verbal reproof. What then was his surprise and concern when ultimately he found himself getting into petty trouble occasionally about such matters as the stowage of his bag, or something amiss in his hammock, matters under the police oversight of the ship's corporals of the lower decks, and which brought down on him a vague threat from one of them.

So heedful in all things as he was, how could this be? He could not understand it, and it more than vexed him. When he spoke to his young topmates about it, they were either lightly incredulous, or found something comical in his unconcealed anxiety. 'Is it your bag, Billy?' said one; 'well, sew yourself up in it, Billy boy, and then you'll be sure to know if anybody meddles with it.'

Now there was a veteran aboard who, because his years began to disqualify him for more active work, had been recently assigned duty as mainmast-man in his watch, looking to the gear belayed at the rail round about that great spar near the deck. At off-times the foretopman had picked up some acquaintance with him, and now in his trouble it occurred to him that he might be the sort of person to go to for wise counsel. He was an old Dansker long anglicised in the service, of few words, many wrinkles and some honourable scars. His wizened face, time-tinted and weather-stormed to the complexion of an antique parchment, was here and there peppered blue by the chance explosion of a gun-cartridge in action. He was an Agamemnon man; some two years prior to the time of this story having served under Nelson, when but Sir Horatio, in that ship immortal in naval memory, and which, dismantled and in parts broken up to her bare ribs, is seen a grand skeleton in Haydon's etching. As one of a boarding-party from the Agamemnon he had received a cut slantwise along one temple and cheek, leaving a long pale scar like a streak of dawn's light falling athwart the dark visage. It was on account of that scar and the affair in which it was known that he had received it, as well as from his blue-peppered complexion, that the Dansker went among the Indomitable's crew by the name of 'Board-her-in-the-smoke.'

Now the first time that his small weasel eyes happened to light on Billy Budd, a certain grim internal merriment set all his ancient wrinkles into antic play. Was it that his eccentric unsentimental old sapience, primitive in its kind, saw, or thought it saw, something which in contrast with the warship's environment looked oddly incongruous in the Handsome Sailor? But after slyly studying him at intervals, the old Merlin's equivocal merriment was modified by now. For now when the twain would meet, it would start in his face a quizzing sort of look, but it would be but momentary and sometimes replaced by an expression of speculative query as to what might eventually befall a nature like that, dropped into a world not without some man-traps and against whose subtleties simple courage lacking experience and

address and without any touch of defensive ugliness, is of little avail; and where such innocence as man is capable of does yet in a moral emergency not always sharpen the faculties or enlighten the will.

However it was, the Dansker in his ascetic way rather took to Billy. Nor was this only because of a certain philosophic interest in such a character. There was another cause. While the old man's eccentricities, sometimes bordering on the ursine, repelled the juniors, Billy, undeterred thereby, would make advances, never passing the old Agamemnon man without a salutation marked by that respect which is seldom lost on the aged, however crabbed at times, or whatever their station in life. There was a vein of dry humour, or what not, in the mastman; and whether in freak of patriarchal irony touching Billy's youth and athletic frame, or for some other and more recondite reason, from the first in addressing him he always substituted Baby for Billy. The Dansker, in fact, being the originator of the name by which the foretopman eventually became known aboard ship.

Well then, in his mysterious little difficulty going in quest of the wrinkled one; Billy found him off duty in a dog-watch ruminating by himself, seated on a shot-box of the upper gun-deck, now and then surveying with a somewhat cynical regard certain of the more swaggering promenaders there. Billy recounted his trouble, again wondering how it all happened. The salt seer attentively listened, accompanying the foretopman's recitals with queer twitchings of his wrinkles and problematical little sparkles of his small ferret eyes. Making an end of his story, the foretopman asked, 'And now, Dansker, do tell me what you think of it.' The old man, shoving up the front of his tarpaulin and deliberately rubbing the long slant scar at the point where it entered the thin hair, laconically said, 'Baby Budd, Jemmy Legs' (meaning the master-at-arms) 'is down on you.'

'Jemmy Legs!' ejaculated Billy, his welkin eyes expanding; 'what for? Why, he calls me the sweet and pleasant young fellow, they tell me.'

‘Does he so?’ grinned the grizzled one; then said, ‘Ay, Baby lad, a sweet voice has Jemmy Legs.’

‘No, not always. But to me he has. I seldom pass him but there comes a pleasant word.’

‘And that’s because he’s down upon you, Baby Budd.’

Such reiteration, along with the manner of it, incomprehensible to a novice, disturbed Billy almost as much as the mystery for which he had sought explanation. Something less unpleasingly oracular he tried to extract; but the old sea-Chiron, thinking perhaps that for the nonce he had sufficiently instructed his young Achilles, pursed his lips, gathered all his wrinkles together, and would commit himself to nothing further.

Years, and these experiences which befall certain shrewder men subordinated life-long to the will of superiors, all this had developed in the Dansker the pithy guarded cynicism that was his leading characteristic.

IX

The next day an incident served to confirm Billy Budd in his incredulity as to the Dansker’s strange summing-up of the case submitted.

The ship at noon going large before the wind was rolling on her course, and he, below at dinner and engaged in some sportful talk with the members of his mess, chanced in a sudden lurch to spill the entire contents of his soup-pan upon the new-scrubbed deck. Claggart, the master-at-arms, official ratan in hand, happened to be passing along the battery in a bay of which the mess was lodged, and the greasy liquid streamed just across his path. Stepping over it, he was proceeding on his way without comment, since the matter was nothing to take notice of under the circumstances, when he happened to observe who it was that had done the spilling. His countenance changed. Pausing, he was about to ejaculate something hasty at the

sailor, but checked himself, and pointing down to the streaming soup, playfully tapped him from behind with his ratan, saying, in a low musical voice, peculiar to him at times, ‘Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it, too!’ and with that passed on. Not noted by Billy as not coming within his view was the involuntary smile, or rather grimace, that accompanied Claggart’s equivocal words. Aridly it drew down the thin corners of his shapely mouth. But everybody taking his remark as meant for humorous, and at which therefore as coming from a superior they were bound to laugh, ‘with counterfeited glee,’ acted accordingly; and Billy, tickled, it may be, by the allusion to his being the Handsome Sailor, merrily joined in; then addressing his messmates exclaimed, ‘There, now, who says that Jemmy Legs is down on me!’

‘And who said he was, Beauty?’ demanded one Donald with some surprise. Whereat the foretopman looked a little foolish, recalling that it was only one person, Board-her-in-the-smoke, who had suggested what to him was the smoky idea that this pleasant master-at-arms was in any peculiar way hostile to him. Meantime that functionary resuming his path must have momentarily worn some expression less guarded than that of the bitter smile and, usurping the face from the heart, some distorting expression perhaps, for a drummer-boy heedlessly frolicking along from the opposite direction, and chancing to come into light collision with his person, was strangely disconcerted by his aspect. Nor was the impression lessened when the official, impulsively giving him a sharp cut with the ratan, vehemently exclaimed, ‘Look where you go!’

X

What was the matter with the master-at-arms? And be the matter what it might, how could it have direct relation to Billy Budd, with whom prior to the affair of the spilled soup he had never come into any special contact, official or otherwise? What indeed could the trouble have to do with one so little inclined to give offence as the

merchant ship's peacemaker, even him who in Claggart's own phrase was 'the sweet and pleasant young fellow'? Yes, why should Jemmy Legs, to borrow the Dansker's expression, be down on the Handsome Sailor?

But, at heart and not for nothing, as the late chance encounter may indicate to the discerning, down on him, secretly down on him, he assuredly was.

Now to invent something touching the more private career of Claggart, something involving Billy Budd, of which something the latter should be wholly ignorant, some romantic incident implying that Claggart's knowledge of the young blue-jacket began at some period anterior to catching sight of him on board the seventy-four—all this, not so difficult to do, might avail in a way more or less interesting to account for whatever enigma may appear to lurk in the case. But, in fact, there was nothing of the sort. And yet the cause, necessarily to be assumed as the sole one assignable, is in its very realism as much charged with that prime element of Radcliffian romance, the mysterious, as any that the ingenuity of the author of the Mysteries of Udolpho could devise. For what can more partake of the mysterious than an antipathy spontaneous and profound such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal, however harmless he may be?—if not called forth by that very harmlessness itself.

Now there can exist no irritating juxtaposition of dissimilar personalities comparable to that which is possible aboard a great warship fully manned and at sea. There, every day, among all ranks, almost every man comes into more or less of contact with almost every other man. Wholly there to avoid even the sight of an aggravating object one must needs give it Jonah's toss, or jump overboard himself. Imagine how all this might eventually operate on some peculiar human creature the direct reverse of a saint?

But for the adequate comprehending of Claggart by a normal nature these hints are insufficient. To pass from a normal nature to him one must cross 'the deadly space

between,' and this is best done by indirection.

Long ago an honest scholar, my senior, said to me in reference to one who like himself is now no more, a man so unimpeachably respectable that against him nothing was ever openly said, though among the few something was whispered, 'Yes, X— is a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady's fan. You are aware that I am the adherent of no organised religion, much less of any philosophy built into a system. Well, for all that, I think that to try and get into X—, enter his labyrinth, and get out again, without a clue derived from some source other than what is known as knowledge of the world, that were hardly possible, at least for me.'

'Why,' said I, 'X—, however singular a study to some, is yet human, and knowledge of the world assuredly implies the knowledge of human nature, and in most of its varieties.'

'Yes, but a superficial knowledge of it, serving ordinary purposes. But for anything deeper, I am not certain whether to know the world and to know human nature be not two distinct branches of knowledge, which while they may coexist in the same heart, yet either may exist with little or nothing of the other. Nay, in an average man of the world, his constant rubbing with it blunts that fine spiritual insight indispensable to the understanding of the essential in certain exceptional characters, whether evil ones or good. In a matter of some importance I have seen a girl wind an old lawyer about her little finger. Nor was it the dotage of senile love. Nothing of the sort. But he knew law better than he knew the girl's heart. Coke and Blackstone hardly shed so much light into obscure spiritual places as the Hebrew prophets. And who were they? Mostly recluses.'

At the time my inexperience was such that I did not quite see the drift of all this. It may be that I see it now. And, indeed, if that lexicon which is based on Holy Writ were any longer popular, one might with less difficulty define and denominate certain phenomenal men. As it is, one must turn to some authority not liable to the

charge of being tinctured with the Biblical element.

In a list of definitions included in the authentic translation of Plato, a list attributed to him, occurs this: ‘Natural Depravity: a depravity according to nature.’ A definition which though savouring of Calvinism, by no means involves Calvin’s dogma as to total mankind. Evidently its intent makes it applicable but to individuals. Not many are the examples of this depravity which the gallows and jail supply. At any rate, for notable instances,—since these have no vulgar alloy of the brute in them, but invariably are dominated by intellectuality,—one must go elsewhere. Civilisation, especially if of the austerer sort, is auspicious to it. It folds itself in the mantle of respectability. It has its certain negative virtues serving as silent auxiliaries. It is not going too far to say that it is without vices or small sins. There is a phenomenal pride in it that excludes them from anything—never mercenary or avaricious. In short, the depravity here meant partakes nothing of the sordid or sensual. It is serious, but free from acerbity. Though no flatterer of mankind, it never speaks ill of it.

But the thing which in eminent instances signalises so exceptional a nature is this: though the man’s even temper and discreet bearing would seem to intimate a mind peculiarly subject to the law of reason, not the less in his soul’s recesses he would seem to riot in complete exemption from that law, having apparently little to do with reason further than to employ it as an ambidexter implement for effecting the irrational. That is to say: toward the accomplishment of an aim which in wantonness of malignity would seem to partake of the insane, he will direct a cool judgment sagacious and sound.

These men are true madmen, and of the most dangerous sort, for their lunacy is not continuous, but occasional; evoked by some special object; it is secretive and self-contained, so that when most active it is to the average mind not distinguished from sanity, and for the reason above suggested that whatever its aim may be, and

the aim is never disclosed, the method and the outward proceeding is always perfectly rational.

Now something such was Claggart, in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short, ‘a depravity according to nature.’

Can it be this phenomenon, disowned or not acknowledged, that in some criminal cases puzzles the courts? For this cause have our juries at times not only to endure the prolonged contentions of lawyers with their fees, but also the yet more perplexing strife of the medical experts with theirs? But why leave it to them? Why not subpœna as well the clerical proficients? Their vocation bringing them into peculiar contact with so many human beings, and sometimes in their least guarded hour, in interviews very much more confidential than those of physician and patient; this would seem to qualify them to know something about those intricacies involved in the question of moral responsibility; whether in a given case, say, the crime proceeded from mania in the brain or rabies of the heart. As to any differences among themselves these clerical proficients might develop on the stand, these could hardly be greater than the direct contradictions exchanged between the remunerated medical experts.

Dark sayings are these, some will say. But why? It is because they somewhat savour of Holy Writ in its phrase ‘mysteries of iniquity.’

The point of the story turning on the hidden nature of the master-at-arms has necessitated this chapter. With an added hint or two in connection with the accident of the mess, the resumed narrative must be left to vindicate as it may its own credibility.

XI

Pale ire, envy and despair.

That Claggart's figure was not amiss, and his face, save the chin, well moulded, has already been said. Of these favourable points he seemed not insensible, for he was not only neat but careful in his dress. But the form of Billy Budd was heroic; and if his face was without the intellectual look of the pallid Claggart's, not the less was it lit, like his, from within, though from a different source. The bonfire in his heart made luminous the rose-tan in his cheek.

In view of the marked contrast between the persons of the twain, it is more than probable that when the master-at-arms in the scene last given applied to the sailor the proverb 'Handsome is as handsome does,' he there let escape an ironic inkling, not caught by the young sailors who heard it, as to what it was that had first moved him against Billy, namely, his significant personal beauty.

Now envy and antipathy, passions irreconcilable in reason, nevertheless in fact may spring conjoined like Chang and Eng in one birth. Is envy then such a monster? Well, though many an arraigned mortal has in hopes of mitigated penalty pleaded guilty to horrible actions, did ever anybody seriously confess to envy? Something there is in it universally felt to be more shameful than even felonious crime. And not only does everybody disown it, but the better sort are inclined to incredulity when it is in earnest imputed to an intelligent man. But since its lodgment is in the heart, not the brain, no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it. But Claggart's was no vulgar form of the passion. Nor, as directed toward Billy Budd, did it partake of that streak of apprehensive jealousy that marred Saul's visage perturbedly brooding on the comely young David. Claggart's envy struck deeper. If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health, and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because these happened to go along with a nature that, as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice, or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent. To him, the spirit lodged within Billy and looking out from his welkin eyes as from windows, that ineffability which made the dimple in his dyed cheek, suppled his joints, and danced in his yellow curls, made him pre-eminently the

Handsome Sailor. One person excepted, the master-at-arms was perhaps the only man in the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd, and the insight but intensified his passion, which assuming various secret forms within him, at times assumed that of cynic disdain—disdain of innocence. To be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an æsthetic way he saw the charm of it, the courageous free-and-easy temper of it, and fain would have shared it, but he despaired of it.

With no power to annul the elemental evil in himself, though he could hide it readily enough; apprehending the good, but powerless to be it; what recourse is left to a nature like Claggart's, surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, but to recoil upon itself, and, like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, act out to the end its allotted part.

Passion, and passion in its profoundest, is not a thing demanding a palatial stage whereon to play its part. Down among the groundlings, among the beggars and rakers of the garbage, profound passion is enacted. And the circumstances that provoke it, however trivial or mean, are no measure of its power. In the present instance the stage is a scrubbed gun-deck, and one of the external provocations a man-of-war's man's spilled soup.

Now when the master-at-arms noticed whence came that greasy fluid streaming before his feet, he must have taken it—to some extent wilfully perhaps—not for the mere accident it assuredly was, but for the sly escape of a spontaneous feeling on Billy's part more or less answering to the antipathy on his own. In effect a foolish demonstration he must have thought, and very harmless, like the futile kick of a heifer, which yet were the heifer a shod stallion, would not be so harmless. Even so was it that into the gall of envy Claggart infused the vitriol of his contempt. But the incident confirmed to him certain tell-tale reports purveyed to his ear by Squeak, one of his more cunning corporals, a grizzled little man, so nicknamed by the sailors on

account of his squeaky voice and sharp visage ferreting about the dark corners of the lower decks after interlopers, satirically suggesting to them the idea of a rat in a cellar.

Now his chief's employing him as an implicit tool in laying little traps for the worriment of the foretopman—for it was from the master-at-arms that the petty persecutions heretofore adverted to had proceeded—the corporal, having naturally enough concluded that his master could have no love for the sailor, made it his business, faithful understrapper that he was, to ferment the ill blood by perverting to his chief certain innocent frolics of the good-natured foretopman, besides inventing for his mouth sundry contumelious epithets he claimed to have overheard him let fall. The master-at-arms never suspected the veracity of these reports, more especially as to the epithets, for he well knew how secretly unpopular may become a master-at-arms—at least, a master-at-arms in those days, zealous in his function—and how the blue-jackets shoot at him in private their raillery and wit; the nickname by which he goes among them (Jemmy Legs) implying under the form of merriment their cherished disrespect and dislike.

In view of the greediness of hate for provocation, it hardly needed a purveyor to feed Claggart's passion. An uncommon prudence is habitual with the subtler depravity, for it has everything to hide. And in case of any merely suspected injury, its secretiveness voluntarily cuts it off from enlightenment or disillusion; and not unreluctantly, action is taken upon surmise as upon certainty. And the retaliation is apt to be in monstrous disproportion to the supposed offence; for when in anybody was revenge in its exactions aught else but an inordinate usurer. But how with Claggart's conscience? For though consciences are unlike as foreheads, every intelligence, not excluding the Scriptural devils who 'believe and tremble,' has one. But Claggart's conscience being but the lawyer to his will, made ogres of trifles, probably arguing that the motive imputed to Billy in spilling the soup just when he did, together with the epithets alleged, these, if nothing more, made a strong case

against him; nay, justified animosity into a sort of retributive righteousness. The Pharisee is the Guy Fawkes prowling in the hid chambers underlying some natures like Claggart's. And they can really form no conception of an unreciprocated malice. Probably, the master-at-arms' clandestine persecution of Billy was started to try the temper of the man; but it had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of, or ever pervert into even plausible self-justification; so that the occurrence at the mess, petty if it were, was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart; and for the rest, not improbably, it put him upon new experiments.

XII

Not many days after the last incident narrated, something befell Billy Budd that more gravelled him than aught that had previously occurred.

It was a warm night for the latitude; and the foretopman, whose watch at the time was properly below, was dozing on the uppermost deck whither he had ascended from his hot hammock—one of hundreds suspended so closely wedged together over a lower gun-deck that there was little or no swing to them. He lay as in the shadow of a hillside stretched under the lee of the booms, a piled ridge of spare spars, and among which the ship's largest boat, the launch, was stowed. Alongside of three other slumberers from below, he lay near one end of the booms which approached from the foremast; his station aloft on duty as a foretopman being just over the deck station of the forecastleman, entitling him according to usage to make himself more or less at home in that neighbourhood.

Presently he was stirred into semi-consciousness by somebody, who must have previously sounded the sleep of the others, touching his shoulder, and then, as the foretopman raised his head, breathing into his ear in a quick whisper, 'Slip into the lee fore-chains, Billy; there is something in the wind. Don't speak. Quick. I will meet you there'; and disappeared.

Now Billy, like sundry other essentially good-natured ones, had some of the weaknesses inseparable from essential good-nature; and among these was a reluctance, almost an incapacity, of plumply saying no to an abrupt proposition not obviously absurd on the face of it, nor obviously unfriendly, nor iniquitous. And being of warm blood had not the phlegm to negate any proposition by unresponsive inaction. Like his sense of fear, his apprehension as to aught outside of the honest and natural was seldom very quick. Besides, upon the present occasion, the drouse from his sleep still hung upon him.

However it was, he mechanically rose, and sleepily wondering what could be in the wind, betook himself to the designated place, a narrow platform, one of six, outside of the high bulwarks, and screened by the great dead-eyes and multiple columned lanyards of the shrouds and back-stays; and, in a great warship of that time, of dimensions commensurate to the ample hull's magnitude; a tarry balcony, in short, overhanging the sea, and so secluded that one mariner of the Indomitable, a nonconformist old tar of a serious turn, made it even in daytime his private oratory.

In this retired nook the stranger soon joined Billy Budd. There was no moon as yet; a haze obscured the starlight. He could not distinctly see the stranger's face. Yet from something in the outline and carriage, Billy took him to be, and correctly, one of the afterguard.

'Hist, Billy!' said the man, in the same quick, cautionary whisper as before; 'you were impressed, weren't you? Well, so was I'; and he paused, as to mark the effect. But Billy, not knowing exactly what to make of this, said nothing. Then the other: 'We are not the only impressed ones, Billy. There's a gang of us. Couldn't you—help—at a pinch?'

'What do you mean?' demanded Billy, here shaking off his drouse.

'Hist, hist!' the hurried whisper now growing husky; 'see here,' and the man held up two small objects faintly twinkling in the night light; 'see, they are yours, Billy, if

you'll only—'

But Billy broke in, and in his resentful eagerness to deliver himself, his vocal infirmity somewhat intruded. 'D-D-Damme, I don't know what you are d-driving at, or what you mean, but you had better g-g-go where you belong!' For the moment the fellow, as confounded, did not stir; and Billy, springing to his feet, said, 'If you d-don't start, I'll t-t-t-oss you back over the r-rail!' There was no mistaking this, and the mysterious emissary decamped, disappearing in the direction of the mainmast in the shadow of the booms.

'Hallo, what's the matter?' here came growling from a forecastleman awakened from his deck-doze by Billy's raised voice. And as the foretopman reappeared, and was recognised by him, 'Ah, Beauty,is it you? Well, something must have been the matter, for you st-st-stuttered.'

'Oh,' rejoined Billy, now mastering the impediment; 'I found an afterguardsman in our part of the ship here, and I bid him be off where he belongs.'

'And is that all you did about it, foretopman?' gruffly demanded another, an irascible old fellow of brick-coloured visage and hair, and who was known to his associate forecastlemen as Red Pepper. 'Such sneaks I should like to marry to the gunner's daughter!' by that expression meaning that he would like to subject them to disciplinary castigation over a gun.

However, Billy's rendering of the matter satisfactorily accounted to these inquirers for the brief commotion, since of all the sections of a ship's company the forecastlemen, veterans for the most part, and bigoted in their sea-prejudices, are the most jealous in resenting territorial encroachments, especially on the part of any of the afterguard, of whom they have but a sorry opinion, chiefly landsmen, never going aloft except to reef or furl the mainsail, and in no wise competent to handle a marling-spike or turn in a dead-eye, say.

XIII

This incident sorely puzzled Billy Budd. It was an entirely new experience; the first time in his life that he had ever been personally approached in underhand intriguing fashion. Prior to this encounter he had known nothing of the afterguardsman, the two men being stationed wide apart, one forward and aloft during his watch, the other on deck and aft.

What could it mean? And could they really be guineas, those two glittering objects the interloper had held up to his (Billy's) eyes? Where could the fellow get guineas? Why, even buttons, spare buttons, are not so plentiful at sea. The more he turned the matter over, the more he was nonplussed, and made uneasy and discomforted. In his disgustful recoil from an overture which though he but ill comprehended he instinctively knew must involve evil of some sort, Billy Budd was like a young horse fresh from the pasture suddenly inhaling a vile whiff from some chemical factory, and by repeated snortings tries to get it out of his nostrils and lungs. This frame of mind barred all desire of holding further parley with the fellow, even were it but for the purpose of gaining some enlightenment as to his design in approaching him. And yet he was not without natural curiosity to see how such a visitor in the dark would look in broad day.

He espied him the following afternoon in his first dog-watch below, one of the smokers on that forward part of the upper gun-deck allotted to the pipe. He recognised him by his general cut and build, more than by his round freckled face and glassy eyes of pale blue veiled with lashes all but white. And yet Billy was a bit uncertain whether indeed it were he—yonder chap about his own age, chatting and laughing in free-hearted way, leaning against a gun; a genial young fellow enough to look at, and something of a rattle-brain, to all appearance. Rather chubby, too, for a sailor, even an afterguardsman. In short, the last man in the world, one would think, to be overburthened with thoughts, especially those perilous thoughts that must

needs belong to a conspirator in any serious project, or even to the underling of such a conspirator.

Although Billy was not aware of it, the fellow with a sidelong watchful glance had perceived Billy first, and then noting that Billy was looking at him, thereupon nodded a familiar sort of friendly recognition as to an old acquaintance, without interrupting the talk he was engaged in with the group of smokers. A day or two afterwards, chancing in the evening promenade on a gun-deck to pass Billy, he offered a flying word of good-fellowship, as it were, which by its unexpectedness, and equivocalness under the circumstances, so embarrassed Billy, that he knew not how to respond to it, and let it go unnoticed.

Billy was now left more at a loss than before. The ineffectual speculations into which he was led were so disturbingly alien to him, that he did his best to smother them. It never entered his mind that here was a matter which, from its extreme questionableness, it was his duty as a loyal blue-jacket to report in the proper quarter. And, probably, had such a step been suggested to him, he would have been deterred from taking it by the thought, one of novice-magnanimity, that it would savour overmuch of the dirty work of a tell-tale. He kept the thing to himself. Yet upon one occasion he could not forbear a little disburthening himself to the old Dansker, tempted thereto perhaps by the influence of a balmy night when the ship lay becalmed; the twain, silent for the most part, sitting together on deck, their heads propped against the bulwarks. But it was only a partial and anonymous account that Billy gave, the unfounded scruples above referred to preventing full disclosure to anybody. Upon hearing Billy’s version, the sage Dansker seemed to divine more than he was told; and after a little meditation, during which his wrinkles were pursed as into a point, quite effacing for the time that quizzing expression his face sometimes wore—‘Didn’t I say so, Baby Budd?’

‘Say what?’ demanded Billy.

‘Why, Jemmy Legs is down on you.’

‘And what,’ rejoined Billy in amazement, ‘has Jemmy Legs to do with that cracked afterguardsman?’

‘Ho, it was an afterguardsman, then. A cat’s-paw, a cat’s-paw!’ And with that exclamation, which, whether it had reference to a light puff of air just then coming over the calm sea, or subtler relation to the afterguardsman, there is no telling. The old Merlin gave a twisting wrench with his black teeth at his plug of tobacco, vouchsafing no reply to Billy’s impetuous question. For it was his wont to relapse into grim silence when interrogated in sceptical sort as to any of his sententious oracles, not always very clear ones, rather partaking of that obscurity which invests most Delphic deliverances from any quarter.

XIV

Long experience had very likely brought this old man to that bitter prudence which never interferes in aught, and never gives advice.

Yet, despite the Dansker’s pithy insistence as to the master-at-arms being at the bottom of these strange experiences of Billy on board the Indomitable, the young sailor was ready to ascribe them to almost anybody but the man who, to use Billy’s own expression, ‘always had a pleasant word for him.’ This is to be wondered at. Yet not so much to be wondered at. In certain matters some sailors even in mature life remain unsophisticated enough. But a young seafarer of the disposition of our athletic foretopman, is much of a child-man. And yet a child’s utter innocence is but its blank ignorance, and the innocence more or less wanes as intelligence waxes. But in Billy Budd intelligence, such as it was, had advanced, while yet his simple-mindedness remained for the most part unaffected. Experience is a teacher indeed; yet did Billy’s years make his experience small. Besides, he had none of that intuitive knowledge of the bad which in natures not good or incompletely so, foreruns experience, and therefore may pertain, as in some instances it too clearly

does pertain, even to youth.

And what could Billy know of man except of man as a mere sailor? And the old-fashioned sailor, the veritable man-before-the-mast, the sailor from boyhood up, he, though indeed of the same species as a landsman, is in some respects singularly distinct from him. The sailor is frankness, the landsman is finesse. Life is not a game with the sailor, demanding the long head; no intricate game of chess where few moves are made in straightforwardness, but ends are attained by indirection; an oblique, tedious, barren game, hardly worth that poor candle burnt out in playing it.

Yes, as a class, sailors are in character a juvenile race. Even their deviations are marked by juvenility. And this more especially holding true with the sailors of Billy's time. Then, too, certain things which apply to all sailors do more pointedly operate here and there upon the junior one. Every sailor, too, is accustomed to obey orders without debating them; his life afloat is externally ruled for him; he is not brought into that promiscuous commerce with mankind where unobstructed free agency on equal terms—equal superficially, at least—soon teaches one that unless upon occasion he exercises a distrust keen in proportion to the fairness of the appearance, some foul turn may be served him. A ruled, undemonstrative distrustfulness is so habitual, not with business-men so much, as with men who know their kind in less shallow relations than business, namely certain men of the world, that they come at last to employ it all but unconsciously; and some of them would very likely feel real surprise at being charged with it as one of their general characteristics.

XV

But after the little matter at the mess Billy Budd no more found himself in strange trouble at times about his hammock or his clothes-bag, or what not. While, as to that smile that occasionally sunned him, and the pleasant passing word, these were if not more frequent, yet if anything more pronounced than before.

But for all that, there were certain other demonstrations now. When Claggart's unobserved glance happened to light on belted Billy rolling along the upper gun-deck in the leisure of the second dog-watch, exchanging passing broadsides of fun with other young promenaders in the crowd, that glance would follow the cheerful sea-Hyperion with a settled meditative and melancholy expression, his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears. Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence, and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immitigable look, pinching and shrivelling the visage into the momentary semblance of a wrinkled walnut. But sometimes catching sight in advance of the foretopman coming in his direction, he would, upon their nearing, step aside a little to let him pass, dwelling upon Billy for the moment with the glittering dental satire of a guise. But upon any abrupt unforeseen encounter a red light would flash forth from his eye, like a spark from an anvil in a dusk smithy. That quick fierce light was a strange one, darted from orbs which in repose were of a colour nearest approaching a deeper violet, the softest of shades.

Though some of these caprices of the pit could not but be observed by their object, yet were they beyond the construing of such a nature. And the thews of Billy were hardly comparable with that sort of sensitive spiritual organisation which in some cases instinctively conveys to ignorant innocence an admonition of the proximity of the malign. He thought the master-at-arms acted in a manner rather queer at times. That was all. But the occasional frank air and pleasant word went for what they purported to be, the young sailor never having heard as yet of the 'too fair-spoken man.'

Had the foretopman been conscious of having done or said anything to provoke the ill-will of the official, it would have been different with him, and his sight might have been pursed if not sharpened.

So was it with him in yet another matter. Two minor officers, the armourer and captain of the hold, with whom he had never exchanged a word, his position on the ship not bringing him into contact with them; these men now for the first time began to cast upon Billy, when they chanced to encounter him, that peculiar glance which evidences that the man from whom it comes has been some way tampered with, and to the prejudice of him upon whom the glance lights. Never did it occur to Billy as a thing to be noted, or a thing suspicious, though he well knew the fact, that the armourer and captain of the hold, with the ship's yeoman, apothecary, and others of that grade, were by naval usage, messmates of the master-at-arms, men with ears convenient to his confidential tongue.

Our Handsome Sailor's manly forwardness upon occasion, and irresistible good-nature, indicating no mental superiority tending to excite an invidious feeling, bred general popularity, and this good-will on the part of most of his shipmates made him the less to concern himself about such mute aspects toward him as those whereto allusion has just been made.

As to the afterguardsman, though Billy for reasons already given necessarily saw little of him, yet when the two did happen to meet, invariably came the fellow's off-hand cheerful recognition, sometimes accompanied by a passing pleasant word or two. Whatever that equivocal young person's original design may really have been, or the design of which he might have been the deputy, certain it was from his manner upon these occasions, that he had wholly dropped it.

It was as if his precocity of crookedness (and every vulgar villain is precocious) had for once deceived him, and the man he had sought to entrap as a simpleton had, through his very simplicity, baffled him.

But shrewd ones may opine that it was hardly possible for Billy to refrain from going up to the afterguardsman and bluntly demanding to know his purpose in the initial interview, so abruptly closed in the fore-chains. Shrewd ones may also think it

but natural in Billy to set about sounding some of the other impressed men of the ship in order to discover what basis, if any, there was for the emissary's obscure suggestions as to plotting disaffection aboard. Yes, the shrewd may so think. But something more, or rather, something else than mere shrewdness is perhaps needful for the due understanding of such a character as Billy Budd's.

As to Claggart, the monomania in the man—if that indeed it were—as involuntarily disclosed by starts in the manifestations detailed, yet in general covered over by his self-contained and rational demeanour; this, like a subterranean fire, was eating its way deeper and deeper in him. Something decisive must come of it.

XVI

After the mysterious interview in the fore-chains, the one so abruptly ended there by Billy, nothing especially germane to the story occurred until the events now about to be narrated.

Elsewhere it has been said that owing to the lack of frigates (of course better sailers than line-of-battle ships) in the English squadron up the Straits at that period, the Indomitable[2] seventy-four was occasionally employed not only as an available substitute for a scout, but at times on detached service of more important kind. This was not alone because of her sailing qualities, not common in a ship of her rate, but quite as much probably, that the character of her commander, it was thought, specially adapted him for any duty where under unforeseen difficulties a prompt initiative might have to be taken in some matter demanding knowledge and ability in addition to those qualities employed in good seamanship. It was on an expedition of the latter sort, a somewhat distant one, and when the Indomitable[2] was almost at her furthest remove from the fleet, that in the latter part of an afternoon-watch she unexpectedly came in sight of a ship of the enemy. It proved to be a frigate. The latter, perceiving through the glass that the weight of men and metal would be heavily against her, invoking her light heels, crowded sail to get away. After a chase

urged almost against hope, and lasting until about the middle of the first dog-watch, she signally succeeded in effecting her escape.

Not long after the pursuit had been given up, and ere the excitement incident thereto had altogether waned away, the master-at-arms, ascending from his cavernous sphere, made his appearance cap in hand by the mainmast, respectfully waiting the notice of Captain Vere, then solitary walking the weather-side of the quarter-deck, doubtless somewhat chafed at the failure of the pursuit. The spot where Claggart stood was the place allotted to men of lesser grades seeking some more particular interview either with the officer of the deck or the captain himself. But from the latter it was not often that a sailor or petty officer of those days would seek a hearing; only some exceptional cause would, according to established custom, have warranted that.

Presently, just as the commander, absorbed in his reflections, was on the point of turning aft in his promenade, he became sensible of Claggart's presence, and saw the doffed cap held in deferential expectancy. Here be it said that Captain Vere's personal knowledge of this petty officer had only begun at the time of the ship's last sailing from home, Claggart then for the first, in transfer from a ship detained for repairs, supplying on board the Indomitable[3] the place of a previous master-at-arms disabled and ashore.

No sooner did the commander observe who it was that now so deferentially stood awaiting his notice, than a peculiar expression came over his face. It was not unlike that which uncontrollably will flit across the countenance of one at unawares encountering a person who though known to him indeed has hardly been long enough known for thorough knowledge, but something in whose aspect nevertheless now for the first provokes a vaguely repellent distaste. But coming to a stand, and resuming much of his wonted official manner, save that a sort of impatience lurked in the intonation of the opening word, he said, 'Well, what is it, master-at-arms?'

With the air of a subordinate grieved at the necessity of being a messenger of ill-tidings, and while conscientiously determined to be frank, yet equally resolved upon shunning overstatement, Claggart at this invitation, or rather summons to disburthen, spoke up. What he said, conveyed in the language of no uneducated man, was to the effect following, if not altogether in these words, namely: That during the chase and preparations for the possible encounter he had seen enough to convince him that at least one sailor aboard was a dangerous character in a ship mustering some who not only had taken a guilty part in the late serious trouble, but others also who, like the man in question, had entered His Majesty's service under another form than enlistment.

At this point Captain Vere with some impatience interrupted him:

'Be direct, man; say impressed men.'

Claggart made a gesture of subservience and proceeded. Quite lately he (Claggart) had begun to suspect that some sort of movement prompted by the sailor in question was covertly going on, but he had not thought himself warranted in reporting the suspicion so long as it remained indistinct. But from what he had that afternoon observed in the man referred to, the suspicion of something clandestine going on had advanced to a point less removed from certainty. He deeply felt, he added, the serious responsibility assumed in making a report involving such possible consequences to the individual mainly concerned, besides tending to augment those natural anxieties which every naval commander must feel in view of extraordinary outbreaks so recent as those which, he sorrowfully said it, it needed not to name.

Now at the first broaching of the matter Captain Vere, taken by surprise, could not wholly dissemble his disquietude, but as Claggart went on, the former's aspect changed into restiveness under something in the testifier's manner in giving his testimony. However, he refrained from interrupting him. And Claggart, continuing, concluded with this:

‘God forbid, your honour, that the Indomitable’s[4] should be the experience of the—’

‘Never mind that!’ here peremptorily broke in the superior, his face altering with anger instantly, divining the ship that the other was about to name, one in which the Nore Mutiny had assumed a singularly tragical character that for a time jeopardised the life of its commander. Under the circumstances he was indignant at the purposed allusion. When the commissioned officers themselves were on all occasions very heedful how they referred to the recent event, for a petty officer unnecessarily to allude to it in the presence of his captain, this struck him as a most immodest presumption. Besides, to his quick sense of self-respect, it even looked under the circumstances something like an attempt to alarm him. Nor at that was he without some surprise that one who so far as he had hitherto come under his notice had shown considerable tact in his function, should in this particular evince such lack of it.

But these thoughts and kindred dubious ones flitting across his mind were suddenly replaced by an intuitional surmise, which though as yet obscure in form, served practically to affect his reception of the ill tidings. Certain it is, that long versed in everything pertaining to the complicated gun-deck life, which like every other form of life has its secret mines and dubious side, the side popularly disclaimed, Captain Vere did not permit himself to be unduly disturbed by the general tenor of his subordinate’s report. Furthermore, if in view of recent events prompt action should be taken at the first palpable sign of recurring insubordination, for all that, not judicious would it be, he thought, to keep the idea of lingering disaffection alive by undue forwardness in crediting an informer, even if his own subordinate, and charged among other honours with police surveillance of the crew. This feeling would not perhaps have so prevailed with him were it not that upon a prior occasion the patriotic zeal officially evinced by Claggart had somewhat irritated him as appearing rather supersensitive and strained. Furthermore, something even in the

official's self-possessed and somewhat ostentatious manner in making his specifications strangely reminded him of a bandsman, a perjured witness in a capital case before a court-martial ashore of which when a lieutenant he, Captain Vere, had been a member.

Now the peremptory check given to Claggart in the matter of the arrested allusion was quickly followed up by this: 'You say that there is at least one dangerous man aboard. Name him.'

'William Budd, a foretopman, your honour.'

'William Budd!' repeated Captain Vere with unfeigned astonishment; 'and mean you the man that Lieutenant Ratcliffe took from the merchantman not very long ago—the young fellow who seems to be so popular with the men—Billy, the Handsome Sailor, as they call him?'

'The same, your honour; but for all his youth and good looks, a deep one. Not for nothing does he insinuate himself into the good-will of his shipmates, since at the least they will at a pinch say a good word for him at all hazards. Did Lieutenant Ratcliffe happen to tell your honour of that adroit fling of Budd's jumping up in the cutter's bow under the merchantman's stern when he was being taken off? That sort of good-humoured air even masks that at heart he resents his impressment. You have but noted his fair cheek. A man-trap may be under his ruddy-tipped daisies.'

Now the Handsome Sailor as a signal figure among the crew had naturally enough attracted the captain's attention from the first. Though in general not very demonstrative to his officers, he had congratulated Lieutenant Ratcliffe upon his good fortune in lighting on such a fine specimen of the genus homo, who in the nude might have passed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall.

As to Billy's adieu to the ship Rights-of-Man, which the boarding lieutenant, in a deferential way, had indeed reported to him, Captain Vere, more as a good story than aught else (having mistakenly understood it as a satiric sally), had but thought

so much the better of the impressed man for it; as a military sailor, admiring the spirit that could take an arbitrary enlistment so merrily and sensibly. The foretopman's conduct, too, so far as it had fallen under the captain's notice, had confirmed the first happy augury, while the new recruit's qualities as a sailor-man seemed to be such that he had thought of recommending him to the executive officer for promotion to a place that would more frequently bring him under his own observation, namely, the captaincy of the mizen-top, replacing there in the starboard-watch a man not so young whom partly for that reason he deemed less fitted for the post. Be it parenthesised here that since the mizen-topmen have not to handle such breadths of heavy canvas as the lower sails on the mainmast and foremast, a young man if of the right stuff not only seems best adapted to duty there, but, in fact, is generally selected for the captaincy of that top, and the company under him are light hands, and often but striplings. In sum, Captain Vere had from the beginning deemed Billy Budd to be what in the naval parlance of the time was called a 'King's bargain,' that is to say, for His Britannic Majesty's Navy a capital investment at small outlay or none at all.

After a brief pause, during which the reminiscences above mentioned passed vividly through his mind, he weighed the import of Claggart's last suggestion conveyed in the phrase 'a man-trap under his ruddy-tipped daisies,' and the more he weighed it the less reliance he felt in the informer's good faith. Suddenly he turned upon him: 'Do you come to me, master-at-arms, with so foggy a tale? As to Budd, cite me an act or spoken word of his confirmatory of what you in general charge against him. Stay,' drawing nearer to him, 'heed what you speak. Just now and in a case like this, there is a yard-arm-end for the false witness.'

'Ah, your honour!' sighed Claggart, mildly shaking his shapely head as in sad deprecation of such unmerited severity of tone. Then bridling—erecting himself as in virtuous self-assertion, he circumstantially alleged certain words and acts which collectively, if credited, led to presumptions mortally inculpating Budd, and for

some of these averments, he added, substantiating proof was not far.

With gray eyes impatient and distrustful, essaying to fathom to the bottom Claggart's calm violet ones, Captain Vere again heard him out; then for the moment stood ruminating. The mood he evinced, Claggart—himself for the time liberated from the other's scrutiny—steadily regarded with a look difficult to render—a look curious of the operation of his tactics, a look such as might have been that of the spokesman of the envious children of Jacob deceptively imposing upon the troubled patriarch the blood-dyed coat of young Joseph.

Though something exceptional in the moral quality of Captain Vere made him, in earnest encounter with a fellow-man, a veritable touchstone of that man's essential nature, yet now as to Claggart and what was really going on in him, his feeling partook less of intuitional conviction than of strong suspicion clogged by strange dubieties. The perplexity he evinced proceeded less from aught touching the man informed against—as Claggart doubtless opined—than from considerations how best to act in regard to the informer. At first, indeed, he was naturally for summoning that substantiation of his allegations which Claggart said was at hand. But such a proceeding would result in the matter at once getting abroad, which in the present stage of it, he thought, might undesirably affect the ship's company. If Claggart was a false witness—that closed the affair. And therefore, before trying the accusation, he would first practically test the accuser; and he thought this could be done in a quiet undemonstrative way.

The measure he determined upon involved a shifting of the scene, a transfer to a place less exposed to observation than the broad quarter-deck. For although the few gun-room officers there at the time had, in due observance of naval etiquette, withdrawn to leeward the moment Captain Vere had begun his promenade on the deck's weather-side; and though during the colloquy with Claggart they of course ventured not to diminish the distance; and though throughout the interview Captain

Vere's voice was far from high, and Claggart's silvery and low; and the wind in the cordage and the wash of the sea helped the more to put them beyond ear-shot; nevertheless, the interview's continuance already had attracted observation from some topmen aloft, and other sailors in the waist or farther forward.

Having determined upon his measures, Captain Vere forthwith took action. Abruptly turning to Claggart he asked, 'Master-at-arms, is it now Budd's watch aloft?'

'No, your honour.'

Whereupon, 'Mr. Wilkes,' summoning the nearest midshipman, 'tell Albert to come to me.' Albert was the captain's hammock-boy, a sort of sea-valet, in whose discretion and fidelity his master had much confidence. The lad appeared. 'You know Budd, the foretopman?'

'I do, sir.'

'Go find him. It is his watch off. Manage to tell him out of ear-shot that he is wanted aft. Contrive it that he speaks to nobody. Keep him in talk yourself. And not till you get well aft here, not till then, let him know that the place where he is wanted is my cabin. You understand? Go. Master-at-arms, show yourself on the decks below, and when you think it time for Albert to be coming with his man, stand by quietly to follow the sailor in.'

2. In Melville's MS. the vessel is on these occasions given the name Bellipotent. See also pp. 64, 66, 109, 110.

3. Cf. p. 63 note.

4. Cf. p. 63 note.

XVII

Now when the foretopman found himself closeted, as it were, in the cabin with the captain and Claggart, he was surprised enough. But it was a surprise unaccompanied by apprehension or distrust. To an immature nature, essentially honest and humane,

forewarning intimations of subtler danger from one's kind came tardily, if at all. The only thing that took shape in the young sailor's mind was this: 'Yes, the captain, I have always thought, looks kindly upon me. Wonder if he's going to make me his coxswain. I should like that. And maybe now he is going to ask the master-at-arms about me.'

'Shut the door there, sentry,' said the commander. 'Stand without and let nobody come in. Now, master-at-arms, tell this man to his face what you told of him to me'; and stood prepared to scrutinise the mutually confronting visages.

With the measured step and calm collected air of an asylum physician approaching in the public hall some patient beginning to show indications of a coming paroxysm, Claggart deliberately advanced within short range of Billy, and mesmerically looking him in the eye, briefly recapitulated the accusation.

Not at first did Billy take it in. When he did the rose-tan of his cheek looked struck as by white leprosy. He stood like one impaled and gagged. Meanwhile the accuser's eyes, removing not as yet from the blue, dilated ones, underwent a phenomenal change, their wonted rich violet colour blurring into a muddy purple. Those lights of human intelligence losing human expression, gelidly protruding like the alien eyes of certain uncatalogued creatures of the deep.

The first mesmeric glance was one of surprised fascination; the last was as the hungry lurch of the torpedo-fish.

'Speak, man!' said Captain Vere to the transfixed one, struck by his aspect even more than by Claggart's. 'Speak! defend yourself.' Which appeal caused but a strange, dumb gesturing and gurgling in Billy; amazement at such an accusation so suddenly sprung on inexperienced nonage; this, and it may be horror at the accuser, serving to bring out his lurking defect, and in this instance for the time intensifying it into a convulsed tongue-tie; while the intent head and entire form, straining forward in an agony of ineffectual eagerness to obey the injunction to speak and

defend himself, gave an expression to the face like that of a condemned vestal priestess in the moment of being buried alive, and in the first struggle against suffocation.

Though at the time Captain Vere was quite ignorant of Billy's liability to vocal impediment, he now immediately divined it, since vividly Billy's aspect recalled to him that of a bright young schoolmate of his whom he had seen struck by much the same startling impotence in the act of eagerly rising in the class to be foremost in response to a testing question put to it by the master. Going close up to the young sailor, and laying a soothing hand on his shoulder, he said, 'There is no hurry, my boy. Take your time, take your time.' Contrary to the effect intended, these words, so fatherly in tone, doubtless touching Billy's heart to the quick, prompted yet more violent efforts at utterance—efforts soon ending for the time in confirming the paralysis, and bringing to the face an expression which was as a crucifixion to behold. The next instant, quick as the flame from a discharged cannon at night, his right arm shot out, and Claggart dropped to the deck. Whether intentionally, or but owing to the young athlete's superior height, the blow had taken effect full upon the forehead, so shapely and intellectual-looking a feature in the master-at-arms; so that the body fell over lengthwise, like a heavy plank tilted from erectness. A gasp or two, and he lay motionless.

'Fated boy,' breathed Captain Vere, in tone so low as to be almost a whisper, 'what have you done! But here, help me.'

The twain raised the felled one from the loins up into a sitting position. The spare form flexibly acquiesced, but inertly. It was like handling a dead snake. They lowered it back. Regaining erectness, Captain Vere with one hand covering his face stood to all appearance as impassive as the object at his feet. Was he absorbed in taking in all the bearings of the event, and what was best not only now at once to be done, but also in the sequel? Slowly he uncovered his face; and the effect was as if

the moon emerging from eclipse should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into hiding. The father in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian. In his official tone he bade the foretopman retire to a state-room aft (pointing it out), and there remain till thence summoned. This order Billy in silence mechanically obeyed. Then going to the cabin door where it opened on the quarter-deck, Captain Vere said to the sentry without, 'Tell somebody to send Albert here.' When the lad appeared his master so contrived it that he should not catch sight of the prone one. 'Albert,' he said to him, 'tell the surgeon I wish to see him. You need not come back till called.'

When the surgeon entered—a self-poised character of that grave sense and experience that hardly anything could take him aback—Captain Vere advanced to meet him, thus unconsciously interrupting his view of Claggart, and interrupting the other's wonted ceremonious salutation said, 'Nay, tell me how it is with yonder man,' directing his attention to the prostrate one.

The surgeon looked, and for all his self-command, somewhat started at the abrupt revelation. On Claggart's always pallid complexion thick black blood was now oozing from mouth and ear. To the gazer's professional eyes it was unmistakably no living man that he saw.

'Is it so, then?' said Captain Vere, intently watching him. 'I thought it. But verify it.' Whereupon the customary tests confirmed the surgeon's first glance, who now looking up in unfeigned concern, cast a look of intense inquisitiveness upon his superior. But Captain Vere, with one hand to his brow, was standing motionless. Suddenly, catching the surgeon's arm convulsively, he exclaimed, pointing down to the body, 'It is the divine judgment of Ananias! Look!'

Disturbed by the excited manner he had never before observed in the Indomitable's captain, and as yet wholly ignorant of the affair, the prudent surgeon nevertheless held his peace, only again looking an earnest interrogation as to what it was that had

resulted in such a tragedy.

But Captain Vere was now again motionless, standing absorbed in thought. But again starting, he vehemently exclaimed, ‘Struck dead by an angel of God. Yet the angel must hang!’

At these interjections, incoherences to the listener as yet unapprised of the antecedent events, the surgeon was profoundly discomforted. But now, as recollecting himself, Captain Vere in less harsh tone briefly related the circumstances leading up to the event.

‘But come; we must dispatch,’ he added; ‘help me to remove him (meaning the body) to yonder compartment’—designating one opposite where the foretopman remained immured. Anew disturbed by a request that as implying a desire for secrecy seemed unaccountably strange to him, there was nothing for the subordinate to do but comply.

‘Go now,’ said Captain Vere, with something of his wonted manner, ‘go now. I shall presently call a drum-head court. Tell the lieutenants what has happened, and tell Mr. Morton’—meaning the captain of marines. ‘And charge them to keep the matter to themselves.’

Full of disquietude and misgivings, the surgeon left the cabin. Was Captain Vere suddenly affected in his mind, or was it but a transient excitement brought about by so strange and extraordinary a happening? As to the drum-head court, it struck the surgeon as impolitic, if nothing more. The thing to do, he thought, was to place Billy Budd in confinement, and in a way dictated by usage, and postpone further action in so extraordinary a case to such time as they should again join the squadron, and then transfer it to the admiral. He recalled the unwonted agitation of Captain Vere and his excited exclamations, so at variance with his normal manner. Was he unhinged? But assuming that he was, it were not so susceptible of proof. What then could he do? No more trying situation is conceivable than that of an officer subordinated under a

captain whom he suspects to be, not mad indeed, but yet not quite unaffected in his intellect. To argue his order to him would be insolence. To resist him would be mutiny. In obedience to Captain Vere he communicated to the lieutenants and captain of marines what had happened, saying nothing as to the captain's state. They stared at him in surprise and concern. Like him, they seemed to think that such a matter should be reported to the admiral.

Who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the difference of the colour, but where exactly does the first one visibly enter into the other? So with sanity and insanity. In pronounced cases there is no question about them. But in some cases, in various degrees supposedly less pronounced, to draw the line of demarcation few will undertake, though for a fee some professional experts will. There is nothing nameable but that some men will undertake to do for pay. In other words, there are instances where it is next to impossible to determine whether a man is sane or beginning to be otherwise.

Whether Captain Vere, as the surgeon professionally surmised, was really the sudden victim of any degree of aberration, one must determine for himself by such light as this narrative may afford.

XVIII

The unhappy event which has been narrated could not have happened at a worse juncture. For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections, an after-time very critical to naval authority, demanding from every English sea-commander two qualities not readily interfusable—prudence and rigour. Moreover, there was something crucial in the case.

In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the Indomitable, and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt, personified in Claggart and Budd, in effect changed

places.

In the legal view, the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimise a man blameless; and the indisputable deed of the latter, navally regarded, constituted the most heinous of military crimes. Yet more. The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer that might be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea-commander, inasmuch as he was authorised to determine the matter on that primitive legal basis.

Small wonder then that the Indomitable's captain, though in general a man of rigid decision, felt that circumspectness not less than promptitude was necessary. Until he could decide upon his course, and in each detail, and not only so, but until the concluding measure was upon the point of being enacted, he deemed it advisable, in view of all the circumstances, to guard as much as possible against publicity. Here he may or may not have erred. Certain it is, however, that subsequently in the confidential talk of more than one or two gun-rooms and cabins he was not a little criticised by some officers, a fact imputed by his friends, and vehemently by his cousin Jack Denton, to professional jealousy of Starry Vere. Some imaginative ground for invidious comment there was. The maintenance of secrecy in the matter, the confining all knowledge of it for a time to the place where the homicide occurred—the quarter-deck cabin; in these particulars lurked some resemblance to the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian, great chiefly by his crimes.

The case was such that fain would the Indomitable's captain have deferred taking any action whatever respecting it further than to keep the foretopman a close prisoner till the ship rejoined the squadron, and then submitting the matter to the judgment of his admiral.

But a true military officer is in one particular like a true monk. Not with more of self-abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former

his vows of allegiance to martial duty.

Feeling that unless quick action was taken on it, the deed of the foretopman, as soon as it should be known on the gun-decks, would tend to awaken any slumbering embers of the Nore among the crew, a sense of the urgency of the case overruled in Captain Vere every other consideration. But though a conscientious disciplinarian he was no lover of authority for mere authority's sake. Very far was he from embracing opportunities for monopolising to himself the perils of moral responsibility, none at least that could properly be referred to an official superior, or shared with him by his official equals, or even subordinates. So thinking, he was glad it would not be at variance with usage to turn the matter over to a summary court of his own officers, reserving to himself, as the one on whom the ultimate accountability would rest, the right of maintaining a supervision of it, or formally or informally interposing at need. Accordingly a drum-head court was summarily convened, he electing the individuals composing it—the first lieutenant, the captain of marines, and the sailing-master.

In associating an officer of marines with the sea-lieutenant in a case having to do with a sailor, the commander perhaps deviated from general custom. He was prompted thereto by the circumstance that he took that soldier to be a judicious person, thoughtful and not altogether incapable of grappling with a difficult case unprecedented in his prior experience. Yet even as to him he was not without some latent misgiving, for withal he was an extremely good-natured man, an enjoyer of his dinner, a sound sleeper, and inclined to obesity. The sort of man who, though he would always maintain his manhood in battle, might not prove altogether reliable in a moral dilemma involving aught of the tragic. As to the first lieutenant and the sailing-master, Captain Vere could not but be aware that though honest natures, of approved gallantry upon occasion, their intelligence was mostly confined to the matter of active seamanship, and the fighting demands of their profession. The court was held in the same cabin where the unfortunate affair had taken place. This cabin,

the commander's, embraced the entire area under the poop-deck. Aft, and on either side, was a small state-room—the one room temporarily a jail, and the other a dead-house—and a yet smaller compartment leaving a space between, expanding forward into a goodly oblong of length coinciding with the ship's beam. A skylight of moderate dimensions was overhead, and at each end of the oblong space were two sashed port-hole windows easily convertible back into embrasures for short carronades.

All being quickly in readiness, Billy Budd was arraigned, Captain Vere necessarily appearing as the sole witness in the case, and as such temporarily sinking his rank, though singularly maintaining it in a matter apparently trivial, namely, that he testified from the ship's weather-side, with that object having caused the court to sit on the lee-side. Concisely he narrated all that had led up to the catastrophe, omitting nothing in Claggart's accusation, and deposing as to the manner in which the prisoner had received it. At this testimony the three officers glanced with no little surprise at Billy Budd, the last man they would have suspected, either of mutinous design alleged by Claggart, or of the undeniable deed he himself had done. The first lieutenant taking judicial primary, and turning toward the prisoner, said, 'Captain Vere has spoken. Is it or is it not as Captain Vere says?' In response came syllables not so much impeded in the utterance as might have been anticipated. They were these:—

'Captain Vere tells the truth. It is just as Captain Vere says, but it is not as the master-at-arms said. I have eaten the King's bread, and I am true to the King.'

'I believe you, my man,' said the witness, his voice indicating a suppressed emotion not otherwise betrayed.

'God will bless you for that, your honour!' not without stammering, said Billy, and all but broke down. But immediately was recalled to self-control by another question, to which with the same emotional difficulty of utterance he said, 'No, there

was no malice between us. I never bore malice against the master-at-arms. I am sorry that he is dead. I did not mean to kill him. Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him. But he foully lied to my face, and in the presence of my captain, and I had to say something, and I could only say it with a blow. God help me!'

In the impulsive above-board manner of the frank one the court saw confirmed all that was implied in words that just previously had perplexed them coming as they did from the testifier to the tragedy, and promptly following Billy's impassioned disclaimer of mutinous intent—Captain Vere's words, 'I believe you, my man.'

Next, it was asked of him whether he knew of or suspected aught savouring of incipient trouble (meaning mutiny, though the explicit term was avoided) going on in any section of the ship's company.

The reply lingered. This was naturally imputed by the court to the same vocal embarrassment which had retarded or obstructed previous answers. But in main it was otherwise here; the question immediately recalling to Billy's mind the interview with the afterguardsman in the fore-chains. But an innate repugnance to playing a part at all approaching that of an informer against one's own shipmates—the same erring sense of uninstructed honour which had stood in the way of his reporting the matter at the time, though as a loyal man-of-war's man it was incumbent on him, and failure so to do it charged against him and proven, would have subjected him to the heaviest of penalties. This, with the blind feeling now his, that nothing really was being hatched, prevailed with him. When the answer came it was a negative.

'One question more,' said the officer of marines now first speaking, and with a troubled earnestness. 'You tell us that what the master-at-arms said against you was a lie. Now why should he have so lied, so maliciously lied, since you declare there was no malice between you?'

At that question, unintentionally touching on a spiritual sphere, wholly obscure to

Billy's thoughts, he was nonplussed, evincing a confusion indeed that some observers, such as can be imagined, would have construed into involuntary evidence of hidden guilt. Nevertheless he strove some way to answer, but all at once relinquished the vain endeavour, at the same time turning an appealing glance towards Captain Vere, as deeming him his best helper and friend. Captain Vere, who had been seated for a time, rose to his feet, addressing the interrogator. 'The question you put to him comes naturally enough. But how can he rightly answer it, or anybody else? unless indeed it be he who lies within there,' designating the compartment where lay the corpse. 'But the prone one there will not rise to our summons. In effect though, as it seems to me, the point you make is hardly material. Quite aside from any conceivable motive actuating the master-at-arms, and irrespective of the provocation of the blow, a martial court must needs in the present case confine its attention to the blow's consequence, which consequence is to be deemed not otherwise than as the striker's deed!'

This utterance, the full significance of which it was not at all likely that Billy took in, nevertheless caused him to turn a wistful, interrogative look toward the speaker, a look in its dumb expressiveness not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master, seeking in his face some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence. Nor was the same utterance without marked effect upon the three officers, more especially the soldier. Couched in it seemed to them a meaning unanticipated, involving a prejudgment on the speaker's part. It served to augment a mental disturbance previously evident enough.

The soldier once more spoke, in a tone of suggestive dubiety addressing at once his associates and Captain Vere: 'Nobody is present—none of the ship's company, I mean, who might shed lateral light, if any is to be had, upon what remains mysterious in this matter.'

'That is thoughtfully put,' said Captain Vere; 'I see your drift. Ay, there is a

mystery; but to use a Scriptural phrase, it is “a mystery of iniquity,” a matter for psychological theologians to discuss. But what has a military court to do with it? Not to add that for us, any possible investigation of it is cut off by the lasting tongue-tie of—him—in yonder,’ again designating the mortuary state-room. ‘The prisoner’s deed. With that alone we have to do.’

To this, and particularly the closing reiteration, the marine soldier, knowing not how aptly to reply, sadly abstained from saying aught. The first lieutenant, who at the outset had not unnaturally assumed primacy in the court, now over-rulingly instructed by a glance from Captain Vere, a glance more effective than words, resumed that primacy. Turning to the prisoner: ‘Budd,’ he said, and scarce in equable tones, ‘Budd, if you have aught further to say for yourself, say it now.’

Upon this the young sailor turned another quick glance toward Captain Vere; then, as taking a hint from that aspect, a hint confirming his own instinct that silence was now best, replied to the lieutenant, ‘I have said all, sir.’

The marine—the same who had been the sentinel without the cabin-door at the time that the foretopman, followed by the master-at-arms, entered it—he, standing by the sailor throughout their judicial proceedings, was now directed to take him back to the after-compartment originally assigned to the prisoner and his custodian. As the twain disappeared from view, the three officers, as partially liberated from some inward constraint associated with Billy’s mere presence, simultaneously stirred in their seats. They exchanged looks of troubled indecision, yet feeling that decide they must and without long delay, for Captain Vere was for the time sitting unconsciously with his back toward them, apparently in one of his absent fits, gazing out from a sashed port-hole to windward upon the monotonous blank of the twilight sea. But the court’s silence continuing, broken only at moments by brief consultations in low, earnest tones, this seemed to assure him and encourage him. Turning, he to and fro paced the cabin athwart; in the returning ascent to windward,

climbing the slant deck in the ship's lee roll; without knowing it symbolising thus in his action a mind resolute to surmount difficulties even if against primitive instincts strong as the wind and the sea. Presently he came to a stand before the three. After scanning their faces he stood less as mustering his thoughts for expression, than as one only deliberating how best to put them to well-meaning men not intellectually mature, men with whom it was necessary to demonstrate certain principles that were axioms to himself. Similar impatience as to talking is perhaps one reason that deters some minds from addressing any popular assemblies; under which head is to be classed most legislatures in a democracy.

When speak he did, something both in the substance of what he said and his manner of saying it, showed the influence of unshared studies modifying and tempering the practical training of an active career. This, along with his phraseology now and then, was suggestive of the grounds whereon rested that imputation of a certain pedantry socially alleged against him by certain naval men of wholly practical cast, captains who nevertheless would frankly concede that His Majesty's Navy mustered no more efficient officers of their grade than Starry Vere.

What he said was to this effect: 'Hitherto I have been but the witness, little more; and I should hardly think now to take another tone, that of your coadjutor, for the time, did I not perceive in you—at the crisis too—a troubled hesitancy, proceeding, I doubt not, from the clashing of military duty with moral scruple—scruple vitalised by compassion. For the compassion, how can I otherwise but share it. But, mindful of paramount obligation, I strive against scruples that may tend to enervate decision. Not, gentlemen, that I hide from myself that the case is an exceptional one. Speculatively regarded, it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here, acting not as casuists or moralists, it is a case practical and under martial law practically to be dealt with.

'But your scruples! Do they move as in a dusk? Challenge them. Make them

advance and declare themselves. Come now: do they impart something like this: If, mindless of palliating circumstances, we are bound to regard the death of the master-at-arms as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one. But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? Now can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow-creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?—Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King. Though the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free agents. When war is declared, are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command. If our judgments approve the war, that is but coincidence. So in other particulars. So now, would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigour of it, we are not responsible. Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitilessly that law may operate, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it.

'But the exceptional in the matter moves the heart within you. Even so, too, is mine moved. But let not warm hearts betray heads that should be cool. Ashore in a criminal case will an upright judge allow himself off the bench to be waylaid by some tender kinswoman of the accused seeking to touch him with her tearful plea? Well, the heart here is as that piteous woman. The heart is the feminine in man, and hard though it be, she must here be ruled out.'

He paused, earnestly studying them for a moment; then resumed.

'But something in your aspect seems to urge that it is not solely that heart that

moves in you, but also the conscience, the private conscience. But tell me whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed?'

Here the three men moved in their seats, less convinced than agitated by the course of an argument troubling but the more the spontaneous conflict within. Perceiving which, the speaker paused for a moment; then abruptly changing his tone, went on.

'To steady us a bit, let us recur to the facts. In war-time at sea a man-of-war's man strikes his superior in grade, and the blow kills. Apart from its effect, the blow itself is, according to the Articles of War, a capital crime. Furthermore—'

'Ay, sir,' emotionally broke in the officer of marines, 'in one sense it was. But surely Budd purposed neither mutiny nor homicide.'

'Surely not, my good man. And before a court less arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one that plea would largely extenuate. At the Last Assizes it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In feature no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives—War. In His Majesty's service—in this ship indeed—there are Englishmen forced to fight for the King against their will. Against their conscience, for aught we know. Though as their fellow-creatures some of us may appreciate their position, yet as Navy officers, what reck we of it? Still less recks the enemy. Our impressed men he would fain cut down in the same swath with our volunteers. As regards the enemy's naval conscripts, some of whom may even share our own abhorrence of the regicidal French Directory, it is the same on our side. War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent or non-intent is nothing to the purpose.

'But while, put to it by those anxieties in you which I cannot but respect, I only repeat myself—while thus strangely we prolong proceedings that should be summary, the enemy may be sighted and an engagement result. We must do; and

one of two things must we do—condemn or let go.'

'Can we not convict and yet mitigate the penalty?' asked the junior lieutenant, here speaking, and falteringly, for the first.

'Lieutenant, were that clearly lawful for us under the circumstances, consider the consequences of such clemency. The people' (meaning the ship's company) 'have native sense; most of them are familiar with our naval usage and tradition; and how would they take it? Even could you explain to them—which our official position forbids—they, long moulded by arbitrary discipline, have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate. No, to the people the foretopman's deed, however it be worded in the announcement, will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow, they know. But it does not follow. Why? they will ruminate. You know what sailors are. Will they not revert to the recent outbreak at the Nore? Ay, they know the well-founded alarm—the panic it struck throughout England. Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them—afraid of practising a lawful rigour singularly demanded at this juncture lest it should provoke new troubles. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part, and how deadly to discipline. You see then whither, prompted by duty and the law, I steadfastly drive. But I beseech you, my friends, do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts, I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid.'

With that, crossing the deck, he resumed his place by the sashed port-hole, tacitly leaving the three to come to a decision. On the cabin's opposite side the troubled court sat silent. Loyal lieges, plain and practical, though at bottom they dissented from some points Captain Vere had put to them, they were without the faculty, hardly had the inclination to gainsay one whom they felt to be an earnest man, one,

too, not less their superior in mind than in naval rank. But it is not improbable that even such of his words as were not without influence over them, came home to them less than his closing appeal to their instinct as sea-officers. He forecasted the practical consequences to discipline (considering the unconfirmed tone of the fleet at the time), if violent killing at sea by a man-of-war's man of a superior in grade were allowed to pass for aught else than a capital crime, and one demanding prompt infliction of the penalty.

Not unlikely they were brought to something more or less akin to that harassed frame of mind which in the year 1842 actuated the commander of the U.S. brig-of-war Somers to resolve, under the so-called Articles of War, Articles modelled upon the English Mutiny Act, to resolve upon the execution at sea of a midshipman and two petty officers as mutineers designing the seizure of the brig. Which resolution was carried out though in a time of peace and within not many days' sail of home. An act vindicated by a naval court of inquiry subsequently convened ashore. History, and here cited without comment. True, the circumstances on board the Somers were different from those on board the Indomitable. But the urgency felt, well warranted or otherwise, was much the same.

Says a writer whom few know, 'Forty years after a battle it is easy for a non-combatant to reason about how it ought to have been fought. It is another thing personally and under fire to direct the fighting while involved in the obscuring smoke of it. Much so with respect to other emergencies involving considerations both practical and moral, and when it is imperative promptly to act. The greater the fog the more it imperils the steamer, and speed is put on though at the hazard of running somebody down. Little ween the snug card-players in the cabin of the responsibilities of the sleepless man on the bridge.'

In brief, Billy Budd was formally convicted and sentenced to be hung at the yard-arm in the early morning-watch, it being now night. Otherwise, as is customary

in such cases, the sentence would forthwith have been carried out. In war-time on the field or in the fleet, a mortal punishment decreed by a drum-head court—on the field sometimes decreed by but a nod from the general—follows without delay on the heel of conviction without appeal.

XIX

It was Captain Vere himself who of his own motion communicated the finding of the court to the prisoner; for that purpose going to the compartment where he was in custody, and bidding the marine there to withdraw for the time.

Beyond the communication of the sentence what took place at this interview was never known. But, in view of the character of the twain briefly closeted in that state-room, each radically sharing in the rarer qualities of one nature—so rare, indeed, as to be all but incredible to average minds, however much cultivated—some conjectures may be ventured.

It would have been in consonance with the spirit of Captain Vere should he on this occasion have concealed nothing from the condemned one; should he indeed have frankly disclosed to him the part he himself had played in bringing about the decision, at the same time revealing his actuating motives. On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy indeed he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him implied in his captain making such a confidant of him. Nor as to the sentence itself could he have been insensible that it was imparted to him as to one not afraid to die. Even more may have been. Captain Vere in the end may have developed the passion sometimes latent under an exterior stoical or indifferent. He was old enough to have been Billy's father. The austere devotee of military duty, letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalised humanity, may in the end have caught Billy to his heart, even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting

behest. But there is no telling the sacrament—seldom if in any case revealed to the gadding world wherever under circumstances at all akin to those here attempted to be set forth—two of great Nature's nobler order embrace. There is privacy at the time, inviolable to the survivor, and holy oblivion, the sequel to each diviner magnanimity, providentially covers all at last.

The first to encounter Captain Vere in the act of leaving the compartment was the senior lieutenant. The face he beheld, for the moment one expressive of the agony of the strong, was to that officer, though a man of fifty, a startling revelation. That the condemned one suffered less than he who mainly had effected the condemnation, was apparently indicated by the former's exclamation in the scene soon perforce to be touched upon.

Of a series of incidents within a brief term rapidly following each other, the adequate narration may take up a term less brief, especially if explanation or comment here and there seem requisite to the better understanding of such incidents. Between the entrance into the cabin of him who never left it alive, and him who when he did leave it left it as one condemned to die; between this and the closeted interview just given, less than an hour and a half had elapsed. It was an interval long enough, however, to awaken speculations among no few of the ship's company as to what it was that could be detaining in the cabin the master-at-arms and the sailor, for it was rumoured that both of them had been seen to enter it, and neither of them had been seen to emerge. This rumour had got abroad upon the gun-decks and in the tops; the people of a great warship being in one respect like villagers, taking microscopic note of every untoward movement or non-movement going on. When therefore in weather not at all tempestuous all hands were called in the second dog-watch, a summons under such circumstances not usual in those hours, the crew were not wholly unprepared for some announcement extraordinary, one having connection, too, with the continued absence of the two men from their wonted haunts.

There was a moderate sea at the time; and the moon newly risen, and near to being at its full, silvered the white spar-deck wherever not blotted by the clear-cut shadows horizontally thrown of fixtures and moving men. On either side the quarter-deck the marine guard under arms was drawn up; and Captain Vere, standing in his place surrounded by all the ward-room officers, addressed his men. In so doing his manner showed neither more nor less than that properly pertaining to his supreme position aboard his own ship. In clear terms and concise he told them what had taken place in the cabin; that the master-at-arms was dead; that he who had killed him had been already tried by a summary court and condemned to death; and that the execution would take place in the early morning watch. The word mutiny was not named in what he said. He refrained, too, from making the occasion an opportunity for any preachment as to the maintenance of discipline, thinking, perhaps, that under existing circumstances in the Navy the consequence of violating discipline should be made to speak for itself.

Their captain's announcement was listened to by the throng of standing sailors in a dumbness like that of a seated congregation of believers in Hell listening to their clergyman's announcement of his Calvinistic text.[5]

At the close, however, a confused murmur went up. It began to wax all but instantly, then at a sign, was pierced and suppressed by shrill whistles of the boatswain and his mates piping, 'Down one watch.'[6]

To be prepared for burial Claggart's body was delivered to certain petty officers of his mess. And here, not to clog the sequel with lateral matters, it may be added that at a suitable hour, the master-at-arms was committed to the sea with every funeral honour properly belonging to his naval grade.

In this proceeding, as in every public one growing out of the tragedy, strict adherence to usage was observed. Nor in any point could it have been at all deviated from, either with respect to Claggart or Billy Budd, without begetting undesirable

speculations in the ship's company, sailors, and more particularly man-of-war's men, being of all men the greatest sticklers for usage.

For similar cause all communication between Captain Vere and the condemned one ended with the closeted interview already given, the latter being now surrendered to the ordinary routine preliminary to the end. This transfer under guard from the captain's quarters was effected without unusual precautions—at least no visible ones.

If possible, not to let the men so much as surmise that their officers anticipate aught amiss from them, is the tacit rule in a military ship. And the more that some sort of trouble should really be apprehended, the more do the officers keep that apprehension to themselves; though not the less unostentatious vigilance may be augmented.

In the present instance the sentry placed over the prisoner had strict orders to let no one have communication with him but the chaplain. And certain unobtrusive measures were taken absolutely to ensure this point.

5. Melville's MS. contains at this point the words 'Jonathan Edwards' in brackets. Clearly Melville had in mind the great New England Calvinist preacher and theologian when he was writing this sentence.

6. There is an author's note in the margin of the MS. reading:—Another order to be given here in place of this one.

XX

In a seventy-four of the old order the deck known as the upper gun-deck was the one covered over by the spar-deck, which last, though not without its armament, was for the most part exposed to the weather. In general it was at all hours free from hammocks; those of the crew swinging on the lower gun-deck and berth-deck, the latter being not only a dormitory but also the place for the stowing of the sailors'

bags, and on both sides lined with the large chests or movable pantries of the many messes of the men.

On the starboard side of the Indomitable's upper gun-deck, behold Billy Budd under sentry lying prone in irons in one of the bays formed by the regular spacing of the guns comprising the batteries on either side. All these pieces were of the heavier calibre of that period. Mounted on lumbering wooden carriages, they were hampered with cumbersome harness of breeching and strong side-tackles for running them out. Guns and carriages, together with the long rammers and shorter lintstocks lodged in loops overhead—all these, as customary, were painted black; and the heavy hempen breechings tarred to the same tint, wore the like livery of the undertaker. In contrast with the funereal tone of these surroundings the prone sailor's exterior apparel, white jumper and white duck trowsers, each more or less soiled, dimly glimmered in the obscure light of the bay like a patch of discoloured snow in early April lingering at some upland cave's black mouth. In effect he is already in his shroud or the garments that shall serve him in lieu of one. Over him, but scarce illuminating him, two battle-lanterns swing from two massive beams of the deck above. Fed with the oil supplied by the war-contractors (whose gains, honest or otherwise, are in every land an anticipated portion of the harvest of death) with flickering splashes of dirty yellow light they pollute the pale moonshine all but ineffectually struggling in obstructed flecks through the open ports from which the tompioned cannon protrude. Other lanterns at intervals serve but to bring out somewhat the obscurer bays which, like small confessionals or side-chapels in a cathedral, branch from the long, dim-vistaed, broad aisle, between the two batteries of that covered tier.

Such was the deck where now lay the Handsome Sailor. Through the rose-tan of his complexion, no pallor could have shown. It would have taken days of sequestration from the winds and the sun to have brought about the effacement of that. But the skeleton in the cheek-bone at the point of its angle was just beginning delicately to be defined under the warm-tinted skin. In fervid hearts self-contained some brief

experiences devour our human tissue as secret fire in a ship's hold consumes cotton in the bale.

But now, lying between the two guns, as nipped in the vice of fate, Billy's agony, mainly proceeding from a generous young heart's virgin experience of the diabolical incarnate and effective in some men—the tension of that agony was over now. It survived not the something healing in the closeted interview with Captain Vere. Without movement he lay as in a trance, that adolescent expression, previously noted as his, taking on something akin to the look of a slumbering child in the cradle when the warm hearth-glow of the still chamber of night plays on the dimples that at whiles mysteriously form in the cheek, silently coming and going there. For now and then in the gyved one's trance, a serene happy light born of some wandering reminiscence or dream would diffuse itself over his face, and then wane away only anew to return.

The chaplain coming to see him and finding him thus, and perceiving no sign that he was conscious of his presence, attentively regarded him for a space, then slipping aside, withdrew for the time, peradventure feeling that even he, the minister of Christ, though receiving his stipend from wars, had no consolation to proffer which could result in a peace transcending that which he beheld. But in the small hours he came again. And the prisoner, now awake to his surroundings, noticed his approach, and civilly, all but cheerfully, welcomed him. But it was to little purpose that in the interview following the good man sought to bring Billy Budd to some Godly understanding that he must die, and at dawn. True, Billy himself freely referred to his death as a thing close at hand; but it was something in the way that children will refer to death in general, who yet among their other sports will play a funeral with hearse and mourners. Not that like children Billy was incapable of conceiving what death really is. No, but he was wholly without irrational fear of it, a fear more prevalent in highly civilised communities than those so-called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to unadulterate Nature. And, as elsewhere said, a

barbarian Billy radically was; quite as much so (for all the costume) as his countrymen the British captives, living trophies made to march in the Roman triumph of Germanicus. Quite as much so as those later barbarians, young men probably, and picked specimens among the earlier British converts to Christianity, at least nominally such, and taken to Rome (as to-day converts from lesser isles of the sea may be taken to London), of whom the Pope of that time, admiring the strangeness of their personal beauty, so unlike the Italian stamp, their clear, ruddy complexions and curled flaxen locks, exclaimed, ‘Angles’ (meaning English, the modern derivative), ‘Angles do you call them? And is it because they look so like Angels?’ Had it been later in time one would think that the Pope had in mind Fra Angelico’s seraphs, some of whom, plucking apples in gardens of Hesperides, have the faint rosebud complexion of the more beautiful English girls.

XXI

If in vain the good chaplain sought to impress the young barbarian with ideas of death akin to those conveyed in the skull, dial, and cross-bones on old tombstones; equally futile to all appearance were his efforts to bring home to him the thought of salvation and a Saviour. Billy listened, but less out of awe or reverence, perhaps, than from a certain natural politeness; doubtless at bottom regarding all that in much the same way that most mariners of his class take any discourse, abstract or out of the common tone of the workaday world. And this sailor way of taking clerical discourse is not wholly unlike the way in which the pioneer of Christianity, full of transcendent miracles, was received long ago on tropic isles by any superior savage so called—a Tahitian, say, of Captain Cook’s time or shortly after that time. Out of natural courtesy he received but did not appreciate. It was like a gift placed in the palm of an outstretched hand upon which the fingers do not close.

But the Indomitable’s chaplain was a discreet man possessing the good sense of a good heart. So he insisted not on his vocation here. At the instance of Captain Vere,

a lieutenant had apprised him of pretty much everything as to Billy; and since he felt that innocence was even a better thing than religion wherewith to go to judgment, he reluctantly withdrew; but in his emotion not without first performing an act strange enough in an Englishman, and under the circumstances yet more so in any regular priest. Stooping over, he kissed on the fair cheek his fellow-man, a felon in martial law, one who, though in the confines of death, he felt he could never convert to a dogma; nor for all that did he fear for his future.

Marvel not that having been made acquainted with the young sailor's essential innocence, the worthy man lifted not a finger to avert the doom of such a martyr to martial discipline. So to do would not only have been as idle as invoking the desert, but would also have been an audacious transgression of the bounds of his function, one as exactly prescribed to him by military law as that of the boatswain or any other naval officer. Bluntly put, a chaplain is the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War—Mars. As such, he is as incongruous as a musket would be on the altar at Christmas. Why, then, is he there? Because he indirectly subserves the purpose attested by the cannon; because, too, he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but force.[7]

7. There is an author's note in the margin of the MS. reading:—An irruption of heretic thought hard to suppress.

XXII

The night so luminous on the spar-deck (otherwise on the cavernous ones below—levels so like the tiered galleries in a coal-mine) passed away. Like the prophet in the chariot disappearing in heaven and dropping his mantle to Elisha, the withdrawing night transferred its pale robe to the peeping day. A meek, shy light appeared in the east, where stretched a diaphanous fleece of white furrowed vapour. That light slowly waxed. Suddenly one[8] bells was struck aft, responded to by one

louder metallic stroke from forward. It was four o'clock in the morning. Instantly the silver whistles were heard summoning all hands to witness punishment. Up through the great hatchway, rimmed with racks of heavy shot, the watch-below came pouring, overspreading with the watch already on deck the space between the mainmast and foremast, including that occupied by the capacious launch and the black booms tiered on either side of it, boat and booms making a summit of observation for the powder-boys and younger tars. A different group comprising one watch of topmen leaned over the side of the rail of that sea-balcony, no small one in a seventy-four, looking down on the crowd below. Man or boy, none spake but in whispers, and few spake at all. Captain Vere—as before, the central figure among the assembled commissioned officers—stood nigh the break of the poop-deck, facing forward. Just below him on the quarter-deck the marines in full equipment were drawn up much as at the scene of the promulgated sentence.

At sea in the old time, the execution by halter of a military sailor was generally from the fore-yard. In the present instance, for special reasons, the main-yard was assigned. Under an arm of that yard the prisoner was presently brought up, the chaplain attending him. It was noted at the time, and remarked upon afterwards, that in this final scene the good man evinced little or nothing of the perfunctory. Brief speech indeed he had with the condemned one, but the genuine Gospel was less on his tongue than in his aspect and manner toward him. The final preparations personal to the latter being speedily brought to an end by two boatswain's-mates, the consummation impended. Billy stood facing aft. At the penultimate moment, his words, his only ones, words wholly unobstructed in the utterance, were these—'God bless Captain Vere!' Syllables so unanticipated coming from one with the ignominious hemp about his neck—a conventional felon's benediction directed aft toward the quarters of honour; syllables, too, delivered in the clear melody of a singing-bird on the point of launching from the twig, had a phenomenal effect, not unenhanced by the rare personal beauty of the young sailor, spiritualised now

through late experiences so poignantly profound.

Without volition, as it were, as if indeed the ship's populace were the vehicles of some vocal current-electric, with one voice, from alow and aloft, came a resonant echo—'God bless Captain Vere!' And yet at that instant Billy alone must have been in their hearts, even as he was in their eyes.

At the pronounced words and the spontaneous echo that voluminously rebounded them, Captain Vere, either through stoic self-control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock, stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship-armourer's rack.

The hull, deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward, was just regaining an even keel, when the last signal, the preconcerted dumb one, was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vapoury fleece hanging low in the east, was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and ascending, took the full rose of the dawn.

In the pinioned figure, arrived at the yard-end, to the wonder of all, no motion was apparent save that created by the slow roll of the hull, in moderate weather so majestic in a great ship heavy-cannoned.

A Digression

When some days afterwards in reference to the singularity just mentioned, the purser, a rather ruddy, rotund person, more accurate as an accountant than profound as a philosopher, said at mess to the surgeon, 'What testimony to the force lodged in will-power,' the latter, spare and tall, one in whom a discreet causticity went along with a manner less genial than polite, replied, 'Your pardon, Mr. Purser. In a hanging scientifically conducted—and under special orders I myself directed how Budd's was to be effected—any movement following the completed suspension and originating in the body suspended, such movement indicates mechanical spasm in

the muscular system. Hence the absence of that is no more attributable to will-power, as you call it, than to horse-power—begging your pardon.'

'But this muscular spasm you speak of, is not that in a degree more or less invariable in these cases?'

'Assuredly so, Mr. Purser.'

'How then, my good sir, do you account for its absence in this instance?'

'Mr. Purser, it is clear that your sense of the singularity in this matter equals not mine. You account for it by what you call will-power, a term not yet included in the lexicon of science. For me I do not with my present knowledge pretend to account for it at all. Even should one assume the hypothesis that at the first touch of the halyards the action of Budd's heart, intensified by extraordinary emotion at its climax, abruptly stopped—much like a watch when in carelessly winding it up you strain at the finish, thus snapping the chain—even under that hypothesis how account for the phenomenon that followed?'

'You admit, then, that the absence of spasmodic movement was phenomenal?'

'It was phenomenal, Mr. Purser, in the sense that it was an appearance, the cause of which is not immediately to be assigned.'

'But tell me, my dear sir,' pertinaciously continued the other, 'was the man's death effected by the halter, or was it a species of euthanasia?'

'Euthanasia, Mr. Purser, is something like your will-power; I doubt its authenticity as a scientific term—begging your pardon again. It is at once imaginative and metaphysical—in short, Greek. But,' abruptly changing his tone, 'there is a case in the sick-bay that I do not care to leave to my assistants. Beg your pardon, but excuse me.' And rising from the mess he formally withdrew.

8. Written in pencil above this 'one,' an 'eight,' allowing a choice of readings.

XXIII

The silence at the moment of execution, and for a moment or two continuing thereafter, but emphasised by the regular wash of the sea against the hull, or the flutter of a sail caused by the helmsman's eyes being tempted astray, this emphasised silence was gradually disturbed by a sound not easily to be verbally rendered. Whoever has heard the freshet-wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountains, showers not shared by the plain; whoever has heard the first muffled murmur of its sloping advance through precipitous woods, may form some conception of the sound now heard. The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous indistinctness, since it came from close by, even from the men massed on the ship's open deck. Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance further than it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to, in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing of Billy's benediction. But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamour it was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt unexpectedness.

'Pipe down the starboard watch, boatswain, and see that they go.'

Shrill as the shriek of the sea-hawk the whistles of the boatswain and his mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it; and yielding to the mechanism of discipline the throng was thinned by one half. For the remainder, most of them were set to temporary employments connected with trimming the yards and so forth, business readily to be found upon occasion by any officer-of-the-deck.

Now each proceeding that follows a mortal sentence pronounced at sea by a drum-head court is characterised by promptitude not perceptibly merging into hurry, though bordering that. The hammock, the one which had been Billy's bed when alive, having already been ballasted with shot, and otherwise prepared to serve for his canvas coffin, the last office of the sea-undertakers, the sail-maker's mates, was

now speedily completed. When everything was in readiness a second call for all hands, made necessary by the strategic movement before mentioned, was sounded, and now to witness burial.

The details of this closing formality it needs not to give. But when the tilted plank let slide its freight into the sea, a second strange human murmur was heard, blended now with another inarticulate sound proceeding from certain larger sea-fowl, who, their attention having been attracted by the peculiar commotion in the water resulting from the heavy sloped dive of the shotted hammock into the sea, flew screaming to the spot. So near the hull did they come, that the stridor or bony creak of their gaunt double-jointed pinions was audible. As the ship under light airs passed on, leaving the burial spot astern, they still kept circling it low down with the moving shadow of their outstretched wings and the croaked requiem of their cries.

Upon sailors as superstitious as those of the age preceding ours, man-of-war's men, too, who had just beheld the prodigy of repose in the form suspended in air and now foundering in the deeps; to such mariners the action of the sea-fowl, though dictated by mere animal greed for prey, was big with no prosaic significance. An uncertain movement began among them, in which some encroachment was made. It was tolerated but for a moment. For suddenly the drum beat to quarters, which familiar sound happening at least twice every day, had upon the present occasion a signal peremptoriness in it. True martial discipline long continued superinduces in average man a sort of impulse of docility whose operation at the official tone of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of an instinct.

The drum-beat dissolved the multitude, distributing most of them along the batteries of the two covered gun-decks. There, as wont, the gun crews stood by their respective cannon erect and silent. In due course the first officer, sword under arm and standing in his place on the quarter-deck, formally received the successive reports of the sworded lieutenants commanding the sections of batteries below; the

last of which reports being made, the summed report he delivered with the customary salute to the commander. All this occupied time, which in the present case was the object of beating to quarters at an hour prior to the customary one. That such variance from usage was authorised by an officer like Captain Vere, a martinet as some deemed him, was evidence of the necessity for unusual action implied in what he deemed to be temporarily the mood of his men. ‘With mankind,’ he would say, ‘forms, measured forms, are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spell-binding the wild denizens of the woods.’ And this he once applied to the disruption of forms going on across the Channel and the consequences thereof.

At this unwonted muster at quarters all proceeded as at the regular hour. The band on the quarter-deck played a sacred air. After which the chaplain went through the customary morning service. That done, the drum beat the retreat, and toned by music and religious rites subserving the discipline and purpose of war, the men in their wonted orderly manner dispersed to the places allotted them when not at the guns.

And now it was full day. The fleece of low-hanging vapour had vanished, licked up by the sun that late had so glorified it. And the circumambient air in the clearness of its serenity was like smooth white marble in the polished block not yet removed from the marble-dealer’s yard.

XXIV

The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges; hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial.

How it fared with the Handsome Sailor during the year of the Great Mutiny has been faithfully given. But though properly the story ends with his life, something in way of sequel will not be amiss. Three brief chapters will suffice.

In the general re-christening under the Directory of the craft originally forming the navy of the French Monarchy, the St. Louis line-of-battle ship was named the Athéiste. Such a name, like some other substituted ones in the Revolutionary fleet, while proclaiming the infidel audacity of the ruling power, was yet, though not so intended to be, the aptest name, if one consider it, ever given to a warship; far more so indeed than the Devastation, the Erebus (the Hell), and similar names bestowed upon fighting-ships.

On the return passage to the English fleet from the detached cruise during which occurred the events already recorded, the Indomitable[9] fell in with the Athéiste. An engagement ensued, during which Captain Vere, in the act of putting his ship alongside the enemy with a view of throwing his boarders across the bulwarks, was hit by a musket-ball from a port-hole of the enemy's main cabin. More than disabled, he dropped to the deck and was carried below to the same cock-pit where some of his men already lay. The senior lieutenant took command. Under him the enemy was finally captured, and though much crippled, was by rare good fortune successfully taken into Gibraltar, an English port not very distant from the scene of the fight. There Captain Vere with the rest of the wounded was put ashore. He lingered for some days, but the end came. Unhappily he was cut off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar. The spirit that 'spite its philosophic austerity may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions, ambition, never attained to the fulness of fame.

Not long before death, while lying under the influence of that magical drug which, soothing the physical frame, mysteriously operates on the subtler element in man, he was heard to murmur words inexplicable to his attendant—'Billy Budd, Billy Budd.' That these were not the accents of remorse, would seem clear from what the attendant said to the Indomitable's[10] senior officer of marines, who, as the most reluctant to condemn of the members of the drum-head court, too well knew, though here he kept the knowledge to himself, who Billy Budd was.

9. Cf. p. 63 note.

10. Cf. p. 63 note.

XXV

Some few weeks after the execution, among other matters under the head of News from the Mediterranean, there appeared in a naval chronicle of the time, an authorised weekly publication, an account of the affair. It was doubtless for the most part written in good faith, though the medium, partly rumour, through which the facts must have reached the writer, served to deflect, and in part falsify them. Because it appeared in a publication now long ago superannuated and forgotten, and is all that hitherto has stood on human record to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd, it is here reproduced.

‘On the tenth of the last month a deplorable occurrence took place on board H.M.S. Indomitable. John Claggart, the ship’s master-at-arms, discovering that some sort of plot was incipient among an inferior section of the ship’s company, and that the ringleader was one William Budd, he, Claggart, in the act of arraigning the man before the captain was vindictively stabbed to the heart by the suddenly drawn sheath-knife of Budd.

‘The deed and the implement employed sufficiently suggest that though mustered into the service under an English name the assassin was no Englishman, but one of those aliens adopting an English cognomen whom the present extraordinary necessities of the Service have caused to be admitted into it in considerable numbers.

‘The enormity of the crime and the extreme depravity of the criminal, appear the greater in view of the character of the victim, a middle-aged man, respectable and discreet, belonging to that minor official grade, the petty officers, upon whom, as none know better than the commissioned gentlemen, the efficiency of His Majesty’s

Navy so largely depends. His function was a responsible one; at once onerous and thankless, and his fidelity in it the greater because of his strong patriotic impulse. In this instance, as in so many other instances in these days, the character of the unfortunate man signally refutes, if refutation were needed, that peevish saying attributed to Dr. Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

‘The criminal paid the penalty of his crime. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard H.M.S. Indomitable.’[11]

11. An author’s note, crossed out, here appears in the original MS. It reads:—Here ends a story not unwarranted by what happens in this incongruous world of ours—innocence and infirmary, spiritual depravity and fair respite.

XXVI

Everything is for a season remarkable in navies. Any tangible object associated with some striking incident of the service, is converted into a monument. The spar from which the foretopman was suspended, was for some few years kept trace of by the blue-jackets. Then knowledge followed it from ship to dockyard and again from dockyard to ship, still pursuing it even when at last reduced to a mere dockyard boom. To them a chip of it was as a piece of the Cross. Ignorant though they were of the real facts of the happening, and not thinking but that the penalty was unavoidably inflicted from the naval point of view, for all that they instinctively felt that Billy was a sort of man as incapable of mutiny as of wilful murder. They recalled the fresh young image of the Handsome Sailor, that face never deformed by a sneer or subtler vile freak of the heart within! This impression of him was doubtless deepened by the fact that he was gone, and in a measure mysteriously gone. On the gun-decks of the Indomitable the general estimate of his nature and its unconscious simplicity eventually found rude utterance from another foretopman, one of his own watch, gifted as some sailors are, with an artless poetic temperament.

The tarry hands made some lines, which, after circulating among the shipboard crew for a while, finally got rudely printed at Portsmouth as a ballad. The title given to it was the sailor's.

BILLY IN THE DARBIES

Good of the Chaplain to enter Lone Bay
And down on his marrow-bones here and pray
For the likes just o' me, Billy Budd.—But look:
Through the port comes the moon-shine astray!
It tips the guard's cutlass and silvers this nook;
But 'twill die in the dawning of Billy's last day,
A jewel-block they'll make of me to-morrow,
Pendant pearl from the yard-arm-end
Like the ear-drop I gave to Bristol-Molly—
Oh, 'tis me, not the sentence, they'll suspend.
Ay, ay, all is up; and I must up too
Early in the morning, aloft from alow.
On an empty stomach, now, never it would do.
They'll give me a nibble—bit o' biscuit ere I go.
Sure, a messmate will reach me the last parting cup;
But turning heads away from the hoist and the belay,
Heaven knows who will have the running of me up!
No pipe to those halyards—But aren't it all sham?
A blur's in my eyes; it is dreaming that I am.
A hatchet to my panzer? all adrift to go?

The drum roll to grog, and Billy never know?

But Donald he has promised to stand by the plank;

So I'll shake a friendly hand ere I sink.

But—no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think.

I remember Taff the Welshman when he sank.

And his cheek it was like the budding pink.

But me, they'll lash me in hammock, drop me deep

Fathoms down, fathoms down, how I'll dream fast asleep.

I feel it stealing now. Sentry, are you there?

Just ease these darbies at the wrist,

And roll me over fair.

I am sleepy and the oozy weeds about me twist.

END OF BOOK,

April 19, 1891.

OTHER PROSE PIECES

DANIEL ORME

(Omitted from 'Billy Budd')

A profound portrait-painter like Titian or our famous countryman Stewart, what such an observer sees in any face he may earnestly study, that essentially is the man. To disentangle his true history from contemporary report is superfluous. Not so with us who are scarce Titians and Stewarts. Occasionally we are struck by some exceptional aspect instantly awakening our interest. But it is an interest that in its ignorance is full of commonplace curiosity. We try to ascertain from somebody the

career and experience of the man, or may seek to obtain the information from himself. But what we hear from others may prove but unreliable gossip, and he himself, if approached, prove uncommunicative. In short, in most instances he turns out to be like a meteoric stone in a field. There it lies. The neighbours have their say about it, and an odd enough say it may prove. But what is it? Whence did it come? In what unimaginable sphere did it get that strange, igneous, metallic look, the kine now cropping the dewy grass about it?

Any attempt to depict such a character as is here suggested must be an imperfect one. Nevertheless, it is a man of this description who is the subject of the present essay at a sketch.

A sailor's name as it appears on a crew-list is not always his real name, nor in every instance does it indicate his country. This premised, be it said that by the name at the head of this writing long went an old man-of-war's man of whose earlier history it may verily be said that nobody knew anything but himself; and it was idle to seek it in that quarter. Conscientious, constantly so, in discharging his duties, the respect of his officers naturally followed. And for his fellow-sailors, if none had reason to like one so unlike themselves, none dared to take the slightest liberties with him. Any approach to it, and his eye was a tutoring and deterring one. Getting in years at last, he was retired as captain of a top, and assigned to a lower grade and post, namely, at the foot of the mainmast, his business there being simply to stand by, to let go, and make fast. But even this, with the night-watches, ere long exacted too much from a sailor, a septuagenarian. In brief, he belays his last halyard, and slips into obscure moorings ashore. Whatever his disposition may originally have been, there, in his latter cruise at least, had he been specially noted for his unsociability. Not that he was gruff like some marine veterans with the lumbago, nor stealthily taciturn like an Indian; but moody, frequently muttering to himself. And from such muttered soliloquy he would sometimes start, and with a look or gesture so uncheerfully peculiar that the Calvinistic imagination of a certain frigate's chaplain construed it

into remorseful condemnation of some dark deed in the past.

His features were large, strong, cast as in iron; but the effect of a cartridge explosion had peppered all below the eyes with dense dottings of black-blue. When according to custom he as mainmast man used to doff his hat in less laconic speech with the officer-of-the-deck, his tanned brow showed like October's tawny moon revealed in crescent above an ominous cloud. Along with his moody ways, was it this uncanny physical aspect, the result of a mere chance, was it this, and this alone, that had suggested the germ of the rumour among certain afterguardsmen that in earlier life he had been a bucanier of the Keys and the Gulf, one of Lafitte's murderous crew? Certain it is, he had once served on a letter-of-marque.

In stature, though bowed somewhat in the shoulders, akin to the champion of Gath. Hands heavy and hard; short nails like withered horn. A powerful head, and shaggy. An iron-gray beard broad as a commodore's pennant, and about the mouth indelibly streaked with the moodily dribbled tobacco juice of all his cruises. In his day watch-below silently couched by himself on the gun-deck in a bay between black cannon, he might have suggested an image of the Great Grizzly of the California Sierras, his coat the worse for wear, grim in his last den awaiting the last hour.

In his shore moorings—hard by the waters, not very far from the docks—what with his all-night-in and easier lot in every particular, with choice of associates when he desired them, which was not always, happily he lost most of his gruffness as the old mastiff of the mainmast exposed to all weathers and with salt-horse for his diet. A stranger accosting him sunning himself upon some old spar on the strand, and kindly saluting him there, would receive no surly response, and if more than mere salutation was exchanged, would probably go away with the impression that he had been talking with an interesting oddity, a salt philosopher, not lacking in a sort of grim common-sense.

After being ashore for a period, a singularity in his habits was remarked. At times,

but only when he might think himself quite alone, he would roll aside the bosom of his darned Guernsey frock and steadfastly contemplate something on his body. If by chance discovered in this, he would quickly conceal all and growl his resentment.

This peculiarity awakening the curiosity of certain idle observers, lodgers under the same roof with him, and none caring to be so bold as to question him as to the reason of it, or to ask what it was on his body, a drug was enlisted as a means of finding out the secret. In prudent quantities it was slyly slipped into his huge bowl of tea at supper. Next morning a certain old-clothes-man whispered to his gossips the result of his sorry intrusion overnight.

Drawing them into a corner, and looking around furtively, ‘Listen,’ said he, and told them an eerie story, following it up with shuddering conjectures, vague enough, but dear to the superstitious and ignorant mind. What he had really discovered was this: a crucifix in indigo and vermilion tattooed on the chest and on the side of the heart. Slanting across the crucifix and paling the pigment there ran a whitish scar, long and thin, such as might ensue from the slash of a cutlass imperfectly parried or dodged. The cross of the Passion is often tattooed upon the sailor, upon the forearm generally, sometimes, though but rarely, on the trunk. As for the scar, the old mastman had in legitimate naval service known what it was to repel boarders and not without receiving a sabre mark from them. It may be. The gossips of the lodging, however, took another view of the discovery, and at last reported to the landlady that the old sailor was a sort of man forbid, a man branded by the Evil Spirit, and it would be well to get rid of him, lest the charm in the horse-shoe nailed over the house-door should be fatally counteracted and be naught. The good woman, however, was a sensible lady with no belief in the horse-shoe, though she tolerated it, and as the old mastman was regular in his weekly dues, and never made noise or gave trouble, she turned a deaf ear to all solicitations against him.

Since in his presence it was ever prudently concealed, the old mariner was not then

aware of underhand proceedings. At sea it had never come to his ears that some of his shipmates thought him a bucanier, for there was a quiet leonine droop about the angles of his mouth that said—hands off. So now he was ignorant of the circumstances that the same rumour had followed him ashore. Had his habits been social, he would have socially felt the effect of this and cast about in vain for the cause; whether having basis or not, some ill-report is in certain instances like what sailors call a dry tempest, during which there is neither rain nor lightning, though none the less the viewless and intangible winds make a shipwreck and then ask—who did it?

So Orme pursued his solitary way with not much from without to disturb him. But Time's moments still keep descending upon the quietest hour, and though it were adamant they would wear it. In his retirement the superannuated giant begins to mellow down into a sort of animal decay. In hard, rude natures, especially such as have passed their lives among the elements, farmers or sailors, this animal decay mostly affects the memory by casting a haze over it; not seldom, it softens the heart as well, besides more or less, perhaps, drowsing the conscience, innocent or otherwise.

But let us come to the close of a sketch necessarily imperfect. One fine Easter Day, following a spell of rheumatic weather, Orme was discovered alone and dead on a height overlooking the seaward sweep of the great haven to whose shore, in his retirement from sea, he had moored. It was an evened terrace, destined for use in war, but in peace neglected and offering a sanctuary for anybody. Mounted on it was an obsolete battery of rusty guns. Against one of these he was found leaning, his legs stretched out before him; his clay pipe broken in twain, the vacant bowl and no spillings from it, attesting that his pipe had been smoked out to the last of its contents. He faced the outlet to the ocean. The eyes were open, still continuing in death the vital glance fixed on the hazy waters and the dim-seen sails coming and going or at anchor near by. What had been his last thoughts? If aught of reality

lurked in the rumours concerning him, had remorse, had penitence any place in those thoughts? Or was there just nothing of either? After all, were his moodiness and mutterings, his strange freaks, starts, eccentric shrugs and grimaces, were these but the grotesque additions like the wens and knobs and distortions of the trunk of an old chance apple-tree in an inclement upland, not only beaten by many storms, but also obstructed in its natural development by the chance of its having first sprouted among hard-packed rock? In short, that fatality, no more encrusting him, made him what he came to be? Even admitting that there was something dark that he chose to keep to himself, what then? Such reticence may sometimes be more for the sake of others than one's self. No, let us believe that that animal decay before mentioned still befriended him to the close, and that he fell asleep recalling through the haze of memory many a far-off scene of the wide world's beauty dreamily suggested by the hazy waters before him.

He lies buried among other sailors, for whom also strangers performed one last rite in a lonely plot overgrown with wild eglantine uncared for by man.

HAWTHORNE AND HIS MOSSES

BY A VIRGINIAN SPENDING JULY IN VERMONT

A papered chamber in a fine old farmhouse, a mile from any other dwelling, and dipped to the eaves in foliage—surrounded by mountains, old woods, and Indian pools,—this, surely, is the place to write of Hawthorne. Some charm is in this northern air, for love and duty seem both impelling to the task. A man of a deep and noble nature has seized me in this seclusion. His wild, witch-voice rings through me; or, in softer cadences, I seem to hear it in the songs of the hill-side birds that sing in the larch-trees at my window.

Would that all excellent books were foundlings, without father or mother, that so it might be we could glorify them, without including their ostensible authors! Nor would any true man take exception to this; least of all, he who writes, 'When the

artist rises high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he makes it perceptible to mortal senses becomes of little value in his eyes, while his spirit possesses itself in the enjoyment of the reality.'

But more than this. I know not what would be the right name to put on the title-page of an excellent book; but this I feel, that the names of all fine authors are fictitious ones, far more so than that of Junius; simply standing, as they do, for the mystical ever-eluding spirit of all beauty, which ubiquitously possesses men of genius. Purely imaginative as this fancy may appear, it nevertheless seems to receive some warranty from the fact, that on a personal interview no great author has ever come up to the idea of his reader. But that dust of which our bodies are composed, how can it fitly express the nobler intelligences among us? With reverence be it spoken, that not even in the case of one deemed more than man, not even in our Saviour, did his visible frame betoken anything of the augustness of the nature within. Else, how could those Jewish eyewitnesses fail to see heaven in his glance!

It is curious how a man may travel along a country road, and yet miss the grandest or sweetest of prospects by reason of an intervening hedge, so like all other hedges, as in no way to hint of the wide landscape beyond. So has it been with me concerning the enchanting landscape in the soul of this Hawthorne, this most excellent Man of Mosses. His Old Manse has been written now four years, but I never read it till a day or two since. I had seen it in the book-stores—heard of it often—even had it recommended to me by a tasteful friend, as a rare, quiet book, perhaps too deserving of popularity to be popular. But there are so many books called 'excellent,' and so much unpopular merit, that amid the thick stir of other things, the hint of my tasteful friend was disregarded, and for four years the Mosses on the Old Manse never refreshed me with their perennial green. It may be, however, that all this while the book, likewise, was only improving in flavour and body. At any rate, it so chanced that this long procrastination eventuated in a happy result. At breakfast the other day, a mountain girl, a cousin of mine, who for the last

two weeks has every morning helped me to strawberries and raspberries, which, like the roses and pearls in the fairy tale, seemed to fall into the saucer from those strawberry-beds, her cheeks—this delightful creature, this charming Cherry says to me—'I see you spend your mornings in the haymow; and yesterday I found there Dwight's Travels in New England. Now I have something far better than that, something more congenial to our summer on these hills. Take these raspberries, and then I will give you some moss.' 'Moss!' said I. 'Yes, and you must take it to the barn with you, and good-bye to Dwight.'

With that she left me, and soon returned with a volume, verdantly bound, and garnished with a curious frontispiece in green; nothing less than a fragment of real moss, cunningly pressed to a fly-leaf. 'Why, this,' said I, spilling my raspberries, 'this is the Mosses from an Old Manse.' 'Yes,' said cousin Cherry, 'yes, it is that flowery Hawthorne.' 'Hawthorne and Mosses,' said I, 'no more it is morning: it is July in the country: and I am off for the barn.'

Stretched on that new-mown clover, the hill-side breeze blowing over me through the wide barn door, and soothed by the hum of the bees in the meadows around, how magically stole over me this Mossy Man! and how amply, how bountifully, did he redeem that delicious promise to his guests in the Old Manse, of whom it is written: 'Others could give them pleasure, or amusement, or instruction—these could be picked up anywhere; but it was for me to give them rest—rest, in a life of trouble! What better could be done for those weary and world-worn spirits?… what better could be done for anybody who came within our magic circle than to throw the spell of a tranquil spirit over him?' So all that day, half-buried in the new clover, I watched this Hawthorne's 'Assyrian dawn, and Paphian sunset and moonrise from the summit of our eastern hill.'

The soft ravishments of the man spun me round about in a web of dreams, and when the book was closed, when the spell was over, this wizard 'dismissed me with but

misty reminiscences, as if I had been dreaming of him.'

What a wild moonlight of contemplative humour bathes that Old Manse!—the rich and rare distilment of a spicy and slowly-oozing heart. No rollicking rudeness, no gross fun fed on fat dinners, and bred in the lees of wine,—but a humour so spiritually gentle, so high, so deep, and yet so richly relishable, that it were hardly inappropriate in an angel. It is the very religion of mirth; for nothing so human but it may be advanced to that. The orchard of the Old Manse seems the visible type of the fine mind that has described it—those twisted and contorted old trees, 'they stretch out their crooked branches, and take such hold of the imagination that we remember them as humorists and odd-fellows.' And then, as surrounded by these grotesque forms, and hushed in the noonday repose of this Hawthorne's spell, how aptly might the still fall of his ruddy thoughts into your soul be symbolised by: 'In the stillest afternoon, if I listened, the thump of a great apple was audible, falling without a breath of wind, from the mere necessity of perfect ripeness.' For no less ripe than ruddy are the apples of the thoughts and fancies in this sweet Man of Mosses.

Buds and Bird Voices. What a delicious thing is that! 'Will the world ever be so decayed, that spring may not renew its greenness?' And the Fire Worship. Was ever the hearth so glorified into an altar before? The mere title of that piece is better than any common work in fifty folio volumes. How exquisite is this: 'Nor did it lessen the charm of his soft, familiar courtesy and helpfulness that the mighty spirit, were opportunity offered him, would run riot through the peaceful house, wrap its inmates in his terrible embrace, and leave nothing of them save their whitened bones. This possibility of mad destruction only made his domestic kindness the more beautiful and touching. It was so sweet of him, being endowed with such power, to dwell day after day, and one long lonesome night after another, on the dusky hearth, only now and then betraying his wild nature by thrusting his red tongue out of the chimney-top! True, he had done much mischief in the world, and was pretty certain to do more; but his warm heart atoned for all. He was kindly to the race of man; and

they pardoned his characteristic imperfections.'

But he has still other apples, not quite so ruddy, though full as ripe:—apples, that have been left to wither on the tree, after the pleasant autumn gathering is past. The sketch of The Old Apple Dealer is conceived in the subtlest spirit of sadness; he whose 'subdued and nerveless boyhood prefigured his abortive prime, which likewise contained within itself the prophecy and image of his lean and torpid age.' Such touches as are in this piece cannot proceed from any common heart. They argue such a depth of tenderness, such a boundless sympathy with all forms of being, such an omnipresent love, that we must needs say that this Hawthorne is here almost alone in his generation,—at least, in the artistic manifestation of these things. Still more. Such touches as these—and many, very many similar ones, all through his chapters—furnish clues whereby we enter a little way into the intricate, profound heart where they originated. And we see that suffering, some time or other, and in some shape or other,—this only can enable any man to depict it in others. All over him, Hawthorne's melancholy rests like an Indian summer, which, though bathing a whole country in one softness, still reveals the distinctive hue of every towering hill and each far-winding vale.

But it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. Where Hawthorne is known, he seems to be deemed a pleasant writer, with a pleasant style,—a sequestered, harmless man, from whom any deep and weighty thing would hardly be anticipated—a man who means no meanings. But there is no man, in whom humour and love, like mountain peaks, soar to such a rapt height as to receive the irradiations of the upper skies;—there is no man in whom humour and love are developed in that high form called genius; no such man can exist without also possessing, as the indispensable complement of these, a great, deep intellect, which drops down into the universe like a plummet. Or, love and humour are only the eyes through which such an intellect views this world. The great beauty in such a mind is but the product of its strength. What, to all readers, can be more charming than the

piece entitled Monsieur du Miroir; and to a reader at all capable of fully fathoming it, what, at the same time, can possess more mystical depth of meaning?—yes, there he sits and looks at me,—this ‘shape of mystery,’ this ‘identical Monsieur du Miroir!’ ‘Methinks I should tremble now were his wizard power of gliding through all impediments in search of me to place him suddenly before my eyes.’

How profound, nay, appalling, is the moral evolved by the Earth’s Holocaust; where—beginning with the hollow follies and affectations of the world,—all vanities and empty theories and forms are, one after another, and by an admirably graduated, growing comprehensiveness, thrown into the allegorical fire, till, at length, nothing is left but the all-engendering heart of man; which remaining still unconsumed, the great conflagration is naught.

Of a piece with this, is the Intelligence Office, a wondrous symbolising of the secret workings in men’s souls. There are other sketches still more charged with ponderous import.

The Christmas Banquet, and The Bosom Serpent, would be fine subjects for a curious and elaborate analysis, touching the conjectural parts of the mind that produced them. For spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne’s soul, the other side—like the dark half of the physical sphere—is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black. But this darkness but gives more effect to the ever-moving dawn, that forever advances through it, and circumnavigates his world. Whether Hawthorne has simply availed himself of this mystical blackness as a means to the wondrous effects he makes it to produce in his lights and shades; or whether there really lurks in him, perhaps unknown to himself, a touch of Puritanic gloom,—this, I cannot altogether tell. Certain it is, however, that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can

weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance. At all events, perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne. Still more: this black conceit pervades him through and through. You may be witched by his sunlight—transported by the bright gildings in the skies he builds over you; but there is the blackness of darkness beyond; and even his bright gildings but fringe and play upon the edges of thunder-clouds. In one word, the world is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne. He himself must often have smiled at its absurd misconception of him. He is immeasurably deeper than the plummet of the mere critic. For it is not the brain that can test such a man; it is only the heart. You cannot come to know greatness by inspecting it; there is no glimpse to be caught of it, except by intuition; you need not ring it, you but touch it, and you find it is gold.

Now, it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken, that so fixes and fascinates me. It may be, nevertheless, that it is too largely developed in him. Perhaps he does not give us a ray of light for every shade of his dark. But however this may be, this blackness it is that furnishes the infinite obscure of his background,—that background, against which Shakespeare plays his grandest conceits, the things that have made for Shakespeare his loftiest but most circumscribed renown, as the profoundest of thinkers. For by philosophers Shakespeare is not adored, as the great man of tragedy and comedy:—‘Off with his head; so much for Buckingham!’ This sort of rant interlined by another hand, brings down the house,—those mistaken souls, who dream of Shakespeare as a mere man of Richard the Third humps and Macbeth daggers. But it is those deep far-away things in him; those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality;—these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare. Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his

own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them. Tormented into desperation, Lear, the frantic king, tears off the mask, and speaks the same madness of vital truth. But, as I before said, it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. And so, much of the blind, unbridled admiration that has been heaped upon Shakespeare, has been lavished upon the least part of him. And few of his endless commentators and critics seem to have remembered, or even perceived, that the immediate products of a great mind are not so great as that undeveloped and sometimes undevelopable yet dimly-discernible greatness, to which those immediate products are but the infallible indices. In Shakespeare's tomb lies infinitely more than Shakespeare ever wrote. And if I magnify Shakespeare, it is not so much for what he did do as for what he did not do, or refrained from doing. For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a scared white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,—even though it be covertly and by snatches.

But if this view of the all-popular Shakespeare be seldom taken by his readers, and if very few who extol him have ever read him deeply, or perhaps, only have seen him on the tricky stage (which alone made, and is still making him, his mere mob renown)—if few men have time, or patience, or palate, for the spiritual truth as it is in that great genius—it is then no matter of surprise, that in a contemporaneous age, Nathaniel Hawthorne is a man as yet almost utterly mistaken among men. Here and there, in some quiet armchair in the noisy town, or some deep nook among the noiseless mountains, he may be appreciated for something of what he is. But unlike Shakespeare, who was forced to the contrary course by circumstances, Hawthorne (either from simple disinclination, or else from inaptitude) refrains from all the popularising noise and show of broad farce and blood-besmeared tragedy; content with the still, rich utterance of a great intellect in repose, and which sends few thoughts into circulation, except they be arterialised at his large warm lungs, and expanded in his honest heart.

Nor need you fix upon that blackness in him, if it suit you not. Nor, indeed, will all readers discern it; for it is, mostly, insinuated to those who may best understand it, and account for it; it is not obtruded upon every one alike.

Some may start to read of Shakespeare and Hawthorne on the same page. They may say, that if an illustration were needed, a lesser light might have sufficed to elucidate this Hawthorne, this small man of yesterday. But I am not willingly one of those who, as touching Shakespeare at least, exemplify the maxim of Rochefoucauld, that 'we exalt the reputation of some, in order to depress that of others';—who, to teach all noble-souled aspirants that there is no hope for them, pronounce Shakespeare absolutely unapproachable. But Shakespeare has been approached. There are minds that have gone as far as Shakespeare into the universe. And hardly a mortal man, who, at some time or other, has not felt as great thoughts in him as any you will find in Hamlet. We must not inferentially malign mankind for the sake of any one man, whoever he may be. This is too cheap a purchase of contentment for conscious mediocrity to make. Besides, this absolute and unconditional adoration of Shakespeare has grown to be a part of our Anglo-Saxon superstitions. The Thirty-Nine Articles are now forty. Intolerance has come to exist in this matter. You must believe in Shakespeare's unapproachability, or quit the country. But what sort of a belief is this for an American, a man who is bound to carry republican progressiveness into Literature as well as into Life? Believe me, my friends, that men not very much inferior to Shakespeare are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio. And the day will come when you shall say, Who reads a book by an Englishman that is a modern? The great mistake seems to be, that even with those Americans who look forward to the coming of a great literary genius among us, they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth's day; be a writer of dramas founded upon old English history or the tales of Boccaccio. Whereas, great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a corresponding colouring. It is of a piece with the Jews, who, while their Shiloh was

meekly walking in their streets, were still praying for his magnificent coming; looking for him in a chariot, who was already among them on an ass. Nor must we forget that, in his own lifetime, Shakespeare was not Shakespeare, but only Master William Shakespeare of the shrewd, thriving, business firm of Condell, Shakespeare and Co., proprietors of the Globe Theatre in London; and by a courtly author, of the name of Chettle, was looked at as an ‘upstart crow,’ beautified ‘with other birds’ feathers.’ For, mark it well, imitation is often the first charge brought against originality. Why this is so, there is not space to set forth here. You must have plenty of sea-room to tell the Truth in; especially when it seems to have an aspect of newness, as America did in 1492, though it was then just as old, and perhaps older than Asia, only those sagacious philosophers, the common sailors, had never seen it before, swearing it was all water and moonshine there.

Now I do not say that Nathaniel of Salem is a greater man than William of Avon, or as great. But the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable. Not a very great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William.

This, too, I mean, that if Shakespeare has not been equalled, give the world time, and he is sure to be surpassed in one hemisphere or the other. Nor will it at all do to say that the world is getting gray and grizzled now, and has lost that fresh charm which she wore of old, and by virtue of which the great poets of past times made themselves what we esteem them to be. Not so. The world is as young to-day as when it was created; and this Vermont morning dew is as wet to my feet, as Eden’s dew to Adam’s. Nor has nature been all over ransacked by our progenitors, so that no new charms and mysteries remain for this latter generation to find. Far from it. The trillionth part has not yet been said; and all that has been said, but multiplies the avenues to what remains to be said. It is not so much paucity as superabundance of material that seems to incapacitate modern authors.

Let America, then, prize and cherish her writers; yea, let her glorify them. They are

not so many in number as to exhaust her goodwill. And while she has good kith and kin of her own to take to her bosom, let her not lavish her embraces upon the household of an alien. For believe it or not, England after all, is in many things an alien to us. China has more bonds of real love for us than she. But even were there no strong literary individualities among us, as there are some dozens at least, nevertheless, let America first praise mediocrity even, in her children, before she praises (for everywhere, merit demands acknowledgment from every one) the best excellence in the children of any other land. Let her own authors, I say, have the priority of appreciation. I was much pleased with a hot-headed Carolina cousin of mine, who once said,—'If there were no other American to stand by, in literature, why, then, I would stand by Pop Emmons and his Fredoniad, and till a better epic came along, swear it was not very far behind the Iliad.' Take away the words, and in spirit he was sound.

Not that American genius needs patronage in order to expand. For that explosive sort of stuff will expand though screwed up in a vice, and burst it, though it were triple steel. It is for the nation's sake, and not for her authors' sake, that I would have America be heedful of the increasing greatness among her writers. For how great the shame, if other nations should be before her, in crowning her heroes of the pen! But this is almost the case now. American authors have received more just and discriminating praise (however loftily and ridiculously given, in certain cases) even from some Englishmen, than from their own countrymen. There are hardly five critics in America; and several of them are asleep. As for patronage, it is the American author who now patronises his country, and not his country him. And if at times some among them appeal to the people for more recognition, it is not always with selfish motives, but patriotic ones.

It is true, that but few of them as yet have evinced that decided originality which merits great praise. But that graceful writer, who perhaps of all Americans has received the most plaudits from his own country for his productions,—that very

popular and amiable writer, however good and self-reliant in many things, perhaps owes his chief reputation to the self-acknowledged imitation of a foreign model, and to the studied avoidance of all topics but smooth ones. But it is better to fail in originality, than to succeed in imitation. He who has never failed somewhere, that man cannot be great. Failure is the true test of greatness. And if it be said, that continual success is a proof that a man wisely knows his powers,—it is only to be added, that, in that case, he knows them to be small. Let us believe it, then, once for all, that there is no hope for us in these smooth, pleasing writers that know their powers. Without malice, but to speak the plain fact, they but furnish an appendix to Goldsmith, and other English authors. And we want no American Goldsmiths, nay, we want no American Miltons. It were the vilest thing you could say of a true American author, that he were an American Tompkins. Call him an American and have done, for you cannot say a nobler thing of him. But it is not meant that all American writers should studiously cleave to nationality in their writings; only this, no American writer should write like an Englishman or a Frenchman; let him write like a man, for then he will be sure to write like an American. Let us away with this leaven of literary flunkeyism toward England. If either must play the flunkey in this thing, let England do it, not us. While we are rapidly preparing for that political supremacy among the nations which prophetically awaits us at the close of the present century, in a literary point of view, we are deplorably unprepared for it; and we seem studious to remain so. Hitherto, reasons might have existed why this should be; but no good reason exists now. And all that is requisite to amendment in this matter, is simply this: that while fully acknowledging all excellence everywhere, we should refrain from unduly lauding foreign writers, and, at the same time, duly recognise the meritorious writers that are our own; those writers who breathe that unshackled, democratic spirit of Christianity in all things, which now takes the practical lead in this world, though at the same time led by ourselves—us Americans. Let us boldly condemn all imitation, though it comes to us graceful and

fragrant as the morning; and foster all originality, though at first it be crabbed and ugly as our own pine knots. And if any of our authors fail, or seem to fail, then, in the words of my Carolina cousin, let us clap him on the shoulder and back him against all Europe for his second round. The truth is, that in one point of view this matter of a national literature has come to such a pass with us, that in some sense we must turn bullies, else the day is lost, or superiority so far beyond us, that we can hardly say it will ever be ours.

And now, my countrymen, as an excellent author of your own flesh and blood—an unimitating, and, perhaps, in his way, an inimitable man—whom better can I commend to you, in the first place, than Nathaniel Hawthorne. He is one of the new, and far better generation of your writers. The smell of young beeches and hemlocks is upon him; your own broad prairies are in his soul; and if you travel away inland into his deep and noble nature, you will hear the far roar of his Niagara. Give not over to future generations the glad duty of acknowledging him for what he is. Take that joy to yourself, in your own generation; and so shall he feel those grateful impulses on him, that may possibly prompt him to the full flower of some still greater achievement in your eyes. And by confessing him you thereby confess others; you brace the whole brotherhood. For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round.

In treating of Hawthorne, or rather of Hawthorne in his writings (for I never saw the man; and in the chances of a quiet plantation life, remote from his haunts, perhaps never shall); in treating of his works, I say, I have thus far omitted all mention of his Twice Told Tales, and Scarlet Letter. Both are excellent, but full of such manifold, strange, and diffusive beauties, that time would all but fail me to point the half of them out. But there are things in those two books, which, had they been written in England a century ago, Nathaniel Hawthorne had utterly displaced many of the bright names we now revere on authority. But I am content to leave Hawthorne to himself, and to the infallible finding of posterity; and however great may be the

praise I have bestowed upon him, I feel that in so doing I have served and honoured myself, rather than him. For, at bottom, great excellence is praise enough to itself; but the feeling of a sincere and appreciative love and admiration toward it, this is relieved by utterance, and warm, honest praise ever leaves a pleasant flavour in the mouth; and it is an honourable thing to confess to what is honourable in others.

But I cannot leave my subject yet. No man can read a fine author, and relish him to his very bones while he reads, without subsequently fancying to himself some ideal image of the man and his mind. And if you rightly look for it, you will almost always find that the author himself has somewhere furnished you with his own picture. For poets (whether in prose or verse), being painters by nature, are like their brethren of the pencil, the true portrait-painters, who, in the multitude of likenesses to be sketched, do not invariably omit their own; and in all high instances, they paint them without any vanity, though at times with a lurking something that would take several pages to properly define.

I submit it, then, to those best acquainted with the man personally, whether the following is not Nathaniel Hawthorne;—and to himself, whether something involved in it does not express the temper of his mind,—that lasting temper of all true, candid men—a seeker, not a finder yet:—

‘A man now entered, in neglected attire, with the aspect of a thinker, but somewhat too roughhewn and brawny for a scholar. His face was full of sturdy vigour, with some finer and keener attribute beneath; though harsh at first, it was tempered with the glow of a large, warm heart, which had force enough to heat his powerful intellect through and through. He advanced to the Intelligencer, and looked at him with a glance of such stern sincerity, that perhaps few secrets were beyond its scope.

‘“I seek for Truth,” said he.’

Twenty-four hours have elapsed since writing the foregoing. I have just returned from the haymow, charged more and more with love and admiration of Hawthorne.

For I have just been gleaning through the Mosses, picking up many things here and there that had previously escaped me. And I found that but to glean after this man, is better than to be in at the harvest of others. To be frank (though, perhaps, rather foolish), notwithstanding what I wrote yesterday of these Mosses, I had not then culled them all; but had, nevertheless, been sufficiently sensible of the subtle essence in them, as to write as I did. To what infinite height of loving wonder and admiration I may yet be borne, when by repeatedly banqueting on these Mosses I shall have thoroughly incorporated their whole stuff into my being—that, I cannot tell. But already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further and further, shoots his strong New England roots into the hot soil in my Southern soul.

By careful reference to the table of contents, I now find that I have gone through all the sketches; but that when I yesterday wrote, I had not at all read two particular pieces, to which I now desire to call special attention—A Select Party and Young Goodman Brown. Here, be it said to all those whom this poor fugitive scrawl of mine may tempt to the perusal of the Mosses, that they must on no account suffer themselves to be trifled with, disappointed, or deceived by the triviality of many of the titles to these sketches. For in more than one instance, the title utterly belies the piece. It is as if rustic demijohns containing the very best and costliest of Falernian and Tokay, were labelled ‘Cider,’ ‘Perry,’ and ‘Elderberry wine.’ The truth seems to be, that like many other geniuses, this Man of Mosses takes great delight in hoodwinking the world,—at least, with respect to himself. Personally, I doubt not that he rather prefers to be generally esteemed but a so-so sort of author; being willing to reserve the thorough and acute appreciation of what he is, to that party most qualified to judge—that is, to himself. Besides, at the bottom of their natures, men like Hawthorne, in many things, deem the plaudits of the public such strong presumptive evidence of mediocrity in the object of them, that it would in some degree render them doubtful of their own powers, did they hear much and vociferous

braying concerning them in the public pastures. True, I have been braying myself (if you please to be witty enough to have it so), but then I claim to be the first that has so brayed in this particular matter; and, therefore, while pleading guilty to the charge, still claim all the merit due to originality.

But with whatever motive, playful or profound, Nathaniel Hawthorne has chosen to entitle his pieces in the manner he has, it is certain that some of them are directly calculated to deceive—egregiously deceive, the superficial skimmer of pages. To be downright and candid once more, let me cheerfully say, that two of these titles did dolefully dupe no less an eager-eyed reader than myself; and that, too, after I had been impressed with a sense of the great depth and breadth of this American man. 'Who in the name of thunder' (as the country people say in this neighbourhood), 'who in the name of thunder, would anticipate any marvel in a piece entitled Young Goodman Brown?' You would of course suppose that it was a simple little tale, intended as a supplement to Goody Two Shoes. Whereas, it is deep as Dante; nor can you finish it, without addressing the author in his own words—'It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin.'… And with Young Goodman, too, in allegorical pursuit of his Puritan wife, you cry out in your anguish:—

'"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.'

Now this same piece entitled Young Goodman Brown, is one of the two that I had not all read yesterday; and I allude to it now, because it is, in itself, such a strong positive illustration of the blackness in Hawthorne, which I had assumed from the mere occasional shadows of it, as revealed in several of the other sketches. But had I previously perused Young Goodman Brown, I should have been at no pains to draw the conclusion, which I came to at a time when I was ignorant that the book

contained one such direct and unqualified manifestation of it.

The other piece of the two referred to, is entitled A Select Party, which, in my first simplicity upon originally taking hold of the book, I fancied must treat of some pumpkin-pie party in old Salem; or some chowder party on Cape Cod. Whereas, by all the gods of Peedee, it is the sweetest and sublimest thing that has been written since Spenser wrote. Nay, there is nothing in Spenser that surpasses it, perhaps nothing that equals it. And the test is this. Read any canto in The Faerie Queene and then read A Select Party, and decide which pleases you most, that is, if you are qualified to judge. Do not be frightened at this; for when Spenser was alive, he was thought of very much as Hawthorne is now,—was generally accounted just such a 'gentle' harmless man. It may be, that to common eyes, the sublimity of Hawthorne seems lost in his sweetness,—as perhaps in that same Select Party of his; for whom he has builded so august a dome of sunset clouds, and served them on richer plate than Belshazzar when he banqueted his lords in Babylon.

But my chief business now, is to point out a particular page in this piece, having reference to an honoured guest, who under the name of the Master Genius, but in the guise 'of a young man of poor attire, with no insignia of rank or acknowledged eminence,' is introduced to the Man of Fancy, who is the giver of the feast. Now, the page having reference to this Master Genius, so happily expresses much of what I yesterday wrote, touching the coming of the literary Shiloh of America, that I cannot but be charmed by the coincidence; especially, when it shows such a parity of ideas, at least in this one point, between a man like Hawthorne and a man like me.

And here, let me throw out another conceit of mine touching this American Shiloh, or Master Genius, as Hawthorne calls him. May it not be, that this commanding mind has not been, is not, and never will be, individually developed in any one man? And would it, indeed, appear so unreasonable to suppose, that this great fulness and overflowing may be, or may be destined to be, shared by a plurality of men of

genius? Surely, to take the very greatest example on record, Shakespeare cannot be regarded as in himself the concretion of all the genius of his time; nor as so immeasurably beyond Marlowe, Webster, Ford, Beaumont, Jonson, that these great men can be said to share none of his power? For one, I conceive that there were dramatists in Elizabeth's day, between whom and Shakespeare the distance was by no means great. Let any one, hitherto little acquainted with those neglected old authors, for the first time read them thoroughly, or even read Charles Lamb's Specimens of them, and he will be amazed at the wondrous ability of those Anaks of men, and shocked at this renewed example of the fact, that Fortune has more to do with fame than merit,—though without merit, lasting fame there can be none.

Nevertheless, it would argue too ill of my country were this maxim to hold good concerning Nathaniel Hawthorne, a man who already in some few minds has shed 'such a light as never illuminates the earth save when a great heart burns as the household fire of a grand intellect.'

The words are his,—in the Select Party; and they are a magnificent setting to a coincident sentiment of my own, but ramblingly expressed yesterday, in reference to himself. Gainsay it who will; as I now write, I am Posterity speaking by proxy—and after-times will make it more than good, when I declare, that the American who up to the present day has evinced, in literature, the largest brain with the largest heart, that man is Nathaniel Hawthorne. Moreover, that whatever Nathaniel Hawthorne may hereafter write, Mosses from an Old Manse will be ultimately accounted his masterpiece. For there is a sure, though secret sign in some works which proves the culmination of the powers (only the developable ones, however) that produced them. But I am by no means desirous of the glory of a prophet. I pray Heaven that Hawthorne may yet prove me an impostor in this prediction. Especially, as I somehow cling to the strange fancy, that, in all men, hiddenly reside certain wondrous, occult properties—as in some plants and minerals—which by some happy but very rare accident (as bronze was discovered by the melting of the iron

and brass at the burning of Corinth) may chance to be called forth here on earth; not entirely waiting for their better discovery in the more congenial, blessed atmosphere of heaven.

Once more—for it is hard to be finite upon an infinite subject, and all subjects are infinite. By some people this entire scrawl of mine may be esteemed altogether unnecessary, inasmuch ‘as years ago’ (they may say) ‘we found out the rich and rare stuff in this Hawthorne, who you now parade forth, as if only you yourself were the discoverer of this Portuguese diamond in your literature.’ But even granting all this—and adding to it, the assumption that the books of Hawthorne have sold by the five thousand—what does that signify? They should be sold by the hundred thousand; and read by the million; and admired by every one who is capable of admiration.

COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO!

OR THE CROWING OF THE NOBLE COCK BENEVENTANO

In all parts of the world many high-spirited revolts from rascally despotisms had of late been knocked on the head; many dreadful casualties, by locomotive and steamer, had likewise knocked hundreds of high-spirited travellers on the head (I lost a dear friend in one of them); my own private affairs were also full of despotisms, casualties, and knockings on the head, when early one morning in Spring, being too full of hypos to sleep, I sallied out to walk on my hill-side pasture.

It was a cool and misty, damp, disagreeable air. The country looked underdone, its raw juices squirting out all round. I buttoned out this squitchy air as well as I could with my lean, double-breasted dress-coat—my overcoat being so long-skirted I only used it in my wagon—and spitefully thrusting my crab-stick into the oozy sod, bent my blue form to the steep ascent of the hill. This toiling posture brought my head pretty well earthward, as if I were in the act of butting it against the world. I marked the fact, but only grinned at it with a ghastly grin.

All round me were tokens of a divided empire. The old grass and the new grass were striving together. In the low wet swales the verdure peeped out in vivid green; beyond, on the mountains, lay light patches of snow, strangely relieved against their russet sides; all the humped hills looked like brindled kine in the shivers. The woods were strewn with dry dead boughs, snapped off by the riotous winds of March, while the young trees skirting the woods were just beginning to show the first yellowish tinge of the nascent spray.

I sat down for a moment on a great rotting log nigh the top of the hill, my back to a heavy grove, my face presented toward a wide, sweeping circuit of mountains enclosing a rolling, diversified country. Along the base of one long range of heights ran a lagging, fever-and-agueish river, over which was a duplicate stream of dripping mist, exactly corresponding in every meander with its parent water below. Low down, here and there, shreds of vapour listlessly wandered in the air, like abandoned or helmless nations or ships—or very soaky towels hung on criss-cross clothes-lines to dry. Afar, over a distant village lying in a bay of the plain formed by the mountains, there rested a great flat canopy of haze, like a pall. It was the condensed smoke of the chimneys, with the condensed, exhaled breath of the villagers, prevented from dispersion by the imprisoning hills. It was too heavy and lifeless to mount of itself; so there it lay, between the village and the sky, doubtless hiding many a man with the mumps, and many a queasy child.

My eye ranged over the capacious rolling country, and over the mountains, and over the village, and over a farmhouse here and there, and over woods, groves, streams, rocks, fells—and I thought to myself, what a slight mark, after all, does man make on this huge great earth. Yet the earth makes a mark on him. What a horrid accident was that on the Ohio, where my good friend and thirty other good fellows were sloped into eternity at the bidding of a thick-headed engineer, who knew not a valve from a flue. And that crash on the railroad just over yon mountains there, where two infatuate trains ran pell-mell into each other, and climbed and clawed each other’s

backs; and one locomotive was found fairly shelled, like a chick, inside of a passenger car in the antagonist train; and near a score of noble hearts, a bride and her groom, and an innocent little infant, were all disembarked into the grim hulk of Charon, who ferried them over, all baggageless, to some clinkered iron-foundry country or other. Yet what's the use of complaining? What justice of the peace will right this matter? Yea, what's the use of bothering the very heavens about it? Don't the heavens themselves ordain these things—else they could not happen?

A miserable world! Who would take the trouble to make a fortune in it, when he knows not how long he can keep it, for the thousand villains and asses who have the management of railroads and steamboats, and innumerable other vital things in the world. If they would make me Dictator in North America a while, I'd string them up, and hang, draw, and quarter; fry, roast, and boil; stew, grill, and devil them, like so many turkey-legs—the rascally numskulls of stokers; I'd set them to stokering in Tartarus—I would!

Great improvements of the age! What! to call the facilitation of death and murder an improvement! Who wants to travel so fast? My grandfather did not, and he was no fool. Hark! here comes that old dragon again—that gigantic gad-fly of a Moloch—snort! puff! scream!—here he comes straight-bent through these vernal woods, like the Asiatic cholera cantering on a camel. Stand aside! here he comes, the chartered murderer! the death monopoliser! judge, jury, and hangman all together, whose victims die always without benefit of clergy. For two hundred and fifty miles that iron fiend goes yelling through the land, crying 'More! more! more!' Would that fifty conspiring mountains would fall atop of him! And, while they were about it, would they also fall atop of that smaller dunning fiend, my creditor, who frightens the life out of me more than any locomotive—a lantern-jawed rascal, who seems to run on a railroad track, too, and duns me even on Sunday, all the way to church and back, and comes and sits in the same pew with me, and pretending to be polite and hand me the prayer-book opened at the proper place, pokes his pesky bill

under my nose in the very midst of my devotions, and so shoves himself between me and salvation; for how can one keep his temper on such occasions?

I can't pay this horrid man; and yet they say money was never so plentiful—a drug in the market; but blame me if I can get any of the drug, though there never was a sick man more in need of that particular sort of medicine. It's a lie; money ain't plenty—feel of my pocket. Ha! here's a powder I was going to send to the sick baby in yonder hovel, where the Irish ditcher lives. That baby has the scarlet fever. They say the measles are rife in the country, too, and the varioloid, and the chicken-pox, and it's bad for teething children. And after all, I suppose many of the poor little ones, after going through all this trouble, snap off short; and so they had the measles, mumps, croup, scarlet fever, chicken-pox, cholera-morbus, summer-complaint, and all else, in vain! Ah! there's that twinge of the rheumatics in my right shoulder. I got it one night on the North River, when, in a crowded boat, I gave up my berth to a sick lady, and stayed on deck till morning in drizzling weather. There's the thanks one gets for charity! Twinge! Shoot away, ye rheumatics! Ye couldn't lay on worse if I were some villain who had murdered the lady instead of befriending her. Dyspepsia, too—I am troubled with that.

Hallo! here come the calves, the two-year-olds, just turned out of the barn into the pasture, after six months of cold victuals. What a miserable-looking set, to be sure! A breaking up of a hard winter, that's certain: sharp bones sticking out like elbows; all quilted with a strange stuff dried on their flanks like layers of pancakes. Hair worn quite off too, here and there; and where it ain't pancaked, or worn off, looks like the rubbed sides of mangy old hair-trunks. In fact, they are not six two-year-olds, but six abominable old hair-trunks wandering about here in this pasture.

Hark! By Jove, what's that? See! the very hair-trunks prick their ears at it, and stand and gaze away down into the rolling country yonder. Hark again! How clear! how

musical! how prolonged! What a triumphant thanksgiving of a cock-crow! ‘Glory be to God in the highest!’ It says those very words as plain as ever cock did in this world. Why, why, I begin to feel a little in sorts again. It ain’t so very misty, after all. The sun yonder is beginning to show himself: I feel warmer.

Hark! There again! Did ever such a blessed cock-crow so ring out over the earth before! Clear, shrill, full of pluck, full of fire, full of fun, full of glee. It plainly says—‘Never say die!’ My friends, it is extraordinary, is it not?

Unwittingly, I found that I had been addressing the two-year-olds—the calves—in my enthusiasm; which shows how one’s true nature will betray itself at times in the most unconscious way. For what a very two-year-old, and calf, I had been to fall into the sulks, on a hill-top too, when a cock down in the lowlands there, without discourse of reason, and quite penniless in the world, and with death hanging over him at any moment from his hungry master, sends up a cry like a very laureate celebrating the glorious victory of New Orleans.

Hark! there it goes again! My friends, that must be a Shanghai; no domestic-born cock could crow in such prodigious exulting strains. Plainly, my friends, a Shanghai of the Emperor of China’s breed.

But my friends the hair-trunks, fairly alarmed at last by such clamorously-victorious tones, were now scampering off, with their tails flirting in the air, and capering with their legs in clumsy enough sort of style, sufficiently evincing that they had not freely flourished them for the six months last past.

Hark! there again! Whose cock is that? Who in this region can afford to buy such an extraordinary Shanghai? Bless me—it makes my blood bound—I feel wild. What? jumping on this rotten old log here, to flap my elbows and crow too? And just now in the doleful dumps. And all this from the simple crow of a cock. Marvellous cock! But soft—this fellow now crows most lustily; but it’s only morning; let’s see how he’ll crow about noon, and toward nightfall. Come to think of it, cocks crow mostly

in the beginning of the day. Their pluck ain't lasting, after all. Yes, yes; even cocks have to succumb to the universal spell of tribulation: jubilant in the beginning, but down in the mouth at the end.

… 'Of fine mornings,

We fine lusty cocks begin our crows in gladness;

But when eve does come we don't crow quite so much,

For then cometh despondency and madness.'

The poet had this very Shanghai in his mind when he wrote that. But stop. There he rings out again, ten times richer, fuller, longer, more obstreperously exulting than before! Why, this is equal to hearing the great bell of St. Paul's rung at a coronation! In fact, that bell ought to be taken down, and this Shanghai put in its place. Such a crow would jollify all London, from Mile-End (which is no end) to Primrose Hill (where there ain't any primroses), and scatter the fog.

Well, I have an appetite for my breakfast this morning, if I have not had it for a week before. I meant to have only tea and toast; but I'll have coffee and eggs—no, brown stout and a beefsteak, I want something hearty. Ah, here comes the down-train: white cars, flashing through the trees like a vein of silver. How cheerfully the steam-pipe chirps! Gay are the passengers. There waves a handkerchief—going down to the city to eat oysters, and see their friends, and drop in at the circus. Look at the mist yonder; what soft curls and undulations round the hills, and the sun weaving his rays among them. See the azure smoke of the village, like the azure tester over a bridal-bed. How bright the country looks there where the river overflowed the meadows. The old grass has to knock under to the new. Well, I feel the better for this walk. Home now, and walk into that steak, and crack that bottle of brown stout; and by the time that's drunk—a quart of stout—by that time, I shall feel about as stout as Samson. Come to think of it, that dun may call, though. I'll just visit the woods and cut a club. I'll club him, by Jove, if he duns me this day.

Hark! there goes Shanghai again. Shanghai says, ‘Bravo!’ Shanghai says, ‘Club him!’

Oh, brave cock!

I felt in rare spirits the whole morning. The dun called about eleven. I had the boy Jake send the dun up. I was reading Tristram Shandy, and could not go down under the circumstances. The lean rascal (a lean farmer, too—think of that!) entered, and found me seated in an armchair, with my feet on the table, and the second bottle of brown stout handy, and the book under eye.

‘Sit down,’ said I; ‘I’ll finish this chapter, and then attend to you. Fine morning. Ha! ha!—this is a fine joke about my Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman! Ha! ha! ha! let me read this to you.’

‘I have no time; I’ve got my noon chores to do.’

‘To the deuce with your chores!’ said I. ‘Don’t drop your old tobacco about here, or I’ll turn you out.’

‘Sir!’

‘Let me read you this about the Widow Wadman. Said the Widow Wadman—’

‘There’s my bill, sir.’

‘Very good. Just twist it up, will you; it’s about my smoking-time; and hand a coal, will you, from the hearth yonder!’

‘My bill, sir!’ said the rascal, turning pale with rage and amazement at my unwonted air (formerly I had always dodged him with a pale face), but too prudent as yet to betray the extremity of his astonishment. ‘My bill, sir!’—and he stiffly poked it at me.

‘My friend,’ said I, ‘what a charming morning! How sweet the country looks! Pray, did you hear that extraordinary cock-crow this morning? Take a glass of my stout!’

‘Yours? First pay your debts before you offer folks your stout!’

‘You think, then, that, properly speaking, I have no stout,’ said I, deliberately rising. ‘I’ll undeceive you. I’ll show you stout of a superior brand to Barclay and Perkins.’

Without more ado, I seized that insolent dun by the slack of his coat—(and, being a lean, shad-bellied wretch, there was plenty of slack to it)—I seized him that way, tied him with a sailor-knot, and thrusting his bill between his teeth, introduced him to the open country lying round about my place of abode.

‘Jake,’ said I, ‘you’ll find a sack of blue-nosed potatoes lying under the shed. Drag it here, and pelt this pauper away; he’s been begging pence of me, and I know he can work, but he’s lazy. Pelt him away, Jake!’

Bless my stars, what a crow! Shanghai sent up such a perfect pæan and laudamus—such a trumpet-blast of triumph, that my soul fairly snorted in me. Duns!—I could have fought an army of them! Plainly, Shanghai was of the opinion that duns only came into the world to be kicked, hanged, bruised, battered, choked, walloped, hammered, drowned, clubbed!

Returning indoors, when the exultation of my victory over the dun had a little subsided, I fell to musing over the mysterious Shanghai. I had no idea I would hear him so nigh my house. I wondered from what rich gentleman’s yard he crowed. Nor had he cut short his crows so easily as I had supposed he would. This Shanghai crowed till midday, at least. Would he keep a-crowing all day? I resolved to learn. Again I ascended the hill. The whole country was now bathed in a rejoicing sunlight. The warm verdure was bursting all round me. Teams were afield. Birds, newly arrived from the south, were blithely singing in the air. Even the crows cawed with a certain unction, and seemed a shade or two less black than usual.

Hark! there goes the cock! How shall I describe the crow of the Shanghai at noontide? His sunrise crow was a whisper to it. It was the loudest, longest, and most strangely musical crow that ever amazed mortal man. I had heard plenty of cock-crows before, and many fine ones; but this one! so smooth and flute-like in its

very clamour; so self-possessed in its very rapture of exultation; so vast, mounting, swelling, soaring, as if spurted out from a golden throat, thrown far back. Nor did it sound like the foolish, vain-glorious crow of some young sophomorean cock, who knew not the world, and was beginning life in audacious gay spirits, because in wretched ignorance of what might be to come. It was the crow of a cock who crowed not without advice; the crow of a cock who knew a thing or two; the crow of a cock who had fought the world and got the better of it, and was now resolved to crow, though the earth should heave and the heavens should fall. It was a wise crow; an invincible crow; a philosophic crow; a crow of all crows.

I returned home once more full of reinvigorated spirits, with a dauntless sort of feeling. I thought over my debts and other troubles, and over the unlucky risings of the poor oppressed peoples abroad, and over the railroad and steamboat accidents, and over even the loss of my dear friend, with a calm, good-natured rapture of defiance, which astounded myself. I felt as though I could meet Death, and invite him to dinner, and toast the Catacombs with him, in pure overflow of self-reliance and a sense of universal security.

Toward evening I went up to the hill once more to find whether, indeed, the glorious cock would prove game even from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Talk of Vespers or Curfew!—the evening crow of the cock went out of his mighty throat all over the land and inhabited it, like Xerxes from the East with his double-winged host. It was miraculous. Bless me, what a crow! The cock went game to roost that night, depend upon it, victorious over the entire day, and bequeathing the echoes of his thousand crows to night.

After an unwontedly sound, refreshing sleep I rose early, feeling like a carriage-spring—light, elliptical, airy, buoyant as sturgeon-nose—and, like a football, bounded up the hill. Hark! Shanghai was up before me. The early bird that caught the worm—crowing like a bugle worked by an engine—lusty, loud, all

jubilation. From the scattered farm-houses a multitude of other cocks were crowing, and replying to each other's crows. But they were as flageolets to a trombone. Shanghai would suddenly break in, and overwhelm all their crows with his one domineering blast. He seemed to have nothing to do with any other concern. He replied to no other crow, but crowed solely by himself, on his own account, in solitary scorn and independence.

Oh, brave cock!—oh, noble Shanghai!—oh, bird rightly offered up by the invincible Socrates, in testimony of his final victory over life.

As I live, thought I, this blessed day will I go and seek out the Shanghai, and buy him, if I have to clap another mortgage on my land.

I listened attentively now, striving to mark from what direction the crow came. But it so charged and replenished, and made bountiful and overflowing all the air, that it was impossible to say from what precise point the exultation came. All that I could decide upon was this: the crow came from out of the east, and not from out of the west. I then considered with myself how far a cock-crow might be heard. In this still country, shut in, too, by mountains, sounds were audible at great distances. Besides, the undulations of the land, the abuttings of the mountains into the rolling hill and valley below, produced strange echoes, and reverberations, and multiplications, and accumulations of resonance, very remarkable to hear, and very puzzling to think of. Where lurked this valiant Shanghai—this bird of cheerful Socrates—the game-fowl Greek who died unappalled? Where lurked he? Oh, noble cock, where are you? Crow once more, my Bantam! my princely, my imperial Shanghai! my bird of the Emperor of China! Brother of the Sun! Cousin of great Jove! where are you?—one crow more, and tell me your number!

Hark! like a full orchestra of the cocks of all nations, forth burst the crow. But where from? There it is; but where? There was no telling, further than it came from out the east.

After breakfast I took my stick and sallied down the road. There were many gentlemen's seats dotting the neighbouring country, and I made no doubt that some of these opulent gentlemen had invested a hundred-dollar bill in some royal Shanghai recently imported in the ship Trade Wind, or the ship White Squall, or the ship Sovereign of the Seas; for it must needs have been a brave ship with a brave name which bore the fortunes of so brave a cock. I resolved to walk the entire country, and find this noble foreigner out; but thought it would not be amiss to inquire on the way at the humblest homesteads, whether, peradventure, they had heard of a lately-imported Shanghai belonging to any of the gentlemen settlers from the city; for it was plain that no poor farmer, no poor man of any sort, could own such an oriental trophy, such a Great Bell of St. Paul's swung in a cock's throat.

I met an old man, ploughing, in a field nigh the road-side fence.

'My friend, have you heard an extraordinary cock-crow of late?'

'Well, well,' he drawled, 'I don't know—the Widow Crowfoot has a cock—and Squire Squaretoes has a cock—and I have a cock, and they all crow. But I don't know of any on 'em with 'strordinary crows.'

'Good morning to you,' said I, shortly; 'it's plain that you have not heard the crow of the Emperor of China's chanticleer.'

Presently I met another old man mending a tumble-down old rail-fence. The rails were rotten, and at every move of the old man's hand they crumbled into yellow ochre. He had much better let the fence alone, or else get him new rails. And here I must say, that one cause of the sad fact why idiocy more prevails among farmers than any other class of people, is owing to their undertaking the mending of rotten rail-fences in warm, relaxing spring weather. The enterprise is a hopeless one. It is a laborious one; it is a bootless one. It is an enterprise to make the heart break. Vast pains squandered upon a vanity. For how can one make rotten rail-fences stand up on their rotten pins? By what magic put pith into sticks which have lain freezing and

baking through sixty consecutive winters and summers? This it is, this wretched endeavour to mend rotten rail-fences with their own rotten rails, which drives many farmers into the asylum.

On the face of the old man in question incipient idiocy was plainly marked. For, about sixty rods before him extended one of the most unhappy and desponding broken-hearted Virginia rail-fences I ever saw in my life. While in a field behind, were a set of young steers, possessed as by devils, continually butting at this forlorn old fence, and breaking through it here and there, causing the old man to drop his work and chase them back within bounds. He would chase them with a piece of rail huge as Goliath's beam, but as light as cork. At the first flourish, it crumbled into powder.

'My friend,' said I, addressing this woeful mortal, 'have you heard an extraordinary cock-crow of late?'

I might as well have asked him if he had heard the death-tick. He stared at me with a long, bewildered, doleful, and unutterable stare, and without reply resumed his unhappy labours.

What a fool, thought I, to have asked such an uncheerful and uncheerable creature about a cheerful cock!

I walked on. I had now descended the high land where my house stood, and being in a low tract could not hear the crow of the Shanghai, which doubtless overshot me there. Besides, the Shanghai might be at lunch of corn and oats, or taking a nap, and so interrupted his jubilations for a while.

At length I encountered riding along the road, a portly gentleman—nay, a pursy one—of great wealth, who had recently purchased him some noble acres, and built him a noble mansion, with a goodly fowl-house attached, the fame whereof spread through all that country. Thought I, Here now is the owner of the Shanghai.

'Sir,' said I, 'excuse me, but I am a countryman of yours, and would ask, if so be

you own any Shanghais?'

'Oh, yes; I have ten Shanghais.'

'Ten!' exclaimed I in wonder; 'and do they all crow?'

'Most lustily; every soul of them; I wouldn't own a cock that wouldn't crow.'

'Will you turn back, and show me those Shanghais?'

'With pleasure: I am proud of them. They cost me, in the lump, six hundred dollars.'

As I walked by the side of his horse, I was thinking to myself whether possibly I had not mistaken the harmoniously combined crowings of ten Shanghais in a squad, for the supernatural crow of a single Shanghai by himself.

'Sir,' said I, 'is there one of your Shanghais which far exceeds all the others in the lustiness, musicalness, and inspiring effects of his crow?'

'They crow pretty much alike, I believe,' he courteously replied; 'I really don't know that I could tell their crow apart.'

I began to think that after all my noble chanticleer might not be in the possession of this wealthy gentleman. However, we went into his fowl-yard, and I saw his Shanghais. Let me say that hitherto I had never clapped eye on this species of imported fowl. I had heard what enormous prices were paid for them, and also that they were of an enormous size, and had somehow fancied they must be of a beauty and brilliancy proportioned both to size and price. What was my surprise, then, to see ten carrot-coloured monsters, without the smallest pretension to effulgence of plumage. Immediately I determined that my royal cock was neither among these, nor could possibly be a Shanghai at all; if these gigantic gallows-bird fowl were fair specimens of the true Shanghai.

I walked all day, dining and resting at a farm-house, inspecting various fowl-yards, interrogating various owners of fowls, hearkening to various crows, but discovered not the mysterious chanticleer. Indeed, I had wandered so far and deviously, that I

could not hear his crow. I began to suspect that this cock was a mere visitor in the country, who had taken his departure by the eleven o'clock train from the south, and was now crowing and jubilating somewhere on the verdant banks of Long Island Sound.

But next morning, again I heard the inspiring blast, again felt my blood bound in me, again felt superior to all the ills of life, again felt like turning my dun out of doors. But displeased with the reception given him at his last visit, the dun stayed away, doubtless being in a huff. Silly fellow that he was, to take a harmless joke in earnest.

Several days passed, during which I made sundry excursions in the regions round about, but in vain sought the cock. Still, I heard him from the hill, and sometimes from the house, and sometimes in the stillness of the night. If at times I would relapse into my doleful dumps, straightway at the sound of the exultant and defiant crow, my soul, too, would turn chanticleer, and clap her wings, and throw back her throat, and breathe forth a cheerful challenge to all the world of woes.

At last, after some weeks I was necessitated to clap another mortgage on my estate in order to pay certain debts, and among others the one I owed the dun, who of late had commenced a civil-process against me. The way the process was served was a most insulting one. In a private room I had been enjoying myself in the village tavern over a bottle of Philadelphia porter, and some Herkimer cheese, and a roll, and having apprised the landlord, who was a friend of mine, that I would settle with him when I received my next remittances, stepped to the peg where I had hung my hat in the bar-room, to get a choice cigar I had left in the hall, when lo! I found the civil-process enveloping the cigar. When I unrolled the cigar, I unrolled the civil-process, and the constable standing by rolled out, with a thick tongue, 'Take notice!' and added, in a whisper, 'Put that in your pipe and smoke it!'

I turned short round upon the gentlemen then and there present in that bar-room. Said I, 'Gentlemen, is this an honourable—nay, is this a lawful way of serving a

civil-process? Behold!'

One and all they were of opinion that it was a highly inelegant act in the constable to take advantage of a gentleman's lunching on cheese and porter, to be so uncivil as to slip a civil-process into his hat. It was ungenerous; it was cruel; for the sudden shock of the thing coming instanter upon the lunch would impair the proper digestion of the cheese, which is proverbially not so easy of digestion as blanc-mange.

Arrived home, I read the process, and felt a twinge of melancholy. Hard world! hard world! Here I am, as good a fellow as ever lived—hospitable—open-hearted—generous to a fault: and the Fatesforbid that I should possess the fortune to bless the countrywith my bounteousness. Nay, while many a stingy curmudgeon rolls inidle gold, I, heart of nobleness as I am, I have civil-processesserved on me! I bowed my head, and felt forlorn—unjustlyused—abused—unappreciated—in short, miserable.

Hark! like a clarion! yea, like a jolly bolt of thunder with bells to it—came the all-glorious and defiant crow! Ye gods, how it set me up again! Right on my pins! Yea, verily on stilts!

Oh, noble cock!

Plain as cock could speak, it said: 'Let the world and all aboard of it go to pot. Do you be jolly, and never say die. What's the world compared to you? What is it anyhow but a lump of loam? Do you be jolly!'

Oh, noble cock!

'But my dear and glorious cock,' mused I, upon second thought, 'one can't so easily send this world to pot; one can't so easily be jolly with civil-processes in his hat or hand.'

Hark! the crow again. Plain as cock could speak, it said: 'Hang the process, and hang the fellow that sent it! If you have not land or cash, go and thrash the fellow, and tell him you never mean to pay him. Be jolly!'

Now this was the way—through the imperative intimations of the cock—that I came to clap the added mortgage on my estate; paid all my debts by fusing them into this one added bond and mortgage. Thus made at ease again, I renewed my search for the noble cock. But in vain, though I heard him every day. I began to think there was some sort of deception in this mysterious thing: some wonderful ventriloquist prowled around my barns, or in my cellar, or on my roof, and was minded to be gaily mischievous. But no—what ventriloquist could so crow with such an heroic and celestial crow?

At last, one morning there came to me a certain singular man, who had sawed and split my wood in March—some five-and-thirty cords of it—and now he came for his pay. He was a singular man, I say. He was tall and spare, with a long, saddish face, yet somehow a latently joyous eye, which offered the strangest contrast. His air seemed staid, but undepressed. He wore a long, gray, shabby coat, and a big battered hat. This man had sawed my wood at so much a cord. He would stand and saw all day long in a driving snowstorm, and never wink at it. He never spoke unless spoken to. He only sawed. Saw, saw, saw—snow, snow, snow. The saw and the snow went together like two natural things. The first day this man came, he brought his dinner with him, and volunteered to eat it sitting on his buck in the snowstorm. From my window, where I was reading Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, I saw him in the act. I burst out of doors bare-headed. 'Good heavens!' cried I; 'what are you doing? Come in. This your dinner!'

He had a hunk of stale bread and another hunk of salt beef, wrapped in a wet newspaper, and washed his morsels down by melting a handful of fresh snow in his mouth. I took this rash man indoors, planted him by the fire, gave him a dish of hot pork and beans, and a mug of cider.

'Now,' said I, 'don't you bring any of your damp dinners here. You work by the job, to be sure, but I'll dine you for all that.'

He expressed his acknowledgments in a calm, proud, but not ungrateful way, and dispatched his meal with satisfaction to himself, and me also. It afforded me pleasure to perceive that he quaffed down his mug of cider like a man. I honoured him. When I addressed him in the way of business at his buck, I did so in a guardedly respectful and deferential manner. Interested in his singular aspect, struck by his wondrous intensity of application at his saw—a most wearisome and disgustful occupation to most people—I often sought to gather from him who he was, what sort of a life he led, where he was born, and so on. But he was mum. He came to saw my wood, and eat my dinners—if I chose to offer them—but not to gabble. At first I somewhat resented his sullen silence under the circumstances. But better considering it, I honoured him the more. I increased the respectfulness and deferentialness of my address toward him. I concluded within myself that this man had experienced hard times; that he had had many sore rubs in the world; that he was of a solemn disposition; that he was of the mind of Solomon; that he lived calmly, decorously, temperately; and though a very poor man, was, nevertheless, a highly respectable one. At times I imagined that he might even be an elder or deacon of some small country church. I thought it would not be a bad plan to run this excellent man for President of the United States. He would prove a great reformer of abuses.

His name was Merrymusk. I had often thought how jolly a name for so unjolly a wight. I inquired of people whether they knew Merrymusk. But it was some time before I learned much about him. He was by birth a Marylander, it appeared, who had long lived in the country round about; a wandering man; until within some ten years ago, a thriftless man, though perfectly innocent of crime; a man who would work hard a month with surprising soberness, and then spend all his wages in one riotous night. In youth he had been a sailor, and run away from his ship at Batavia, where he caught the fever, and came nigh dying. But he rallied, reshipped, landed home, found all his friends dead, and struck for the Northern interior, where he had

since tarried. Nine years back he had married a wife, and now had four children. His wife was become a perfect invalid; one child had the white-swelling, and the rest were rickety. He and his family lived in a shanty on a lonely barren patch nigh the railroad-track, where it passed close to the base of a mountain. He had bought a fine cow to have plenty of wholesome milk for his children; but the cow died during an accouchement, and he could not afford to buy another. Still, his family never suffered for lack of food. He worked hard and brought it to them.

Now, as I said before, having long previously sawed my wood, this Merrymusk came for his pay.

‘My friend,’ said I, ‘do you know of any gentleman hereabouts who owns an extraordinary cock?’

The twinkle glittered quite plain in the wood-sawyer’s eye.

‘I know of no gentleman,’ he replied, ‘who has what might well be called an extraordinary cock.’

Oh, thought I, this Merrymusk is not the man to enlighten me. I am afraid I shall never discover this extraordinary cock.

Not having the full change to pay Merrymusk, I gave him his due, as nigh as I could make it, and told him that in a day or two I would take a walk and visit his place, and hand him the remainder. Accordingly one fine morning I sallied forth upon the errand. I had much ado finding the best road to the shanty. No one seemed to know where it was exactly. It lay in a very lonely part of the country, a densely-wooded mountain on one side (which I call October Mountain, on account of its bannered aspect in that month), and a thicketed swamp on the other, the railroad cutting the swamp. Straight as a die the railroad cut it; many times a day tantalising the wretched shanty with the sight of all the beauty, rank, fashion, health, trunks, silver and gold, dry-goods and groceries, brides and grooms, happy wives and husbands, flying by the lonely door—no time to stop—flash! here they are—and there they

go!—out of sight at both ends—as if that part of the world were only made to fly over, and not to settle upon. And this was about all the shanty saw of what people call ‘life.’

Though puzzled somewhat, yet I knew the general direction where the shanty lay, and on I trudged. As I advanced, I was surprised to hear the mysterious cock crow with more and more distinctness. Is it possible, thought I, that any gentleman owning a Shanghai can dwell in such a lonesome, dreary region? Louder and louder, nigher and nigher, sounded the glorious and defiant clarion. Though somehow I may be out of the track to my wood-sawyer’s, I said to myself, yet, thank Heaven, I seem to be on the way toward that extraordinary cock. I was delighted with this auspicious accident. On I journeyed; while at intervals the crow sounded most invitingly, and jocundly, and superbly; and the last crow was ever nigher than the former one. At last, emerging from a thicket of elders, straight before me I saw the most resplendent creature that ever blessed the sight of man.

A cock, more like a golden eagle than a cock. A cock, more like a field-marshal than a cock. A cock, more like Lord Nelson with all his glittering arms on, standing on the Vanguard’s quarter-deck going into battle, than a cock. A cock, more like the Emperor Charlemagne in his robes at Aix-la-Chapelle, than a cock.

Such a cock!

He was of a haughty size, stood haughtily on his haughty legs. His colours were red, gold, and white. The red was on his crest alone, which was a mighty and symmetric crest, like unto Hector’s helmet, as delineated on antique shields. His plumage was snowy, traced with gold. He walked in front of the shanty, like a peer of the realm; his crest lifted, his chest heaved out, his embroidered trappings flashing in the light. His pace was wonderful. He looked like some noble foreigner. He looked like some Oriental king in some magnificent Italian opera.

Merrymusk advanced from the door.

‘Pray, is not that the Signor Beneventano?’

‘Sir!’

‘That’s the cock,’ said I, a little embarrassed. The truth was, my enthusiasm had betrayed me into a rather silly inadvertence. I had made a somewhat learned sort of allusion in the presence of an unlearned man. Consequently, upon discovering it by his honest stare, I felt foolish; but carried it off by declaring that this was the cock.

Now, during the preceding autumn I had been to the city, and had chanced to be present at a performance of the Italian Opera. In that opera figured in some royal character a certain Signor Beneventano—a man of a tall, imposing person, clad in rich raiment, like to plumage, and with a most remarkable, majestic, scornful stride. The Signor Beneventano seemed on the point of tumbling over backward with exceeding haughtiness. And, for all the world, the proud pace of the cock seemed the very stage-pace of the Signor Beneventano.

Hark! Suddenly the cock paused, lifted his head still higher, ruffled his plumes, seemed inspired, and sent forth a lusty crow. October Mountain echoed it; other mountains sent it back; still others rebounded it; it overran the country round. Now I plainly perceived how it was I had chanced to hear the gladdening sound on my distant hill.

‘Good heavens! do you own the cock? Is that cock yours?’

‘Is it my cock!’ said Merrymusk, looking slyly gleeful out of the corner of his long, solemn face.

‘Where did you get it?’

‘It chipped the shell here. I raised it.’

‘You?’

Hark! Another crow. It might have raised the ghosts of all the pines and hemlocks ever cut down in that country. Marvellous cock! Having crowed, he strode on again,

surrounded by a bevy of admiring hens.

‘What will you take for Signor Beneventano?’

‘Sir?’

‘That magic cock!—what will you take for him?’

‘I won’t sell him.’

‘I will give you fifty dollars.’

‘Pooh!’

‘One hundred!’

‘Pish!’

‘Five hundred!’

‘Bah!’

‘And you a poor man?’

‘No; don’t I own that cock, and haven’t I refused five hundred dollars for him?’

‘True,’ said I, in profound thought; ‘that’s a fact. You won’t sell him, then?’

‘No.’

‘Will you give him?’

‘No.’

‘Will you keep him, then!’ I shouted, in a rage.

‘Yes.’

I stood a while admiring the cock, and wondering at the man. At last I felt a redoubled admiration of the one, and a redoubled deference for the other.

‘Won’t you step in?’ said Merrymusk.

‘But won’t the cock be prevailed upon to join us?’ said I.

‘Yes. Trumpet! hither, boy! hither!’

The cock turned round, and strode up to Merrymusk.

‘Come!’

The cock followed us into the shanty.

‘Crow!’

The roof jarred.

Oh, noble cock!

I turned in silence upon my entertainer. There he sat on an old battered chest, in his old tattered gray coat, with patches at his knees and elbows, and a deplorably bunged hat. I glanced round the room. Bare rafters overhead, but solid junks of jerked beef hanging from them. Earth floor, but a heap of potatoes in one corner, and a sack of Indian meal in another. A blanket was strung across the apartment at the farther end, from which came a woman’s ailing voice and the voices of ailing children. But somehow in the ailing of these voices there seemed no complaint.

‘Mrs. Merrymusk and children?’

‘Yes.’

I looked at the cock. There he stood majestically in the middle of the room. He looked like a Spanish grandee caught in a shower, and standing under some peasant’s shed. There was a strange supernatural look of contrast about him. He irradiated the shanty; he glorified its meanness. He glorified the battered chest, and tattered gray coat, and the bunged hat. He glorified the very voices which came in ailing tones from behind the screen.

‘Oh, father,’ cried a little sickly voice, ‘let Trumpet sound again.’

‘Crow,’ cried Merrymusk.

The cock threw himself into a posture.

The roof jarred.

‘Does not this disturb Mrs. Merrymusk and the sick children?’

‘Crow again, Trumpet.’

The roof jarred.

‘It does not disturb them, then?’

‘Didn’t you hear ’em ask for it?’

‘How is it, that your sick family like this crowing?’ said I. ‘The cock is a glorious cock, with a glorious voice, but not exactly the sort of thing for a sick-chamber, one would suppose. Do they really like it?’

‘Don’t you like it? Don’t it do you good? Ain’t it inspiring? Don’t it impart pluck? give stuff against despair?’

‘All true,’ said I, removing my hat with profound humility before the brave spirit disguised in the base coat.

‘But then,’ said I, still with some misgivings, ‘so loud, so wonderfully clamorous a crow, methinks might be amiss to invalids, and retard their convalescence.’

‘Crow your best now, Trumpet!’

I leaped from my chair. The cock frightened me, like some overpowering angel in the Apocalypse. He seemed crowing over the fall of wicked Babylon, or crowing over the triumph of righteous Joshua in the vale of Askalon. When I regained my composure somewhat, an inquisitive thought occurred to me. I resolved to gratify it.

‘Merrymusk, will you present me to your wife and children?’

‘Yes. Wife, the gentleman wants to step in.’

‘He is very welcome,’ replied a weak voice.

Going behind the curtain, there lay a wasted, but strangely cheerful human face; and that was pretty much all; the body, hid by the counterpane and an old coat, seemed too shrunken to reveal itself through such impediments. At the bedside sat a pale girl, ministering. In another bed lay three children, side by side: three more pale faces.

‘Oh, father, we don’t mislike the gentleman, but let us see Trumpet too.’

At a word, the cock strode behind the screen, and perched himself on the children’s bed. All their wasted eyes gazed at him with a wild and spiritual delight. They seemed to sun themselves in the radiant plumage of the cock.

‘Better than a ’pothecary, eh?’ said Merrymusk. ‘This is Dr. Cock himself.’

We retired from the sick ones, and I reseated myself again, lost in thought over this strange household.

‘You seem a glorious independent fellow!’ said I.

‘And I don’t think you a fool, and never did. Sir, you are a trump.’

‘Is there any hope of your wife’s recovery?’ said I, modestly seeking to turn the conversation.

‘Not the least.’

‘The children?’

‘Very little.’

‘It must be a doleful life, then, for all concerned. This lonely solitude—this shanty—hard work—hard times.’

‘Haven’t I Trumpet? He’s the cheerer. He crows through all; crows at the darkest: Glory to God in the highest! Continually he crows it.’

‘Just the import I first ascribed to his crow, Merrymusk, when first I heard it from my hill. I thought some rich nabob owned some costly Shanghai; little weening any such poor man as you owned this lusty cock of a domestic breed.’

‘Poor man like me? Why call me poor? Don’t the cock I own glorify this otherwise inglorious, lean, lantern-jawed land? Didn’t my cock encourage you? And I give you all this glorification away gratis. I am a great philanthropist. I am a rich man—a very rich man, and a very happy one. Crow, Trumpet.’

The roof jarred.

I returned home in a deep mood. I was not wholly at rest concerning the soundness of Merrymusk's views of things, though full of admiration for him. I was thinking on the matter before my door, when I heard the cock crow again. Enough. Merrymusk is right.

Oh, noble cock! oh, noble man!

I did not see Merrymusk for some weeks after this; but hearing the glorious and rejoicing crow, I supposed that all went as usual with him. My own frame of mind remained a rejoicing one. The cock still inspired me. I saw another mortgage piled on my plantation; but only bought another dozen of stout, and a dozen-dozen of Philadelphia porter. Some of my relatives died; I wore no mourning, but for three days drank stout in preference to porter, stout being of the darker colour. I heard the cock crow the instant I received the unwelcome tidings.

'Your health in this stout, oh, noble cock!'

I thought I would call on Merrymusk again, not having seen or heard of him for some time now. Approaching the place, there were no signs of motion about the shanty. I felt a strange misgiving. But the cock crew from within doors, and the boding vanished. I knocked at the door. A feeble voice bade me enter. The curtain was no longer drawn; the whole house was a hospital now. Merrymusk lay on a heap of old clothes; wife and children were all in their beds. The cock was perched on an old hogshead hoop, swung from the ridge-pole in the middle of the shanty.

'You are sick, Merrymusk,' said I, mournfully.

'No, I am well,' he feebly answered. 'Crow, Trumpet.'

I shrunk. The strong soul in the feeble body appalled me.

But the cock crew.

The roof jarred.

'How is Mrs. Merrymusk?'

‘Well.’

‘And the children?’

‘Well. All well.’

The last two words he shouted forth in a kind of wild ecstasy of triumph over ill. It was too much. His head fell back. A white napkin seemed dropped upon his face. Merrymusk was dead.

An awful fear seized me.

But the cock crew.

The cock shook his plumage as if each feather were a banner. The cock hung from the shanty roof as erewhile the trophied flags from the dome of St. Paul’s. The cock terrified me with exceeding wonder.

I drew nigh the bedsides of the woman and children. They marked my look of strange affright; they knew what had happened.

‘My good man is just dead,’ breathed the woman lowly. ‘Tell me true?’

‘Dead,’ said I.

The cock crew.

She fell back, without a sigh, and through long-loving sympathy was dead.

The cock crew.

The cock shook sparkles from his golden plumage. The cock seemed in a rapture of benevolent delight. Leaping from the hoop, he strode up majestically to the pile of old clothes, where the wood-sawyer lay, and planted himself, like an armorial supporter, at his side. Then raised one long, musical, triumphant, and final sort of crow, with throat heaved far back, as if he meant the blast to waft the wood-sawyer’s soul sheer up to the seventh heaven. Then he strode, king-like, to the woman’s bed. Another upturned and exultant crow, mated to the former.

The pallor of the children was changed to radiance. Their faces shone celestially

through grime and dirt. They seemed children of emperors and kings, disguised. The cock sprang upon their bed, shook himself, and crowed, and crowed again, and still and still again. He seemed bent upon crowing the souls of the children out of their wasted bodies. He seemed bent upon rejoining instanter this whole family in the upper air. The children seemed to second his endeavours. Far, deep, intense longings for release transfigured them into spirits before my eyes. I saw angels where they lay.

They were dead.

The cock shook his plumage over them. The cock crew. It was now like a Bravo! like a Hurrah! like a Three-times-three! hip! hip! He strode out of the shanty. I followed. He flew upon the apex of the dwelling, spread wide his wings, sounded one supernatural note, and dropped at my feet.

The cock was dead.

If now you visit that hilly region, you will see, nigh the railroad track, just beneath October Mountain, on the other side of the swamp—there you will see a gravestone, not with skull and cross-bones, but with a lusty cock in act of crowing, chiselled on it, with the words beneath:—

‘O death, where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory?’

The wood-sawyer and his family, with the Signor Beneventano, lie in that spot; and I buried them, and planted the stone, which was a stone made to order; and never since then have I felt the doleful dumps, but under all circumstances crow late and early with a continual crow.

Cock-a-doodle-doo!—oo!—oo!—oo!—oo!

THE TWO TEMPLES

(Dedicated to Sheridan Knowles)

[The following letter from the Editor of Putnam's Monthly was kept by Melville with the rejected MS. of the 'Two Temples.'

It is now published together with the Essay to which it refers, both for its intrinsic interest and as evidence of the date at which the 'Two Temples' was written.]

Office of 'Putnam's Monthly,'

10 Park Place, New York,

May 12, 1854.

Dear Sir,—I am very loth to reject the 'Two Temples' as the article contains some exquisitely fine description, and some pungent satire, but my editorial experience compels me to be very careful in offending the religious sensibilities of the public, and the moral of the 'Two Temples' would sway against us the whole power of the pulpit, to say nothing of Brown, and the congregation of Grace Church.

I will take this opportunity to apologise to you for making a slight alteration in the 'Encantadas,' in the last paragraph of the 'Chola Widow,' which I thought would be improved by the omission of a few words. That I did not injure the idea, or mutilate the touching figure you introduced, by the slight excision I made, I received good evidence of, in a letter from James R. Lowell, who said that the figure of the cross in the ass's neck, brought tears into his eyes, and he thought it the finest touch of genius he had seen in prose. The only complaint that I have heard about the 'Encantadas' was that it might have been longer.—Very truly, Your obedient, Chas. F. Briggs.

H. Melville, Esq.

Temple First

'This is too bad,' said I, 'here have I tramped this blessed Sunday morning, all the way from the Battery, three long miles, for this express purpose, prayer-book under arm; here I am, I say, and, after all, I can't get in.

‘Too bad. And how disdainful the great, fat-paunched, beadle-faced man looked, when in answer to my humble petition, he said they had no galleries. Just the same as if he’d said, they didn’t entertain poor folks. But I’ll wager something that had my new coat been done last night, as the false tailor promised, and had I, arrayed therein this bright morning, tickled the fat-paunched, beadle-faced man’s palm with a bank-note, then, gallery or no gallery, I would have had a fine seat in this marble-buttressed, stained-glass, spick-and-span new temple.

‘Well, here I am in the porch, very politely bowed out of the nave. I suppose I’m excommunicated; excluded, anyway. That’s a noble string of flashing carriages drawn up along the curb; those champing horses, too, have a haughty curve to their floam-flecked necks. Property of those “miserable sinners” inside, I presume. I don’t a bit wonder they unreservedly confess to such misery as that. See the gold hat-bands too, and other gorgeous trimmings, on those glossy groups of low-voiced gossipers near by. If I were in England now, I should think those chaps a company of royal dukes, right honourable barons, etc. As it is, though, I guess they are only lackeys. By the way, here I dodge about, as if I wanted to get into their aristocratic circle. In fact, it looks a sort of lackeyish to be idly standing outside a fine temple, cooling your heels, during service. I had best move back to the Battery again, peeping into my prayer-book as I go. But hold; don’t I see a small door? Just in there, to one side, if I don’t mistake, is a very low and very narrow vaulted door. None seem to go that way. Ten to one, that identical door leads up into the tower. And now that I think of it, there is usually in these splendid, new-fashioned Gothic temples, a curious little window high over the orchestra and everything else, away up among the gilded clouds of the ceiling’s frescoes; and that little window, seems to me, if one could but get there, ought to command a glorious bird’s-eye view of the entire field of operations below. I guess I’ll try it. No one in the porch now. The beadle-faced man is smoothing down some ladies’ cushions, far up the broad aisle, I dare say. Softly now. If the small door ain’t locked, I shall have stolen a march upon

the beadle-faced man, and secured a humble seat in the sanctuary, in spite of him. Good! Thanks for this! The door is not locked. Bell-ringer forgot to lock it, no doubt. Now, like any felt-footed grimalkin, up I steal among the leads.'

Ascending some fifty stone steps along a very narrow curving stairway, I found myself on a blank platform forming the second story of the huge square tower. I seemed inside some magic-lantern. On three sides, three gigantic Gothic windows of richly dyed glass, filled the otherwise meagre place with all sorts of sunrises and sunsets, lunar and solar rainbows, falling stars, and other flaming fireworks and pyrotechnics. But after all, it was but a gorgeous dungeon; for I couldn't look out, any more than if I had been the occupant of a basement cell in 'the Tombs.' With some pains, and care not to do any serious harm, I contrived to scratch a minute opening in a great purple star forming the centre of the chief compartment of the middle window; when peeping through, as through goggles, I ducked my head in dismay. The beadle-faced man, with no hat on his head, was just in the act of driving three ragged little boys into the middle of the street; and how could I help trembling at the apprehension of his discovering a rebellious caitiff like me peering down on him from the tower? For, in stealing up here, I had set at naught his high authority. He whom he thought effectually ejected, had burglariously returned. For a moment I was almost ready to bide my chance, and get to the side-walk again with all dispatch. But another Jacob's ladder of lofty steps—wooden ones, this time—allured me to another and still higher flight—in sole hopes of gaining that one secret window where I might, at distance, take part in the proceedings.

Presently I noticed something which, owing to the first marvellous effulgence of the place, had remained unseen till now. Two strong ropes, dropping through holes in the rude ceiling high overhead, fell a sheer length of sixty feet, right through the centre of the space, and dropped in coils upon the floor of the huge magic-lantern. Bell-ropes these, thought I, and quaked. For if the beadle-faced man should learn that a grimalkin was somewhere prowling about the edifice, how easy for him to

ring the alarm. Hark!—ah, that's only the organ—yes—it's the 'Venite, exultemus Domino.' Though an insider in one respect, yet am I but an outsider in another. But for all that, I will not be defrauded of my natural rights. Uncovering my head, and taking out my book, I stood erect, midway up the tall Jacob's ladder, as if standing among the congregation; and in spirit, if not in place, participated in those devout exultings. That over, I continued my upward path; and after crossing sundry minor platforms and irregular landings all the while on a general ascent, at last I was delighted by catching sight of a small round window in the otherwise dead-wall side of the tower, where the tower attached itself to the main building. In front of the window was a rude narrow gallery, used as a bridge to cross from the lower stairs on one side to the upper stairs on the opposite.

As I drew nigh the spot, I well knew from the added clearness with which the sound of worship came to me, that the window did indeed look down upon the entire interior. But I was hardly prepared to find that no pane of glass, stained or unstained, was to stand between me and the far-under aisles and altar. For the purpose of ventilation, doubtless, the opening has been left unsupplied with sash of any sort. But a sheet of fine-woven, gauzy wire-work was in place of that. When, all eagerness, and open book in hand, I first advanced to stand before the window, I involuntarily shrank, as from before the mouth of a furnace, upon suddenly feeling a forceful puff of strange, heated air, blown, as by a blacksmith's bellows, full into my face and lungs. Yes, thought I, this window is doubtless for ventilation. Nor is it quite so comfortable as I fancied it might be. But beggars must not be choosers. The furnace which makes the people below there feel so snug and cosy in their padded pews, is to me, who stand here upon the naked gallery, cause of grievous trouble. Besides, though my face is scorched, my back is frozen. But I won't complain. Thanks for this much, anyway, that by hollowing one hand to my ear, and standing a little sideways out of the more violent rush of the torrid current, I can at least hear the priest sufficiently to make my responses in the proper place. Little dream the

good congregation away down there, that they have a faithful clerk away up here. Here, too, is a fitter place for sincere devotions, where, though I see, I remain unseen. Depend upon it, no Pharisee would have my pew. I like it, and admire it too, because it is so very high. Height, somehow, hath devotion in it. The arch-angelic anthems are raised in a lofty place. All the good shall go to such an one. Yes, heaven is high.

As thus I mused, the glorious organ burst, like an earthquake, almost beneath my feet; and I heard the invoking cry—'Govern them and lift them up forever!' Then down I gazed upon the standing human mass, far, far below, whose heads, gleaming in the many-coloured window-stains, showed like beds of spangled pebbles flashing in a Cuban sun. So, at least, I knew they needs would look, if but the wire-woven screen were drawn aside. That wire-woven screen had the effect of casting crape upon all I saw. Only by making allowances for the crape, could I gain a right idea of the scene disclosed.

Surprising, most surprising, too, it was. As said before, the window was a circular one; the part of the tower where I stood was dusky-dark; its height above the congregation-floor could not have been less than ninety or a hundred feet; the whole interior temple was lit by naught but glass dimmed, yet glorified with all imaginable rich and russet hues; the approach to my strange look-out, through perfect solitude, and along rude and dusty ways, enhanced the theatric wonder of the populous spectacle of this sumptuous sanctuary. Book in hand, responses on my tongue, standing in the very posture of devotion, I could not rid my soul of the intrusive thought, that, through some necromancer's glass, I looked down upon some sly enchanter's show.

At length the lessons being read, the chants chanted, the white-robed priest, a noble-looking man, with a form like the incomparable Talma's, gave out from the reading-desk the hymn before the sermon, and then through a side-door vanished

from the scene. In good time I saw the same Talma-like and noble-looking man reappear through the same side-door, his white apparel wholly changed for black.

By the melodious tone and persuasive gesture of the speaker, and the all-approving attention of the throng, I knew the sermon must be eloquent and well adapted to an opulent auditory; but owing to the priest's changed position from the reading-desk to the pulpit, I could not so distinctly hear him now as in the previous rites. The text, however, repeated at the outset, and often after quoted, I could not but plainly catch: 'Ye are the salt of the earth.'

At length the benediction was pronounced over the mass of low-inclining foreheads; hushed silence, intense motionlessness followed for a moment, as if the congregation were one of buried, not of living men; when, suddenly, miraculously, like the general rising at the Resurrection, the whole host came to their feet, amid a simultaneous roll, like a great drum-beat, from the enrapturing, overpowering organ. Then, in three freshets—all gay, sprightly nods and becks—the gilded brooks poured down the gilded aisles.

Time for me, too, to go, thought I, as snatching one last look upon the imposing scene, I clasped my book and put it in my pocket. The best thing I can do just now is to slide out unperceived amid the general crowd. Hurrying down the great length of ladder, I soon found myself at the base of the last stone step of the final flight; but started aghast—the door was locked! The bell-ringer, or more probably that for ever prying, suspicious-looking, beadle-faced man has done this. He would not let me in at all at first, and now, with the greatest inconsistency, he will not let me out. But what is to be done? Shall I knock on the door? That will never do. It will only frighten the crowd streaming by, and no one can adequately respond to my summons, except the beadle-faced man; and if he sees me, he will recognise me, and perhaps roundly rate me—poor, humble worshipper—before the entire public. No, I won't knock. But what then?

For a long time I thought and thought, till at last all was hushed again. Presently a clicking sound admonished me that the church was being closed. In sudden desperation, I gave a rap on the door. But too late. It was not heard. I was left alone and solitary in a temple which but a moment before was more populous than many villages.

A strange trepidation of gloom and loneliness gradually stole over me. Hardly conscious of what I did, I reascended the stone steps; higher and higher still, and only paused when once more I felt the hot-air blast from the wire-woven screen. Snatching another peep down into the vast arena, I started at its hushed desertness. The long ranges of grouped columns down the nave, the clusterings of them into copses about the corners of the transept; together with the subdued, dim-streaming light from the autumnal glasses; all assumed a secluded and deep-wooded air. I seemed gazing from Pisgah into the forests of old Canaan. A Puseyitish painting of a Madonna and Child, adorning a lower window, seemed showing to me the sole tenants of this painted wilderness—the true Hagar and her Ishmael.

With added trepidation I stole softly back to the magic-lantern platform; and revived myself a little by peeping through the scratch, upon the unstained light of open day. But what is to be done, thought I again.

I descended to the door; listened there; heard nothing. A third time climbing the stone steps, once more I stood in the magic-lantern, while the full nature of the more than awkwardness of my position came over me.

The first persons who will re-enter the temple, mused I, will doubtless be the beadle-faced man and the bell-ringer. And the first man to come up here, where I am, will be the latter. Now what will be his natural impressions upon first descrying an unknown prowler here? Rather disadvantageous to said prowler’s moral character. Explanations will be vain. Circumstances are against me. True, I may hide, till he retires again. But how do I know that he will then leave the door

unlocked? Besides, in a position of affairs like this, it is generally best, I think, to anticipate discovery, and by magnanimously announcing yourself, forestall an inglorious detection. But how announce myself? Already have I knocked, and no response. That moment my eye, impatiently ranging round about, fell upon the bell-ropes. They suggested the usual signal made at dwelling-houses to convey tidings of a stranger's presence. But I was not an outside caller; alas, I was an inside prowler. But one little touch of that bell-rope would be sure to bring relief. I have an appointment at three o'clock. The beadle-faced man must naturally reside very close by the church. He well knows the peculiar ring of his own bell. The slightest possible hum would bring him flying to the rescue. Shall I, or shall I not? But I may alarm the neighbourhood. Ah, no; the merest tingle, not by any means a loud, vociferous peal. Shall I? Better voluntarily bring the beadle-faced man to me, than be involuntarily dragged out from this most suspicious hiding-place. I have to face him, first or last. Better now than later. Shall I?

No more. Creeping to the rope, I gave it a cautious twitch. No sound. A little less warily. All was dumb. Still more strongly. Horrors! My hands, instinctively clapped to my ears, only served to condense the appalling din. Some undreamed-of mechanism seemed to have been touched. The bell must have thrice revolved on its thunderous axis, multiplying the astounding reverberation.

My business is effectually done this time, thought I, all in a tremble. Nothing will serve me now but the reckless confidence of innocence reduced to desperation.

In less than five minutes I heard a running noise beneath me; the lock of the door clicked, and up rushed the beadle-faced man, the perspiration starting from his cheeks.

'You! Is it you? The man I turned away this very morning, skulking here? You dare to touch that bell? Scoundrel!'

And ere I could defend myself, seizing me irresistibly in his powerful grasp, he tore

me along by the collar, and dragging me down the stairs, thrust me into the arms of three policemen, who, attracted by the sudden toll of the bell, had gathered curiously about the porch.

All remonstrances were vain. The beadle-faced man was bigoted against me. Represented as a lawless violator, and a remorseless disturber of the Sunday peace, I was conducted to the Halls of Justice. Next morning, my rather gentlemanly appearance procured me a private hearing from the judge. But the beadle-faced man must have made a Sunday night call on him. In spite of my coolest explanations, the circumstances of the case were deemed so exceedingly suspicious, that only after paying a round fine, and receiving a stinging reprimand, was I permitted to go at large, and pardoned for having humbly indulged myself in the luxury of public worship.

Temple Second

A stranger in London on Saturday night and without a copper! What hospitalities may such an one expect? What shall I do with myself this weary night? My landlady won’t receive me in her parlour. I owe her money. She looks like flint on me. So in this monstrous rabblement must I crawl about till, say, ten o’clock, and then slink home to my unlighted bed.

The case was this: The week following my inglorious expulsion from the transatlantic temple, I had packed up my trunks and damaged character, and repaired to the paternal, loving town of Philadelphia. There chance threw into my way an interesting young orphan lady and her aunt-duenna; the lady rich as Cleopatra, but not as beautiful; the duenna lovely as Charmian, but not so young. For the lady’s health, prolonged travel had been prescribed. Maternally connected in old England, the lady chose London for her primal port. But ere securing their passage, the two were looking around for some young physician, whose disengagement from pressing business might induce him to accept, on a moderate salary, the post of private

Esculapius and knightly companion to the otherwise unprotected pair. The more necessary was this, as not only the voyage to England was intended, but an extensive European tour to follow.

Enough. I came; I saw; I was made the happy man. We sailed. We landed on the other side; when, after two weeks of agonised attendance on the vacillations of the lady, I was very cavalierly dismissed, on the score that the lady's maternal relations had persuaded her to try, through the winter, the salubrious climate of the foggy Isle of Wight, in preference to the fabulous blue atmosphere of the Ionian Isles. So much for national prejudice. Nota Bene.—The lady was in a sad decline.

Having ere sailing been obliged to anticipate nearly a quarter's pay to foot my outfit bills, I was dismally cut adrift in Fleet Street without a solitary shilling. By disposing, at certain pawnbrokers, of some of my less indispensable apparel, I had managed to stave off the more slaughterous onsets of my landlady, while diligently looking about for any business that might providentially appear.

So on I drifted amid those indescribable crowds which every seventh night pour and roar through each main artery, and block the by-veins of great London, the Leviathan. Saturday night it was; and the markets and the shops, and every stall and counter were crushed with the one unceasing tide. A whole Sunday's victualling for three millions of human bodies, was going on. Few of them equally hungry with my own, as through my spent lassitude, the unscrupulous human whirlpools eddied me aside at corners, as any straw is eddied in the Norway Maelstrom. What dire suckings into oblivion must such swirling billows know! Better perish 'mid myriad sharks in mid Atlantic, than die a penniless stranger in Babylonian London. Forlorn, outcast, without a friend, I staggered on through three millions of my own human kind. The fiendish gas-lights shooting their Tartarean rays across the muddy, sticky streets, lit up the pitiless and pitiable scene.

Well, well, if this were but Sunday now, I might conciliate some kind female

pew-opener, and rest me in some inn-like chapel upon some stranger's outside bench. But it is Saturday night. The end of the weary week, and all but the end of weary me.

Disentangling myself at last from those skeins of Pandemonian lanes which snarl one part of the metropolis between Fleet Street and Holborn, I found myself at last in a wide and far less noisy street, a short and shopless one, leading up from the Strand, and terminating at its junction with a crosswise avenue. The comparative quietude of the place was inexpressively soothing. It was like emerging upon the green enclosure surrounding some cathedral church, where sanctity makes all things still. Two lofty brilliant lights attracted me in this tranquil street. Thinking it might prove some moral or religious meeting, I hurried toward the spot; but was surprised to see two tall placards announcing the appearance that night, of the stately Macready in the part of Cardinal Richelieu. Very few loiterers hung about the place, the hour being rather late, and the play-bill hawkers mostly departed, or keeping entirely quiet. This theatre indeed, as I afterwards discovered, was not only one of the best in point of acting, but likewise one of the most decorous in its general management, inside and out. In truth, the whole neighbourhood, as it seemed to me—issuing from the jam and uproar of those turbulent tides against which, or borne on irresistibly by which, I had so long been swimming—the whole neighbourhood, I say, of this pleasing street seemed in good keeping with the character imputed to its theatre.

Glad to find one blessed oasis of tranquillity, I stood leaning against a column of the porch, and striving to lose my sadness in running over one of the huge placards. No one molested me. A tattered little girl, to be sure, approached with a hand-bill extended, but marking me more narrowly, retreated; her strange skill in physiognomy at once enabling her to determine that I was penniless. As I read, and read—for the placard, of enormous dimensions, contained minute particulars of each successive scene in the enacted play—gradually a strong desire to witness this

celebrated Macready in this his celebrated part stole over me. By one act, I might rest my jaded limbs, and more than jaded spirits. Where else could I go for rest, unless I crawled into my cold and lonely bed far up in an attic of Craven Street, looking down upon the muddy Phlegethon of the Thames. Besides, what I wanted was not merely rest, but cheer; the making one of many pleased and pleasing human faces; the getting into a genial humane assembly of my kind; such as, at its best and highest, is to be found in the unified multitude of a devout congregation. But no such assemblies were accessible that night, even if my unbefriended and rather shabby air would overcome the scruples of those fastidious gentry with red gowns and long gilded staves, who guard the portals of the first-class London tabernacles from all profanation of a poor, forlorn, and fainting wanderer like me. Not inns, but ecclesiastical hotels, where the pews are the rented chambers.

No use to ponder, thought I, at last; it is Saturday night, not Sunday; and so, a theatre only can receive me. So powerfully in the end did the longing to get into the edifice come over me, that I almost began to think of pawning my overcoat for admittance. But from this last infatuation I was providentially withheld by a sudden cheery summons, in a voice unmistakably benevolent. I turned, and saw a man who seemed to be some sort of a working man.

‘Take it,’ said he, holding a plain red ticket toward me, full in the gas-light. ‘You want to go in; I know you do. Take it. I am suddenly called home. There—hope you’ll enjoy yourself. Good-bye.’

Blankly and mechanically I had suffered the ticket to be thrust into my hand, and now stood quite astonished, bewildered, and for the time, ashamed. The plain fact was, I had received charity; and for the first time in my life. Often in the course of my strange wanderings I had needed charity, but never had asked it, and certainly never, ere this blessed night, had been offered it. And a stranger, and in the very maw of the roaring London, too! Next moment my sense of foolish shame departed,

and I felt a queer feeling in my left eye, which, as sometimes is the case with people, was the weaker one; probably from being on the same side with the heart.

I glanced round eagerly. But the kind giver was no longer in sight. I looked upon the ticket. I understood. It was one of those checks given to persons inside a theatre when for any cause they desire to step out a moment. Its presentation ensures unquestioned readmittance.

'Shall I use it?' mused I—'what? It's charity. But if it be gloriously right to do a charitable deed, can it be ingloriously wrong to receive its benefit? No one knows you; go boldly in. Charity. Why these unvanquishable scruples? All your life, naught but charity sustains you, and all others in the world. Maternal charity nursed you as a babe; paternal charity fed you as a child; friendly charity got you your profession; and to the charity of every man you meet this night in London, are you indebted for your unattempted life. Any knife, any hand of all the millions of knives and hands in London, has you this night at its mercy. You, and all mortals, live but by sufferance of your charitable kind; charitable by omission, not performance. Slush for your self-upbraidings, and pitiful, poor, shabby pride, you friendless man without a purse. Go in.'

Debate was over. Marking the direction from which the stranger had accosted me, I stepped that way; and soon saw a low-vaulted, inferior-looking door on one side of the edifice. Entering, I wandered on and up, and up and on again, through various doubling stairs and wedge-like, ill-lit passages, whose bare boards much reminded me of my ascent of the Gothic tower on the ocean's far other side. At last I gained a lofty platform, and saw a fixed human countenance facing me from a mysterious window of a sort of sentry-box or closet. Like some saint in a shrine, the countenance was illuminated by two smoky candles. I divined the man. I exhibited my diploma, and he nodded me to a little door beyond; while a sudden burst of orchestral music admonished me. I was now very near my destination, and also

revived the memory of the organ anthems I had heard while on the ladder of the tower at home.

Next moment, the wire-woven gauzy screen of the ventilating window in that same tower seemed enchantedly reproduced before me. The same hot blast of stifling air once more rushed into my lungs. From the same dizzy altitude, through the same fine-spun, vapoury, crapey air; far, far down upon just such a packed mass of silent human beings; listening to just such grand harmonies; I stood within the topmost gallery of the temple. But hardly alone and silently as before. This time I had company. Not of the first circles, and certainly not of the dress-circle; but most acceptable, right welcome, cheery company, to otherwise uncompanioned me. Quiet, well-pleased working men, and their glad wives and sisters, with here and there an aproned urchin, with all-absorbed, bright face, vermilioned by the excitement and the heated air, hovering like a painted cherub over the vast human firmament below. The height of the gallery was in truth appalling. The rail was low. I thought of deep-sea-leads, and the mariner in the vessel’s chains, drawing up the line, with his long-drawn musical accompaniment. And like beds of glittering coral, through the deep sea of azure smoke, there, far down, I saw the jewelled necks and white sparkling arms of crowds of ladies in the semicirque. But, in the interval of two acts, again the orchestra was heard; some inspiring anthem now was played. As the volumed sound came undulating up, and broke in showery spray and foam of melody against our gallery rail, my head involuntarily was bowed, my hand instinctively sought my pocket. Only by a second thought did I check my momentary lunacy, and remind myself that this time I had no small morocco book with me, and that this was not the house of prayer.

Quickly was my wandering mind—preternaturally affected by the sudden translation from the desolate street to this bewildering and blazing spectacle—arrested in its wanderings, by feeling at my elbow a meaning nudge; when turning suddenly, I saw a sort of coffee-pot and pewter mug hospitably presented to me by a ragged, but

good-natured-looking boy.

‘Thank you,’ said I, ‘I won’t take any coffee, I guess.’

‘Coffee?—I guess?—ain’t you a Yankee?’

‘Ay, boy; true blue.’

‘Well, dad’s gone to Yankee-land, a-seekin’ of his fortin; so take a penny mug of ale, do, Yankee, for poor dad’s sake.’

Out from the tilted coffee-pot-looking can came a coffee-coloured stream, and a small mug of humming ale was in my hand.

‘I don’t want it, boy. The fact is, my boy, I have no penny by me. I happened to leave my purse at my lodgings.’

‘Never do you mind, Yankee; drink to honest dad.’

‘With all my heart, you generous boy; here’s immortal life to him!’

He stared at my strange burst, smiled merrily, and left me, offering his coffee-pot in all directions, and not in vain.

’Tis not always poverty to be poor, mused I; one may fare well without a penny. A ragged boy may be a prince-like benefactor.

That unpurchased pennyworth of ale revived my drooping spirits strangely. Stuff was in that barley malt; a most sweet bitterness in those blessed hops. God bless the glorious boy!

The more I looked about me in this lofty gallery, the more was I delighted with its occupants. It was not spacious. It was, if anything, rather contracted, being the very cheapest portion of the house, where very limited attendance was expected; embracing merely the very crown of the topmost semicircle; and so commanding, with a sovereign outlook, and imperial downlook, the whole theatre, with the expanded stage directly opposite, though some hundred feet below. As at the tower, peeping into the transatlantic temple, so stood I here, at the very mainmast-head of

all the interior edifice.

Such was the decorum of this special theatre, that nothing objectionable was admitted within its walls. With an unhurt eye of perfect love, I sat serenely in the gallery, gazing upon the pleasing scene, around me and below. Neither did it abate from my satisfaction to remember that Mr. Macready, the chief actor of the night, was an amiable gentleman, combining the finest qualities of social and Christian respectability with the highest excellence in his particular profession; for which last he had conscientiously done much, in many ways, to refine, elevate, and chasten.

But now the curtain rises, and the robed Cardinal advances. How marvellous this personal resemblance! He looks every inch to be the self-same stately priest I saw irradiated by the glow-worm dyes of the pictured windows from my high tower-pew. And shining as he does, in the rosy reflexes of these stained walls and gorgeous galleries, the mimic priest down there; he, too, seems lit by Gothic blazonings.—Hark! The same measured, courtly, noble tone. See! the same imposing attitude. Excellent actor is this Richelieu!

He disappears behind the scenes. He slips, no doubt, into the Green Room. He reappears somewhat changed in his habiliments. Do I dream, or is it genuine memory that recalls some similar thing seen through the woven wires?

The curtain falls. Starting to their feet, the enraptured thousands sound their responses deafeningly, unmistakably sincere. Right from the undoubted heart. I have no duplicate in my memory of this. In earnestness of response, this second temple stands unmatched. And hath mere mimicry done this? What is it then to act a part?

But now the music surges up again, and borne by that rolling billow, I, and all the gladdened crowd, are harmoniously attended to the street.

I went home to my lonely lodging and slept not much that night, for thinking of the First Temple and the Second Temple; and how that, at home in my own land, I was thrust out from the one, and, a stranger in a strange land, found sterling charity in the

other.

POOR MAN'S PUDDING AND RICH MAN'S CRUMBS

PICTURE FIRST

POOR MAN'S PUDDING

'You see,' said poet Blandmour enthusiastically—as some forty years ago we walked along the road in a soft, moist snowfall toward the end of March—'you see, my friend, that the blessed almoner, Nature, is in all things beneficent; and not only so, but considerate in her charities, as any discreet human philanthropist might be. This snow, now, which seems so unseasonable, is in fact just what a poor husbandman needs. Rightly is this soft March snow, falling just before seed-time, rightly is it called "Poor Man's Manure." Distilling from kind heaven upon the soil, by a gentle penetration it nourishes every clod, ridge, and furrow. To the poor farmer it is as good as the rich farmer's farm-yard enrichments. And the poor man has no trouble to spread it, while the rich man has to spread his.'

'Perhaps so,' said I, without equal enthusiasm, brushing some of the damp flakes from my chest. 'It may be as you say, dear Blandmour. But tell me, how is it that the wind drives yonder drifts of "Poor Man's Manure" off poor Coulter's two-acre patch here, and piles it up yonder on rich Squire Teamster's twenty-acre field?'

'Ah! to be sure—yes—well; Coulter's field, I suppose, is sufficiently moist without further moistenings. Enough is as good as a feast, you know.'

'Yes,' replied I, 'of this sort of damp fare,' shaking another shower of the damp flakes from my person. 'But tell me, this warm spring snow may answer very well, as you say; but how is it with the cold snows of the long, long winters here?'

'Why, do you not remember the words of the Psalmist?—"The Lord giveth snow like wool"; meaning not only that snow is white as wool, but warm, too, as wool. For the only reason, as I take it, that wool is comfortable, is because air is entangled,

and therefore warmed among its fibres. Just so, then, take the temperature of a December field when covered with this snow-fleece, and you will no doubt find it several degrees above that of the air. So, you see, the winter's snow itself is beneficent; under the pretence of frost—a sort of gruff philanthropist—actually warming the earth, which afterward is to be fertilisingly moistened by these gentle flakes of March.'

'I like to hear you talk, dear Blandmour; and, guided by your benevolent heart, can only wish to poor Coulter plenty of this "Poor Man's Manure."'

'But that is not all,' said Blandmour eagerly. 'Did you never hear of the "Poor Man's Eye-water"?'

'Never.'

'Take this soft March snow, melt it, and bottle it. It keeps pure as alcohol. The very best thing in the world for weak eyes. I have a whole demijohn of it myself. But the poorest man, afflicted in his eyes, can freely help himself to this same all-bountiful remedy. Now, what a kind provision is that!'

'Then "Poor Man's Manure" is "Poor Man's Eye-water" too?'

'Exactly. And what could be more economically contrived? One thing answering two ends—ends so very distinct.'

'Very distinct, indeed.'

'Ah! that is your way. Making sport of earnest. But never mind. We have been talking of snow; but common rain-water—such as falls all the year round—is still more kindly. Not to speak of its known fertilising quality as to fields, consider it in one of its minor lights. Pray, did you ever hear of a "Poor Man's Egg"?'

'Never. What is that, now?'

'Why, in making some culinary preparations of meal and flour, where eggs are recommended in the receipt-book, a substitute for the eggs may be had in a cup of

cold rain-water, which acts as leaven. And so a cup of cold rain-water thus used is called by housewives a “Poor Man’s Egg.” And many rich men’s housekeepers sometimes use it.’

‘But only when they are out of hen’s eggs, I presume, dear Blandmour. But your talk is—I sincerely say it—most agreeable to me. Talk on.’

‘Then there’s “Poor Man’s Plaster” for wounds and other bodily harms; an alleviative and curative, compounded of simple, natural things; and so, being very cheap, is accessible to the poorest of sufferers. Rich men often use “Poor Man’s Plaster.”’

‘But not without the judicious advice of a fee’d physician, dear Blandmour.’

‘Doubtless, they first consult the physician; but that may be an unnecessary precaution.’

‘Perhaps so. I do not gainsay it. Go on.’

‘Well, then, did you ever eat of a “Poor Man’s Pudding”?’

‘I never so much as heard of it before.’

‘Indeed! Well, now you shall eat of one; and you shall eat it, too, as made, unprompted, by a poor man’s wife, and you shall eat it at a poor man’s table, and in a poor man’s house. Come now, and if after this eating, you do not say that a “Poor Man’s Pudding” is as relishable as a rich man’s, I will give up the point altogether; which briefly is: that, through kind Nature, the poor, out of their very poverty, extract comfort.’

Not to narrate any more of our conversations upon this subject (for we had several—I being at that time the guest of Blandmour in the country, for the benefit of my health), suffice it that, acting upon Blandmour’s hint, I introduced myself into Coulter’s house on a wet Monday noon (for the snow had thawed), under the innocent pretence of craving a pedestrian’s rest and refreshment for an hour or two.

I was greeted, not without much embarrassment—owing, I suppose, to my dress—but still with unaffected and honest kindness. Dame Coulter was just leaving the wash-tub to get ready her one o'clock meal against her good man's return from a deep wood about a mile distant among the hills, where he was chopping by day's-work—seventy-five cents per day and found himself. The washing being done outside the main building, under an infirm-looking old shed, the dame stood upon a half-rotten, soaked board to protect her feet, as well as might be, from the penetrating damp of the bare ground; hence she looked pale and chill. But her paleness had still another and more secret cause—the paleness of a mother-to-be. A quiet, fathomless heart-trouble, too, couched beneath the mild, resigned blue of her soft and wife-like eye. But she smiled upon me, as apologising for the unavoidable disorder of a Monday and a washing-day, and, conducting me into the kitchen, set me down in the best seat it had—an old-fashioned chair of an enfeebled constitution.

I thanked her; and sat rubbing my hands before the ineffectual low fire, and—unobservantly as I could—glancing now and then about the room, while the good woman, throwing on more sticks, said she was sorry the room was no warmer. Something more she said, too—not repiningly, however—of the fuel, as old and damp; picked-up sticks in Squire Teamster's forest, where her husband was chopping the sappy logs of the living tree for the Squire's fires. It needed not her remark, whatever it was, to convince me of the inferior quality of the sticks; some being quite mossy and toad-stooled with long lying bedded among the accumulated dead leaves of many autumns. They made a sad hissing, and vain spluttering enough.

'You must rest yourself here till dinner-time, at least,' said the dame; 'what I have you are heartily welcome to.'

I thanked her again, and begged her not to heed my presence in the least, but go on with her usual affairs.

I was struck by the aspect of the room. The house was old, and constitutionally damp. The window-sills had beads of exuded dampness upon them. The shrivelled sashes shook in their frames, and the green panes of glass were clouded with the long thaw. On some little errand the dame passed into an adjoining chamber, leaving the door partly open. The floor of that room was carpetless, as the kitchen was. Nothing but bare necessaries were about me; and those not of the best sort. Not a print on the wall; but an old volume of Doddridge lay on the smoked chimney-shelf.

‘You must have walked a long way, sir; you sigh so with weariness.’

‘No, I am not nigh so weary as yourself, I dare say.’

‘Oh, but I am accustomed to that; you are not, I should think,’ and her soft, sad, blue eye ran over my dress. ‘But I must sweep these shavings away; husband made him a new ax-helve this morning before sunrise, and I have been so busy washing, that I have had no time to clear up. But now they are just the thing I want for the fire. They’d be much better, though, were they not so green.’

Now if Blandmour were here, thought I to myself, he would call those green shavings ‘Poor Man’s Matches,’ or ‘Poor Man’s Tinder,’ or some pleasant name of that sort.

‘I do not know,’ said the good woman, turning round to me again, as she stirred among her pots on the smoky fire—‘I do not know how you will like our pudding. It is only rice, milk, and salt boiled together.’

‘Ah, what they call “Poor Man’s Pudding,” I suppose you mean.’

A quick flush, half resentful, passed over her face.

‘We do not call it so, sir,’ she said, and was silent.

Upbraiding myself for my inadvertence, I could not but again think to myself what Blandmour would have said, had he heard those words and seen that flush.

At last a slow, heavy footfall was heard; then a scraping at the door, and another

voice said, ‘Come, wife; come, come—I must be back again in a jiff—if you say I must take all my meals at home, you must be speedy; because the Squire—Good-day, sir,’ he exclaimed, now first catching sight of me as he entered the room. He turned toward his wife, inquiringly, and stood stock-still, while the moisture oozed from his patched boots to the floor.

‘This gentleman stops here a while to rest and refresh: he will take dinner with us, too. All will be ready now in a trice: so sit down on the bench, husband, and be patient, I pray. You see, sir,’ she continued, turning to me, ‘William there wants, of mornings, to carry a cold meal into the woods with him, to save the long one-o’clock walk across the fields to and fro. But I won’t let him. A warm dinner is more than pay for the long walk.’

‘I don’t know about that,’ said William, shaking his head. ‘I have often debated in my mind whether it really paid. There’s not much odds, either way, between a wet walk after hard work, and a wet dinner before it. But I like to oblige a good wife like Martha. And you know, sir, that women will have their whimseys.’

‘I wish they all had as kind whimseys as your wife has,’ said I.

‘Well, I’ve heard that some women ain’t all maple-sugar; but, content with dear Martha, I don’t know much about others.’

‘You find rare wisdom in the woods,’ mused I.

‘Now, husband, if you ain’t too tired, just lend a hand to draw the table out.’

‘Nay,’ said I; ‘let him rest, and let me help.’

‘No,’ said William, rising.

‘Sit still,’ said his wife to me.

The table set, in due time we all found ourselves with plates before us.

‘You see what we have,’ said Coulter—‘salt pork, rye-bread, and pudding. Let me help you. I got this pork of the Squire; some of his last year’s pork, which he let me

have on account. It isn't quite so sweet as this year's would be; but I find it hearty enough to work on, and that's all I eat for. Only let the rheumatiz and other sicknesses keep clear of me, and I ask no flavours or favours from any. But you don't eat of the pork!'

'I see,' said the wife, gently and gravely, 'that the gentleman knows the difference between this year's and last year's pork. But perhaps he will like the pudding.'

I summoned up all my self-control, and smilingly assented to the proposition of the pudding, without by my looks casting any reflections upon the pork. But, to tell the truth, it was quite impossible for me (not being ravenous, but only a little hungry at the time) to eat of the latter. It had a yellowish crust all round it, and was rather rankish, I thought, to the taste. I observed, too, that the dame did not eat of it, though she suffered some to be put on her plate, and pretended to be busy with it when Coulter looked that way. But she ate of the rye-bread, and so did I.

'Now, then, for the pudding,' said Coulter. 'Quick, wife; the Squire sits in his sitting-room window, looking far out across the fields. His timepiece is true.'

'He don't play the spy on you, does he?' said I.

'Oh, no!—I don't say that. He's a good enough man. He gives me work. But he's particular. Wife, help the gentleman. You see, sir, if I lose the Squire's work, what will become of—' and, with a look for which I honoured humanity, with sly significance he glanced toward his wife; then, a little changing his voice, instantly continued—'that fine horse I am going to buy.'

'I guess,' said the dame, with a strange, subdued sort of inefficient pleasantry—'I guess that fine horse you sometimes so merrily dream of will long stay in the Squire's stall. But sometimes his man gives me a Sunday ride.'

'A Sunday ride!' said I.

'You see,' resumed Coulter, 'wife loves to go to church; but the nighest is four miles off, over yon snowy hills. So she can't walk it; and I can't carry her in my arms,

though I have carried her upstairs before now. But, as she says, the Squire's man sometimes gives her a lift on the road; and for this cause it is that I speak of a horse I am going to have one of these fine sunny days. And already, before having it, I have christened it "Martha." But what am I about? Come, come, wife! the pudding! Help the gentleman, do! The Squire! the Squire!—think of the Squire! and help round the pudding. There, one—two—three mouthfuls must do me. Good-bye, wife. Good-bye, sir. I'm off.'

And, snatching his soaked hat, the noble Poor Man hurriedly went out into the soak and the mire.

I suppose now, thinks I to myself, that Blandmour would poetically say, He goes to take a Poor Man's saunter.

'You have a fine husband,' said I to the woman, as we were now left together.

'William loves me this day as on the wedding-day, sir. Some hasty words, but never a harsh one. I wish I were better and stronger for his sake. And, oh! sir, both for his sake and mine' (and the soft blue beautiful eyes turned into two well-springs), 'how I wish little William and Martha lived—it is so lonely-like now. William named after him, and Martha for me.'

When a companion's heart of itself overflows, the best one can do is to do nothing. I sat looking down on my as yet untasted pudding.

'You should have seen little William, sir. Such a bright, manly boy, only six years old—cold, cold now!'

Plunging my spoon into the pudding, I forced some into my mouth to stop it.

'And little Martha—Oh! sir, she was the beauty! Bitter, bitter! but needs must be borne.'

The mouthful of pudding now touched my palate, and touched it with a mouldy, briny taste. The rice, I knew, was of that damaged sort sold cheap; and the salt from

the last year's pork barrel.

'Ah, sir, if those little ones yet to enter the world were the same little ones which so sadly have left it; returning friends, not strangers, strangers, always strangers! Yet does a mother soon learn to love them; for certain, sir, they come from where the others have gone. Don't you believe that, sir? Yes, I know all good people must. But still, still—and I fear it is wicked, and very black-hearted, too—still, strive how I may to cheer me with thinking of little William and Martha in heaven, and with reading Dr. Doddridge there—still, still does dark grief leak in, just like the rain through our roof. I am left so lonesome now; day after day, all the day long, dear William is gone; and all the damp day long grief drizzles and drizzles down on my soul. But I pray to God to forgive me for this; and for the rest, manage it as well as I may.'

Bitter and mouldy is the 'Poor Man's Pudding,' groaned I to myself, half choked with but one little mouthful of it, which would hardly go down.

I could stay no longer to hear of sorrows for which the sincerest sympathies could give no adequate relief; of a fond persuasion, to which there could be furnished no further proof than already was had—a persuasion, too, of that sort which much speaking is sure more or less to mar; of causeless self-upbraidings, which no expostulations could have dispelled. I offered no pay for hospitalities gratuitous and honourable as those of a prince. I knew that such offerings would have been more than declined; charity resented.

The native American poor never lose their delicacy or pride; hence, though unreduced to the physical degradation of the European pauper, they yet suffer more in mind than the poor of any other people in the world. Those peculiar social sensibilities nourished by our own peculiar political principles, while they enhance the true dignity of a prosperous American, do but minister to the added wretchedness of the unfortunate; first, by prohibiting their acceptance of what little

random relief charity may offer; and, second, by furnishing them with the keenest appreciation of the smarting distinction between their ideal of universal equality and their grindstone experience of the practical misery and infamy of poverty—a misery and infamy which is, ever has been, and ever will be, precisely the same in India, England, and America.

Under pretence that my journey called me forthwith, I bade the dame good-bye; shook her cold hand; looked my last into her blue, resigned eye, and went out into the wet. But cheerless as it was, and damp, damp, damp—the heavy atmosphere charged with all sorts of incipiencies—I yet became conscious, by the suddenness of the contrast, that the house air I had quitted was laden down with that peculiar deleterious quality, the height of which—insufferable to some visitants—will be found in a poor-house ward.

This ill-ventilation in winter of the rooms of the poor—a thing, too, so stubbornly persisted in—is usually charged upon them as their disgraceful neglect of the most simple means to health. But the instinct of the poor is wiser than we think. The air which ventilates, likewise cools. And to any shiverer, ill-ventilated warmth is better than well-ventilated cold. Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed.

‘Blandmour,’ said I that evening, as after tea I sat on his comfortable sofa, before a blazing fire, with one of his two ruddy little children on my knee, ‘you are not what may rightly be called a rich man; you have a fair competence; no more. Is it not so? Well, then, I do not include you, when I say, that if ever a Rich Man speaks prosperously to me of a Poor Man, I shall set it down as—I won’t mention the word.’

PICTURE SECOND

RICH MAN’S CRUMBS

In the year 1814, during the summer following my first taste of the ‘Poor Man’s Pudding,’ a sea voyage was recommended to me by my physician. The battle of Waterloo having closed the long drama of Napoleon’s wars, many strangers were visiting Europe. I arrived in London at the time the victorious princes were there assembled enjoying the Arabian Nights’ hospitalities of a grateful and gorgeous aristocracy, and the courtliest of gentlemen and kings—George the Prince Regent.

I had declined all letters but one to my banker. I wandered about for the best reception an adventurous traveller can have—the reception, I mean, which unsolicited chance and accident throw in his venturous way.

But I omit all else to recount one hour’s hap under the lead of a very friendly man, whose acquaintance I made in the open street of Cheapside. He wore a uniform, and was some sort of a civic subordinate; I forget exactly what. He was off duty that day. His discourse was chiefly of the noble charities of London. He took me to two or three, and made admiring mention of many more.

‘But,’ said he, as we turned into Cheapside again, ‘if you are at all curious about such things, let me take you—if it be not too late—to one of the most interesting of all—our Lord Mayor’s Charities, sir; nay, the charities not only of a Lord Mayor, but, I may truly say, in this one instance, of emperors, regents, and kings. You remember the event of yesterday?’

‘That sad fire on the river-side, you mean, unhousing so many of the poor?’

‘No. The grand Guildhall Banquet to the princes. Who can forget it? Sir, the dinner was served on nothing but solid silver and gold plate, worth at the least £200,000—that is, 1,000,000 of your dollars; while the mere expenditure of meats, wines, attendance, and upholstery, etc., cannot be footed under £25,000—125,000 dollars of your hard cash.’

‘But, surely, my friend, you do not call that charity—feeding kings at that rate?’

‘No. The feast came first—yesterday; and the charity after—to-day. How else would

you have it, where princes are concerned? But I think we shall be quite in time—come; here we are at King Street, and down there is Guildhall. Will you go?'

'Gladly, my good friend. Take me where you will. I come but to roam and see.'

Avoiding the main entrance of the hall, which was barred, he took me through some private way, and we found ourselves in a rear blind-walled place in the open air. I looked round amazed. The spot was grimy as a backyard in the Five Points. It was packed with a mass of lean, famished, ferocious creatures, struggling and fighting for some mysterious precedency, and all holding soiled blue tickets in their hands.

'There is no other way,' said my guide; 'we can only get in with the crowd. Will you try it? I hope you have not on your drawing-room suit? What do you say? It will be well worth your sight. So noble a charity does not often offer. The one following the annual banquet of Lord Mayor's day—fine a charity as that certainly is—is not to be mentioned with what will be seen to-day. Is it, ay?'

As he spoke, a basement door in the distance was thrown open, and the squalid mass made a rush for the dark vault beyond.

I nodded to my guide, and sideways we joined in with the rest. Ere long we found our retreat cut off by the yelping crowd behind, and I could not but congratulate myself on having a civic, as well as civil guide; one, too, whose uniform made evident his authority.

It was just the same as if I were pressed by a mob of cannibals on some pagan beach. The beings round me roared with famine. For in this mighty London misery but maddens. In the country it softens. As I gazed on the meagre, murderous pack, I thought of the blue eye of the gentle wife of poor Coulter. Some sort of curved, glittering steel thing (not a sword; I know not what it was), before worn in his belt, was now flourished overhead by my guide, menacing the creatures to forbear offering the stranger violence.

As we drove, slow and wedge-like, into the gloomy vault, the howls of the mass

reverberated. I seemed seething in the Pit with the Lost. On and on, through the dark and the damp, and then up a stone stairway to a wide portal; when, diffusing, the pestiferous mob poured in bright day between painted walls and beneath a painted dome. I thought of the anarchic sack of Versailles.

A few moments more and I stood bewildered among the beggars in the famous Guildhall.

Where I stood—where the thronged rabble stood, less than twelve hours before sat His Imperial Majesty, Alexander of Russia; His Royal Majesty, Frederick William, King of Prussia; His Royal Highness, George, Prince Regent of England; His world-renowned Grace, the Duke of Wellington; with a mob of magnificoes made up of conquering field-marshals, earls, counts, and innumerable other nobles of mark.

The walls swept to and fro, like the foliage of a forest with blazonings of conquerors' flags. Naught outside the hall was visible. No windows were within four-and-twenty feet of the floor. Cut off from all other sights, I was hemmed in by one splendid spectacle—splendid, I mean, everywhere, but as the eye fell toward the floor. That was foul as a hovel's—as a kennel's; the naked boards being strewed with the smaller and more wasteful fragments of the feast, while the two long parallel lines, up and down the hall, of now unrobed, shabby, dirty pine-tables were piled with less trampled wrecks. The dyed banners were in keeping with the last night's kings; the floor suited the beggars of to-day. The banners looked down upon the floor as from his balcony Dives upon Lazarus. A line of liveried men kept back with their staves the impatient jamb of the mob, who, otherwise, might have instantaneously converted the Charity into a Pillage. Another body of gowned and gilded officials distributed the broken meats—the cold victuals and crumbs of kings. One after another the beggars held up their dirty blue tickets, and were served with the plundered wreck of a pheasant, or the rim of a pasty—like the detached crown of

an old hat—the solids and meats stolen out.

‘What a noble charity!’ whispered my guide. ‘See that pasty now, snatched by that pale girl; I dare say the Emperor of Russia ate of that last night.’

‘Very probably,’ murmured I; ‘it looks as though some omnivorous emperor or other had had a finger in that pie.’

‘And see yon pheasant too—there—that one—the boy in the torn shirt has it now—look! The Prince Regent might have dined off that.’

The two breasts were gouged ruthlessly out, exposing the bare bones, embellished with the untouched pinions and legs.

‘Yes, who knows!’ said my guide, ‘His Royal Highness the Prince Regent might have eaten of that identical pheasant.’

‘I don’t doubt it,’ murmured I, ‘he is said to be uncommonly fond of the breast. But where is Napoleon’s head in a charger? I should fancy that ought to have been the principal dish.’

‘You are merry. Sir, even Cossacks are charitable here in Guildhall. Look! the famous Platoff, the Hetman himself—(he was here last night with the rest)—no doubt he thrust a lance into yon fat pork-pie there. Look! the old shirtless man has it now. How he licks his chops over it, little thinking of or thanking the good, kind Cossack that left it him! Ah! another—a stouter has grabbed it. It falls; bless my soul!—the dish is quite empty—only a bit of the hacked crust.’

‘The Cossacks, my friend, are said to be immoderately fond of fat,’ observed I. ‘The Hetman was hardly so charitable as you thought.’

‘A noble charity, upon the whole, for all that. See, even Gog and Magog yonder, at the other end of the hall, fairly laugh out their delight at the scene.’

‘But don’t you think, though,’ hinted I, ‘that the sculptor, whoever he was, carved the laugh too much into a grin—a sort of sardonical grin?’

‘Well, that’s as you take it, sir. But see—now I’d wager a guinea the Lord Mayor’s lady dipped her golden spoon into yonder golden-hued jelly. See, the jelly-eyed old body has slipped it, in one broad gulp, down his throat.’

‘Peace to that jelly!’ breathed I.

‘What a generous, noble, magnanimous charity this is! unheard of in any country but England, which feeds her very beggars with golden-hued jellies.’

‘But not three times every day, my friend. And do you really think that jellies are the best sort of relief you can furnish to beggars? Would not plain beef and bread, with something to do, and be paid for, be better?’

‘But plain beef and bread were not eaten here. Emperors, and prince regents, and kings, and field-marshals don’t often dine on plain beef and bread. So the leavings are according. Tell me, can you expect that the crumbs of kings can be like the crumbs of squirrels?’

‘You! I mean you! stand aside, or else be served and away! Here, take this pasty, and be thankful that you taste of the same dish with Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire. Graceless ragamuffin, do you hear?’

These words were bellowed at me through the din by a red-gowned official nigh the board.

‘Surely he does not mean me,’ said I to my guide; ‘he has not confounded me with the rest.’

‘One is known by the company he keeps,’ smiled my guide. ‘See! not only stands your hat awry and bunged on your head, but your coat is fouled and torn. Nay,’ he cried to the red-gown, ‘this is an unfortunate friend; a simple spectator, I assure you.’

‘Ah! is that you, old lad!’ responded the red-gown, in familiar recognition of my guide—a personal friend as it seemed; ‘well, convey your friend out forthwith. Mind

the grand crash; it will soon be coming; hark! now! away with him!'

Too late. The last dish had been seized. The yet unglutted mob raised a fierce yell, which wafted the banners like a strong gust, and filled the air with a reek as from sewers. They surged against the tables, broke through all barriers, and billowed over the hall—their bare tossed arms like the dashed ribs of a wreck. It seemed to me as if a sudden impotent fury of fell envy possessed them. That one half-hour's peep at the mere remnants of the glories of the Banquets of Kings; the unsatisfying mouthfuls of disembowelled pasties, plundered pheasants, and half-sacked jellies, served to remind them of the intrinsic contempt of the alms. In this sudden mood, or whatever mysterious thing it was that now seized them, these Lazaruses seemed ready to spew up in repentant scorn the contumelious crumbs of Dives.

'This way, this way! stick like a bee to my back,' intensely whispered my guide. 'My friend there has answered my beck, and thrown open yon private door for us two. Wedge—wedge in—quick—there goes your bunged hat—never stop for your coat-tail—hit that man—strike him down! hold! jam! now! now! wrench along for your life! ha! here we breathe freely; thank God! You faint. Ho!'

'Never mind. This fresh air revives me.'

I inhaled a few more breaths of it, and felt ready to proceed.

'And now conduct me, my good friend, by some front passage into Cheapside, forthwith. I must home.'

'Not by the side-walk, though. Look at your dress. I must get a hack for you.'

'Yes, I suppose so,' said I, ruefully eyeing my tatters, and then glancing in envy at the close-bodied coat and flat cap of my guide, which defied all tumblings and tearings.

'There, now, sir,' said the honest fellow, as he put me into the hack, and tucked in me and my rags, 'when you get back to your own country, you can say you have witnessed the greatest of all England's noble charities. Of course, you will make

reasonable allowances for the unavoidable jam. Good-bye. Mind, Jehu'—addressing the driver on the box—'this is a gentleman you carry. He is just from the Guildhall Charity, which accounts for his appearance. Go on now. London Tavern, Fleet Street, remember, is the place.'

'Now, Heaven in its kind mercy save me from the noble charities of London,' sighed I, as that night I lay bruised and battered on my bed; 'and Heaven save me equally from the "Poor Man's Pudding" and the "Rich Man's Crumbs."'

THE HAPPY FAILURE

A STORY OF THE RIVER HUDSON

The appointment was that I should meet my elderly uncle at the river-side, precisely at nine in the morning. The skiff was to be ready, and the apparatus to be brought down by his grizzled old black man. As yet, the nature of the wonderful experiment remained a mystery to all but the projector.

I was first on the spot. The village was high up the river, and the inland summer sun was already oppressively warm. Presently, I saw my uncle advancing beneath the trees, hat off, and wiping his brow; while far behind staggered poor old Yorpy, with what seemed one of the gates of Gaza on his back.

'Come, hurry, stump along, Yorpy!' cried my uncle, impatiently turning round every now and then.

Upon the black's staggering up to the skiff, I perceived that the great gate of Gaza was transformed into a huge, shabby, oblong box, hermetically sealed. The sphinx-like blankness of the box quadrupled the mystery in my mind.

'Is this the wonderful apparatus?' said I, in amazement. 'Why, it's nothing but a battered old dry-goods box, nailed up. And is this the thing, uncle, that is to make you a million of dollars ere the year be out? What a forlorn-looking, lack-lustre, old ash-box it is.'

‘Put it into the skiff!’ roared my uncle to Yorpy, without heeding my boyish disdain. ‘Put it in, you grizzled-headed cherub—put it in carefully, carefully! If that box bursts, my everlasting fortune collapses.’

‘Bursts?—collapses?’ cried I, in alarm. ‘It ain’t full of combustibles? Quick! let me go to the farther end of the boat!’

‘Sit still, you simpleton!’ cried my uncle again. ‘Jump in, Yorpy, and hold on to the box like grim death while I shove off. Carefully! carefully! you dunder-headed black! Mind t’other side of the box, I say! Do you mean to destroy the box?’

‘Duyvel take te pox!’ muttered old Yorpy, who was a sort of Dutch African. ‘De pox has been my cuss for de ten long ’ear.’

‘Now, then, we’re off—take an oar, youngster; you, Yorpy, clinch the box fast. Here we go now. Carefully! carefully! You, Yorpy, stop shaking the box! Easy! easy! there’s a big snag. Pull now. Hurrah! deep water at last! Now give way, youngster, and away to the island.’

‘The island!’ said I. ‘There’s no island hereabouts.’

‘There is ten miles above the bridge, though,’ said my uncle, determinately.

‘Ten miles off! Pull that old dry-goods box ten miles up the river in this blazing sun!’

‘All that I have to say,’ said my uncle, firmly, ‘is that we are bound to Quash Island.’

‘Mercy, uncle! if I had known of this great long pull of ten mortal miles in this fiery sun, you wouldn’t have juggled me into the skiff so easy. What’s in that box?—paving-stones? See how the skiff settles down under it. I won’t help pull a box of paving-stones ten miles. What’s the use of pulling ’em?’

‘Look you, simpleton,’ quoth my uncle, pausing upon his suspended oar. ‘Stop rowing, will ye! Now then, if you don’t want to share in the glory of my experiment;

if you are wholly indifferent to halving its immortal renown; I say, sir, if you care not to be present at the first trial of my Great Hydraulic-Hydrostatic Apparatus for draining swamps and marshes, and converting them, at the rate of one acre the hour, into fields more fertile than those of the Genesee; if you care not, I repeat, to have this proud thing to tell—in far future days, when poor old I shall have been long dead and gone, boy—to your children, and your children's children; in that case, sir, you are free to land forthwith.'

'Oh, uncle! I did not mean—'

'No words, sir! Yorpy, take this oar, and help pull him ashore.'

'But, my dear uncle; I declare to you that—'

'Not a syllable, sir: you have cast open scorn upon the Great Hydraulic-Hydrostatic Apparatus. Yorpy, put him ashore, Yorpy. It's shallow here again. Jump out, Yorpy, and wade with him ashore.'

'Now, my dear, good, kind uncle, do but pardon me this one time, and I will say just nothing about the apparatus.'

'Say nothing about it! when it is my express end and aim it shall be famous! Put him ashore, Yorpy.'

'Nay, uncle, I will not give up my oar. I have an oar in this matter, and I mean to keep it. You shall not cheat me out of my share of your glory.'

'Ah, now there—that's sensible. You may stay, youngster. Pull again now.'

We were all silent for a time, steadily plying our way. At last I ventured to break water once more.

'I am glad, dear uncle, you have revealed to me at last the nature and end of your great experiment. It is the effectual draining of swamps; an attempt, dear uncle, in which, if you do but succeed (as I know you will), you will earn the glory denied to a Roman emperor. He tried to drain the Pontine marsh, but failed.'

‘The world has shot ahead the length of its own diameter since then,’ quoth my uncle, proudly. ‘If that Roman emperor were here, I’d show him what can be done in the present enlightened age.’

Seeing my good uncle so far mollified now as to be quite self-complacent, I ventured another remark.

‘This is a rather severe, hot pull, dear uncle.’

‘Glory is not to be gained, youngster, without pulling hard for it—against the stream, too, as we do now. The natural tendency of man, in the mass, is to go down with the universal current into oblivion.’

‘But why pull so far, dear uncle, upon the present occasion? Why pull ten miles for it? You do but propose, as I understand it, to put to the actual test this admirable invention of yours. And could it not be tested almost anywhere?’

‘Simple boy,’ quoth my uncle, ‘would you have some malignant spy steal from me the fruits of ten long years of high-hearted, persevering endeavour? Solitary in my scheme, I go to a solitary place to test it. If I fail—for all things are possible—no one out of the family will know it. If I succeed, secure in the secrecy of my invention, I can boldly demand any price for its publication.’

‘Pardon me, dear uncle; you are wiser than I.’

‘One would think years and gray hairs should bring wisdom, boy.’

‘Yorpy there, dear uncle; think you his grizzled locks thatch a brain improved by long life?’

‘Am I Yorpy, boy? Keep to your oar!’

Thus padlocked again, I said no further word till the skiff grounded on the shallows, some twenty yards from the deep-wooded isle.

‘Hush!’ whispered my uncle, intensely; ‘not a word now!’ and he sat perfectly still, slowly sweeping with his glance the whole country around, even to both banks of

the here wide-expanded stream.

‘Wait till that horseman yonder passes!’ he whispered again, pointing to a speck moving along a lofty, river-side road, which perilously wound on midway up a long line of broken bluffs and cliffs. ‘There—he’s out of sight now, behind the copse. Quick! Yorpy! Carefully, though! Jump overboard, and shoulder the box, and—Hold!’

We were all mute and motionless again.

‘Ain’t that a boy, sitting like Zaccheus in yonder tree of the orchard on the other bank? Look, youngster—young eyes are better than old—don’t you see him?’

‘Dear uncle, I see the orchard, but I can’t see any boy.’

‘He’s a spy—I know he is,’ suddenly said my uncle, disregardful of my answer, and intently gazing, shading his eyes with his flattened hand. ‘Don’t touch the box, Yorpy. Crouch! crouch down, all of ye!’

‘Why, uncle—there—see—the boy is only a withered white bough. I see it very plainly now.’

‘You don’t see the tree I mean,’ quoth my uncle, with a decided air of relief, ‘but never mind; I defy the boy. Yorpy, jump out, and shoulder the box. And now then, youngster, off with your shoes and stockings, roll up your trowser-legs, and follow me. Carefully, Yorpy, carefully. That’s more precious than a box of gold, mind.’

‘Heavy as de gelt, anyhow,’ growled Yorpy, staggering and splashing in the shallows beneath it.

‘There, stop under the bushes there—in among the flags—so—gently, gently—there, put it down just there. Now, youngster, are you ready? Follow—tiptoes, tiptoes!’

‘I can’t wade in this mud and water on my tiptoes, uncle; and I don’t see the need of it either.’

‘Go ashore, sir—instantly!’

‘Why, uncle, I am ashore.’

‘Peace! follow me, and no more.’

Crouching in the water in complete secrecy, beneath the bushes and among the tall flags, my uncle now stealthily produced a hammer and wrench from one of his enormous pockets, and presently tapped the box. But the sound alarmed him.

‘Yorpy,’ he whispered, ‘go you off to the right, behind the bushes, and keep watch. If you see anyone coming, whistle softly. Youngster, you do the same to the left.’

We obeyed; and presently, after considerable hammering and supplemental tinkering, my uncle’s voice was heard in the utter solitude, loudly commanding our return.

Again we obeyed, and now found the cover of the box removed. All eagerness, I peeped in, and saw a surprising multiplicity of convoluted metal pipes and syringes of all sorts and varieties, all sizes and calibres, inextricably interwreathed together in one gigantic coil. It looked like a huge nest of anacondas and adders.

‘Now then, Yorpy,’ said my uncle, all animation, and flushed with the foretaste of glory, ‘do you stand this side, and be ready to tip when I give the word. And do you, youngster, stand ready to do as much for the other side. Mind, don’t budge it the fraction of a barley-corn till I say the word. All depends on a proper adjustment.’

‘No fear, uncle. I will be careful as a lady’s tweezers.’

‘I s’ant lift de heavy pox,’ growled old Yorpy, ‘till de wort pe given; no fear o’ dat.’

‘Oh, boy,’ said my uncle now, upturning his face devotionally, while a really noble gleam irradiated his gray eyes, locks, and wrinkles! ‘oh, boy! this, this is the hour which for ten long years has, in the prospect, sustained me through all my painstaking obscurity. Fame will be the sweeter because it comes at the last; the truer, because it comes to an old man like me, not to a boy like you. Sustainer! I

glorify Thee.'

He bowed over his venerable head, and—as I live—something like a shower-drop somehow fell from my face into the shallows.

'Tip!'

We tipped.

'A little more!'

We tipped a little more.

'A leetle more!'

We tipped a leetle more.

'Just a leetle, very leetle bit more.'

With great difficulty we tipped just a leetle, very leetle more.

All this time my uncle was diligently stooping over, and striving to peep in, up, and under the box where the coiled anacondas and adders lay; but the machine being now fairly immersed, the attempt was wholly vain.

He rose erect, and waded slowly all round the box; his countenance firm and reliant, but not a little troubled and vexed.

It was plain something or other was going wrong. But as I was left in utter ignorance as to the mystery of the contrivance, I could not tell where the difficulty lay, or what was the proper remedy.

Once more, still more slowly, still more vexedly, my uncle waded round the box, the dissatisfaction gradually deepening, but still controlled, and still with hope at the bottom of it.

Nothing could be more sure than that some anticipated effect had, as yet, failed to develop itself. Certain I was, too, that the water-line did not lower about my legs.

'Tip it a leetle bit—very leetle now.'

‘Dear uncle, it is tipped already as far as it can be. Don’t you see it rests now square on its bottom?’

‘You, Yorpy, take your black hoof from under the box!’

This gust of passion on the part of my uncle made the matter seem still more dubious and dark. It was a bad symptom, I thought.

‘Surely you can tip it just a leetle more!’

‘Not a hair, uncle.’

‘Blast and blister the cursed box, then!’ roared my uncle, in a terrific voice, sudden as a squall. Running at the box he dashed his bare foot into it, and with astonishing power all but crushed in the side. Then seizing the whole box, he disembowelled it of all its anacondas and adders, and, tearing and wrenching them, flung them right and left over the water.

‘Hold, hold, my dear, dear uncle!—do for Heaven’s sake desist. Don’t destroy so, in one frantic moment, all your long, calm years of devotion to one darling scheme. Hold, I conjure!’

Moved by my vehement voice and uncontrollable tears, he paused in his work of destruction, and stood steadfastly eyeing me, or rather blankly staring at me, like one demented.

‘It is not yet wholly ruined, dear uncle; come put it together now. You have hammer and wrench; put it together again, and try it once more. While there is life there is hope.’

‘While there is life hereafter there is despair,’ he howled.

‘Do, do now, dear uncle—here, here, put these pieces together; or, if that can’t be done without more tools, try a section of it—that will do just as well. Try it once; try, uncle.’

My persistent persuasiveness told upon him. The stubborn stump of hope, ploughed

at and uprooted in vain, put forth one last miraculous green sprout.

Steadily and carefully culling out of the wreck some of the more curious-looking fragments, he mysteriously involved them together, and then, clearing out the box, slowly inserted them there, and ranging Yorpy and me as before, bade us tip the box once again.

We did so; and as no perceptible effect yet followed, I was each moment looking for the previous command to tip the box over yet more, when, glancing into my uncle's face, I started aghast. It seemed pinched, shrivelled into mouldy whiteness, like a mildewed grape. I dropped the box, and sprang toward him just in time to prevent his fall.

Leaving the woeful box where we had dropped it, Yorpy and I helped the old man into the skiff, and silently pulled from Quash Isle.

How swiftly the current now swept us down! How hardly before had we striven to stem it! I thought of my poor uncle's saying, not an hour gone by, about the universal drift of the mass of humanity toward utter oblivion.

'Boy!' said my uncle at last, lifting his head.

I looked at him earnestly, and was gladdened to see that the terrible blight of his face had almost departed.

'Boy, there's not much left in an old world for an old man to invent.'

I said nothing.

'Boy, take my advice, and never try to invent anything but—happiness.'

I said nothing.

'Boy, about ship, and pull back for the box.'

'Dear uncle!'

'It will make a good wood-box, boy. And faithful old Yorpy can sell the old iron for tobacco-money.'

‘Dear massa! dear old massa! dat be very fust time in de ten long ’ear yoo hab mention kindly old Yorpy. I tank yoo, dear old massa; I tank yoo so kindly. Yoo is yourself agin in de ten long ’ear.’

‘Ay, long ears enough,’ sighed my uncle; ‘Esopian ears. But it’s all over now. Boy, I’m glad I’ve failed. I say, boy, failure has made a good old man of me. It was horrible at first, but I’m glad I’ve failed. Praise be to God for the failure!’

His face kindled with a strange, rapt earnestness. I have never forgotten that look. If the event made my uncle a good old man, as he called it, it made me a wise young one. Example did for me the work of experience.

When some years had gone by, and my dear old uncle began to fail, and, after peaceful days of autumnal content, was gathered gently to his fathers—faithful old Yorpy closing his eyes—as I took my last look at his venerable face, the pale resigned lips seemed to move. I seemed to hear again his deep, fervent cry—‘Praise be to God for the failure!’

THE FIDDLER

So my poem is damned, and immortal fame is not for me! I am nobody forever and ever. Intolerable fate!

Snatching my hat, I dashed down the criticism, and rushed out into Broadway, where enthusiastic throngs were crowding to a circus in a side-street near by, very recently started, and famous for a capital clown.

Presently my old friend Standard rather boisterously accosted me.

‘Well met, Helmstone, my boy! Ah! what’s the matter? Haven’t been committing murder? Ain’t flying justice? You look wild!’

‘You have seen it, then?’ said I, of course referring to the criticism.

‘Oh yes, I was there at the morning performance. Great clown, I assure you. But here comes Hautboy. Hautboy—Helmstone.’

Without having time or inclination to resent so mortifying a mistake, I was instantly soothed as I gazed on the face of the new acquaintance so unceremoniously introduced. His person was short and full, with a juvenile, animated cast to it. His complexion rurally ruddy; his eye sincere, cheery, and gray. His hair alone betrayed that he was not an overgrown boy. From his hair I set him down as forty or more.

‘Come, Standard,’ he gleefully cried to my friend, ‘are you not going to the circus? The clown is inimitable, they say. Come; Mr. Helmstone, too—come both; and circus over, we’ll take a nice stew and punch at Taylor’s.’

The sterling content, good-humour, and extraordinary ruddy, sincere expression of this most singular new acquaintance acted upon me like magic. It seemed mere loyalty to human nature to accept an invitation from so unmistakably kind and honest a heart.

During the circus performance I kept my eye more on Hautboy than on the celebrated clown. Hautboy was the sight for me. Such genuine enjoyment as his struck me to the soul with a sense of the reality of the thing called happiness. The jokes of the clown he seemed to roll under his tongue as ripe magnum-bonums. Now the foot, now the hand, was employed to attest his grateful applause. At any hit more than ordinary, he turned upon Standard and me to see if his rare pleasure was shared. In a man of forty I saw a boy of twelve; and this, too, without the slightest abatement of my respect. Because all was so honest and natural, every expression and attitude so graceful with genuine good-nature, that the marvellous juvenility of Hautboy assumed a sort of divine and immortal air, like that of some forever youthful god of Greece.

But much as I gazed upon Hautboy, and much as I admired his air, yet that desperate mood in which I had first rushed from the house had not so entirely departed as not to molest me with momentary returns. But from these relapses I would rouse myself, and swiftly glance round the broad amphitheatre of eagerly interested and

all-applauding human faces. Hark! claps, thumps, deafening huzzas; the vast assembly seemed frantic with acclamation; and what, mused I, has caused all this? Why, the clown only comically grinned with one of his extra grins.

Then I repeated in my mind that sublime passage in my poem, in which Cleothemes the Argive vindicates the justice of the war. Ay, ay, thought I to myself, did I now leap into the ring there and repeat that identical passage, nay, enact the whole tragic poem before them, would they applaud the poet as they applaud the clown? No! They would hoot me, and call me doting or mad. Then what does this prove? Your infatuation or their insensibility? Perhaps both; but indubitably the first. But why wail? Do you seek admiration from the admirers of a buffoon? Call to mind the saying of the Athenian, who, when the people vociferously applauded in the forum, asked his friend in a whisper, what foolish thing had he said?

Again my eye swept the circus, and fell on the ruddy radiance of the countenance of Hautboy. But its clear honest cheeriness disdained my disdain. My intolerant pride was rebuked. And yet Hautboy dreamed not what magic reproof to a soul like mine sat on his laughing brow. At the very instant I felt the dart of the censure, his eye twinkled, his hand waved, his voice was lifted in jubilant delight at another joke of the inexhaustible clown.

Circus over, we went to Taylor’s. Among crowds of others, we sat down to our stews and punches at one of the small marble tables. Hautboy sat opposite to me. Though greatly subdued from its former hilarity, his face still shone with gladness. But added to this was a quality not so prominent before; a certain serene expression of leisurely, deep good sense. Good sense and good humour in him joined hands. As the conversation proceeded between the brisk Standard and him—for I said little or nothing—I was more and more struck with the excellent judgment he evinced. In most of his remarks upon a variety of topics Hautboy seemed intuitively to hit the exact line between enthusiasm and apathy. It was plain that while Hautboy saw the

world pretty much as it was, yet he did not theoretically espouse its bright side nor its dark side. Rejecting all solutions, he but acknowledged facts. What was sad in the world he did not superficially gainsay; what was glad in it he did not cynically slur; and all which was to him personally enjoyable, he gratefully took to his heart. It was plain, then—so it seemed at that moment, at least—that his extraordinary cheerfulness did not arise either from deficiency of feeling or thought.

Suddenly remembering an engagement, he took up his hat, bowed pleasantly, and left us.

‘Well, Helmstone,’ said Standard, inaudibly drumming on the slab, ‘what do you think of your new acquaintance?’

The two last words tingled with a peculiar and novel significance.

‘New acquaintance indeed,’ echoed I. ‘Standard, I owe you a thousand thanks for introducing me to one of the most singular men I have ever seen. It needed the optical sight of such a man to believe in the possibility of his existence.’

‘You rather like him, then,’ said Standard, with ironical dryness.

‘I hugely love and admire him, Standard. I wish I were Hautboy.’

‘Ah? That’s a pity now. There’s only one Hautboy in the world.’

This last remark set me to pondering again, and somehow it revived my dark mood.

‘His wonderful cheerfulness, I suppose,’ said I, sneering with spleen, ‘originates not less in a felicitous fortune than in a felicitous temper. His great good sense is apparent; but great good sense may exist without sublime endowments. Nay, I take it, in certain cases, that good sense is simply owing to the absence of those. Much more, cheerfulness. Unpossessed of genius, Hautboy is eternally blessed.’

‘Ah? You would not think him an extraordinary genius, then?’

‘Genius? What! such a short, fat fellow a genius! Genius, like Cassius, is lank.’

‘Ah? But could you not fancy that Hautboy might formerly have had genius, but

luckily getting rid of it, at last fatted up?'

'For a genius to get rid of his genius is as impossible as for a man in the galloping consumption to get rid of that.'

'Ah? You speak very decidedly.'

'Yes, Standard,' cried I, increasing in spleen, 'your cheery Hautboy, after all, is no pattern, no lesson for you and me. With average abilities; opinions clear, because circumscribed; passions docile, because they are feeble; a temper hilarious, because he was born to it—how can your Hautboy be made a reasonable example to a heady fellow like you, or an ambitious dreamer like me? Nothing tempts him beyond common limit; in himself he has nothing to restrain. By constitution he is exempted from all moral harm. Could ambition but prick him; had he but once heard applause, or endured contempt, a very different man would your Hautboy be. Acquiescent and calm from the cradle to the grave, he obviously slides through the crowd.'

'Ah?'

'Why do you say ah to me so strangely whenever I speak?'

'Did you ever hear of Master Betty?'

'The great English prodigy, who long ago ousted the Siddons and the Kembles from Drury Lane, and made the whole town run mad with acclamation?'

'The same,' said Standard, once more inaudibly drumming on the slab.

I looked at him perplexed. He seemed to be holding the master-key of our theme in mysterious reserve; seemed to be throwing out his Master Betty, too, to puzzle me only the more.

'What under heaven can Master Betty, the great genius and prodigy, an English boy twelve years old, have to do with the poor, commonplace plodder Hautboy, an American of forty?'

'Oh, nothing in the least. I don't imagine that they ever saw each other. Besides,

Master Betty must be dead and buried long ere this.'

'Then why cross the ocean, and rifle the grave to drag his remains into this living discussion?'

'Absent-mindedness, I suppose. I humbly beg pardon. Proceed with your observations on Hautboy. You think he never had genius, quite too contented and happy, and fat for that—ah? You think him no pattern for men in general? affording no lesson of value to neglected merit, genius ignored, or impotent presumption rebuked?—all of which three amount to much the same thing. You admire his cheerfulness, while scorning his commonplace soul. Poor Hautboy, how sad that your very cheerfulness should, by a by-blow, bring you despite!'

'I don't say I scorn him; you are unjust. I simply declare that he is no pattern for me.'

A sudden noise at my side attracted my ear. Turning, I saw Hautboy again, who very blithely reseated himself on the chair he had left.

'I was behind time with my engagement,' said Hautboy, 'so thought I would run back and rejoin you. But come, you have sat long enough here. Let us go to my rooms. It is only a five-minutes' walk.'

'If you will promise to fiddle for us, we will,' said Standard.

Fiddle! thought I—he's a jigembob fiddler, then? No wonder genius declines to measure its pace to a fiddler's bow. My spleen was very strong on me now.

'I will gladly fiddle you your fill,' replied Hautboy to Standard. 'Come on.'

In a few minutes we found ourselves in the fifth story of a sort of storehouse, in a lateral street to Broadway. It was curiously furnished with all sorts of odd furniture which seemed to have been obtained, piece by piece, at auctions of old-fashioned household stuff. But all was charmingly clean and cosy.

Pressed by Standard, Hautboy forthwith got out his dented old fiddle, and sitting

down on a tall, rickety stool, played away right merrily at ‘Yankee Doodle’ and other off-handed, dashing, and disdainfully care-free airs. But common as were the tunes, I was transfixed by something miraculously superior in the style. Sitting there on the old stool, his rusty hat sideways cocked on his head, one foot dangling adrift, he plied the bow of an enchanter. All my moody discontent, every vestige of peevishness fled. My whole splenetic soul capitulated to the magical fiddle.

‘Something of an Orpheus, ah?’ said Standard, archly nudging me beneath the left rib.

‘And I, the charmed Bruin,’ murmured I.

The fiddle ceased. Once more, with redoubled curiosity, I gazed upon the easy, indifferent Hautboy. But he entirely baffled inquisition.

When, leaving him, Standard and I were in the street once more, I earnestly conjured him to tell me who, in sober truth, this marvellous Hautboy was.

‘Why, haven’t you seen him? And didn’t you yourself lay his whole anatomy open on the marble slab at Taylor’s. What more can you possibly learn? Doubtless your own masterly insight has already put you in possession of all.’

‘You mock me, Standard. There is some mystery here. Tell me, I entreat you, who is Hautboy?’

‘An extraordinary genius, Helmstone,’ said Standard, with sudden ardour, ‘who in boyhood drained the whole flagon of glory; whose going from city to city was a going from triumph to triumph. One who has been an object of wonder to the wisest, been caressed by the loveliest, received the open homage of thousands on thousands of the rabble. But to-day he walks Broadway and no man knows him. With you and me, the elbow of the hurrying clerk, and the pole of the remorseless omnibus, shove him. He who has a hundred times been crowned with laurels, now wears, as you see, a bunged beaver. Once fortune poured showers of gold into his lap, as showers of laurel leaves upon his brow. To-day, from house to house he hies, teaching fiddling

for a living. Crammed once with fame, he is now hilarious without it. With genius and without fame, he is happier than a king. More a prodigy now than ever.'

'His true name?'

'Let me whisper it in your ear.'

'What! Oh, Standard, myself, as a child, have shouted myself hoarse applauding that very name in the theatre.'

'I have heard your poem was not very handsomely received,' said Standard, now suddenly shifting the subject.

'Not a word of that, for Heaven's sake!' cried I. 'If Cicero, travelling in the East, found sympathetic solace for his grief in beholding the arid overthrow of a once gorgeous city, shall not my petty affair be as nothing, when I behold in Hautboy the vine and the rose climbing the shattered shafts of his tumbled temple of Fame?'

Next day I tore all my manuscripts, bought me a fiddle, and went to take regular lessons of Hautboy.

THE PARADISE OF BACHELORS AND THE TARTARUS OF MAIDS

I. THE PARADISE OF BACHELORS

It lies not far from Temple Bar.

Going to it, by the usual way, is like stealing from a heated plain into some cool, deep glen, shady among harbouring hills.

Sick with the din and soiled with the mud of Fleet Street—where the Benedick tradesmen are hurrying by, with ledger-lines ruled along their brows, thinking upon rise of bread and fall of babies—you adroitly turn a mystic corner—not a street—glide down a dim, monastic way, flanked by dark, sedate, and solemn piles, and still wending on, give the whole careworn world the slip, and, disentangled, stand beneath the quiet cloisters of the Paradise of Bachelors.

Sweet are the oases in Sahara; charming the isle-groves of August prairies; delectable pure faith amidst a thousand perfidies: but sweeter, still more charming, most delectable, the dreamy Paradise of Bachelors, found in the stony heart of stunning London.

In mild meditation pace the cloisters; take your pleasure, sip your leisure, in the garden waterward; go linger in the ancient library; go worship in the sculptured chapel: but little have you seen, just nothing do you know, not the sweet kernel have you tasted, till you dine among the banded Bachelors, and see their convivial eyes and glasses sparkle. Not dine in bustling commons, during term-time, in the hall; but tranquilly, by private hint, at a private table; some fine Templar's hospitably invited guest.

Templar? That's a romantic name. Let me see. Brian de Bois Gilbert was a Templar, I believe. Do we understand you to insinuate that those famous Templars still survive in modern London? May the ring of their armed heels be heard, and the rattle of their shields, as in mailed prayer the monk-knights kneel before the consecrated Host? Surely a monk-knight were a curious sight picking his way along the Strand, his gleaming corselet and snowy surcoat spattered by an omnibus. Long-bearded, too, according to his order's rule; his face fuzzy as a pard's; how would the grim ghost look among the crop-haired, close-shaven citizens? We know indeed—sad history recounts it—that a moral blight tainted at last this sacred Brotherhood. Though no sworded foe might out-skill them in the fence, yet the worm of luxury crawled beneath their guard, gnawing the core of knightly troth, nibbling the monastic vow, till at last the monk's austerity relaxed to wassailing, and the sworn knights-bachelors grew to be but hypocrites and rakes.

But for all this, quite unprepared were we to learn that Knights-Templars (if at all in being) were so entirely secularised as to be reduced from carving out immortal fame in glorious battling for the Holy Land, to the carving of roast mutton at a

dinner-board. Like Anacreon, do these degenerate Templars now think it sweeter far to fall in banquet than in war? Or, indeed, how can there be any survival of that famous order? Templars in modern London! Templars in their red-cross mantles smoking cigars at the Divan! Templars crowded in a railway train, till, stacked with steel helmet, spear, and shield, the whole train looks like one elongated locomotive!

No. The genuine Templar is long since departed. Go view the wondrous tombs in the Temple Church; see there the rigidly-haughty forms stretched out, with crossed arms upon their stilly hearts, in everlasting and undreaming rest. Like the years before the flood, the bold Knights-Templars are no more. Nevertheless, the name remains, and the nominal society, and the ancient grounds, and some of the ancient edifices. But the iron heel is changed to a boot of patent leather; the long two-handed sword to a one-handed quill; the monk-giver of gratuitous ghostly counsel now counsels for a fee; the defender of the sarcophagus (if in good practice with his weapon) now has more than one case to defend; the vowed opener and clearer of all highways leading to the Holy Sepulchre, now has it in particular charge to check, to clog, to hinder, and embarrass all the courts and avenues of Law; the knight-combatant of the Saracen, breasting spear-points at Acre, now fights law-points in Westminster Hall. The helmet is a wig. Struck by Time’s enchanter’s wand, the Templar is to-day a Lawyer.

But, like many others tumbled from proud glory’s height—like the apple, hard on the bough but mellow on the ground—the Templar’s fall has but made him all the finer fellow.

I dare say those old warrior-priests were but gruff and grouty at the best; cased in Birmingham hardware, how could their crimped arms give yours or mine a hearty shake? Their proud, ambitious, monkish souls clasped shut, like horn-book missals; their very faces clapped in bombshells; what sort of genial men were these? But best of comrades, most affable of hosts, capital diner is the modern Templar. His wit and

wine are both of sparkling brands.

The church and cloisters, courts and vaults, lanes and passages, banquet-halls, refectories, libraries, terraces, gardens, broad walks, domicils, and dessert-rooms, covering a very large space of ground, and all grouped in central neighbourhood, and quite sequestered from the old city's surrounding din; and everything about the place being kept in most bachelor-like particularity, no part of London offers to a quiet wight so agreeable a refuge.

The Temple is indeed a city by itself. A city with all the best appurtenances, as the above enumeration shows. A city with a park to it, and flower-beds, and a river-side—the Thames flowing by as openly, in one part, as by Eden's primal garden flowed the mild Euphrates. In what is now the Temple Garden the old Crusaders used to exercise their steeds and lances; the modern Templars now lounge on the benches beneath the trees, and, switching their patent-leather boots, in gay discourse exercise at repartee.

Long lines of stately portraits in the banquet-halls, show what great men of mark—famous nobles, judges, and Lord Chancellors—have in their time been Templars. But all Templars are not known to universal fame; though, if the having warm hearts and warmer welcomes, full minds and fuller cellars, and giving good advice and glorious dinners, spiced with rare divertisements of fun and fancy, merit immortal mention, set down, ye muses, the names of R. F. C. and his imperial brother.

Though to be a Templar, in the one true sense, you must needs be a lawyer, or a student at the law, and be ceremoniously enrolled as member of the order, yet as many such, though Templars, do not reside within the Temple's precincts, though they may have their offices there, just so, on the other hand, there are many residents of the hoary old domicils who are not admitted Templars. If being, say, a lounging gentleman and bachelor, or a quiet, unmarried, literary man, charmed with the soft

seclusion of the spot, you much desire to pitch your shady tent among the rest in this serene encampment, then you must make some special friend among the order, and procure him to rent, in his name, but at your charge, whatever vacant chamber you may find to suit.

Thus, I suppose, did Dr. Johnson, that nominal Benedick and widower but virtual bachelor, when for a space he resided here. So, too, did that undoubted bachelor and rare good soul, Charles Lamb. And hundreds more, of sterling spirits, Brethren of the Order of Celibacy, from time to time have dined, and slept, and tabernacled here. Indeed, the place is all a honeycomb of offices and domicils. Like any cheese, it is quite perforated through and through in all directions with the snug cells of bachelors. Dear, delightful spot! Ah! when I bethink me of the sweet hours there passed, enjoying such genial hospitalities beneath those time-honoured roofs, my heart only finds due utterance through poetry; and, with a sigh, I softly sing, ‘Carry me back to old Virginny!’

Such then, at large, is the Paradise of Bachelors. And such I found it one pleasant afternoon in the smiling month of May, when, sallying from my hotel in Trafalgar Square, I went to keep my dinner appointment with that fine Barrister, Bachelor, and Bencher, R. F. C. (he is the first and second, and should be the third; I hereby nominate him), whose card I kept fast pinched between my gloved forefinger and thumb, and every now and then snatched still another look at the pleasant address inscribed beneath the name, ‘No. —, Elm Court, Temple.’

At the core he was a right bluff, care-free, right comfortable, and most companionable Englishman. If on a first acquaintance he seemed reserved, quite icy in his air—patience; this champagne will thaw. And if it never do, better frozen champagne than liquid vinegar.

There were nine gentlemen, all bachelors, at the dinner. One was from ‘No. —, King’s Bench Walk, Temple’; a second, third, and fourth, and fifth, from various

courts or passages christened with some similarly rich resounding syllables. It was indeed a sort of Senate of the Bachelors, sent to this dinner from widely-scattered districts, to represent the general celibacy of the Temple. Nay it was, by representation, a Grand Parliament of the best Bachelors in universal London; several of those present being from distant quarters of the town, noted immemorial seats of lawyers and unmarried men—Lincoln's Inn, Furnival's Inn; and one gentleman, upon whom I looked with a sort of collateral awe, hailed from the spot where Lord Verulam once abode a bachelor—Gray's Inn.

The apartment was well up toward heaven. I know not how many strange old stairs I climbed to get to it. But a good dinner, with famous company, should be well earned. No doubt our host had his dining-room so high with a view to secure the prior exercise necessary to the due relishing and digesting of it.

The furniture was wonderfully unpretending, old, and snug. No new shining mahogany, sticky with undried varnish; no uncomfortably luxurious ottomans, and sofas too fine to use, vexed you in this sedate apartment. It is a thing which every sensible American should learn from every sensible Englishman, that glare and glitter, gimcracks and gewgaws, are not indispensable to domestic solacement. The American Benedick snatches, down-town, a tough chop in a gilded show-box; the English bachelor leisurely dines at home on that incomparable South Down of his, off a plain deal board.

The ceiling of the room was low. Who wants to dine under the dome of St. Peter's? High ceilings! If that is your demand, and the higher the better, and you be so very tall, then go dine out with the topping giraffe in the open air.

In good time the nine gentlemen sat down to nine covers, and soon were fairly under way.

If I remember right, ox-tail soup inaugurated the affair. Of a rich russet hue, its agreeable flavour dissipated my first confounding of its main ingredient with

teamsters' gads and the raw-hides of ushers. (By way of interlude, we here drank a little claret.) Neptune's was the next tribute rendered—turbot coming second; snow-white, flaky, and just gelatinous enough, not too turtleish in its unctuousness.

(At this point we refreshed ourselves with a glass of sherry.) After these light skirmishers had vanished, the heavy artillery of the feast marched in, led by that well-known English generalissimo, roast beef. For aides-de-camp we had a saddle of mutton, a fat turkey, a chicken-pie, and endless other savoury things; while for avant-couriers came nine silver flagons of humming ale. This heavy ordnance having departed on the track of the light skirmishers, a picked brigade of game-fowl encamped upon the board, their camp-fires lit by the ruddiest of decanters.

Tarts and puddings followed, with innumerable niceties; then cheese and crackers. (By way of ceremony, simply, only to keep up good old fashions, we here each drank a glass of good old port.)

The cloth was now removed; and like Blucher's army coming in at the death on the field of Waterloo, in marched a fresh detachment of bottles, dusty with their hurried march.

All these manœuvrings of the forces were superintended by a surprising old field-marshal (I cannot school myself to call him by the inglorious name of waiter), with snowy hair and napkin, and a head like Socrates. Amidst all the hilarity of the feast, intent on important business, he disdained to smile. Venerable man!

I have above endeavoured to give some slight schedule of the general plan of operations. But anyone knows that a good genial dinner is a sort of pell-mell, indiscriminate affair, quite baffling to detail in all particulars. Thus, I spoke of taking a glass of claret, and a glass of sherry, and a glass of port, and a mug of ale—all at certain specific periods and times. But those were merely the state bumpers, so to speak. Innumerable impromptu glasses were drained between the periods of those grand imposing ones.

The nine bachelors seemed to have the most tender concern for each other's health. All the time, in flowing wine, they most earnestly expressed their sincerest wishes for the entire well-being and lasting hygiene of the gentlemen on the right and on the left. I noticed that when one of these kind bachelors desired a little more wine (just for his stomach's sake, like Timothy), he would not help himself to it unless some other bachelor would join him. It seemed held something indelicate, selfish, and unfraternal, to be seen taking a lonely, unparticipated glass. Meantime, as the wine ran apace, the spirits of the company grew more and more to perfect genialness and unconstraint. They related all sorts of pleasant stories. Choice experiences in their private lives were now brought out, like choice brands of Moselle or Rhenish, only kept for particular company. One told us how mellowly he lived when a student at Oxford; with various spicy anecdotes of most frank-hearted noble lords, his liberal companions. Another bachelor, a gray-headed man, with a sunny face, who, by his own account, embraced every opportunity of leisure to cross over into the Low Countries, on sudden tours of inspection of the fine old Flemish architecture there—this learned, white-haired, sunny-faced old bachelor excelled in his descriptions of the elaborate splendours of those old guild-halls, town-halls, and stadthold-houses to be seen in the land of the ancient Flemings. A third was a great frequenter of the British Museum, and knew all about scores of wonderful antiquities, of Oriental manuscripts, and costly books without a duplicate. A fourth had lately returned from a trip to Old Granada, and, of course, was full of Saracenic scenery. A fifth had a funny case in law to tell. A sixth was erudite in wines. A seventh had a strange characteristic anecdote of the private life of the Iron Duke, never printed, and never before announced in any public or private company. An eighth had lately been amusing his evenings, now and then, with translating a comic poem of Pulci's. He quoted for us the more amusing passages.

And so the evening slipped along, the hours told, not by a water-clock, like King Alfred's, but a wine-chronometer. Meantime the table seemed a sort of Epsom

Heath; a regular ring, where the decanters galloped round. For fear one decanter should not with sufficient speed reach his destination, another was sent express after him to hurry him; and then a third to hurry the second; and so on with a fourth and fifth. And throughout all this nothing loud, nothing unmannerly, nothing turbulent. I am quite sure, from the scrupulous gravity and austerity of his air, that had Socrates, the field-marshal, perceived aught of indecorum in the company he served, he would have forthwith departed without giving warning. I afterward learned that, during the repast, an invalid bachelor in an adjoining chamber enjoyed his first sound refreshing slumber in three long, weary weeks.

It was the very perfection of quiet absorption of good living, good drinking, good feeling, and good talk. We were a band of brothers. Comfort—fraternal, household comfort, was the grand trait of the affair. Also, you could plainly see that these easy-hearted men had no wives or children to give an anxious thought. Almost all of them were travellers, too; for bachelors alone can travel freely, and without any twinges of their consciences touching desertion of the fireside.

The thing called pain, the bugbear styled trouble—those two legends seemed preposterous to their bachelor imaginations. How could men of liberal sense, ripe scholarship in the world, and capacious philosophical and convivial understandings—how could they suffer themselves to be imposed upon by such monkish fables? Pain! Trouble! As well talk of Catholic miracles. No such thing.—Pass the sherry, sir.—Pooh, pooh! Can’t be!—The port, sir, if you please. Nonsense; don’t tell me so.—The decanter stops with you, sir, I believe.

And so it went.

Not long after the cloth was drawn our host glanced significantly upon Socrates, who, solemnly stepping to a stand, returned with an immense convolved horn, a regular Jericho horn, mounted with polished silver, and otherwise chased and curiously enriched; not omitting two lifelike goats’ heads, with four more horns of

solid silver, projecting from opposite sides of the mouth of the noble main horn.

Not having heard that our host was a performer on the bugle, I was surprised to see him lift this horn from the table, as if he were about to blow an inspiring blast. But I was relieved from this, and set quite right as touching the purposes of the horn, by his now inserting his thumb and forefinger into its mouth; whereupon a slight aroma was stirred up, and my nostrils were greeted with the smell of some choice Rappee. It was a mull of snuff. It went the rounds. Capital idea this, thought I, of taking snuff about this juncture. This goodly fashion must be introduced among my countrymen at home, further ruminated I.

The remarkable decorum of the nine bachelors—a decorum not to be affected by any quantity of wine—a decorum unassailable by any degree of mirthfulness—this was again set in a forcible light to me, by now observing that, though they took snuff very freely, yet not a man so far violated the proprieties, or so far molested the invalid bachelor in the adjoining room, as to indulge himself in a sneeze. The snuff was snuffed silently, as if it had been some fine innoxious powder brushed off the wings of butterflies.

But fine though they be, bachelors' dinners, like bachelors' lives, cannot endure forever. The time came for breaking up. One by one the bachelors took their hats, and two by two and arm-in-arm they descended, still conversing, to the flagging of the court; some going to their neighbouring chambers to turn over the Decameron ere retiring for the night; some to smoke a cigar, promenading in the garden on the cool river-side; some to make for the street, call a hack, and be driven snugly to their distant lodgings.

I was the last lingerer.

'Well,' said my smiling host, 'what do you think of the Temple here, and the sort of life we bachelors make out to live in it?'

'Sir,' said I, with a burst of admiring candour—'Sir, this is the very Paradise of

Bachelors!’

II. THE TARTARUS OF MAIDS

It lies not far from Woedolor Mountain in New England. Turning to the east, right out from among bright farms and sunny meadows, nodding in early June with odorous grasses, you enter ascendingly among bleak hills. These gradually close in upon a dusky pass, which, from the violent Gulf Stream of air unceasingly driving between its cloven walls of haggard rock, as well as from the tradition of a crazy spinster’s hut having long ago stood somewhere hereabouts, is called the Mad Maid’s Bellows’-pipe.

Winding along at the bottom of the gorge is a dangerously narrow wheel-road, occupying the bed of a former torrent. Following this road to its highest point, you stand as within a Dantean gateway. From the steepness of the walls here, their strangely ebon hue, and the sudden contraction of the gorge, this particular point is called the Black Notch. The ravine now expandingly descends into a great, purple, hopper-shaped hollow, far sunk among many Plutonian, shaggy-wooded mountains. By the country people this hollow is called the Devil’s Dungeon. Sounds of torrents fall on all sides upon the ear. These rapid waters unite at last in one turbid brick-coloured stream, boiling through a flume among enormous boulders. They call this strange-coloured torrent Blood River. Gaining a dark precipice it wheels suddenly to the west, and makes one maniac spring of sixty feet into the arms of a stunted wood of gray-haired pines, between which it thence eddies on its further way down to the invisible lowlands.

Conspicuously crowning a rocky bluff high to one side, at the cataract’s verge, is the ruin of an old saw-mill, built in those primitive times when vast pines and hemlocks superabounded throughout the neighbouring region. The black-mossed bulk of those immense, rough-hewn, and spike-knotted logs, here and there tumbled all together, in long abandonment and decay, or left in solitary, perilous projection over the

cataract's gloomy brink, impart to this rude wooden ruin not only much of the aspect of one of rough-quarried stone, but also a sort of feudal, Rhineland and Thurmberg look, derived from the pinnacled wildness of the neighbouring scenery.

Not far from the bottom of the Dungeon stands a large whitewashed building, relieved, like some great whited sepulchre, against the sullen background of mountain-side firs, and other hardy evergreens, inaccessibly rising in grim terraces for some two thousand feet.

The building is a paper-mill.

Having embarked on a large scale in the seedsman's business (so extensively and broadcast, indeed, that at length my seeds were distributed through all the Eastern and Northern States, and even fell into the far soil of Missouri and the Carolinas), the demand for paper at my place became so great, that the expenditure soon amounted to a most important item in the general account. It need hardly be hinted how paper comes into use with seedsmen, as envelopes. These are mostly made of yellowish paper, folded square; and when filled, are all but flat, and being stamped, and superscribed with the nature of the seeds contained, assume not a little the appearance of business letters ready for the mail. Of these small envelopes I used an incredible quantity—several hundreds of thousands in a year. For a time I had purchased my paper from the wholesale dealers in a neighbouring town. For economy's sake, and partly for the adventure of the trip, I now resolved to cross the mountains, some sixty miles, and order my future paper at the Devil's Dungeon paper-mill.

The sleighing being uncommonly fine toward the end of January, and promising to hold so for no small period, in spite of the bitter cold I started one gray Friday noon in my pung, well fitted with buffalo and wolf robes; and, spending one night on the road, next noon came in sight of Woedolor Mountain.

The far summit fairly smoked with frost; white vapours curled up from its

white-wooded top, as from a chimney. The intense congelation made the whole country look like one petrifaction. The steel shoes of my pung craunched and gritted over the vitreous, chippy snow, as if it had been broken glass. The forests here and there skirting the route, feeling the same all-stiffening influence, their inmost fibres penetrated with the cold, strangely groaned—not in the swaying branches merely, but likewise in the vertical trunk—as the fitful gusts remorselessly swept through them. Brittle with excessive frost, many colossal tough-grained maples, snapped in twain like pipe-stems, cumbered the unfeeling earth.

Flaked all over with frozen sweat, white as a milky ram, his nostrils at each breath sending forth two horn-shaped shoots of heated respiration, Black, my good horse, but six years old, started at a sudden turn, where, right across the track—not ten minutes fallen—an old distorted hemlock lay, darkly undulatory as an anaconda.

Gaining the Bellows'-pipe, the violent blast, dead from behind, all but shoved my high-backed pung uphill. The gust shrieked through the shivered pass, as if laden with lost spirits bound to the unhappy world. Ere gaining the summit, Black, my horse, as if exasperated by the cutting wind, slung out with his strong hind-legs, tore the light pung straight uphill, and sweeping grazingly through the narrow notch, sped downward madly past the ruined saw-mill. Into the Devil's Dungeon horse and cataract rushed together.

With might and main, quitting my seat and robes, and standing backward, with one foot braced against the dash-board, I rasped and churned the bit, and stopped him just in time to avoid collision, at a turn, with the bleak nozzle of a rock, couchant like a lion in the way—a roadside rock.

At first I could not discover the paper-mill.

The whole hollow gleamed with the white, except, here and there, where a pinnacle of granite showed one wind-swept angle bare. The mountains stood pinned in shrouds—a pass of Alpine corpses. Where stands the mill? Suddenly a whirling,

humming sound broke upon my ear. I looked, and there, like an arrested avalanche, lay the large whitewashed factory. It was subordinately surrounded by a cluster of other and smaller buildings, some of which, from their cheap, blank air, great length, gregarious windows, and comfortless expression, no doubt were boarding-houses of the operatives. A snow-white hamlet amidst the snows. Various rude, irregular squares and courts resulted from the somewhat picturesque clusterings of these buildings, owing to the broken, rocky nature of the ground, which forbade all method in their relative arrangement. Several narrow lanes and alleys, too, partly blocked with snow fallen from the roof, cut up the hamlet in all directions.

When, turning from the travelled highway, jingling with bells of numerous farmers—who, availing themselves of the fine sleighing, were dragging their wood to market—and frequently diversified with swift cutters dashing from inn to inn of the scattered villages—when, I say, turning from that bustling main-road, I by degrees wound into the Mad Maid's Bellows'-pipe, and saw the grim Black Notch beyond, then something latent, as well as something obvious in the time and scene, strangely brought back to my mind my first sight of dark and grimy Temple Bar. And when Black, my horse, went darting through the Notch, perilously grazing its rocky wall, I remembered being in a runaway London omnibus, which in much the same sort of style, though by no means at an equal rate, dashed through the ancient arch of Wren. Though the two objects did by no means completely correspond, yet this partial inadequacy but served to tinge the similitude not less with the vividness than the disorder of a dream. So that, when upon reining up at the protruding rock I at last caught sight of the quaint groupings of the factory-buildings, and with the travelled highway and the Notch behind, found myself all alone, silently and privily stealing through deep-cloven passages into this sequestered spot, and saw the long, high-gabled main factory edifice, with a rude tower—for hoisting heavy boxes—at one end, standing among its crowded outbuildings and boarding-houses, as the Temple Church amidst the surrounding offices and dormitories, and when the

marvellous retirement of this mysterious mountain nook fastened its whole spell upon me, then, what memory lacked, all tributary imagination furnished, and I said to myself, ‘This is the very counterpart of the Paradise of Bachelors, but snowed upon, and frost-painted to a sepulchre.’

Dismounting, and warily picking my way down the dangerous declivity—horse and man both sliding now and then upon the icy ledges—at length I drove, or the blast drove me, into the largest square, before one side of the main edifice. Piercingly and shrilly the shotted blast blew by the corner; and redly and demoniacally boiled Blood River at one side. A long wood-pile, of many scores of cords, all glittering in mail of crusted ice, stood crosswise in the square. A row of horse-posts, their north sides plastered with adhesive snow, flanked the factory wall. The bleak frost packed and paved the square as with some ringing metal.

The inverted similitude recurred—‘The sweet, tranquil Temple garden, with the Thames bordering its green beds,’ strangely meditated I.

But where are the gay bachelors?

Then, as I and my horse stood shivering in the wind-spray, a girl ran from a neighbouring dormitory door, and throwing her thin apron over her bare head, made for the opposite building.

‘One moment, my girl; is there no shed hereabouts which I may drive into?’

Pausing, she turned upon me a face pale with work, and blue with cold; an eye supernatural with unrelated misery.

‘Nay,’ faltered I, ‘I mistook you. Go on; I want nothing.’

Leading my horse close to the door from which she had come, I knocked. Another pale, blue girl appeared, shivering in the doorway as, to prevent the blast, she jealously held the door ajar.

‘Nay, I mistake again. In God’s name shut the door. But hold, is there no man

about?'

That moment a dark-complexioned, well-wrapped personage passed, making for the factory door, and spying him coming, the girl rapidly closed the other one.

'Is there no horse-shed here, sir?'

'Yonder, the wood-shed,' he replied, and disappeared inside the factory.

With much ado I managed to wedge in horse and pung between the scattered piles of wood all sawn and split. Then, blanketing my horse, and piling my buffalo on the blanket's top, and tucking in its edges well around the breast-band and breeching, so that the wind might not strip him bare, I tied him fast, and ran lamely for the factory door, stiff with frost, and cumbered with my driver's dreadnaught.

Immediately I found myself standing in a spacious place, intolerably lighted by long rows of windows, focusing inward the snowy scene without.

At rows of blank-looking counters sat rows of blank-looking girls, with blank, white folders in their blank hands, all blankly folding blank paper.

In one corner stood some huge frame of ponderous iron, with a vertical thing like a piston periodically rising and falling upon a heavy wooden block. Before it—its tame minister—stood a tall girl, feeding the iron animal with half-quires of rose-hued note-paper, which, at every downward dab of the piston-like machine, received in the corner the impress of a wreath of roses. I looked from the rosy paper to the pallid cheek, but said nothing.

Seated before a long apparatus, strung with long, slender strings like any harp, another girl was feeding it with foolscap sheets, which, so soon as they curiously travelled from her on the cords, were withdrawn at the opposite end of the machine by a second girl. They came to the first girl blank; they went to the second girl ruled.

I looked upon the first girl's brow, and saw it was young and fair; I looked upon the second girl's brow, and saw it was ruled and wrinkled. Then, as I still looked, the

two—for some small variety to the monotony—changed places; and where had stood the young, fair brow, now stood the ruled and wrinkled one.

Perched high upon a narrow platform, and still higher upon a high stool crowning it, sat another figure serving some other iron animal; while below the platform sat her mate in some sort of reciprocal attendance.

Not a syllable was breathed. Nothing was heard but the low, steady, overruling hum of the iron animals. The human voice was banished from the spot. Machinery—that vaunted slave of humanity—here stood menially served by human beings, who served mutely and cringingly as the slave serves the Sultan. The girls did not so much seem accessory wheels to the general machinery as mere cogs to the wheels.

All this scene around me was instantaneously taken in at one sweeping glance—even before I had proceeded to unwind the heavy fur tippet from around my neck. But as soon as this fell from me the dark-complexioned man, standing close by, raised a sudden cry, and seizing my arm, dragged me out into the open air, and without pausing for a word instantly caught up some congealed snow and began rubbing both my cheeks.

‘Two white spots like the whites of your eyes,’ he said; ‘man, your cheeks are frozen.’

‘That may well be,’ muttered I; ‘’tis some wonder the frost of the Devil’s Dungeon strikes in no deeper. Rub away.’

Soon a horrible, tearing pain caught at my reviving cheeks. Two gaunt blood-hounds, one on each side, seemed mumbling them. I seemed Actaeon.

Presently, when all was over, I re-entered the factory, made known my business, concluded it satisfactorily, and then begged to be conducted throughout the place to view it.

‘Cupid is the boy for that,’ said the dark-complexioned man. ‘Cupid!’ and by this odd fancy-name calling a dimpled, red-cheeked, spirited-looking, forward little

fellow, who was rather impudently, I thought, gliding about among the passive-looking girls—like a gold-fish through hueless waves—yet doing nothing in particular that I could see, the man bade him lead the stranger through the edifice.

‘Come first and see the water-wheel,’ said this lively lad, with the air of boyishly-brisk importance.

Quitting the folding-room, we crossed some damp, cold boards, and stood beneath a great wet shed, incessantly showering with foam, like the green barnacled bow of some East Indiaman in a gale. Round and round here went the enormous revolutions of the dark colossal water-wheel, grim with its one immutable purpose.

‘This sets our whole machinery a-going, sir; in every part of all these buildings; where the girls work and all.’

I looked, and saw that the turbid waters of Blood River had not changed their hue by coming under the use of man.

‘You make only blank paper; no printing of any sort, I suppose? All blank paper, don’t you?’

‘Certainly; what else should a paper-factory make?’

The lad here looked at me as if suspicious of my common-sense.

‘Oh, to be sure!’ said I, confused and stammering; ‘it only struck me as so strange that red waters should turn out pale chee—paper, I mean.’

He took me up a wet and rickety stair to a great light room, furnished with no visible thing but rude, manger-like receptacles running all round its sides; and up to these mangers, like so many mares haltered to the rack, stood rows of girls. Before each was vertically thrust up a long, glittering scythe, immovably fixed at bottom to the manger-edge. The curve of the scythe, and its having no snath to it, made it look exactly like a sword. To and fro, across the sharp edge, the girls forever dragged long strips of rags, washed white, picked from baskets at one side; thus ripping

asunder every seam, and converting the tatters almost into lint. The air swam with the fine, poisonous particles, which from all sides darted, subtilely, as motes in sunbeams, into the lungs.

‘This is the rag-room,’ coughed the boy.

‘You find it rather stifling here,’ coughed I, in answer; ‘but the girls don’t cough.’

‘Oh, they are used to it.’

‘Where do you get such hosts of rags?’ picking up a handful from a basket.

‘Some from the country round about; some from far over sea—Leghorn and London.’

‘’Tis not unlikely, then,’ murmured I, ‘that among these heaps of rags there may be some old shirts, gathered from the dormitories of the Paradise of Bachelors. But the buttons are all dropped off. Pray, my lad, do you ever find any bachelor’s buttons hereabouts?’

‘None grow in this part of the country. The Devil’s Dungeon is no place for flowers.’

‘Oh! you mean the flowers so called—the Bachelor’s Buttons?’

‘And was not that what you asked about? Or did you mean the gold bosom-buttons of our boss, Old Bach, as our whispering girls all call him?’

‘The man, then, I saw below is a bachelor, is he?’

‘Oh yes, he’s a Bach.’

‘The edges of those swords, they are turned outward from the girls, if I see right; but their rags and fingers fly so, I cannot distinctly see.’

‘Turned outward.’

Yes, murmured I to myself; I see it now; turned outward; and each erected sword is so borne, edge outward, before each girl. If my reading fails me not, just so, of old, condemned state-prisoners went from the hall of judgment to their doom: an officer

before, bearing a sword, its edge turned outward, in significance of their fatal sentence. So, through consumptive pallors of this blank, raggy life, go these white girls to death.

‘Those scythes look very sharp,’ again turning toward the boy.

‘Yes; they have to keep them so. Look!’

That moment two of the girls, dropping their rags, plied each a whetstone up and down the sword-blade. My unaccustomed blood curdled at the sharp shriek of the tormented steel.

Their own executioners; themselves whetting the very swords that slay them, meditated I.

‘What makes those girls so sheet-white, my lad?’

‘Why’—with a roguish twinkle, pure ignorant drollery, not-knowing heartlessness—‘I suppose the handling of such white bits of sheets all the time makes them so sheety.’

‘Let us leave the rag-room now, my lad.’

More tragical and more inscrutably mysterious than any mystic sight, human or machine, throughout the factory, was the strange innocence of cruel-heartedness in this usage-hardened boy.

‘And now,’ said he, cheerily, ‘I suppose you want to see our great machine, which cost us twelve thousand dollars only last autumn. That’s the machine that makes the paper, too. This way, sir.’

Following him, I crossed a large, bespattered place, with two great round vats in it, full of a white, wet, woolly-looking stuff, not unlike the albuminous part of an egg, soft-boiled.

‘There,’ said Cupid, tapping the vats carelessly, ‘these are the first beginnings of the paper; this white pulp you see. Look how it swims bubbling round and round,

moved by the paddle here. From hence it pours from both vats into that one common channel yonder; and so goes, mixed up and leisurely, to the great machine. And now for that.'

He led me into a room, stifling with a strange, blood-like, abdominal heat, as if here, true enough, were being finally developed the germinous particles lately seen.

Before me, rolled out like some long Eastern manuscript, lay stretched one continuous length of iron framework—multitudinous and mystical, with all sorts of rollers, wheels, and cylinders, in slowly-measured and unceasing motion.

'Here first comes the pulp now,' said Cupid, pointing to the nighest end of the machine. 'See; first it pours out and spreads itself upon this wide, sloping board; and then—look—slides, thin and quivering, beneath the first roller there. Follow on now, and see it as it slides from under that to the next cylinder. There; see how it has become just a very little less pulpy now. One step more, and it grows still more to some slight consistence. Still another cylinder, and it is so knitted—though as yet mere dragon-fly wing—that it forms an air-bridge here, like a suspended cobweb, between two more separated rollers; and flowing over the last one, and under again, and doubling about there out of sight for a minute among all those mixed cylinders you indistinctly see, it reappears here, looking now at last a little less like pulp and more like paper, but still quite delicate and defective yet awhile. But—a little further onward, sir, if you please—here now, at this further point, it puts on something of a real look, as if it might turn out to be something you might possibly handle in the end. But it's not yet done, sir. Good way to travel yet, and plenty more of cylinders must roll it.'

'Bless my soul!' said I, amazed at the elongation, interminable convolutions, and deliberate slowness of the machine; 'it must take a long time for the pulp to pass from end to end, and come out paper.'

'Oh! not so long,' smiled the precocious lad, with a superior and patronising air;

‘only nine minutes. But look; you may try it for yourself. Have you a bit of paper? Ah! here’s a bit on the floor. Now mark that with any word you please, and let me dab it on here, and we’ll see how long before it comes out at the other end.’

‘Well, let me see,’ said I, taking out my pencil; ‘come, I’ll mark it with your name.’

Bidding me take out my watch, Cupid adroitly dropped the inscribed slip on an exposed part of the incipient mass.

Instantly my eye marked the second-hand on my dial-plate.

Slowly I followed the slip, inch by inch; sometimes pausing for full half a minute as it disappeared beneath inscrutable groups of the lower cylinders, but only gradually to emerge again; and so, on, and on, and on—inch by inch; now in open sight, sliding along like a freckle on the quivering sheet; and then again wholly vanished; and so, on, and on, and on—inch by inch; all the time the main sheet growing more and more to final firmness—when, suddenly, I saw a sort of paper-fall, not wholly unlike a water-fall; a scissory sound smote my ear, as of some cord being snapped; and down dropped an unfolded sheet of perfect foolscap, with my ‘Cupid’ half faded out of it, and still moist and warm.

My travels were at an end, for here was the end of the machine.

‘Well, how long was it?’ said Cupid.

‘Nine minutes to a second,’ replied I, watch in hand.

‘I told you so.’

For a moment a curious emotion filled me, not wholly unlike that which one might experience at the fulfilment of some mysterious prophecy. But how absurd, thought I again; the thing is a mere machine, the essence of which is unvarying punctuality and precision.

Previously absorbed by the wheels and cylinders, my attention was now directed to a sad-looking woman standing by.

‘That is rather an elderly person so silently tending the machine-end here. She would not seem wholly used to it either.’

‘Oh,’ knowingly whispered Cupid, through the din, ‘she only came last week. She was a nurse formerly. But the business is poor in these parts, and she’s left it. But look at the paper she is piling there.’

‘Ay, foolscap,’ handling the piles of moist, warm sheets, which continually were being delivered into the woman’s waiting hands. ‘Don’t you turn out anything but foolscap at this machine?’

‘Oh, sometimes, but not often, we turn out finer work—cream-laid and royal sheets, we call them. But foolscap being in chief demand, we turn out foolscap most.’

It was very curious. Looking at that blank paper continually dropping, dropping, dropping, my mind ran on in wonderings of those strange uses to which those thousand sheets eventually would be put. All sorts of writings would be writ on those now vacant things—sermons, lawyers’ briefs, physicians’ prescriptions, love-letters, marriage certificates, bills of divorce, registers of births, death-warrants, and so on, without end. Then, recurring back to them as they here lay all blank, I could not but bethink me of that celebrated comparison of John Locke, who, in demonstration of his theory that man had no innate ideas, compared the human mind at birth to a sheet of blank paper; something destined to be scribbled on, but what sort of characters no soul might tell.

Pacing slowly to and fro along the involved machine, still humming with its play, I was struck as well by the inevitability as the evolvement-power in all its motions.

‘Does that thin cobweb there,’ said I, pointing to the sheet in its more imperfect stage, ‘does that never tear or break? It is marvellous fragile, and yet this machine it passes through is so mighty.’

‘It never is known to tear a hair’s point.’

‘Does it never stop—get clogged?’

‘No. It must go. The machinery makes it go just so; just that very way, and at that very pace you there plainly see it go. The pulp can’t help going.’

Something of awe now stole over me, as I gazed upon this inflexible iron animal. Always, more or less, machinery of this ponderous, elaborate sort strikes, in some moods, strange dread into the human heart, as some living, panting Behemoth might. But what made the thing I saw so specially terrible to me was the metallic necessity, the unbudging fatality which governed it. Though, here and there, I could not follow the thin, gauzy veil of pulp in the course of its more mysterious or entirely invisible advance, yet it was indubitable that, at those points where it eluded me, it still marched on in unvarying docility to the autocratic cunning of the machine. A fascination fastened on me. I stood spellbound and wandering in my soul. Before my eyes—there, passing in slow procession along the wheeling cylinders, I seemed to see, glued to the pallid incipience of the pulp, the yet more pallid faces of all the pallid girls I had eyed that heavy day. Slowly, mournfully, beseechingly, yet unresistingly, they gleamed along, their agony dimly outlined on the imperfect paper, like the print of the tormented face on the handkerchief of Saint Veronica.

‘Halloa! the heat of the room is too much for you,’ cried Cupid, staring at me.

‘No—I am rather chill, if anything.’

‘Come out, sir—out—out,’ and, with the protecting air of a careful father, the precocious lad hurried me outside.

In a few moments, feeling revived a little, I went into the folding-room—the first room I had entered, and where the desk for transacting business stood, surrounded by the blank counters and blank girls engaged at them.

‘Cupid here has led me a strange tour,’ said I to the dark-complexioned man before mentioned, whom I had ere this discovered not only to be an old bachelor, but also the principal proprietor. ‘Yours is a most wonderful factory. Your great machine is a miracle of inscrutable intricacy.’

‘Yes, all our visitors think it so. But we don’t have many. We are in a very out-of-the-way corner here. Few inhabitants, too. Most of our girls come from far-off villages.’

‘The girls,’ echoed I, glancing round at their silent forms. ‘Why is it, sir, that in most factories, female operatives, of whatever age, are indiscriminately called girls, never women?’

‘Oh! as to that—why, I suppose, the fact of their being generally unmarried—that’s the reason, I should think. But it never struck me before. For our factory here, we will not have married women; they are apt to be off-and-on too much. We want none but steady workers: twelve hours to the day, day after day, through the three hundred and sixty-five days, excepting Sundays, Thanksgiving, and Fast-days. That’s our rule. And so, having no married women, what females we have are rightly enough called girls.’

‘Then these are all maids,’ said I, while some pained homage to their pale virginity made me involuntarily bow.

‘All maids.’

Again the strange emotion filled me.

‘Your cheeks look whitish yet, sir,’ said the man, gazing at me narrowly. ‘You must be careful going home. Do they pain you at all now? It’s a bad sign, if they do.’

‘No doubt, sir,’ answered I, ‘when once I have got out of the Devil’s Dungeon, I shall feel them mending.’

‘Ah, yes; the winter air in valleys, or gorges, or any sunken place, is far colder and more bitter than elsewhere. You would hardly believe it now, but it is colder here than at the top of Woedolor Mountain.’

‘I dare say it is, sir. But time presses me; I must depart.’

With that, remuffling myself in dreadnaught and tippet, thrusting my hands into my

huge sealskin mittens, I sallied out into the nipping air, and found poor Black, my horse, all cringing and doubled up with the cold.

Soon, wrapped in furs and meditations, I ascended from the Devil's Dungeon.

At the Black Notch I paused, and once more bethought me of Temple Bar. Then, shooting through the pass, all alone with inscrutable nature, I exclaimed—Oh! Paradise of Bachelors! and oh! Tartarus of Maids!

JIMMY ROSE

A time ago, no matter how long precisely, I, an old man, removed from the country to the city, having become unexpected heir to a great old house in a narrow street of one of the lower wards once the haunt of style and fashion, full of gay parlours and bridal chambers; but now, for the most part, transformed into counting-rooms and ware-houses. There bales and boxes usurp the place of sofas; day-books and ledgers are spread where once the delicious breakfast toast was buttered. In those old wards the glorious old soft-waffle days are over.

Nevertheless, in this old house of mine, so strangely spared, some monument of departed days survived. Nor was this the only one. Amidst the warehouse ranges some few other dwellings likewise stood. The street's transmutation was not yet complete. Like those old English friars and nuns, long haunting the ruins of their retreats after they had been despoiled, so some few strange old gentlemen and ladies still lingered in the neighbourhood, and would not, could not, might not quit it. And I thought that when, one spring, emerging from my white-blossoming orchard, my own white hairs and white ivory-headed cane were added to their loitering census, that those poor old souls insanely fancied the ward was looking up—the tide of fashion setting back again.

For many years the old house had been unoccupied by an owner; those into whose hands it from time to time had passed having let it out to various shifting tenants;

decayed old townspeople, mysterious recluses, or transient, ambiguous-looking foreigners.

While from certain cheap furbishings to which the exterior had been subjected, such as removing a fine old pulpit-like porch crowning the summit of six lofty steps, and set off with a broad-brimmed sounding-board over-shadowing the whole, as well as replacing the original heavy window shutters (each pierced with a crescent in the upper panel to admit an Oriental and moony light into the otherwise shut-up rooms of a sultry morning in July) with frippery Venetian blinds; while, I repeat, the front of the house hereby presented an incongruous aspect, as if the graft of modernness had not taken in its ancient stock; still, however it might fare without, within little or nothing had been altered. The cellars were full of great grim, arched bins of blackened brick, looking like the ancient tombs of Templars, while overhead were shown the first floor timbers, huge, square, and massive, all red oak, and through long eld, of a rich and Indian colour. So large were those timbers, and so thickly ranked, that to walk in those capacious cellars was much like walking along a line-of-battle ship's gun-deck.

All the rooms in each story remained just as they stood ninety years ago, with all their heavy-moulded, wooden cornices, panelled wainscots, and carved and inaccessible mantels of queer horticultural and zoological devices. Dim with longevity, the very covering of the walls still preserved the patterns of the times of Louis XVI. In the largest parlour (the drawing-room, my daughters called it, in distinction from two smaller parlours, though I did not think the distinction indispensable) the paper-hangings were in the most gaudy style. Instantly we knew such paper could only have come from Paris—genuine Versailles paper—the sort of paper that might have hung in Marie Antoinette's boudoir. It was of great diamond lozenges, divided by massive festoons of roses (onions, Biddy the girl said they were, but my wife soon changed Biddy's mind on that head); and in those lozenges, one and all, as in an over-arboured garden-cage, sat a grand series of gorgeous

illustrations of the natural history of the most imposing Parisian-looking birds—parrots, macaws, and peacocks, but mostly peacocks. Real Prince Esterhazies of birds; all rubies, diamonds, and Orders of the Golden Fleece. But, alas! the north side of this old apartment presented a strange look; half mossy and half mildew; something as ancient forest trees on their north sides, to which particular side the moss most clings, and where, they say, internal decay first strikes. In short, the original resplendence of the peacocks had been sadly dimmed on that north side of the room, owing to a small leak in the eaves, from which the rain had slowly trickled its way down the wall, clean down to the first floor. This leak the irreverent tenants, at that period occupying the premises, did not see fit to stop, or rather, did not think it worth their while, seeing that they only kept their fuel and dried their clothes in the parlour of the peacocks. Hence many of the once glowing birds seemed as if they had their princely plumage bedraggled in a dusty shower. Most mournfully their starry trains were blurred. Yet so patiently and so pleasantly, nay, here and there so ruddily did they seem to bide their bitter doom, so much of real elegance still lingered in their shapes, and so full, too, seemed they of a sweet, engaging pensiveness, meditating all day long, for years and years, among their faded bowers, that though my family repeatedly adjured me (especially my wife, who, I fear, was too young for me) to destroy the whole hen-roost, as Biddy called it, and cover the walls with a beautiful, nice, genteel, cream-coloured paper, despite all entreaties, I could not be prevailed upon, however submissive in other things.

But chiefly would I permit no violation of the old parlour of the peacocks or room of roses (I call it by both names), on account of its long association in my mind with one of the original proprietors of the mansion—the gentle Jimmy Rose.

Poor Jimmy Rose!

He was among my earliest acquaintances. It is not many years since he died; and I and two other tottering old fellows took hack, and in sole procession followed him

to his grave.

Jimmy was born a man of moderate fortune. In his prime he had an uncommonly handsome person; large and manly, with bright eyes of blue, brown curling hair, and cheeks that seemed painted with carmine; but it was health's genuine bloom, deepened by the joy of life. He was by nature a great ladies' man, and like most deep adorers of the sex, never tied up his freedom of general worship by making one wilful sacrifice of himself at the altar.

Adding to his fortune by a large and princely business, something like that of the great Florentine trader, Cosmo the Magnificent, he was enabled to entertain on a grand scale. For a long time his dinners, suppers, and balls were not to be surpassed by any given in the party-giving city of New York. His uncommon cheeriness, the splendour of his dress, his sparkling wit, radiant chandeliers, infinite fund of small talk, French furniture, glowing welcomes to his guests, his bounteous heart and board, his noble graces and his glorious wine, what wonder if all these drew crowds to Jimmy's hospitable abode? In the winter assemblies he figured first on the manager's list. James Rose, Esq., too, was the man to be found foremost in all presentations of plate to highly successful actors at the Park, or of swords and guns to highly successful generals in the field. Often, also, was he chosen to present the gift on account of his fine gift of finely saying fine things.

'Sir,' said he, in a great drawing-room in Broadway, as he extended toward General G— a brace of pistols set with turquoise. 'Sir,' said Jimmy, with a Castilian flourish and a rosy smile, 'there would have been more turquoise here set, had the names of your glorious victories left room.'

Ah, Jimmy, Jimmy! Thou didst excel in compliments. But it was inwrought with thy inmost texture to be affluent in all things which give pleasure. And who shall reproach thee with borrowed wit on this occasion, though borrowed indeed it was? Plagiarise otherwise as they may, not often are the men of this world plagiarists in

praise.

But times changed. Time, true plagiarist of the seasons.

Sudden and terrible reverses in business were made mortal by mad prodigality on all hands. When his affairs came to be scrutinised, it was found that Jimmy could not pay more than fifteen shillings in the pound. And yet in time the deficiency might have been made up—of course, leaving Jimmy penniless—had it not been that in one winter gale two vessels of his from China perished off Sandy Hook; perished at the threshold of their port.

Jimmy was a ruined man.

It was years ago. At that period I resided in the country, but happened to be in the city on one of my annual visits. It was but four or five days since seeing Jimmy at his house the centre of all eyes, and hearing him at the close of the entertainment toasted by a brocaded lady, in these well-remembered words: ‘Our noble host; the bloom on his cheek, may it last long as the bloom in his heart!’ And they, the sweet ladies and gentlemen there, they drank that toast so gaily and frankly off; and Jimmy, such a kind, proud, grateful tear stood in his honest eye, angelically glancing round at the sparkling faces, and equally sparkling, and equally feeling, decanters.

Ah! poor, poor Jimmy—God guard us all—poor Jimmy Rose!

Well, it was but four or five days after this that I heard a clap of thunder—no, a clap of bad news. I was crossing the Bowling Green in a snowstorm not far from Jimmy’s house on the Battery, when I saw a gentleman come sauntering along, whom I remembered at Jimmy’s table as having been the first to spring to his feet in eager response to the lady’s toast. Not more brimming the wine in his lifted glass than the moisture in his eye on that happy occasion.

Well, this good gentleman came sailing across the Bowling Green, swinging a silver-headed ratan; seeing me, he paused, ‘Ah, lad, that was rare wine Jimmy gave us the other night. Shan’t get any more, though. Heard the news? Jimmy’s burst.

Clean smash, I assure you. Come along down to the Coffee-house and I'll tell you more. And if you say so, we'll arrange over a bottle of claret for a sleighing party to Cato's to-night. Come along.'

'Thank you,' said I, 'I—I—I am engaged.'

Straight as an arrow I went to Jimmy's. Upon inquiring for him, the man at the door told me that his master was not in; nor did he know where he was; nor had his master been in the house for forty-eight hours.

Walking up Broadway again, I questioned passing acquaintances; but though each man verified the report, no man could tell where Jimmy was, and no one seemed to care, until I encountered a merchant, who hinted that probably Jimmy, having scraped up from the wreck a snug lump of coin, had prudently betaken himself off to parts unknown. The next man I saw, a great nabob he was too, foamed at the mouth when I mentioned Jimmy's name. 'Rascal; regular scamp, sir, is Jimmy Rose! But there are keen fellows after him.' I afterward heard that this indignant gentleman had lost the sum of seventy-five dollars and seventy-five cents indirectly through Jimmy's failure. And yet I dare say the share of the dinners he had eaten at Jimmy's might more than have balanced that sum, considering that he was something of a wine-bibber, and such wines as Jimmy imported cost a plum or two. Indeed, now that I bethink me, I recall how I had more than once observed this same middle-aged gentleman, and how that toward the close of one of Jimmy's dinners he would sit at the table pretending to be earnestly talking with beaming Jimmy, but all the while, with a half-furtive sort of tremulous eagerness and hastiness, pour down glass after glass of noble wine, as if now, while Jimmy's bounteous sun was at meridian, was the time to make his selfish hay.

At last I met a person famed for his peculiar knowledge of whatever was secret or withdrawn in the histories and habits of noted people. When I inquired of this person where Jimmy could possibly be, he took me close to Trinity Church rail, out of the

jostling of the crowd, and whispered me, that Jimmy had the evening before entered an old house of his (Jimmy's) in C— Street, which old house had been for a time untenanted. The inference seemed to be that perhaps Jimmy might be lurking there now. So getting the precise locality, I bent my steps in that direction, and at last halted before the house containing the room of roses. The shutters were closed, and cobwebs were spun in their crescents. The whole place had a dreary, deserted air. The snow lay unswept, drifted in one billowy heap against the porch, no footprint tracking it. Whoever was within, surely that lonely man was an abandoned one. Few or no people were in the street; for even at that period the fashion of the street had departed from it, while trade had not as yet occupied what its rival had renounced.

Looking up and down the sidewalk a moment, I softly knocked at the door. No response. I knocked again, and louder. No one came. I knocked and rung both; still without effect. In despair I was going to quit the spot, when, as a last resource, I gave a prolonged summons, with my utmost strength, upon the heavy knocker, and then again stood still; while from various strange old windows up and down the street, various strange old heads were thrust out in wonder at so clamorous a stranger. As if now frightened from its silence, a hollow, husky voice addressed me through the keyhole.

'Who are you?' it said.

'A friend.'

'Then shall you not come in,' replied the voice, more hollowly than before.

Great Heaven! this is not Jimmy Rose, thought I, starting. This is the wrong house. I have been misdirected. But still, to make all sure, I spoke again.

'Is James Rose within there?'

No reply.

Once more I spoke:—

‘I am William Ford; let me in.’

‘Oh, I cannot, I cannot! I am afraid of everyone.’

It was Jimmy Rose!

‘Let me in, Rose; let me in, man. I am your friend.’

‘I will not. I can trust no man now.’

‘Let me in, Rose; trust at least one, in me.’

‘Quit the spot, or—’

With that I heard a rattling against the huge lock, not made by any key, as if some small tube were being thrust into the keyhole. Horrified, I fled fast as feet could carry me.

I was a young man then, and Jimmy was not more than forty. It was five-and-twenty years ere I saw him again. And what a change. He whom I expected to behold—if behold at all—dry, shrunken, meagre, cadaverously fierce with misery and misanthropy—amazement! the old Persian roses bloomed in his cheeks. And yet poor as any rat; poor in the last dregs of poverty; a pauper beyond almshouse pauperism; a promenading pauper in a thin, threadbare, careful coat; a pauper with wealth of polished words; a courteous, smiling, shivering gentleman.

Ah, poor, poor Jimmy—God guard us all—poor Jimmy Rose!

Though at the first onset of his calamity, when creditors, once fast friends, pursued him as carrion for jails; though then, to avoid their hunt, as well as the human eye, he had gone and denned in the old abandoned house; and there, in his loneliness, had been driven half mad, yet time and tide had soothed him down to sanity. Perhaps at bottom Jimmy was too thoroughly good and kind to be made from any cause a man-hater. And doubtless it at last seemed irreligious to Jimmy even to shun mankind.

Sometimes sweet sense of duty will entice one to bitter doom. For what could be

more bitter than now, in abject need, to be seen of those—nay, crawl and visit them in an humble sort, and be tolerated as an old eccentric, wandering in their parlours—who once had known him richest of the rich, and gayest of the gay? Yet this Jimmy did. Without rudely breaking him right down to it, fate slowly bent him more and more to the lowest deep. From an unknown quarter he received an income of some seventy dollars, more or less. The principal he would never touch, but, by various modes of eking it out, managed to live on the interest. He lived in an attic, where he supplied himself with food. He took but one regular repast a day—meal and milk—and nothing more, unless procured at others' tables. Often about the tea hour he would drop in upon some old acquaintance, clad in his neat, forlorn frock-coat, with worn velvet sewed upon the edges of the cuffs, and a similar device upon the hems of his pantaloons, to hide that dire look of having been grated off by rats. On Sunday he made a point of always dining at some fine house or other.

It is evident that no man could with impunity be allowed to lead this life unless regarded as one who, free from vice, was by fortune brought so low that the plummet of pity alone could reach him. Not much merit redounded to his entertainers because they did not thrust the starving gentleman forth when he came for his poor alms of tea and toast. Some merit had been theirs had they clubbed together and provided him, at small cost enough, with a sufficient income to make him, in point of necessaries, independent of the daily dole of charity; charity not sent to him either, but charity for which he had to trudge round to their doors.

But the most touching thing of all were those roses in his cheeks; those ruddy roses in his nipping winter. How they bloomed; whether meal and milk, and tea and toast could keep them flourishing; whether now he painted them; by what strange magic they were made to blossom so; no son of man might tell. But there they bloomed. And besides the roses, Jimmy was rich in smiles. He smiled ever. The lordly door which received him to his eleemosynary teas, knew no such smiling guest as Jimmy. In his prosperous days the smile of Jimmy was famous far and wide. It should have

been trebly famous now.

Wherever he went to tea, he had all of the news of the town to tell. By frequenting the reading-rooms, as one privileged through harmlessness, he kept himself informed of European affairs, and the last literature, foreign and domestic. And of this, when encouragement was given, he would largely talk. But encouragement was not always given. At certain houses, and not a few, Jimmy would drop in about ten minutes before the tea-hour, and drop out again about ten minutes after it; well knowing that his further presence was not indispensable to the contentment or felicity of his host.

How forlorn it was to see him so heartily drinking the generous tea, cup after cup, and eating the flavorous bread and butter, piece after piece, when, owing to the lateness of the dinner hour with the rest, and the abundance of that one grand meal with them, no one besides Jimmy touched the bread and butter, or exceeded a single cup of Souchong. And knowing all this very well, poor Jimmy would try to hide his hunger, and yet gratify it too, by striving hard to carry on a sprightly conversation with his hostess, and throwing in the eagerest mouthfuls with a sort of absent-minded air, as if he ate merely for custom’s sake, and not starvation’s.

Poor, poor Jimmy—God guard us all—poor Jimmy Rose!

Neither did Jimmy give up his courtly ways. Whenever there were ladies at the table, sure were they of some fine word; though, indeed,toward the close of Jimmy’s life, the young ladies rather thoughthis compliments somewhat musty, smacking of cocked hats and small-clothes—nay, of old pawnbrokers’ shoulder-lace and sword-belts. For there still lingered in Jimmy’s address a subdued sort of martial air; he having in his palmy days been, among other things, a general of the State militia. There seems a fatality in these militia generalships. Alas! I can recall more than two or three gentlemen who from militia generals became paupers. I am afraid to think why this is so. Is it that this military learning in a man of an unmilitary heart—that

is, a gentle, peaceable heart—is an indication of some weak love of vain display? But ten to one it is not so. At any rate it is unhandsome, if not unchristian, in the happy, too much to moralise on those who are not so.

So numerous were the houses that Jimmy visited, or so cautious was he in timing his less welcome calls, that at certain mansions he only dropped in about once a year or so. And annually upon seeing at that house the blooming Miss Frances or Miss Arabella, he would profoundly bow in his forlorn old coat, and with his soft, white hand take hers in gallant wise, saying, ‘Ah, Miss Arabella, these jewels here are bright upon these fingers; but brighter would they look were it not for those still brighter diamonds of your eyes!’

Though in thy own need thou hadst no pence to give the poor, thou, Jimmy, still hadst alms to give the rich. For not the beggar chattering at the corner pines more after bread than the vain heart after compliment. The rich in their craving glut, as the poor in their craving want, we have with us always. So, I suppose, thought Jimmy Rose.

But all women are not vain, or if a little grain that way inclined, more than redeem it all with goodness. Such was the sweet girl that closed poor Jimmy’s eyes. The only daughter of an opulent alderman, she knew Jimmy well, and saw to him in his declining days. During his last sickness, with her own hands she carried him jellies and blanc-mange; made tea for him in his attic, and turned the poor old gentleman in his bed. And well hadst thou deserved it, Jimmy, at that fair creature’s hands; well merited to have thy old eyes closed by woman’s fairy fingers, who through life, in riches and in poverty, was still woman’s sworn champion and devotee.

I hardly know that I should mention here one little incident connected with this young lady’s ministrations, and poor Jimmy’s reception of them. But it is harm to neither; I will tell it.

Chancing to be in town, and hearing of Jimmy’s illness, I went to see him. And there

in his lone attic I found the lovely ministrant. Withdrawing upon seeing another visitor, she left me alone with him. She had brought some little delicacies, and also several books, of such a sort as are sent by serious-minded well-wishers to invalids in a serious crisis. Now whether it was repugnance at being considered next door to death, or whether it was but the natural peevishness brought on by the general misery of his state; however it was, as the gentle girl withdrew, Jimmy, with what small remains of strength were his, pitched the books into the furthest corner, murmuring, 'Why will she bring me this sad old stuff? Does she take me for a pauper? Thinks she to salve a gentleman's heart with Poor Man's Plaster?'

Poor, poor Jimmy—God guard us all—poor Jimmy Rose!

Well, well, I am an old man, and I suppose these tears I drop are driblets from my dotage. But Heaven be praised, Jimmy needs no man's pity now.

Jimmy Rose is dead!

Meantime, as I sit within the parlour of the peacocks—that chamber from which his husky voice had come ere threatening me with the pistol—I still must meditate upon his strange example, whereof the marvel is, how after that gay, dashing, nobleman's career, he could be content to crawl through life, and peep about among the marbles and mahoganies for contumelious tea and toast, where once like a very Warwick he had feasted the huzzaing world with Burgundy and venison.

And every time I look at the wilted resplendence of those proud peacocks on the wall, I bethink me of the withering change in Jimmy's once resplendent pride of state. But still again, every time I gaze upon those festoons of perpetual roses, 'mid which the faded peacocks hang, I bethink me of those undying roses which bloomed in ruined Jimmy's cheek.

Transplanted to another soil, all the unkind past forgot, God grant that Jimmy's roses may immortally survive!

THE ’GEES

In relating to my friends various passages of my sea-goings, I have at times had occasion to allude to that singular people the ’Gees, sometimes as casual acquaintances, sometimes as shipmates. Such allusions have been quite natural and easy. For instance, I have said The two ’Gees, just as another would say The two Dutchmen, or The two Indians. In fact, being myself so familiar with ’Gees, it seemed as if all the rest of the world must be. But not so. My auditors have opened their eyes as much as to say, ‘What under the sun is a ’Gee?’ To enlighten them I have repeatedly had to interrupt myself, and not without detriment to my stories. To remedy which inconvenience, a friend hinted the advisability of writing out some account of the ’Gees, and having it published. Such as they are, the following memoranda spring from that happy suggestion.

The word ’Gee (g hard) is an abbreviation, by seamen, of Portugee, the corrupt form of Portuguese. As the name is a curtailment, so the race is a residuum. Some three centuries ago certain Portuguese convicts were sent as a colony to Fogo, one of the Cape de Verds, off the north-west coast of Africa, an island previously stocked with an aboriginal race of negroes, ranking pretty high in incivility, but rather low in stature and morals. In course of time, from the amalgamated generation all the likelier sort were drafted off as food for powder, and the ancestors of the since called ’Gees were left as the caput mortuum, or melancholy remainder.

Of all men seamen have strong prejudices, particularly in the matter of race. They are bigots here. But when a creature of inferior race lives among them, an inferior tar, there seems no bound to their disdain. Now, as ere long will be hinted, the ’Gee, though of an aquatic nature, does not, as regards higher qualifications, make the best of sailors. In short, by seamen the abbreviation ’Gee was hit upon in pure contumely; the degree of which may be partially inferred from this, that with them the primitive word Portugee itself is a reproach; so that ’Gee, being a subtle

distillation from that word, stands, in point of relative intensity to it, as attar of roses does to rose-water. At times, when some crusty old sea-dog has his spleen more than usually excited against some luckless blunderer of Fogo, his shipmate, it is marvellous the prolongation of taunt into which he will spin out the one little exclamatory monosyllable Ge-e-e-e-e!

The Isle of Fogo, that is ‘Fire Isle,’ was so called from its volcano, which, after throwing up an infinite deal of stones and ashes, finally threw up business altogether, from its broadcast bounteousness having become bankrupt. But thanks to the volcano’s prodigality in its time, the soil of Fogo is such as may be found of a dusty day on a road newly macadamised. Cut off from farms and gardens, the staple food of the inhabitants is fish, at catching which they are expert. But none the less do they relish ship biscuit, which, indeed, by most islanders, barbarous or semi-barbarous, is held a sort of lozenge.

In his best estate the ’Gee is rather small (he admits it), but, with some exceptions, hardy; capable of enduring extreme hard work, hard fare, or hard usage, as the case may be. In fact, upon a scientific view, there would seem a natural adaptability in the ’Gee to hard times generally. A theory not uncorroborated by his experiences; and furthermore, that kindly care of Nature in fitting him for them, something as for his hard rubs with a hardened world Fox the Quaker fitted himself, namely, in a tough leather suit from top to toe. In other words, the ’Gee is by no means of that exquisitely delicate sensibility expressed by the figurative adjective thin-skinned. His physicals and spirituals are in singular contrast. The ’Gee has a great appetite, but little imagination; a large eyeball, but small insight. Biscuit he crunches, but sentiment he eschews.

His complexion is hybrid; his hair ditto; his mouth disproportionally large, as compared with his stomach; his neck short; but his head round, compact, and betokening a solid understanding.

Like the negro, the ’Gee has a peculiar savour, but a different one—a sort of wild, marine, gamey savour, as in the sea-bird called haglet. Like venison, his flesh is firm but lean.

His teeth are what are called butter-teeth, strong, durable, square, and yellow. Among captains at a loss for better discourse during dull, rainy weather in the horse-latitudes, much debate has been had whether his teeth are intended for carnivorous or herbivorous purposes, or both conjoined. But as on his isle the ’Gee eats neither flesh nor grass, this inquiry would seem superfluous.

The native dress of the ’Gee is, like his name, compendious. His head being by nature well thatched, he wears no hat. Wont to wade much in the surf, he wears no shoes. He has a serviceably hard heel, a kick from which is by the judicious held almost as dangerous as one from a wild zebra.

Though for a long time back no stranger to the seafaring people of Portugal, the ’Gee, until a comparatively recent period, remained almost undreamed of by seafaring Americans. It is now some forty years since he first became known to certain masters of our Nantucket ships, who commenced the practice of touching at Fogo, on the outward passage, there to fill up vacancies among their crews arising from the short supply of men at home. By degrees the custom became pretty general, till now the ’Gee is found aboard of almost one whaler out of three. One reason why they are in request is this: An unsophisticated ’Gee coming on board a foreign ship never asks for wages. He comes for biscuit. He does not know what other wages mean, unless cuffs and buffets be wages, of which sort he receives a liberal allowance, paid with great punctuality, besides perquisites of punches thrown in now and then. But for all this, some persons there are, and not unduly biased by partiality to him either, who still insist that the ’Gee never gets his due.

His docile services being thus cheaply to be had, some captains will go the length of maintaining that ’Gee sailors are preferable, indeed every way, physically and

intellectually, superior to American sailors—such captains complaining, and justly, that American sailors, if not decently treated, are apt to give serious trouble.

But even by their most ardent admirers it is not deemed prudent to sail a ship with none but ’Gees, at least, if they chance to be all green hands, a green ’Gee being of all green things the greenest. Besides, owing to the clumsiness of their feet ere improved by practice in the rigging, green ’Gees are wont, in no inconsiderable numbers, to fall overboard the first dark, squally night; insomuch that when unreasonable owners insist with a captain against his will upon a green ’Gee crew fore and aft, he will ship twice as many ’Gees as he would have shipped of Americans, so as to provide for all contingencies.

The ’Gees are always ready to be shipped. Any day one may go to their isle, and on the showing of a coin of biscuit over the rail, may load down to the water’s edge with them.

But though any number of ’Gees are ever ready to be shipped, still it is by no means well to take them as they come. There is a choice even in ’Gees.

Of course the ’Gee has his private nature as well as his public coat. To know ’Gees—to be a sound judge of ’Gees—one must study them, just as to know and be a judge of horses one must study horses. Simple as for the most part are both horse and ’Gee, in neither case can knowledge of the creature come by intuition. How unwise, then, in those ignorant young captains who, on their first voyage, will go and ship their ’Gees at Fogo without any preparatory information, or even so much as taking convenient advice from a ’Gee jockey. By a ’Gee jockey is meant a man well versed in ’Gees. Many a young captain has been thrown and badly hurt by a ’Gee of his own choosing. For notwithstanding the general docility of the ’Gee when green, it may be otherwise with him when ripe. Discreet captains won’t have such a ’Gee. ‘Away with that ripe ’Gee!’ they cry; ‘that smart ’Gee; that knowing ’Gee! Green ’Gees for me!’

For the benefit of inexperienced captains about to visit Fogo, the following may be given as the best way to test a ’Gee: Get square before him, at say three paces, so that the eye, like a shot, may rake the ’Gee fore and aft, at one glance taking in his whole make and build—how he looks about the head, whether he carry it well; his ears, are they over-lengthy? How fares it in the withers? His legs, does the ’Gee stand strongly on them? His knees, any Belshazzar symptoms there? How stands it in the region of the brisket? etc. etc.

Thus far for bone and bottom. For the rest, draw close to, and put the centre of the pupil of your eye—put it, as it were, right into the ’Gee’s eye; even as an eye-stone, gently, but firmly slip it in there, and then note what speck or beam of viciousness, if any, will be floated out.

All this and much more must be done; and yet after all, the best judge may be deceived. But on no account should the skipper negotiate for his ’Gee with any middleman, himself a ’Gee. Because such an one must be a knowing ’Gee, who will be sure to advise the green ’Gee what things to hide and what to display, to hit the skipper’s fancy; which, of course, the knowing ’Gee supposes to lean toward as much physical and moral excellence as possible. The rashness of trusting to one of these middlemen was forcibly shown in the case of the ’Gee who by his countrymen was recommended to a New Bedford captain as one of the most agile ’Gees in Fogo. There he stood, straight and stout, in a flowing pair of man-of-war’s man’s trowsers, uncommonly well filled out. True, he did not step around much at the time. But that was diffidence. Good. They shipped him. But at the first taking in of sail the ’Gee hung fire. Come to look, both trowser-legs were full of elephantiasis. It was a long sperm-whaling voyage. Useless as so much lumber, at every port prohibited from being dumped ashore, that elephantine ’Gee, ever crunching biscuit, for three weary years was trundled round the globe.

Grown wise by several similar experiences, old Captain Hosea Kean, of Nantucket,

in shipping a ’Gee, at present manages matters thus: He lands at Fogo in the night; by secret means gains information where the likeliest ’Gee wanting to ship lodges; whereupon with a strong party he surprises all the friends and acquaintances of that ’Gee; putting them under guard with pistols at their heads; then creeps cautiously toward the ’Gee, now lying wholly at unawares in his hut, quite relaxed from all possibility of displaying aught deceptive in his appearance. Thus silently, thus suddenly, thus unannounced, Captain Kean bursts upon his ’Gee, so to speak, in the very bosom of his family. By this means, more than once, unexpected revelations have been made. A ’Gee, noised abroad for a Hercules in strength and an Apollo Belvidere for beauty, of a sudden is discovered all in a wretched heap; forlornly adroop as upon crutches, his legs looking as if broken at the cart-wheel. Solitude is the house of candour, according to Captain Kean. In the stall, not the street, he says, resides the real nag.

The innate disdain of regularly bred seamen toward ’Gees receives an added edge from this. The ’Gees undersell them, working for biscuit where the sailors demand dollars. Hence, anything said by sailors to the prejudice of ’Gees should be received with caution. Especially that jeer of theirs, that monkey-jacket was originally so called from the circumstance that that rude sort of shaggy garment was first known in Fogo. They often call a monkey-jacket a ’Gee-jacket. However this may be, there is no call to which the ’Gee will with more alacrity respond than the word ‘Man!’

Is there any hard work to be done, and the ’Gees stand round in sulks? ‘Here, my men!’ cries the mate. How they jump. But ten to one when the work is done, it is plain ’Gee again. ‘Here, ’Gee! you ’Ge-e-e-e!’ In fact, it is not unsurmised, that only when extraordinary stimulus is needed, only when an extra strain is to be got out of them, are these hapless ’Gees ennobled with the human name.

As yet, the intellect of the ’Gee has been little cultivated. No well-attested educational experiment has been tried upon him. It is said, however, that in the last

century a young ’Gee was by a visionary Portuguese naval officer sent to Salamanca University. Also, among the Quakers of Nantucket, there has been talk of sending five comely ’Gees, aged sixteen, to Dartmouth College; that venerable institution, as is well known, having been originally founded partly with the object of finishing off wild Indians in the classics and higher mathematics. Two qualities of the ’Gee which, with his docility, may be justly regarded as furnishing a hopeful basis for his intellectual training, are his excellent memory, and still more excellent credulity.

The above account may, perhaps, among the ethnologists, raise some curiosity to see a ’Gee. But to see a ’Gee there is no need to go all the way to Fogo, no more than to see a Chinaman to go all the way to China. ’Gees are occasionally to be encountered in our seaports, but more particularly in Nantucket and New Bedford. But these ’Gees are not the ’Gees of Fogo. That is, they are no longer green ’Gees. They are sophisticated ’Gees, and hence liable to be taken for naturalised citizens badly sunburnt. Many a Chinaman, in new coat and pantaloons, his long queue coiled out of sight in one of Genin’s hats, has promenaded Broadway, and been taken merely for an eccentric Georgia planter. The same with ’Gees; a stranger need have a sharp eye to know a ’Gee, even if he see him.

Thus much for a general sketchy view of the ’Gee. For further and fuller information apply to any sharp-witted American whaling-captain, but more especially to the before-mentioned old Captain Hosea Kean, of Nantucket, whose address at present is ‘Pacific Ocean.’

I AND MY CHIMNEY

I and my chimney, two gray-headed old smokers, reside in the country. We are, I may say, old settlers here; particularly my old chimney, which settles more and more every day.

Though I always say, I and my chimney, as Cardinal Wolsey used to say, I and my King, yet this egotistic way of speaking, wherein I take precedence of my chimney,

is hardly borne out by the facts; in everything, except the above phrase, my chimney taking precedence of me.

Within thirty feet of the turf-sided road, my chimney—a huge, corpulent old Harry VIII. of a chimney—rises full in front of me and all my possessions. Standing well up a hillside, my chimney, like Lord Rosse's monster telescope, swung vertical to hit the meridian moon, is the first object to greet the approaching traveller's eye, nor is it the last which the sun salutes. My chimney, too, is before me in receiving the first-fruits of the seasons. The snow is on its head ere on my hat; and every spring, as in a hollow beech-tree, the first swallows build their nests in it.

But it is within doors that the pre-eminence of my chimney is most manifest. When in the rear room, set apart for that object, I stand to receive my guests (who, by the way, call more, I suspect, to see my chimney than me), I then stand, not so much before, as, strictly speaking, behind my chimney, which is, indeed, the true host. Not that I demur. In the presence of my betters, I hope I know my place.

From this habitual precedence of my chimney over me, some even think that I have got into a sad rearward way altogether; in short, from standing behind my old-fashioned chimney so much, I have got to be quite behind the age too, as well as running behindhand in everything else. But to tell the truth, I never was a very forward old fellow, nor what my farming neighbours call a forehanded one. Indeed, those rumours about my behindhandedness are so far correct, that I have an odd sauntering way with me sometimes of going about with my hands behind my back. As for my belonging to the rearguard in general, certain it is, I bring up the rear of my chimney—which, by the way, is this moment before me—and that, too, both in fancy and fact. In brief, my chimney is my superior; my superior by I know not how many heads and shoulders; my superior, too, in that humbly bowing over with shovel and tongs, I much minister to it; yet never does it minister, or incline over to me; but, if anything, in its settlings, rather leans the other way.

My chimney is grand seignior here—the one great domineering object, not more of the landscape, than of the house; all the rest of which house, in each architectural arrangement, as may shortly appear, is, in the most marked manner, accommodated, not to my wants, but to my chimney's, which, among other things, has the centre of the house to himself, leaving but the odd holes and corners to me.

But I and my chimney must explain; and as we are both rather obese, we may have to expatiate.

In those houses which are strictly double houses—that is, where the hall is in the middle—the fireplaces usually are on opposite sides; so that while one member of the household is warming himself at a fire built into a recess of the north wall, say another member, the former's own brother, perhaps, may be holding his feet to the blaze before a hearth in the south wall—the two thus fairly sitting back to back. Is this well? Be it put to any man who has a proper fraternal feeling. Has it not a sort of sulky appearance? But very probably this style of chimney building originated with some architect afflicted with a quarrelsome family.

Then again, almost every modern fireplace has its separate flue—separate throughout, from hearth to chimney-top. At least such an arrangement is deemed desirable. Does not this look egotistical, selfish? But still more, all these separate flues, instead of having independent masonry establishments of their own, or instead of being grouped together in one federal stock in the middle of the house—instead of this, I say, each flue is surreptitiously honeycombed into the walls, so that these last are here and there, or indeed almost anywhere, treacherously hollow, and, in consequence, more or less weak. Of course, the main reason of this style of chimney building is to economise room. In cities, where lots are sold by the inch, small space is to spare for a chimney constructed on magnanimous principles; and, as with most thin men, who are generally tall, so with such houses, what is lacking in breadth must be made up in height. This remark holds true even with regard to many very

stylish abodes, built by the most stylish of gentlemen. And yet, when that stylish gentleman, Louis le Grand of France, would build a palace for his lady friend, Madame de Maintenon, he built it but one story high—in fact in the cottage style. But then, how uncommonly quadrangular, spacious, and broad—horizontal acres, not vertical ones. Such is the palace, which, in all its one-storied magnificence of Languedoc marble, in the garden of Versailles, still remains to this day. Any man can buy a square foot of land and plant a liberty-pole on it; but it takes a king to set apart whole acres for a Grand Trianon.

But nowadays it is different; and furthermore, what originated in a necessity has been mounted into a vaunt. In towns there is large rivalry in building tall houses. If one gentleman builds his house four stories high, and another gentleman comes next door and builds five stories high, then the former, not to be looked down upon that way, immediately sends for his architect and claps a fifth and a sixth story on top of his previous four. And, not till the gentleman has achieved his aspiration, not till he has stolen over the way by twilight and observed how his sixth story soars beyond his neighbour's fifth—not till then does he retire to his rest with satisfaction.

Such folks, it seems to me, need mountains for neighbours, to take this emulous conceit of soaring out of them.

If, considering that mine is a very wide house, and by no means lofty, aught in the above may appear like interested pleading, as if I did but fold myself about in the cloak of a general proposition, cunningly to tickle my individual vanity beneath it, such misconception must vanish upon my frankly conceding, that land adjoining my alder swamp was sold last month for ten dollars an acre, and thought a rash purchase at that; so that for wide houses hereabouts there is plenty of room, and cheap. Indeed so cheap—dirt cheap—is the soil, that our elms thrust out their roots in it, and hang their great boughs over it, in the most lavish and reckless way. Almost all our crops, too, are sown broadcast, even peas and turnips. A farmer among us, who should go

about his twenty-acre field, poking his finger into it here and there, and dropping down a mustard seed, would be thought a penurious, narrow-minded husbandman. The dandelions in the river meadows, and the forget-me-nots along the mountain roads, you see at once they are put to no economy in space. Some seasons, too, our rye comes up here and there a spear, sole and single like a church-spire. It doesn't care to crowd itself where it knows there is such a deal of room. The world is wide, the world is all before us, says the rye. Weeds, too, it is amazing how they spread. No such thing as arresting them—some of our pastures being a sort of Alsatia for the weeds. As for the grass, every spring it is like Kossuth's rising of what he calls the peoples. Mountains, too, a regular camp-meeting of them. For the same reason, the same all-sufficiency of room, our shadows march and countermarch, going through their various drills and masterly evolutions, like the old imperial guard on the Champ de Mars. As for the hills, especially where the roads cross them, the supervisors of our various towns have given notice to all concerned, that they can come and dig them down and cart them off, and never a cent to pay, no more than for the privilege of picking blackberries. The stranger who is buried here, what liberal-hearted landed proprietor among us grudges him his six feet of rocky pasture?

Nevertheless, cheap, after all, as our land is, and much as it is trodden under foot, I, for one, am proud of it for what it bears; and chiefly for its three great lions—the Great Oak, Ogg Mountain, and my chimney.

Most houses here are but one and a half stories high; few exceed two. That in which I and my chimney dwell, is in width nearly twice its height, from sill to eaves—which accounts for the magnitude of its main content—besides showing that in this house, as in this country at large, there is abundance of space, and to spare, for both of us.

The frame of the old house is of wood—which but the more sets forth the solidity of

the chimney, which is of brick. And as the great wrought nails, binding the clap-boards, are unknown in these degenerate days, so are the huge bricks in the chimney walls. The architect of the chimney must have had the pyramid of Cheops before him; for after that famous structure it seems modelled, only its rate of decrease toward the summit is considerably less, and it is truncated. From the exact middle of the mansion it soars from the cellar, right up through each successive floor, till, four feet square, it breaks water from the ridge-pole of the roof, like an anvil-headed whale through the crest of a billow. Most people, though, liken it, in that part, to a razeed observatory, masoned up.

The reason for its peculiar appearance above the roof touches upon rather delicate ground. How shall I reveal that, forasmuch as many years ago the original gable roof of the old house had become very leaky, a temporary proprietor hired a band of woodmen, with their huge, cross-cut saws, and went to sawing the old gable roof clean off. Off it went, with all its birds' nests and dormer windows. It was replaced with a modern roof, more fit for a railway wood-house than an old country gentleman's abode. This operation—razeeing the structure some fifteen feet—was, in effect upon the chimney, something like the falling of the great spring tides. It left uncommon low water all about the chimney—to abate which appearance, the same person now proceeds to slice fifteen feet off the chimney itself, actually beheading my royal old chimney—a regicidal act, which, were it not for the palliating fact that he was a poulterer by trade, and, therefore, hardened to such neck-wringings, should send that former proprietor down to posterity in the same cart with Cromwell.

Owing to its pyramidal shape, the reduction of the chimney inordinately widened its razeed summit. Inordinately, I say, but only in the estimation of such as have no eye to the picturesque. What care I, if, unaware that my chimney, as a free citizen of this free land, stands upon an independent basis of its own, people passing it, wonder how such a brick-kiln, as they call it, is supported upon mere joists and rafters? What care I? I will give a traveller a cup of switchel, if he want it; but am I bound to

supply him with a sweet taste? Men of cultivated minds see, in my old house and chimney, a goodly old elephant-and-castle.

All feeling hearts will sympathise with me in what I am now about to add. The surgical operation above referred to, necessarily brought into the open air a part of the chimney previously under cover, and intended to remain so, and, therefore, not built of what are called weather-bricks. In consequence, the chimney, though of a vigorous constitution, suffered not a little, from so naked an exposure; and, unable to acclimate itself, ere long began to fail—showing blotchy symptoms akin to those in measles. Whereupon travellers, passing my way, would wag their heads, laughing: ‘See that wax nose—how it melts off!’ But what cared I? The same travellers would travel across the sea to view Kenilworth peeling away, and for a very good reason: that of all artists of the picturesque, decay wears the palm—I would say, the ivy. In fact, I’ve often thought that the proper place for my old chimney is ivied old England.

In vain my wife—with what probable ulterior intent will, ere long, appear—solemnly warned me, that unless something were done, and speedily, we should be burnt to the ground, owing to the holes crumbling through the aforesaid blotchy parts, where the chimney joined the roof. ‘Wife,’ said I, ‘far better that my house should burn down, than that my chimney should be pulled down, though but a few feet. They call it a wax nose; very good; not for me to tweak the nose of my superior.’ But at last the man who has a mortgage on the house dropped me a note, reminding me that, if my chimney was allowed to stand in that invalid condition, my policy of insurance would be void. This was a sort of hint not to be neglected. All the world over, the picturesque yields to the pocketesque. The mortgagor cared not, but the mortgagee did.

So another operation was performed. The wax nose was taken off, and a new one fitted on. Unfortunately for the expression—being put up by a squint-eyed mason,

who, at the time, had a bad stitch in the same side—the new nose stands a little awry, in the same direction.

Of one thing, however, I am proud. The horizontal dimensions of the new part are unreduced.

Large as the chimney appears upon the roof, that is nothing to its spaciousness below. At its base in the cellar, it is precisely twelve feet square; and hence covers precisely one hundred and forty-four superficial feet. What an appropriation of terra firma for a chimney, and what a huge load for this earth! In fact, it was only because I and my chimney formed no part of his ancient burden, that that stout peddler, Atlas of old, was enabled to stand up so bravely under his pack. The dimensions given may, perhaps, seem fabulous. But, like those stones at Gilgal, which Joshua set up for a memorial of having passed over Jordan, does not my chimney remain, even unto this day?

Very often I go down into my cellar, and attentively survey that vast square of masonry. I stand long, and ponder over, and wonder at it. It has a druidical look, away down in the umbrageous cellar there, whose numerous vaulted passages, and far glens of gloom, resemble the dark, damp depths of primeval woods. So strongly did this conceit steal over me, so deeply was I penetrated with wonder at the chimney, that one day—when I was a little out of my mind, I now think—getting a spade from the garden, I set to work, digging round the foundation, especially at the corners thereof, obscurely prompted by dreams of striking upon some old, earthen-worn memorial of that bygone day, when, into all this gloom, the light of heaven entered, as the masons laid the foundation-stones, peradventure sweltering under an August sun, or pelted by a March storm. Plying my blunted spade, how vexed was I by that ungracious interruption of a neighbour, who, calling to see me upon some business, and being informed that I was below, said I need not be troubled to come up, but he would go down to me; and so, without ceremony, and

without my having been forewarned, suddenly discovered me, digging in my cellar.

‘Gold-digging, sir?’

‘Nay, sir,’ answered I, starting, ‘I was merely—ahem! merely—I say I was merely digging—round my chimney.’

‘Ah, loosening the soil, to make it grow. Your chimney, sir, you regard as too small, I suppose; needing further development, especially at the top?’

‘Sir!’ said I, throwing down the spade, ‘do not be personal. I and my chimney—’

‘Personal?’

‘Sir, I look upon this chimney less as a pile of masonry than as a personage. It is the king of the house. I am but a suffered and inferior subject.’

In fact, I would permit no gibes to be cast at either myself or my chimney; and never again did my visitor refer to it in my hearing, without coupling some compliment with the mention. It well deserves a respectful consideration. There it stands, solitary and alone—not a council-of-ten flues, but, like his sacred majesty of Russia, a unit of an autocrat.

Even to me, its dimensions, at times, seem incredible. It does not look so big—no, not even in the cellar. By the mere eye, its magnitude can be but imperfectly comprehended, because only one side can be received at one time; and said side can only present twelve feet, linear measure. But then, each other side also is twelve feet long; and the whole obviously forms a square; and twelve times twelve is one hundred and forty-four. And so, an adequate conception of the magnitude of this chimney is only to be got at by a sort of process in the higher mathematics, by a method somewhat akin to those whereby the surprising distances of fixed stars are computed.

It need hardly be said, that the walls of my house are entirely free from fireplaces. These all congregate in the middle—in the one grand central chimney, upon all four

sides of which are hearths—two tiers of hearths—so that when, in the various chambers, my family and guests are warming themselves of a cold winter's night, just before retiring, then, though at the time they may not be thinking so, all their faces mutually look towards each other, yea, all their feet point to one centre; and, when they go to sleep in their beds, they all sleep round one warm chimney, like so many Iroquois Indians, in the woods, round their one heap of embers. And just as the Indians' fire serves, not only to keep them comfortable, but also to keep off wolves and other savage monsters, so my chimney, by its obvious smoke at top, keeps off prowling burglars from the towns—for what burglar or murderer would dare break into an abode from whose chimney issues such a continual smoke—betokening that if the inmates are not stirring, at least fires are, and in case of an alarm, candles may readily be lighted, to say nothing of muskets.

But stately as is the chimney—yea, grand high altar as it is, right worthy for the celebration of High Mass before the Pope of Rome and all his cardinals—yet what is there perfect in this world? Caius Julius Cæsar, had he not been so inordinately great, they say that Brutus, Cassius, Antony, and the rest, had been greater. My chimney, were it not so mighty in its magnitude, my chambers had been larger. How often has my wife ruefully told me that my chimney, like the English aristocracy, casts a contracting shade all round it. She avers that endless domestic inconveniences arise—more particularly from the chimney's stubborn central locality. The grand objection with her is, that it stands midway in the place where a fine entrance-hall ought to be. In truth, there is no hall whatever to the house—nothing but a sort of square landing-place, as you enter from the wide front door. A roomy enough landing-place, I admit, but not attaining to the dignity of a hall. Now, as the front door is precisely in the middle of the front of the house, inwards it faces the chimney. In fact, the opposite wall of the landing-place is formed solely by the chimney; and hence—owing to the gradual tapering of the chimney—is a little less than twelve feet in width. Climbing the chimney in this

part, is the principal staircase—which, by three abrupt turns, and three minor landing-places, mounts to the second floor, where, over the front door, runs a sort of narrow gallery, something less than twelve feet long, leading to chambers on either hand. This gallery, of course, is railed; and so, looking down upon the stairs, and all those landing-places together, with the main one at bottom, resembles not a little a balcony for musicians, in some jolly old abode, in times Elizabethan. Shall I tell a weakness? I cherish the cobwebs there, and many a time arrest Biddy in the act of brushing them with her broom, and have many a quarrel with my wife and daughters about it.

Now the ceiling, so to speak, of the place where you enter the house, that ceiling is, in fact, the ceiling of the second floor, not the first. The two floors are made one here; so that ascending this turning stairs, you seem going up into a kind of soaring tower, or lighthouse. At the second landing, midway up the chimney, is a mysterious door, entering to a mysterious closet; and here I keep mysterious cordials, of a choice, mysterious flavour, made so by the constant nurturing and subtle ripening of the chimney's gentle heat, distilled through that warm mass of masonry. Better for wines is it than voyages to the Indies; my chimney itself a tropic. A chair by my chimney in a November day is as good for an invalid as a long season spent in Cuba. Often I think how grapes might ripen against my chimney. How my wife's geraniums bud there! Bud in December. Her eggs, too—can't keep them near the chimney, on account of hatching. Ah, a warm heart has my chimney.

How often my wife was at me about that projected grand entrance-hall of hers, which was to be knocked clean through the chimney, from one end of the house to the other, and astonish all guests by its generous amplitude. 'But, wife,' said I, 'the chimney—consider the chimney: if you demolish the foundation, what is to support the superstructure?' 'Oh, that will rest on the second floor.' The truth is, women know next to nothing about the realities of architecture. However, my wife still talked of running her entries and partitions. She spent many long nights elaborating

her plans; in imagination building her boasted hall through the chimney, as though its high mightiness were a mere spear of sorrel-top. At last, I gently reminded her that, little as she might fancy it, the chimney was a fact—a sober, substantial fact, which, in all her plannings, it would be well to take into full consideration. But this was not of much avail.

And here, respectfully craving her permission, I must say a few words about this enterprising wife of mine.[12] Though in years nearly old as myself, in spirit she is young as my little sorrel mare, Trigger, that threw me last fall. What is extraordinary, though she comes of a rheumatic family, she is straight as a pine, never has any aches; while for me with the sciatica, I am sometimes as crippled up as any old apple-tree. But she has not so much as a toothache. As for her hearing—let me enter the house in my dusty boots, and she away up in the attic. And for her sight—Biddy, the housemaid, tells other people's housemaids, that her mistress will spy a spot on the dresser straight through the pewter platter, put up on purpose to hide it. Her faculties are alert as her limbs and her senses. No danger of my spouse dying of torpor. The longest night in the year I've known her lie awake, planning her campaign for the morrow. She is a natural projector. The maxim, 'Whatever is, is right,' is not hers. Her maxim is, Whatever is, is wrong; and what is more, must be altered; and what is still more, must be altered right away. Dreadful maxim for the wife of a dozy old dreamer like me, who dotes on seventh days as days of rest, and out of a sabbatical horror of industry, will, on a week day, go out of my road a quarter of a mile, to avoid the sight of a man at work.

That matches are made in heaven, may be, but my wife would have been just the wife for Peter the Great, or Peter the Piper. How she would have set in order that huge, littered empire of the one, and with indefatigable painstaking picked the peck of pickled peppers for the other.

But the most wonderful thing is, my wife never thinks of her end. Her youthful

incredulity, as to the plain theory, and still plainer fact of death, hardly seems Christian. Advanced in years, as she knows she must be, my wife seems to think that she is to teem on, and be inexhaustible forever. She doesn't believe in old age. At that strange promise in the plain of Mamre, my old wife, unlike old Abraham's, would not have jeeringly laughed within herself.

Judge how to me, who, sitting in the comfortable shadow of my chimney, smoking my comfortable pipe, with ashes not unwelcome at my feet, and ashes not unwelcome all but in my mouth; and who am thus in a comfortable sort of not unwelcome, though, indeed, ashy enough way, reminded of the ultimate exhaustion even of the most fiery life; judge how to me this unwarrantable vitality in my wife must come, sometimes, it is true, with a moral and a calm, but oftener with a breeze and a ruffle.

If the doctrine be true, that in wedlock contraries attract, by how cogent a fatality must I have been drawn to my wife! While spicily impatient of present and past, like a glass of ginger-beer she overflows with her schemes; and, with like energy as she puts down her foot, puts down her preserves and her pickles, and lives with them in a continual future; or ever full of expectations both from time and space, is ever restless for newspapers, and ravenous for letters. Content with the years that are gone, taking no thought for the morrow, and looking for no new thing from any person or quarter whatever, I have not a single scheme or expectation on earth, save in unequal resistance of the undue encroachment of hers.

Old myself, I take to oldness in things; for that cause mainly loving old Montaigne, and old cheese, and old wine; and eschewing young people, hot rolls, new books, and early potatoes, and very fond of my old claw-footed chair, and old club-footed Deacon White, my neighbour, and that still nigher old neighbour, my betwisted old grape-vine, that of a summer evening leans in his elbow for cosy company at my window-sill, while I, within doors, lean over mine to meet his; and above all, high

above all, am fond of my high-manteled old chimney. But she, out of that infatuate juvenility of hers, takes to nothing but newness; for that cause mainly, loving new cider in autumn, and in spring, as if she were own daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, fairly raving after all sorts of salads and spinages, and more particularly green cucumbers (though all the time Nature rebukes such unsuitable young hankerings in so elderly a person, by never permitting such things to agree with her), and has an itch after recently-discovered fine prospects (so no graveyard be in the background), and also after Swedenborgianism, and the Spirit Rapping philosophy, with other new views, alike in things natural and unnatural; and immortally hopeful, is forever making new flower-beds even on the north side of the house, where the bleak mountain wind would scarce allow the wiry weed called hard-hack to gain a thorough footing; and on the road-side sets out mere pipe-stems of young elms; though there is no hope of any shade from them, except over the ruins of her great-granddaughters' gravestones; and won't wear caps, but plaits her gray hair; and takes the Ladies' Magazine for the fashions; and always buys her new almanac a month before the new year; and rises at dawn; and to the warmest sunset turns a cold shoulder; and still goes on at odd hours with her new course of history, and her French, and her music; and likes young company; and offers to ride young colts; and sets out young suckers in the orchard; and has a spite against my elbowed old grape-vine, and my club-footed old neighbour, and my claw-footed old chair, and above all, high above all, would fain persecute, unto death, my high-manteled old chimney. By what perverse magic, I a thousand times think, does such a very autumnal old lady have such a very vernal young soul? When I would remonstrate at times, she spins round on me with, 'Oh, don't you grumble, old man (she always calls me old man), it's I, young I, that keep you from stagnating.' Well, I suppose it is so. Yea, after all, these things are well ordered. My wife, as one of her poor relations, good soul, intimates, is the salt of the earth, and none the less the salt of my sea, which otherwise were unwholesome. She is its monsoon, too, blowing a

brisk gale over it, in the one steady direction of my chimney.

Not insensible of her superior energies, my wife has frequently made me propositions to take upon herself all the responsibilities of my affairs. She is desirous that, domestically, I should abdicate; that, renouncing further rule, like the venerable Charles V., I should retire into some sort of monastery. But indeed, the chimney excepted, I have little authority to lay down. By my wife's ingenious application of the principle that certain things belong of right to female jurisdiction, I find myself, through my easy compliances, insensibly stripped by degrees of one masculine prerogative after another. In a dream I go about my fields, a sort of lazy, happy-go-lucky, good-for-nothing, loafing old Lear. Only by some sudden revelation am I reminded who is over me; as year before last, one day seeing in one corner of the premises fresh deposits of mysterious boards and timbers, the oddity of the incident at length begat serious meditation. 'Wife,' said I, 'whose boards and timbers are those I see near the orchard there? Do you know anything about them, wife? Who put them there? You know I do not like the neighbours to use my land that way; they should ask permission first.'

She regarded me with a pitying smile.

'Why, old man, don't you know I am building a new barn? Didn't you know that, old man?'

This is the poor old lady that was accusing me of tyrannising over her.

To return now to the chimney. Upon being assured of the futility of her proposed hall, so long as the obstacle remained, for a time my wife was for a modified project. But I could never exactly comprehend it. As far as I could see through it, it seemed to involve the general idea of a sort of irregular archway, or elbowed tunnel, which was to penetrate the chimney at some convenient point under the staircase, and carefully avoiding dangerous contact with the fireplaces, and particularly steering clear of the great interior flue, was to conduct the enterprising traveller from the

front door all the way into the dining-room in the remote rear of the mansion. Doubtless it was a bold stroke of genius, that plan of hers, and so was Nero's when he schemed his grand canal through the Isthmus of Corinth. Nor will I take oath, that, had her project been accomplished, then, by help of lights hung at judicious intervals through the tunnel, some Belzoni or other might have succeeded in future ages in penetrating through the masonry, and actually emerging into the dining-room, and once there, it would have been inhospitable treatment of such a traveller to have denied him a recruiting meal.

But my bustling wife did not restrict her objections, nor in the end confine her proposed alterations to the first floor. Her ambition was of the mounting order. She ascended with her schemes to the second floor, and so to the attic. Perhaps there was some small ground for her discontent with things as they were. The truth is, there was no regular passage-way upstairs or down, unless we again except that little orchestra-gallery before mentioned. And all this was owing to the chimney, which my gamesome spouse seemed despitefully to regard as the bully of the house. On all its four sides, nearly all the chambers sidled up to the chimney for the benefit of a fireplace. The chimney would not go to them; they must needs go to it. The consequence was, almost every room, like a philosophical system, was in itself an entry, or passage-way to other rooms, and systems of rooms—a whole suite of entries, in fact. Going through the house, you seem to be forever going somewhere, and getting nowhere. It is like losing one's self in the woods; round and round the chimney you go, and if you arrive at all, it is just where you started, and so you begin again, and again get nowhere. Indeed—though I say it not in the way of fault-finding at all—never was there so labyrinthine an abode. Guests will tarry with me several weeks, and every now and then, be anew astonished at some unforeseen apartment.

The puzzling nature of the mansion, resulting from the chimney, is peculiarly noticeable in the dining-room, which has no less than nine doors, opening in all

directions, and into all sorts of places. A stranger for the first time entering this dining-room, and naturally taking no special heed at what door he entered, will, upon rising to depart, commit the strangest blunders. Such, for instance, as opening the first door that comes handy, and finding himself stealing upstairs by the back passage. Shutting that door, he will proceed to another, and be aghast at the cellar yawning at his feet. Trying a third, he surprises the housemaid at her work. In the end, no more relying on his own unaided efforts, he procures a trusty guide in some passing person, and in good time successfully emerges. Perhaps as curious a blunder as any, was that of a certain stylish young gentleman, a great exquisite, in whose judicious eyes my daughter Anna had found especial favour. He called upon the young lady one evening, and found her alone in the dining-room at her needlework. He stayed rather late; and after abundance of superfine discourse, all the while retaining his hat and cane, made his profuse adieus, and with repeated graceful bows proceeded to depart, after the fashion of courtiers from the Queen, and by so doing, opening a door at random, with one hand placed behind, very effectually succeeded in backing himself into a dark pantry, where he carefully shut himself up, wondering there was no light in the entry. After several strange noises as of a cat among the crockery, he reappeared through the same door, looking uncommonly crestfallen, and, with a deeply embarrassed air, requested my daughter to designate at which of the nine he should find exit. When the mischievous Anna told me the story, she said it was surprising how unaffected and matter-of-fact the young gentleman’s manner was after his reappearance. He was more candid than ever, to be sure; having inadvertently thrust his white kids into an open drawer of Havana sugar, under the impression, probably, that being what they call ‘a sweet fellow,’ his route might possibly lie in that direction.

Another inconvenience resulting from the chimney is, the bewilderment of a guest in gaining his chamber, many strange doors lying between him and it. To direct him by finger-posts would look rather queer; and just as queer in him to be knocking at

every door on his route, like London's city guest, the King, at Temple Bar.

Now, of all these things and many, many more, my family continually complained. At last my wife came out with her sweeping proposition—in toto to abolish the chimney.

'What!' said I, 'abolish the chimney? To take out the backbone of anything, wife, is a hazardous affair. Spines out of backs, and chimneys out of houses, are not to be taken like frosted lead-pipes from the ground. Besides,' added I, 'the chimney is the one grand permanence of this abode. If undisturbed by innovators, then in future ages, when all the house shall have crumbled from it, this chimney will still survive—a Bunker Hill monument. No, no, wife, I can't abolish my backbone.'

So said I then. But who is sure of himself, especially an old man, with both wife and daughters ever at his elbow and ear? In time, I was persuaded to think a little better of it; in short, to take the matter into preliminary consideration. At length it came to pass that a master mason—a rough sort of architect—one Mr. Scribe, was summoned to a conference. I formally introduced him to my chimney. A previous introduction from my wife had introduced him to myself. He had been not a little employed by that lady, in preparing plans and estimates for some of her extensive operations in drainage. Having, with much ado, extorted from my spouse the promise that she would leave us to an unmolested survey, I began by leading Mr. Scribe down to the root of the matter, in the cellar. Lamp in hand, I descended; for though upstairs it was noon, below it was night.

We seemed in the pyramids; and I, with one hand holding my lamp over head, and with the other pointing out, in the obscurity, the hoar mass of the chimney, seemed some Arab guide, showing the cobwebbed mausoleum of the great god Apis.

'This is a most remarkable structure, sir,' said the master mason, after long contemplating it in silence, 'a most remarkable structure, sir.'

'Yes,' said I, complacently, 'everyone says so.'

‘But large as it appears above the roof, I would not have inferred the magnitude of this foundation, sir,’ eyeing it critically.

Then taking out his rule, he measured it.

‘Twelve feet square; one hundred and forty-four square feet! Sir, this house would appear to have been built simply for the accommodation of your chimney.’

‘Yes, my chimney and me. Tell me candidly, now,’ I added, ‘would you have such a famous chimney abolished?’

‘I wouldn’t have it in a house of mine, sir, for a gift,’ was the reply. ‘It’s a losing affair altogether, sir. Do you know, sir, that in retaining this chimney, you are losing, not only one hundred and forty-four square feet of good ground, but likewise a considerable interest upon a considerable principal?’

‘How?’

‘Look, sir,’ said he, taking a bit of red chalk from his pocket, and figuring against a whitewashed wall, ‘twenty times eight is so and so; then forty-two times thirty-nine is so and so—ain’t it, sir? Well, add those together, and subtract this here, then that makes so and so,’ still chalking away.

To be brief, after no small ciphering, Mr. Scribe informed me that my chimney contained, I am ashamed to say how many thousand and odd valuable bricks.

‘No more,’ said I, fidgeting. ‘Pray now, let us have a look above.’

In that upper zone we made two more circumnavigations for the first and second floors. That done, we stood together at the foot of the stairway by the front door; my hand upon the knob, and Mr. Scribe hat in hand.

‘Well, sir,’ said he, a sort of feeling his way, and, to help himself, fumbling with his hat, ‘well, sir, I think it can be done.’

‘What, pray, Mr. Scribe; what can be done?’

‘Your chimney, sir; it can without rashness be removed, I think.’

‘I will think of it, too, Mr. Scribe,’ said I, turning the knob, and bowing him toward the open space without; ‘I will think of it, sir; it demands consideration; much obliged to ye; good-morning, Mr. Scribe.’

‘It is all arranged, then,’ cried my wife with great glee, bursting from the nighest room.

‘When will they begin?’ demanded my daughter Julia.

‘To-morrow?’ asked Anna.

‘Patience, patience, my dears,’ said I, ‘such a big chimney is not to be abolished in a minute.’

Next morning it began again.

‘You remember the chimney,’ said my wife.

‘Wife,’ said I, ‘it is never out of my house, and never out of my mind.’

‘But when is Mr. Scribe to begin to pull it down?’ asked Anna.

‘Not to-day, Anna,’ said I.

‘When, then?’ demanded Julia, in alarm.

Now, if this chimney of mine was, for size, a sort of belfry, for ding-donging at me about it, my wife and daughters were a sort of bells, always chiming together, or taking up each other’s melodies at every pause, my wife the key-clapper of all. A very sweet ringing, and pealing, and chiming, I confess; but then, the most silvery of bells may, sometimes, dismally toll, as well as merrily play. And as touching the subject in question, it became so now. Perceiving a strange relapse of opposition in me, wife and daughters began a soft and dirge-like melancholy tolling over it.

At length my wife, getting much excited, declared to me, with pointed finger, that so long as that chimney stood, she should regard it as the monument of what she called my broken pledge. But finding this did not answer, the next day, she gave me to understand that either she or the chimney must quit the house.

Finding matters coming to such a pass, I and my pipe philosophised over them a while, and finally concluded between us, that little as our hearts went with the plan, yet for peace' sake, I might write out the chimney's death-warrant, and, while my hand was in, scratch a note to Mr. Scribe.

Considering that I, and my chimney, and my pipe, from having been so much together, were three great cronies, the facility with which my pipe consented to a project so fatal to the goodliest of our trio; or rather, the way in which I and my pipe, in secret, conspired together, as it were, against our unsuspicious old comrade—this may seem rather strange, if not suggestive of sad reflections upon us two. But, indeed, we, sons of clay, that is my pipe and I, are no whit better than the rest. Far from us, indeed, to have volunteered the betrayal of our crony. We are of a peaceable nature, too. But that love of peace it was which made us false to a mutual friend, as soon as his cause demanded a vigorous vindication. But I rejoice to add, that better and braver thoughts soon returned, as will now briefly be set forth.

To my note, Mr. Scribe replied in person.

Once more we made a survey, mainly now with a view to a pecuniary estimate.

'I will do it for five hundred dollars,' said Mr. Scribe at last, again hat in hand.

'Very well, Mr. Scribe, I will think of it,' replied I, again bowing him to the door.

Not unvexed by this, for the second time, unexpected response, again he withdrew, and from my wife and daughters again burst the old exclamations.

The truth is, resolve how I would, at the last pinch I and my chimney could not be parted.

'So Holofernes will have his way, never mind whose heart breaks for it,' said my wife next morning, at breakfast, in that half-didactic, half-reproachful way of hers, which is harder to bear than her most energetic assault. Holofernes, too, is with her a pet name for any fell domestic despot. So, whenever, against her most ambitious innovations, those which saw me quite across the grain, I, as in the present instance,

stand with however little steadfastness on the defence, she is sure to call me Holofernes, and ten to one takes the first opportunity to read aloud, with a suppressed emphasis, of an evening, the first newspaper paragraph about some tyrannic day-labourer, who, after being for many years the Caligula of his family, ends by beating his long-suffering spouse to death, with a garret door wrenched off its hinges, and then, pitching his little innocents out of the window, suicidally turns inward toward the broken wall scored with the butcher's and baker's bills, and so rushes headlong to his dreadful account.

Nevertheless, for a few days, not a little to my surprise, I heard no further reproaches. An intense calm pervaded my wife, but beneath which, as in the sea, there was no knowing what portentous movements might be going on. She frequently went abroad, and in a direction which I thought not unsuspicious; namely, in the direction of New Petra, a griffin-like house of wood and stucco, in the highest style of ornamental art, graced with four chimneys in the form of erect dragons spouting smoke from their nostrils; the elegant modern residence of Mr. Scribe, which he had built for the purpose of a standing advertisement, not more of his taste as an architect, than his solidity as a master mason.

At last, smoking my pipe one morning, I heard a rap at the door, and my wife, with an air unusually quiet for her, brought me a note. As I have no correspondents except Solomon, with whom, in his sentiments, at least, I entirely correspond, the note occasioned me some little surprise, which was not diminished upon reading the following:—

'New Petra, April 1.

'Sir,—During my last examination of your chimney, possibly you may have noted that I frequently applied my rule to it in a manner apparently unnecessary. Possibly also, at the same time, you might have observed in me more or less of perplexity, to which, however, I refrained from giving any verbal expression.

‘I now feel it obligatory upon me to inform you of what was then but a dim suspicion, and as such would have been unwise to give utterance to, but which now, from various subsequent calculations assuming no little probability, it may be important that you should not remain in further ignorance of.

‘It is my solemn duty to warn you, sir, that there is architectural cause to conjecture that somewhere concealed in your chimney is a reserved space, hermetically closed, in short, a secret chamber, or rather closet. How long it has been there, it is for me impossible to say. What it contains is hid, with itself, in darkness. But probably a secret closet would not have been contrived except for some extraordinary object, whether for the concealment of treasure, or what other purpose, may be left to those better acquainted with the history of the house to guess.

‘But enough; in making this disclosure, sir, my conscience is eased. Whatever step you choose to take upon it is, of course, a matter of indifference to me; though, I confess, as respects the character of the closet, I cannot but share in a natural curiosity.

‘Trusting that you may be guided aright, in determining whether it is Christian-like knowingly to reside in a house, hidden in which is a secret closet.—I remain, with much respect, yours very humbly, ‘Hiram Scribe.’

My first thought upon reading this note was, not of the alleged mystery of manner to which, at the outset, it alluded—for none such had I at all observed in the master mason during his surveys—but of my late kinsman, Captain Julian Dacres, long a shipmaster and merchant in the Indian trade, who, about thirty years ago, and at the ripe age of ninety, died a bachelor, and in this very house, which he had built. He was supposed to have retired into this country with a large fortune. But to the general surprise, after being at great cost in building himself this mansion, he settled down into a sedate, reserved, and inexpensive old age, which by the neighbours was thought all the better for his heirs; but lo! upon opening the will, his property was

found to consist but of the house and grounds, and some ten thousand dollars in stocks; but the place, being found heavily mortgaged, was in consequence sold. Gossip had its day, and left the grass quietly to creep over the captain's grave, where he still slumbers in a privacy as unmolested as if the billows of the Indian Ocean, instead of the billows of inland verdure, rolled over him. Still, I remembered long ago, hearing strange solutions whispered by the country people for the mystery involving his will, and, by reflex, himself; and that, too, as well in conscience as purse. But people who could circulate the report (which they did), that Captain Julian Dacres had, in his day, been a Borneo pirate, surely were not worthy of credence in their collateral notions. It is queer what wild whimseys of rumours will, like toadstools, spring up about any eccentric stranger, who, settling down among a rustic population, keeps quietly to himself. With some, inoffensiveness would seem a prime cause of offence. But what chiefly had led me to scout at these rumours, particularly as referring to concealed treasure, was the circumstance, that the stranger (the same who razeed the roof and the chimney) into whose hands the estate had passed on my kinsman's death, was of that sort of character, that had there been the least ground for those reports, he would speedily have tested them, by tearing down and rummaging the walls.

Nevertheless, the note of Mr. Scribe, so strangely recalling the memory of my kinsman, very naturally chimed in with what had been mysterious, or at least unexplained, about him; vague flashings of ingots united in my mind with vague gleamings of skulls. But the first cool thought soon dismissed such chimeras; and, with a calm smile, I turned towards my wife, who, meantime, had been sitting near by, impatient enough, I dare say, to know who could have taken it into his head to write me a letter.

'Well, old man,' said she, 'who is it from, and what is it about?'

'Read it, wife,' said I, handing it.

Read it she did, and then—such an explosion! I will not pretend to describe her emotions, or repeat her expressions. Enough that my daughters were quickly called in to share the excitement. Although they had never before dreamed of such a revelation as Mr. Scribe's; yet upon the first suggestion they instinctively saw the extreme likelihood of it. In corroboration, they cited first my kinsman, and second, my chimney; alleging that the profound mystery involving the former, and the equally profound masonry involving the latter, though both acknowledged facts, were alike preposterous on any other supposition than the secret closet.

But all this time I was quietly thinking to myself: Could it be hidden from me that my credulity in this instance would operate very favourably to a certain plan of theirs? How to get to the secret closet, or how to have any certainty about it at all, without making such fell work with the chimney as to render its set destruction superfluous? That my wife wished to get rid of the chimney, it needed no reflection to shew; and that Mr. Scribe, for all his pretended disinterestedness, was not opposed to pocketing five hundred dollars by the operation, seemed equally evident. That my wife had, in secret, laid heads together with Mr. Scribe, I at present refrain from affirming. But when I consider her enmity against my chimney, and the steadiness with which at the last she is wont to carry out her schemes, if by hook or by crook she can, especially after having been once baffled, why, I scarcely knew at what step of hers to be surprised.

Of one thing only was I resolved, that I and my chimney should not budge.

In vain all protests. Next morning I went out into the road, where I had noticed a diabolical-looking old gander, that, for its doughty exploits in the way of scratching into forbidden enclosures, had been rewarded by its master with a portentous, four-pronged, wooden decoration, in the shape of a collar of the Order of the Garotte. This gander I cornered, and rummaging out its stiffest quill, plucked it, took it home, and making a stiff pen, inscribed the following stiff note:—

‘Chimney Side, April 2.

‘Mr. Scribe.

‘Sir,—For your conjecture, we return you our joint thanks and compliments, and beg leave to assure you, that we shall remain, very faithfully, the same, ‘I and my Chimney.’

Of course, for this epistle we had to endure some pretty sharp raps. But having at last explicitly understood from me that Mr. Scribe’s note had not altered my mind one jot, my wife, to move me, among other things said, that if she remembered aright, there was a statute placing the keeping in private houses of secret closets on the same unlawful footing with the keeping of gunpowder. But it had no effect.

A few days after, my spouse changed her key.

It was nearly midnight, and all were in bed but ourselves, who sat up, one in each chimney-corner; she, needles in hand, indefatigably knitting a sock; I, pipe in mouth, indolently weaving my vapours.

It was one of the first of the chill nights in autumn. There was a fire on the hearth, burning low. The air without was torpid and heavy; the wood, by an oversight, of the sort called soggy.

‘Do look at the chimney,’ she began; ‘can’t you see that something must be in it?’

‘Yes, wife. Truly there is smoke in the chimney, as in Mr. Scribe’s note.’

‘Smoke? Yes, indeed, and in my eyes, too. How you two wicked old sinners do smoke!—this wicked old chimney and you.’

‘Wife,’ said I, ‘I and my chimney like to have a quiet smoke together, it is true, but we don’t like to be called names.’

‘Now, dear old man,’ said she, softening down, and a little shifting the subject, ‘when you think of that old kinsman of yours, you know there must be a secret closet in this chimney.’

‘Secret ash-hole, wife, why don’t you have it? Yes, I dare say there is a secret ash-hole in the chimney; for where do all the ashes go to that we drop down the queer hole yonder?’

‘I know where they go to; I’ve been there almost as many times as the cat.’

‘What devil, wife, prompted you to crawl into the ash-hole! Don’t you know that St. Dunstan’s devil emerged from the ash-hole? You will get your death one of these days, exploring all about as you do. But, supposing there be a secret closet, what then?’

‘What then? Why, what should be in a secret closet but—’

‘Dry bones, wife,’ broke in I with a puff, while the sociable old chimney broke in with another.

‘There again! Oh, how this wretched old chimney smokes,’ wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. ‘I’ve no doubt the reason it smokes so is, because that secret closet interferes with the flue. Do see, too, how the jambs here keep settling; and it’s down hill all the way from the door to this hearth. This horrid old chimney will fall on our heads yet; depend upon it, old man.’

‘Yes, wife, I do depend on it; yes, indeed, I place every dependence on my chimney. As for its settling, I like it. I, too, am settling, you know, in my gait. I and my chimney are settling together, and shall keep settling, too, till, as in a great feather-bed, we shall both have settled away clean out of sight. But this secret oven; I mean, secret closet of yours, wife; where exactly do you suppose that secret closet is?’

‘That is for Mr. Scribe to say.’

‘But suppose he cannot say exactly; what then?’

‘Why, then, he can prove, I am sure, that it must be somewhere or other in this horrid old chimney.’

‘And if he can’t prove that; what then?’

‘Why then, old man,’ with a stately air, ‘I shall say little more about it.’

‘Agreed, wife,’ returned I, knocking my pipe-bowl against the jamb; ‘and now, to-morrow, I will a third time send for Mr. Scribe. Wife, the sciatica takes me; be so good as to put this pipe on the mantel.’

‘If you get the step-ladder for me, I will. This shocking old chimney, this abominable old-fashioned old chimney’s mantels are so high, I can’t reach them.’

No opportunity, however trivial, was overlooked for a subordinate fling at the pile.

Here, by way of introduction, it should be mentioned, that besides the fireplaces all round it, the chimney was, in the most haphazard way, excavated on each floor for certain curious out-of-the-way cupboards and closets, of all sorts and sizes, clinging here and there, like nests in the crotches of some old oak. On the second floor these closets were by far the most irregular and numerous. And yet this should hardly have been so, since the theory of the chimney was, that it pyramidically diminished as it ascended. The abridgment of its square on the roof was obvious enough; and it was supposed that the reduction must be methodically graduated from bottom to top.

‘Mr. Scribe,’ said I, when, the next day, with an eager aspect, that individual again came, ‘my object in sending for you this morning is, not to arrange for the demolition of my chimney, nor to have any particular conversation about it, but simply to allow you every reasonable facility for verifying, if you can, the conjecture communicated in your note.’

Though in secret not a little crestfallen, it may be, by my phlegmatic reception, so different from what he had looked for; with much apparent alacrity he commenced the survey; throwing open the cupboards on the first floor, and peering into the closets on the second; measuring one within, and then comparing that measurement with the measurement without. Removing the fire-boards, he would gaze up the flues. But no sign of the hidden work yet.

Now, on the second floor the rooms were the most rambling conceivable. They, as it were, dovetailed into each other. They were of all shapes; not one mathematically square room among them all—a peculiarity which by the master mason had not been unobserved. With a significant, not to say portentous expression, he took a circuit of the chimney, measuring the area of each room around it; then going downstairs, and out of doors, he measured the entire ground area; then compared the sum-total of all the areas of all the rooms on the second floor with the ground area; then, returning to me in no small excitement, announced that there was a difference of no less than two hundred and odd square feet—room enough, in all conscience, for a secret closet.

‘But, Mr. Scribe,’ said I, stroking my chin, ‘have you allowed for the walls, both main and sectional? They take up some space, you know.’

‘Ah, I had forgotten that,’ tapping his forehead; ‘but,’ still ciphering on his paper, ‘that will not make up the deficiency.’

‘But, Mr. Scribe, have you allowed for the recesses of so many fireplaces on a floor, and for the fire-walls, and the flues; in short, Mr. Scribe, have you allowed for the legitimate chimney itself—some one hundred and forty-four square feet or thereabouts, Mr. Scribe?’

‘How unaccountable. That slipped my mind too.’

‘Did it, indeed, Mr. Scribe?’

He faltered a little, and burst forth with, ‘But we must now allow one hundred and forty-four square feet for the legitimate chimney. My position is, that within those undue limits the secret closet is contained.’

I eyed him in silence a moment; then spoke:

‘Your survey is concluded, Mr. Scribe; be so good now as to lay your finger upon the exact part of the chimney wall where you believe this secret closet to be; or would a witch-hazel wand assist you, Mr. Scribe?’

‘No, sir, but a crowbar would,’ he, with temper, rejoined.

Here, now, thought I to myself, the cat leaps out of the bag. I looked at him with a calm glance, under which he seemed somewhat uneasy. More than ever now I suspected a plot. I remembered what my wife had said about abiding by the decision of Mr. Scribe. In a bland way, I resolved to buy up the decision of Mr. Scribe.

‘Sir,’ said I, ‘really, I am much obliged to you for this survey. It has quite set my mind at rest. And no doubt you, too, Mr. Scribe, must feel much relieved. Sir,’ I added, ‘you have made three visits to the chimney. With a business man, time is money. Here are fifty dollars, Mr. Scribe. Nay, take it. You have earned it. Your opinion is worth it. And by the way’—as he modestly received the money—‘have you any objections to give me a—a—little certificate—something, say, like a steamboat certificate, certifying that you, a competent surveyor, have surveyed my chimney, and found no reason to believe any unsoundness; in short, any—any secret closet in it. Would you be so kind, Mr. Scribe?’

‘But, but, sir,’ stammered he with honest hesitation.

‘Here, here are pen and paper,’ said I, with entire assurance.

Enough.

That evening I had the certificate framed and hung over the dining-room fireplace, trusting that the continual sight of it would forever put at rest at once the dreams and stratagems of my household.

But, no. Inveterately bent upon the extirpation of that noble old chimney, still to this day my wife goes about it, with my daughter Anna’s geological hammer, tapping the wall all over, and then holding her ear against it, as I have seen the physicians of life insurance companies tap a man’s chest, and then incline over for the echo. Sometimes of nights she almost frightens one, going about on this phantom errand, and still following the sepulchral response of the chimney, round and round, as if it were leading her to the threshold of the secret closet.

‘How hollow it sounds,’ she will hollowly cry. ‘Yes, I declare,’ with an emphatic tap, ‘there is a secret closet here. Here, in this very spot. Hark! How hollow!’

‘Psha! wife, of course it is hollow. Who ever heard of a solid chimney?’

But nothing avails. And my daughters take after, not me, but their mother.

Sometimes all three abandon the theory of the secret closet, and return to the genuine ground of attack—the unsightliness of so cumbrous a pile, with comments upon the great addition of room to be gained by its demolition, and the fine effect of the projected grand hall, and the convenience resulting from the collateral running in one direction and another of their various partitions. Not more ruthlessly did the Three Powers partition away poor Poland, than my wife and daughters would fain partition away my chimney.

But seeing that, despite all, I and my chimney still smoke our pipes, my wife reoccupies the ground of the secret closet, enlarging upon what wonders are there, and what a shame it is, not to seek it out and explore it.

‘Wife,’ said I, upon one of these occasions, ‘why speak more of that secret closet, when there before you hangs contrary testimony of a master mason, elected by yourself to decide. Besides, even if there were a secret closet, secret it should remain, and secret it shall. Yes, wife, here, for once, I must say my say. Infinite sad mischief has resulted from the profane bursting open of secret recesses. Though standing in the heart of this house, though hitherto we have all nestled about it, unsuspicious of aught hidden within, this chimney may or may not have a secret closet. But if it have, it is my kinsman’s. To break into that wall, would be to break into his breast. And that wall-breaking wish of Momus I account the wish of a church-robbing gossip and knave. Yes, wife, a vile eavesdropping varlet was Momus.’

‘Moses?—Mumps? Stuff with your mumps and your Moses!’

The truth is, my wife, like all the rest of the world, cares not a fig for my

philosophical jabber. In dearth of other philosophical companionship, I and my chimney have to smoke and philosophise together. And sitting up so late as we do at it, a mighty smoke it is that we two smoky old philosophers make.

But my spouse, who likes the smoke of my tobacco as little as she does that of the soot, carries on her war against both. I live in continual dread lest, like the golden bowl, the pipes of me and my chimney shall yet be broken. To stay that mad project of my wife's, naught answers. Or, rather, she herself is incessantly answering, incessantly besetting me with her terrible alacrity for improvement, which is a softer name for destruction. Scarce a day I do not find her with her tape-measure, measuring for her grand hall, while Anna holds a yard-stick on one side, and Julia looks approvingly on from the other. Mysterious intimations appear in the nearest village paper, signed 'Claude,' to the effect that a certain structure, standing on a certain hill, is a sad blemish to an otherwise lovely landscape. Anonymous letters arrive, threatening me with I know not what, unless I remove my chimney. Is it my wife, too, or who, that sets up the neighbours to badgering me on the same subject, and hinting to me that my chimney, like a huge elm, absorbs all moisture from my garden? At night, also, my wife will start as from sleep, professing to hear ghostly noises from the secret closet. Assailed on all sides, and in all ways, small peace have I and my chimney.

Were it not for the baggage, we would together pack up, and remove from the country.

What narrow escapes have been ours! Once I found in a drawer a whole portfolio of plans and estimates. Another time, upon returning after a day's absence, I discovered my wife standing before the chimney in earnest conversation with a person whom I at once recognised as a meddlesome architectural reformer, who, because he had no gift for putting up anything, was ever intent upon pulling down; in various parts of the country having prevailed upon half-witted old folks to destroy

their old-fashioned houses, particularly the chimneys.

But worst of all was that time I unexpectedly returned at early morning from a visit to the city, and upon approaching the house, narrowly escaped three brickbats which fell, from high aloft, at my feet. Glancing up, what was my horror to see three savages, in blue jean overalls, in the very act of commencing the long-threatened attack. Ay, indeed, thinking of those three brickbats, I and my chimney have had narrow escapes.

It is now some seven years since I have stirred from home. My city friends all wonder why I don't come to see them, as in former times. They think I am getting sour and unsocial. Some say that I have become a sort of mossy old misanthrope, while all the time the fact is, I am simply standing guard over my mossy old chimney; for it is resolved between me and my chimney, that I and my chimney will never surrender.

12. In the margin of the MS. of this Essay, Melville's wife wrote the following note:—

'All this about his wife, applied to his mother—who was very vigorous and energetic about the farm, etc. The proposed removal of the chimney is purely mythical.'

THE APPLE-TREE TABLE

OR ORIGINAL SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

When I first saw the table, dingy and dusty, in the furthest corner of the old hopper-shaped garret, and set out with broken, be-crusted old purple vials and flasks, and a ghostly, dismantled old quarto, it seemed just such a necromantic little old table as might have belonged to Friar Bacon. Two plain features it had, significant of conjurations and charms—the circle and tripod; the slab being round, supported by a twisted little pillar, which, about a foot from the bottom, sprawled

out into three crooked legs, terminating in three cloven feet. A very satanic-looking little old table, indeed.

In order to convey a better idea of it, some account may as well be given of the place it came from. A very old garret of a very old house in an old-fashioned quarter of one of the oldest towns in America. This garret had been closed for years. It was thought to be haunted; a rumour, I confess, which, however absurd (in my opinion), I did not, at the time of purchasing, very vehemently contradict; since, not improbably, it tended to place the property the more conveniently within my means.

It was, therefore, from no dread of the reputed goblins aloft, that, for five years after first taking up my residence in the house, I never entered the garret. There was no special inducement. The roof was well slated, and thoroughly tight. The company that insured the house, waived all visitation of the garret; why, then, should the owner be over-anxious about it?—particularly as he had no use for it, the house having ample room below. Then the key of the stair-door leading to it was lost. The lock was a huge old-fashioned one. To open it, a smith would have to be called; an unnecessary trouble, I thought. Besides, though I had taken some care to keep my two daughters in ignorance of the rumour above-mentioned, still, they had, by some means, got an inkling of it, and were well enough pleased to see the entrance to the haunted ground closed. It might have remained so for a still longer time, had it not been for my accidentally discovering, in a corner of our glen-like, old, terraced garden, a large and curious key, very old and rusty, which I at once concluded must belong to the garret door—a supposition which, upon trial, proved correct. Now, the possession of a key to anything, at once provokes a desire to unlock and explore; and this, too, from a mere instinct of gratification, irrespective of any particular benefit to accrue.

Behold me, then, turning the rusty old key, and going up, alone, into the haunted garret. It embraced the entire area of the mansion. Its ceiling was formed by the roof,

showing the rafters and boards on which the slates were laid. The roof shedding the water four ways from a high point in the centre, the space beneath was much like that of a general's marquee—only midway broken by a labyrinth of timbers, for braces, from which waved innumerable cobwebs, that, of a summer's noon, shone like Bagdad tissues and gauzes. On every hand, some strange insect was seen, flying, or running, or creeping, on rafter and floor.

Under the apex of the roof was a rude, narrow, decrepit step-ladder, something like a Gothic pulpit-stairway, leading to a pulpit-like platform, from which a still narrower ladder—a sort of Jacob's ladder—led somewhat higher to the lofty scuttle. The slide of this scuttle was about two feet square, all in one piece, furnishing a massive frame for a single small pane of glass, inserted into it like a bull's-eye. The light of the garret came from this sole source, filtrated through a dense curtain of cobwebs. Indeed, the whole stairs, and platform, and ladder, were festooned, and carpeted, and canopied with cobwebs; which, in funereal accumulations, hung, too, from the groined, murky ceiling, like the Carolina moss in the cypress forest. In these cobwebs swung, as in aerial catacombs, myriads of all tribes of mummied insects.

Climbing the stairs to the platform, and pausing there, to recover my breath, a curious scene was presented. The sun was about half-way up. Piercing the little skylight, it slopingly bored a rainbowed tunnel clear across the darkness of the garret. Here, millions of butterfly moles were swarming. Against the skylight itself, with a cymbal-like buzzing, thousands of insects clustered in a golden mob.

Wishing to shed a clearer light through the place, I sought to withdraw the scuttle-slide. But no sign of latch or hasp was visible. Only after long peering, did I discover a little padlock, imbedded, like an oyster at the bottom of the sea, amid matted masses of weedy webs, chrysalides, and insectivorous eggs. Brushing these away, I found it locked. With a crooked nail, I tried to pick the lock, when scores of small ants and flies, half-torpid, crawled forth from the keyhole, and, feeling the

warmth of the sun in the pane, began frisking around me. Others appeared. Presently I was overrun by them. As if incensed at this invasion of their retreat, countless bands darted up from below, beating about my head, like hornets. At last, with a sudden jerk, I burst open the scuttle. And ah! what a change. As from the gloom of the grave and the companionship of worms, men shall at last rapturously rise into the living greenness and glory-immortal, so, from my cobwebbed old garret, I thrust forth my head into the balmy air, and found myself hailed by the verdant tops of great trees, growing in the little garden below—trees, whose leaves soared high above my topmost slate.

Refreshed by this outlook, I turned inward to behold the garret, now unwontedly lit up. Such humped masses of obsolete furniture. An old escritoire, from whose pigeon-holes sprang mice, and from whose secret drawers came subterranean squeakings, as from chipmunks' holes in the woods; and broken-down old chairs, with strange carvings, which seemed fit to seat a conclave of conjurors. And a rusty, iron-bound chest, lidless, and packed full of mildewed old documents; one of which, with a faded red ink-blot at the end, looked as if it might have been the original bond that Doctor Faust gave to Mephistopheles. And, finally, in the least lighted corner of all, where was a profuse litter of indescribable old rubbish—among which was a broken telescope, and a celestial globe staved in—stood the little old table, one hoofed foot, like that of the Evil One, dimly revealed through the cobwebs. What a thick dust, half paste, had settled upon the old vials and flasks; how their once liquid contents had caked, and how strangely looked the mouldy old book in the middle—Cotton Mather's Magnalia.

Table and book I removed below, and had the dislocations of the one and the tatters of the other repaired. I resolved to surround this sad little hermit of a table, so long banished from genial neighbourhood, with all the kindly influences of warm urns, warm fires, and warm hearts, little dreaming what all this warm nursing would hatch.

I was pleased by the discovery that the table was not of the ordinary mahogany, but of apple-tree wood, which age had darkened nearly to walnut. It struck me as being an appropriate piece of furniture for our cedar-parlour—so called, from its being, after the old fashion, wainscoted with that wood. The table's round slab, or orb, was so contrived as to be readily changed from a horizontal to a perpendicular position; so that, when not in use, it could be snugly placed in a corner. For myself, wife, and two daughters, I thought it would make a nice little breakfast and tea-table. It was just the thing for a whist-table, too. And I also pleased myself with the idea that it would make a famous reading-table.

In these fancies, my wife, for one, took little interest. She disrelished the idea of so unfashionable and indigent-looking a stranger as the table intruding into the polished society of more prosperous furniture. But when, after seeking its fortune at the cabinet-maker's, the table came home, varnished over, bright as a guinea, no one exceeded my wife in a gracious reception of it. It was advanced to an honourable position in the cedar-parlour.

But, as for my daughter Julia, she never got over her strange emotions upon first accidentally encountering the table. Unfortunately, it was just as I was in the act of bringing it down from the garret. Holding it by the slab, I was carrying it before me, one cobwebbed hoof thrust out, which weird object at a turn of the stairs suddenly touched my girl, as she was ascending; whereupon, turning, and seeing no living creature—for I was quite hidden behind my shield—seeing nothing indeed, but the apparition of the Evil One's foot, as it seemed, she cried out, and there is no knowing what might have followed, had I not immediately spoken.

From the impression thus produced, my poor girl, of a very nervous temperament, was long recovering. Superstitiously grieved at my violating the forbidden solitude above, she associated in her mind the cloven-footed table with the reputed goblins there. She besought me to give up the idea of domesticating the table. Nor did her

sister fail to add her entreaties. Between my girls there was a constitutional sympathy. But my matter-of-fact wife had now declared in the table's favour. She was not wanting in firmness and energy. To her, the prejudices of Julia and Anna were simply ridiculous. It was her maternal duty, she thought, to drive such weakness away. By degrees, the girls, at breakfast and tea, were induced to sit down with us at the table. Continual proximity was not without effect. By and by, they would sit pretty tranquilly, though Julia, as much as possible, avoided glancing at the hoofed feet, and, when at this I smiled, she would look at me seriously—as much as to say, Ah, papa, you, too, may yet do the same. She prophesied that, in connection with the table, something strange would yet happen. But I would only smile the more, while my wife indignantly chided.

Meantime, I took particular satisfaction in my table, as a night reading-table. At a ladies' fair, I bought me a beautifully worked reading-cushion, and, with elbow leaning thereon, and hand shading my eyes from the light, spent many a long hour—nobody by, but the queer old book I had brought down from the garret.

All went well, till the incident now about to be given—an incident, be it remembered, which, like every other in this narration, happened long before the time of the 'Fox Girls.'

It was late on a Saturday night in December. In the little old cedar-parlour, before the little old apple-tree table, I was sitting up, as usual, alone. I had made more than one effort to get up and go to bed; but I could not. I was, in fact, under a sort of fascination. Somehow, too, certain reasonable opinions of mine, seemed not so reasonable as before. I felt nervous. The truth was, that though, in my previous night-readings, Cotton Mather had but amused me, upon this particular night he terrified me. A thousand times I had laughed at such stories. Old wives' fables, I thought, however entertaining. But now, how different. They began to put on the aspect of reality. Now, for the first time it struck me that this was no romantic Mrs.

Radcliffe, who had written the Magnalia; but a practical, hard-working, earnest, upright man, a learned doctor, too, as well as a good Christian and orthodox clergyman. What possible motive could such a man have to deceive? His style had all the plainness and unpoetic boldness of truth. In the most straightforward way, he laid before me detailed accounts of New England witchcraft, each important item corroborated by respectable townsfolk, and, of not a few of the most surprising, he himself had been eye-witness. Cotton Mather testified himself whereof he had seen. But is it possible? I asked myself. Then I remembered that Dr. Johnson, the matter-of-fact compiler of a dictionary, had been a believer in ghosts, besides many other sound, worthy men. Yielding to the fascination, I read deeper and deeper into the night. At last, I found myself starting at the least chance sound, and yet wishing that it were not so very still.

A tumbler of warm punch stood by my side, with which beverage, in a moderate way, I was accustomed to treat myself every Saturday night; a habit, however, against which my good wife had long remonstrated; predicting that, unless I gave it up, I would yet die a miserable sot. Indeed, I may here mention that, on the Sunday mornings following my Saturday nights, I had to be exceedingly cautious how I gave way to the slightest impatience at any accidental annoyance; because such impatience was sure to be quoted against me as evidence of the melancholy consequences of over-night indulgence. As for my wife, she, never sipping punch, could yield to any little passing peevishness as much as she pleased.

But, upon the night in question, I found myself wishing that, instead of my usual mild mixture, I had concocted some potent draught. I felt the need of stimulus. I wanted something to hearten me against Cotton Mather—doleful, ghostly, ghastly Cotton Mather. I grew more and more nervous. Nothing but fascination kept me from fleeing the room. The candles burnt low, with long snuffs, and huge winding-sheets. But I durst not raise the snuffers to them. It would make too much noise. And yet, previously, I had been wishing for noise. I read on and on. My hair

began to have a sensation. My eyes felt strained; they pained me. I was conscious of it. I knew I was injuring them. I knew I should rue this abuse of them next day; but I read on and on. I could not help it. The skinny hand was on me.

All at once—Hark!

My hair felt like growing grass.

A faint sort of inward rapping or rasping—a strange, inexplicable sound, mixed with a slight kind of wood-pecking or ticking.

Tick! tick!

Yes, it was a faint sort of ticking.

I looked up at my great Strasbourg clock in one corner. It was not that. The clock had stopped.

Tick! tick!

Was it my watch?

According to her usual practice at night, my wife had, upon retiring, carried my watch off to our chamber to hang it up on its nail.

I listened with all my ears.

Tick! tick!

Was it a death-tick in the wainscot?

With a tremulous step I went all round the room, holding my ear to the wainscot.

No; it came not from the wainscot.

Tick! tick!

I shook myself. I was ashamed of my fright.

Tick! tick!

It grew in precision and audibleness. I retreated from the wainscot. It seemed advancing to meet me.

I looked round and round, but saw nothing, only one cloven foot of the little apple-tree table.

Bless me, said I to myself, with a sudden revulsion, it must be very late; ain't that my wife calling me? Yes, yes; I must to bed. I suppose all is locked up. No need to go the rounds.

The fascination had departed, though the fear had increased. With trembling hands, putting Cotton Mather out of sight, I soon found myself, candlestick in hand, in my chamber, with a peculiar rearward feeling, such as some truant dog may feel. In my eagerness to get well into the chamber, I stumbled against a chair.

'Do try and make less noise, my dear,' said my wife from the bed.

'You have been taking too much of that punch, I fear. That sad habit grows on you. Ah, that I should ever see you thus staggering at night into your chamber.'

'Wife,' hoarsely whispered I, 'there is—is something tick-ticking in the cedar-parlour.'

'Poor old man—quite out of his mind—I knew it would be so. Come to bed; come and sleep it off.'

'Wife, wife!'

'Do, do come to bed. I forgive you. I won't remind you of it to-morrow. But you must give up the punch-drinking, my dear. It quite gets the better of you.'

'Don't exasperate me,' I cried now, truly beside myself; 'I will quit the house!'

'No, no! not in that state. Come to bed, my dear. I won't say another word.'

The next morning, upon waking, my wife said nothing about the past night's affair, and, feeling no little embarrassment myself, especially at having been thrown into such a panic, I also was silent. Consequently, my wife must still have ascribed my singular conduct to a mind disordered, not by ghosts, but by punch. For my own part, as I lay in bed watching the sun in the panes, I began to think that much

midnight reading of Cotton Mather was not good for man; that it had a morbid influence upon the nerves, and gave rise to hallucinations. I resolved to put Cotton Mather permanently aside. That done, I had no fear of any return of the ticking. Indeed, I began to think that what seemed the ticking in the room, was nothing but a sort of buzzing in my ear.

As is her wont, my wife having preceded me in rising, I made a deliberate and agreeable toilet. Aware that most disorders of the mind have their origin in the state of the body, I made vigorous use of the flesh-brush, and bathed my head with New England rum, a specific once recommended to me as good for buzzing in the ear. Wrapped in my dressing-gown, with cravat nicely adjusted, and finger-nails neatly trimmed, I complacently descended to the little cedar-parlour to breakfast.

What was my amazement to find my wife on her knees, rummaging about the carpet nigh the little apple-tree table, on which the morning meal was laid, while my daughters, Julia and Anna, were running about the apartment distracted.

‘Oh, papa, papa!’ cried Julia, hurrying up to me, ‘I knew it would be so. The table, the table!’

‘Spirits! spirits!’ cried Anna, standing far away from it, with pointed finger.

‘Silence!’ cried my wife. ‘How can I hear it, if you make such a noise? Be still. Come here, husband; was this the ticking you spoke of? Why don’t you move? Was this it? Here, kneel down and listen to it. Tick, tick, tick!—don’t you hear it now?’

‘I do, I do,’ cried I, while my daughters besought us both to come away from the spot.

Tick! tick! tick!

Right from under the snowy cloth, and the cheerful urn, and the smoking milk-toast, the unaccountable ticking was heard.

‘Ain’t there a fire in the next room, Julia?’ said I, ‘let us breakfast there, my dear,’

turning to my wife—‘let us go—leave the table—tell Biddy to remove the things.’

And so saying I was moving toward the door in high self-possession, when my wife interrupted me.

‘Before I quit this room, I will see into this ticking,’ she said with energy.

‘It is something that can be found out, depend upon it. I don’t believe in spirits, especially at breakfast-time. Biddy! Biddy! Here, carry these things back to the kitchen,’ handing the urn. Then, sweeping off the cloth, the little table lay bare to the eye.

‘It’s the table, the table!’ cried Julia.

‘Nonsense,’ said my wife. ‘Who ever heard of a ticking table? It’s on the floor. Biddy! Julia! Anna! move everything out of the room—table and all. Where are the tack-hammers?’

‘Heavens, mamma—you are not going to take up the carpet?’ screamed Julia.

‘Here’s the hammers, marm,’ said Biddy, advancing tremblingly.

‘Hand them to me, then,’ cried my wife; for poor Biddy was, at long gun-distance, holding them out as if her mistress had the plague.

‘Now, husband, do you take up that side of the carpet, and I will this.’ Down on her knees she then dropped, while I followed suit.

The carpet being removed, and the ear applied to the naked floor, not the slightest ticking could be heard.

‘The table—after all, it is the table,’ cried my wife. ‘Biddy, bring it back.’

‘Oh no, marm, not I, please, marm,’ sobbed Biddy.

‘Foolish creature!—Husband, do you bring it.’

‘My dear,’ said I, ‘we have plenty of other tables; why be so particular?’

‘Where is that table?’ cried my wife, contemptuously, regardless of my gentle

remonstrance.

‘In the wood-house, marm. I put it away as far as ever I could, marm,’ sobbed Biddy.

‘Shall I go to the wood-house for it, or will you?’ said my wife, addressing me in a frightful, businesslike manner.

Immediately I darted out of the door, and found the little apple-tree table, upside down, in one of my chip-bins. I hurriedly returned with it, and once more my wife examined it attentively. Tick, tick, tick! Yes, it was the table.

‘Please, marm,’ said Biddy, now entering the room, with hat and shawl—‘please, marm, will you pay me my wages?’

‘Take your hat and shawl off directly,’ said my wife; ‘set this table again.’

‘Set it,’ roared I, in a passion, ‘set it, or I’ll go for the police.’

‘Heavens! heavens!’ cried my daughters, in one breath. ‘What will become of us!—Spirits! spirits!’

‘Will you set the table?’ cried I, advancing upon Biddy.

‘I will, I will—yes, marm—yes, master—I will, I will. Spirits!—Holy Vargin!’

‘Now, husband,’ said my wife, ‘I am convinced that, whatever it is that causes this ticking, neither the ticking nor the table can hurt us; for we are all good Christians, I hope. I am determined to find out the cause of it, too, which time and patience will bring to light. I shall breakfast on no other table but this, so long as we live in this house. So, sit down, now that all things are ready again, and let us quietly breakfast. My dears,’ turning to Julia and Anna, ‘go to your room, and return composed. Let me have no more of this childishness.’

Upon occasion my wife was mistress in her house.

During the meal, in vain was conversation started again and again; in vain my wife said something brisk to infuse into others an animation akin to her own. Julia and

Anna, with heads bowed over their tea-cups, were still listening for the tick. I confess, too, that their example was catching. But, for the time, nothing was heard. Either the ticking had died quite away, or else, slight as it was, the increasing uproar of the street, with the general hum of day so contrasted with the repose of night and early morning, smothered the sound. At the lurking inquietude of her companions, my wife was indignant; the more so, as she seemed to glory in her own exemption from panic. When breakfast was cleared away she took my watch, and, placing it on the table, addressed the supposed spirits in it, with a jocosely defiant air:

‘There, tick away, let us see who can tick loudest!’

All that day, while abroad, I thought of the mysterious table. Could Cotton Mather speak true? Were there spirits? And would spirits haunt a tea-table? Would the Evil One dare show his cloven foot in the bosom of an innocent family? I shuddered when I thought that I myself, against the solemn warnings of my daughters, had wilfully introduced the cloven foot there. Yea, three cloven feet. But, toward noon, this sort of feeling began to wear off. The continual rubbing against so many practical people in the street, brushed such chimeras away from me. I remembered that I had not acquitted myself very intrepidly either on the previous night or in the morning. I resolved to regain the good opinion of my wife.

To evince my hardihood the more signally, when tea was dismissed, and the three rubbers of whist had been played, and no ticking had been heard—which the more encouraged me—I took my pipe, and, saying that bed-time had arrived for the rest, drew my chair toward the fire, and, removing my slippers, placed my feet on the fender, looking as calm and composed as old Democritus in the tombs of Abdera, when one midnight the mischievous little boys of the town tried to frighten that sturdy philosopher with spurious ghosts.

And I thought to myself, that the worthy old gentleman had set a good example to all times in his conduct on that occasion. For, when at the dead hour, intent on his

studies, he heard the strange sounds, he did not so much as move his eyes from his page, only simply said: ‘Boys, little boys, go home. This is no place for you. You will catch cold here.’ The philosophy of which words lies here: that they imply the foregone conclusion, that any possible investigation of any possible spiritual phenomena was absurd; that upon the first face of such things, the mind of a sane man instinctively affirmed them a humbug, unworthy the least attention; more especially if such phenomena appear in tombs, since tombs are peculiarly the place of silence, lifelessness, and solitude; for which cause, by the way, the old man, as upon the occasion in question, made the tombs of Abdera his place of study.

Presently I was alone, and all was hushed. I laid down my pipe, not feeling exactly tranquil enough now thoroughly to enjoy it. Taking up one of the newspapers, I began, in a nervous, hurried sort of way, to read by the light of a candle placed on a small stand drawn close to the fire. As for the apple-tree table, having lately concluded that it was rather too low for a reading-table, I thought best not to use it as such that night. But it stood not very distant in the middle of the room.

Try as I would, I could not succeed much at reading. Somehow I seemed all ear and no eye; a condition of intense auricular suspense. But ere long it was broken.

Tick! tick! tick!

Though it was not the first time I had heard that sound; nay, though I had made it my particular business on this occasion to wait for that sound, nevertheless, when it came, it seemed unexpected, as if a cannon had boomed through the window.

Tick! tick! tick!

I sat stock-still for a time, thoroughly to master, if possible, my first discomposure. Then rising, I looked pretty steadily at the table; went up to it pretty steadily; took hold of it pretty steadily; but let it go pretty quickly; then paced up and down, stopping every moment or two, with ear pricked to listen. Meantime, within me, the contest between panic and philosophy remained not wholly decided.

Tick! tick! tick!

With appalling distinctness the ticking now rose on the night.

My pulse fluttered—my heart beat. I hardly know what might not have followed, had not Democritus just then come to the rescue. For shame, said I to myself, what is the use of so fine an example of philosophy, if it cannot be followed? Straightway I resolved to imitate it, even to the old sage's occupation and attitude.

Resuming my chair and paper, with back presented to the table, I remained thus for a time, as if buried in study, when, the ticking still continuing, I drawled out, in as indifferent and dryly jocose a way as I could: 'Come, come, Tick, my boy, fun enough for to-night.'

Tick! tick! tick!

There seemed a sort of jeering defiance in the ticking now. It seemed to exult over the poor affected part I was playing. But much as the taunt stung me, it only stung me into persistence. I resolved not to abate one whit in my mode of address.

'Come, come, you make more and more noise, Tick, my boy; too much of a joke—time to have done.'

No sooner said than the ticking ceased. Never was responsive obedience more exact. For the life of me, I could not help turning round upon the table, as one would upon some reasonable being, when—could I believe my senses? I saw something moving, or wriggling, or squirming upon the slab of the table. It shone like a glow-worm. Unconsciously, I grasped the poker that stood at hand. But bethinking me how absurd to attack a glow-worm with a poker, I put it down. How long I sat spellbound and staring there, with my body presented one way and my face another, I cannot say; but at length I rose, and, buttoning my coat up and down, made a sudden intrepid forced march full upon the table. And there, near the centre of the slab, as I live, I saw an irregular little hole, or, rather, short nibbled sort of crack, from which (like a butterfly escaping its chrysalis) the sparkling object, whatever it might be,

was struggling. Its motion was the motion of life. I stood becharmed. Are there, indeed, spirits, thought I; and is this one? No; I must be dreaming. I turned my glance off to the red fire on the hearth, then back to the pale lustre on the table. What I saw was no optical illusion, but a real marvel. The tremor was increasing, when, once again, Democritus befriended me. Supernatural coruscation as it appeared, I strove to look at the strange object in a purely scientific way. Thus viewed, it appeared some new sort of small shining beetle or bug, and, I thought, not without something of a hum to it, too.

I still watched it, and with still increasing self-possession. Sparkling and wriggling, it still continued its throes. In another moment it was just on the point of escaping its prison. A thought struck me. Running for a tumbler, I clapped it over the insect just in time to secure it.

After watching it a while longer under the tumbler, I left all as it was, and, tolerably composed, retired.

Now, for the soul of me, I could not, at that time, comprehend the phenomenon. A live bug come out of a dead table? A fire-fly bug come out of a piece of ancient lumber, for one knows not how many years stored away in an old garret? Was ever such a thing heard of, or even dreamed of? How got the bug there? Never mind. I bethought me of Democritus, and resolved to keep cool. At all events, the mystery of the ticking was explained. It was simply the sound of the gnawing and filing, and tapping of the bug, in eating its way out. It was satisfactory to think, that there was an end forever to the ticking. I resolved not to let the occasion pass without reaping some credit from it.

‘Wife,’ said I, next morning, ‘you will not be troubled with any more ticking in our table. I have put a stop to all that.’

‘Indeed, husband,’ said she, with some incredulity.

‘Yes, wife,’ returned I, perhaps a little vaingloriously, ‘I have put a quietus upon that

ticking. Depend upon it, the ticking will trouble you no more.'

In vain she besought me to explain myself. I would not gratify her; being willing to balance any previous trepidation I might have betrayed, by leaving room now for the imputation of some heroic feat whereby I had silenced the ticking. It was a sort of innocent deceit by implication, quite harmless, and, I thought, of utility.

But when I went to breakfast, I saw my wife kneeling at the table again, and my girls looking ten times more frightened than ever.

'Why did you tell me that boastful tale,' said my wife, indignantly. 'You might have known how easily it would be found out. See this crack, too; and here is the ticking again, plainer than ever.'

'Impossible,' I explained; but upon applying my ear, sure enough, tick! tick! tick! The ticking was there.

Recovering myself the best way I might, I demanded the bug.

'Bug?' screamed Julia. 'Good heavens, papa!'

'I hope, sir, you have been bringing no bugs into this house,' said my wife, severely.

'The bug, the bug!' I cried; 'the bug under the tumbler.'

'Bugs in tumblers!' cried the girls; 'not our tumblers, papa? You have not been putting bugs into our tumblers? Oh, what does—what does it all mean?'

'Do you see this hole, this crack here?' said I, putting my finger on the spot.

'That I do,' said my wife, with high displeasure. 'And how did it come there? What have you been doing to the table?'

'Do you see this crack?' repeated I, intensely.

'Yes, yes,' said Julia; 'that was what frightened me so; it looks so like witch-work.'

'Spirits! spirits!' cried Anna.

'Silence!' said my wife. 'Go on, sir, and tell us what you know of the crack.'

‘Wife and daughters,’ said I, solemnly, ‘out of that crack, or hole, while I was sitting all alone here last night, a wonderful—’

Here, involuntarily, I paused, fascinated by the expectant attitudes and bursting eyes of Julia and Anna.

‘What, what?’ cried Julia.

‘A bug, Julia.’

‘Bug?’ cried my wife. ‘A bug come out of this table? And what did you do with it?’

‘Clapped it under a tumbler.’

‘Biddy! Biddy!’ cried my wife, going to the door. ‘Did you see a tumbler here on this table when you swept the room?’

‘Sure I did, marm, and ’bomnable bug under it.’

‘And what did you do with it?’ demanded I.

‘Put the bug in the fire, sir, and rinsed out the tumbler ever so many times, marm.’

‘Where is that tumbler?’ cried Anna. ‘I hope you scratched it—marked it some way. I’ll never drink out of that tumbler; never put it before me, Biddy. A bug—a bug! Oh, Julia! Oh, mamma! I feel it crawling all over me, even now. Haunted table!’

‘Spirits! spirits!’ cried Julia.

‘My daughters,’ said their mother, with authority in her eyes, ‘go to your chamber till you can behave more like reasonable creatures. Is it a bug—a bug that can frighten you out of what little wits you ever had? Leave the room. I am astonished, I am pained by such childish conduct.’

‘Now tell me,’ said she, addressing me, as soon as they had withdrawn, ‘now tell me truly, did a bug really come out of this crack in the table?’

‘Wife, it is even so.’

‘Did you see it come out?’

‘I did.’

She looked earnestly at the crack, leaning over it.

‘Are you sure?’ said she, looking up, but still bent over.

‘Sure, sure.’

She was silent. I began to think that the mystery of the thing began to tell even upon her. Yes, thought I, I shall presently see my wife shaking and shuddering, and, who knows, calling in some old dominie to exorcise the table, and drive out the spirits.

‘I’ll tell you what we’ll do,’ said she suddenly, and not without excitement.

‘What, wife?’ said I, all eagerness, expecting some mystical proposition; ‘what, wife?’

‘We will rub this table all over with that celebrated “roach powder” I’ve heard of.’

‘Good gracious! Then you don’t think it’s spirits?’

‘Spirits?’

The emphasis of scornful incredulity was worthy of Democritus himself.

‘But this ticking—this ticking?’ said I.

‘I’ll whip that out of it.’

‘Come, come, wife,’ said I, ‘you are going too far the other way, now. Neither roach powder nor whipping will cure this table. It’s a queer table, wife; there’s no blinking it.’

‘I’ll have it rubbed, though,’ she replied, ‘well rubbed’; and calling Biddy, she bade her get wax and brush, and give the table a vigorous manipulation. That done, the cloth was again laid, and we sat down to our morning meal; but my daughters did not make their appearance. Julia and Anna took no breakfast that day.

When the cloth was removed, in a business-like way my wife went to work with a dark-coloured cement, and hermetically closed the little hole in the table.

My daughters looking pale, I insisted upon taking them out for a walk that morning, when the following conversation ensued:

‘My worst presentiments about that table are being verified, papa,’ said Julia; ‘not for nothing was that intimation of the cloven foot on my shoulder.’

‘Nonsense,’ said I. ‘Let us go into Mrs. Brown’s, and have an ice-cream.’

The spirit of Democritus was stronger on me now. By a curious coincidence, it strengthened with the strength of the sunlight.

‘But is it not miraculous,’ said Anna, ‘how a bug should come out of a table?’

‘Not at all, my daughter. It is a very common thing for bugs to come out of wood. You yourself must have seen them coming out of the ends of the billets on the hearth.’

‘Ah, but that wood is almost fresh from the woodland. But the table is at least a hundred years old.’

‘What of that?’ said I, gaily. ‘Have not live toads been found in the hearts of dead rocks, as old as creation?’

‘Say what you will, papa, I feel it is spirits,’ said Julia. ‘Do, do now, my dear papa, have that haunted table removed from the house.’

‘Nonsense,’ said I.

By another curious coincidence, the more they felt frightened, the more I felt brave.

Evening came.

‘This ticking,’ said my wife; ‘do you think that another bug will come of this continued ticking?’

Curiously enough, that had not occurred to me before. I had not thought of there being twins of bugs. But now, who knew; there might be even triplets.

I resolved to take precautions, and, if there was to be a second bug, infallibly secure it. During the evening, the ticking was again heard. About ten o’clock I clapped a

tumbler over the spot, as near as I could judge of it by my ear. Then we all retired, and locking the door of the cedar-parlour, I put the key in my pocket.

In the morning, nothing was to be seen, but the ticking was heard. The trepidation of my daughters returned. They wanted to call in the neighbours. But to this my wife was vigorously opposed. We should be the laughing-stock of the whole town. So it was agreed that nothing should be disclosed. Biddy received strict charges; and, to make sure, was not allowed that week to go to confession, lest she should tell the priest.

I stayed home all that day; every hour or two bending over the table, both eye and ear. Toward night, I thought the ticking grew more distinct, and seemed divided from my ear by a thinner and thinner partition of the wood. I thought, too, that I perceived a faint heaving up, or bulging of the wood, in the place where I had placed the tumbler. To put an end to the suspense, my wife proposed taking a knife and cutting into the wood there; but I had a less impatient plan; namely, that she and I should sit up with the table that night, as, from present symptoms, the bug would probably make its appearance before morning. For myself, I was curious to see the first advent of the thing—the first dazzle of the chick as it chipped the shell.

The idea struck my wife not unfavourably. She insisted that both Julia and Anna should be of the party, in order that the evidence of their senses should disabuse their minds of all nursery nonsense. For that spirits should tick, and that spirits should take unto themselves the form of bugs, was, to my wife, the most foolish of all foolish imaginations. True, she could not account for the thing; but she had all confidence that it could be, and would yet be, somehow explained, and that to her entire satisfaction. Without knowing it herself, my wife was a female Democritus. For my part, my present feelings were of a mixed sort. In a strange and not unpleasing way, I gently oscillated between Democritus and Cotton Mather. But to my wife and daughters I assumed to be pure Democritus—a jeerer at all tea-table

spirits whatever.

So, laying in a good supply of candles and crackers, all four of us sat up with the table, and at the same time sat round it. For a while my wife and I carried on an animated conversation. But my daughters were silent. Then my wife and I would have had a rubber of whist, but my daughters could not be prevailed upon to join. So we played whist with two dummies literally; my wife won the rubber and, fatigued with victory, put away the cards.

Half-past eleven o'clock. No sign of the bug. The candles began to burn dim. My wife was just in the act of snuffing them, when a sudden, violent, hollow, resounding, rumbling, thumping was heard.

Julia and Anna sprang to their feet.

'All well!' cried a voice from the street. It was the watchman, first ringing down his club on the pavement, and then following it up with this highly satisfactory verbal announcement.

'All well! Do you hear that, my girls?' said I, gaily.

Indeed it was astonishing how brave as Bruce I felt in company with three women, and two of them half frightened out of their wits.

I rose for my pipe, and took a philosophic smoke.

Democritus forever, thought I.

In profound silence, I sat smoking, when lo!—pop! pop! pop!—right under the table, a terrible popping.

This time we all four sprang up, and my pipe was broken.

'Good heavens! what's that?'

'Spirits! spirits!' cried Julia.

'Oh, oh, oh!' cried Anna.

'Shame!' said my wife, 'it's that new bottled cider, in the cellar, going off. I told

Biddy to wire the bottles to-day.'

I shall here transcribe from memoranda, kept during part of the night.

'One o'clock. No sign of the bug. Ticking continues. Wife getting sleepy.

'Two o'clock. No sign of the bug. Ticking intermittent. Wife fast asleep.

'Three o'clock. No sign of the bug. Ticking pretty steady. Julia and Anna getting sleepy.

'Four o'clock. No sign of the bug. Ticking regular, but not spirited. Wife, Julia, and Anna, all fast asleep in their chairs.

'Five o'clock. No sign of the bug. Ticking faint. Myself feeling drowsy. The rest still asleep.'

So far the journal.

—Rap! rap! rap!

A terrific, portentous rapping against a door.

Startled from our dreams, we started to our feet.

Rap! rap! rap!

Julia and Anna shrieked.

I cowered in the corner.

'You fools!' cried my wife, 'it's the baker with the bread.'

Six o'clock.

She went to throw back the shutters, but ere it was done, a cry came from Julia. There, half in and half out its crack, there wriggled the bug, flashing in the room's general dimness, like a fiery opal.

Had this bug had a tiny sword by its side—a Damascus sword—and a tiny necklace round its neck—a diamond necklace—and a tiny gun in its claw—brass gun—and a tiny manuscript in its mouth—a Chaldee manuscript—Julia and Anna could not

have stood more charmed.

In truth, it was a beautiful bug—a Jew jeweller's bug—a bug like a sparkle of a glorious sunset.

Julia and Anna had never dreamed of such a bug. To them, bug had been a word synonymous with hideousness. But this was a seraphical bug; or rather, all it had of the bug was the B, for it was beautiful as a butterfly.

Julia and Anna gazed and gazed. They were no more alarmed. They were delighted.

'But how got this strange, pretty creature into the table?' cried Julia.

'Spirits can get anywhere,' replied Anna.

'Pshaw!' said my wife.

'Do you hear any more ticking?' said I.

They all applied their ears, but heard nothing.

'Well, then, wife and daughters, now that it is all over, this very morning I will go and make inquiries about it.'

'Oh do, papa,' cried Julia, 'do go and consult Madame Pazzi, the conjuress.'

'Better go and consult Professor Johnson, the naturalist,' said my wife.

'Bravo, Mrs. Democritus!' said I. 'Professor Johnson is the man.'

By good fortune I found the professor in. Informing him briefly of the incident, he manifested a cool, collected sort of interest, and gravely accompanied me home. The table was produced, the two openings pointed out, the bug displayed, and the details of the affair set forth; my wife and daughters being present.

'And now, Professor,' said I, 'what do you think of it?'

Putting on his spectacles, the learned professor looked hard at the table, and gently scraped with his penknife into the holes, but said nothing.

'Is it not an unusual thing, this?' anxiously asked Anna.

‘Very unusual, Miss.’

At which Julia and Anna exchanged significant glances.

‘But is it not wonderful, very wonderful?’ demanded Julia.

‘Very wonderful, Miss.’

My daughters exchanged still more significant glances, and Julia, emboldened, again spoke.

‘And must you not admit, sir, that it is the work of—of—of sp—?’

‘Spirits? No,’ was the crusty rejoinder.

‘My daughters,’ said I, mildly, ‘you should remember that this is not Madame Pazzi, the conjuress, you put your questions to, but the eminent naturalist, Professor Johnson. And now, Professor,’ I added, ‘be pleased to explain. Enlighten our ignorance.’

Without repeating all the learned gentleman said—for, indeed, though lucid, he was a little prosy—let the following summary of his explication suffice.

The incident was not wholly without example. The wood of the table was apple-tree, a sort of tree much fancied by various insects. The bugs had come from eggs laid inside the bark of the living tree in the orchard. By careful examination of the position of the hole from which the last bug had emerged, in relation to the cortical layers of the slab, and then allowing for the inch and a half along the grain, ere the bug had eaten its way entirely out, and then computing the whole number of cortical layers in the slab, with a reasonable conjecture for the number cut off from the outside, it appeared that the egg must have been laid in the tree some ninety years, more or less, before the tree could have been felled. But between the felling of the tree and the present time, how long might that be? It was a very old-fashioned table. Allow eighty years for the age of the table, which would make one hundred and fifty years that the bug had lain in the egg. Such, at least, was Professor Johnson’s

computation.

‘Now, Julia,’ said I, ‘after that scientific statement of the case (though, I confess, I don’t exactly understand it) where are your spirits? It is very wonderful as it is, but where are your spirits?’

‘Where, indeed?’ said my wife.

‘Why, now, she did not really associate this purely natural phenomenon with any crude, spiritual hypothesis, did she?’ observed the learned professor, with a slight sneer.

‘Say what you will,’ said Julia, holding up, in the covered tumbler, the glorious, lustrous, flashing, live opal, ‘say what you will, if this beauteous creature be not a spirit, it yet teaches a spiritual lesson. For if, after one hundred and fifty years’ entombment, a mere insect comes forth at last into light, itself an effulgence, shall there be no glorified resurrection for the spirit of man? Spirits! spirits!’ she exclaimed, with rapture, ‘I still believe in them with delight, when before I but thought of them with terror.’

The mysterious insect did not long enjoy its radiant life; it expired the next day. But my girls have preserved it. Embalmed in a silver vinaigrette, it lies on the little apple-tree table in the pier of the cedar-parlour.

And whatever lady doubts this story, my daughters will be happy to show her both the bug and the table, and point out to her, in the repaired slab of the latter, the two sealing-wax drops designating the exact place of the two holes made by the two bugs, something in the same way in which are marked the spots where the cannon balls struck Brattle Street church.

UNDER THE ROSE

(Being an extract from an old MS. entitled ‘Travels in Persia (Iran)

by a servant of My Lord the Ambassador.’)

… These roses of divers hues, red, yellow, pink, and white, the black slave, a clean-limbed adolescent, and comely for all his flat nose; he, before offering them to My Lord to refresh him with their colour and scent, did, at the Azem's bidding, drop them into a delicate vase of amber; and so cunningly, withal, that they fell as of themselves into the attitude of young damsels leaning over the balustrade of a dome and gazing downward; so that the vase itself was all but hidden from view, at least, much of the upper part thereof, where I noted that certain relievos were, though truly I could get but a peep thereof at that time.

On the next day but one repairing to the same villa where the Azem made abode for that month, and there waiting to convey a reply to a missive from My Lord; I saw by chance on a marble buffet the same vase then empty; and going up to it, curiously observed the relievos, before hidden by the flowers. They were of a mystical type, methought, something like certain pictures in the great Dutch Bible in a library at Oxon, setting forth the enigmas of the Song of the Wise Man, to wit, King Solomon. I hardly knew what to make of them; and so would as lief have seen the roses in their stead. Yet for the grace of it, if not the import, whatever that might be, was I pleased with a round device of sculpture on one side, about the bigness of My Lord's seal to a parchment, showing the figure of an angel with a spade under arm like a gardener, and bearing roses in a pot; and a like angel-figure, clad like a cellarer, and with a wine-jar on his shoulder; and these two angels, side by side, pacing toward a meagre wight, very doleful and Job-like, squatted hard by a sepulchre, as meditating thereon; and all done very lively in small.

But the thing that meseems was most strange was the amber wherein this device and sundry other inventions were cut; for in parts it held marvellously congealed within its substance certain little relics of perished insects, as of the members of flies on frozen syrup or marmalade. Never had I seen the like thereof before; and My Lord, to whom that night I spoke of it, as he was drinking his posset, about the time of his retiring, he instructed me that that sort of amber was of the rarest, and esteemed

exceeding precious, and spoke of a famous piece in the Great Duke's museum at Florence; and much wished that the Azem had given him that vase in place of the jewelled scimetar you wot of. 'And Geoffry,' quoth My Lord somewhat eagerly, 'didst thou note that the vessel was of one whole piece or in two parts, the bowl part and the standard?' But verily I could not answer to purpose here, for I did in no wise handle the vase; and I doubt had the jealousy of the attendants permitted it; so that, were there any junction of two or more parts, right deftly was the same hidden by the craft of the artificer.

It befell that at the next coming together of My Lord and the Azem, which was about that stale affair of the two factors at Aleppo; My Lord after that business, and when their black drink, coffee, had been offered us in little cups of filigree, fine as My Lady's Flanders lace, and great jasmine-stemmed pipes, two yards long, likewise, as is their ceremonious custom; My Lord, I say, holding the amber mouthpiece before him, shaped somewhat like a lemon, and of a wondrous clear tint much the same, and of a diameter not behind, for among these people the higher the rank or the longer the purse, the greater the costly mouthpiece, the same being but gently pressed against the lips at the orifice of the inhaled vapour; My Lord, I say, holding this fair oval of clear amber before him, turned, through the interpreter, the discourse to considerations of the occult nature of that substance whereof it was fashioned; declaring, among other items, his incredulity touching the strange allegement that amber was sometimes found with bees glued up therein as in their own crystallised honey, or, if not bees, then fleas and flies. With the wondrous sedate courtesy of all the grandees in these parts, the Azem with his silvery spade-beard, sitting cross-legged on the green silken cushions; he, though never understanding a word of My Lord's English, yet very gravely and attentively, as before, heard him out; him, My Lord, first, I mean, leaning over toward him, his hand to his ear, for, certes, he was somewhat deaf, being in years; leaning over toward him, I say, and thereafter relaxing and falling back somewhat on the

cushions, and so giving another sort of heed to the interpreter; who, having delivered his burden, the Azem did nothing but give a little clap with his hands, and, as it were one of the painted manikins in the great clock at Strasbourg, a pretty little page issued from a sort of draped closet near by; to whom his master made a sign; whereat the page brought to My Lord the aforesaid amber vase, empty, and put it into his two hands; who made as if surprised; and after scrutinising it, and turning it round and round, and discovering the imbedded relics, affected great admiration at being so promptly and in that tacit manner confuted in his misbelief; and much did he laud the beauty of the vase as well; insomuch that the interpreter, a precise clerk in his careful vocation, verily he seemed as sore put to it to render My Lord.

But if herein, and all along, My Lord's purpose was so to work on the Azem as that he, seeing his great pleasure in the vase, might be drawn to make a gift of it; I say, if this were My Lord's intent, it prospered not to the fulfilment, forasmuch as it was now the Azem's turn to say how much he likewise, he himself, esteemed the vase, declaring that at such rate did he prize it, he would not barter it, no, not for a certain villa he spake of, though mightily he coveted the same. For besides the beauty of the vessel and the rare sculpture on it, and its being incomparably the biggest piece of amber known in those parts; besides all this, it was the very vase, he avouched—and with a kind of ardour strange to note in one so much upon his turbaned dignity—the very vase, in sooth, that being on a bridal festival filled with roses in the palace of the old Shaz Gold-beak at Shiraz, had tempted their great poet, one Lugar-Lips, to a closer inspection, when tenderly dividing the flowers one from another, and noting the little anatomies congealed in the amber, he was prompted to the inditing of certain verses; for which cause the vase thenceforth forever was inestimable. To which extravagance My Lord listened with his wonted civility, nay, and with a special graciousness, but for all that a bit sadly too, meseemed, and would now again have swerved the discourse; but the Azem was beforehand, and bade the page bring him something from a silver-bound chest near by in an alcove. It was a vellum

book, about the bigness of a prayer-book for church-going, but very rich with jewelled clasps, and writ by some famous scribe in the fair Persian text, and illuminated withal like unto the great Popish parchment folios I have seen. And this book, surely of great cost, the Azem with his own hands right nobly did present to My Lord, putting his finger on a certain page whereon were traced those verses aforesaid.

But, shortly after, some sherbet and sweetmeats being served, and the Azem's own mules being at the garden gate, and, the more to honour us, with gorgeous new trappings; our train withdrew in the same state as when we entered, that is, the one great captain-soldier leading, with a mighty truncheon in his hand, and his troop making a lane through which we proceeded to the saddles, they the while salaaming and paying extreme obeisance to My Lord, which, indeed, was but their bounden duty, for he was an Englishman and my noble master.

Now a Greek renegado, one long dwelling in Persia, a scholar, and at whiles employed by My Lord, he being expert in divers tongues of both continents, and learned in the chirography of the Persian and Arabic; this polyglot infidel—the more shame to him for turning his back on his Saviour—he being at the embassy one day, which was I know not what kind of strange holiday with these folk; My Lord for his recreation, and by way of challenge, being a little merry, as was his wont sometimes for a brief space after dinner; he commanded the Greek to put those verses into English rhyme if he could, and on the instant, or as soon soever as might be. Upon which the Greek said: 'My Lord, I will try; but I pray thee give me wine'—glancing at the table where remained certain nickel flasks of the choice vintages both of Persia and Cyprus; 'Yes, wine, My Lord,' he repeated. 'Now,' demanded my master severely. 'Bethink thee, now, My Lord,' quoth he, saluting; 'this same Lugar-Lip's verses being all grapes, or veritably saturated with the ripe juice thereof, there is no properly rendering them without a cup or two of the same; and, behold, My Lord, I am sober.'

My master, after a moment seeming to debate in his mind whether this proceeded from a strange familiar impudence in the varlet, or from an honest superstition however silly, for he delivered himself very soberly and discreetly, commanded wine to be served him; when the renegado, quaffing like a good fellow his cup or two, which were indeed five, for I took the tally; he, I say, quaffing at whiles, and all the time holding the vellum book in one hand—and, sooth, but one hand he had, the other having been smitten off by a scimetar, whether in honourable fray, or by the executioner, I know not; he, ever and anon scanning the page, humming and hooing to himself and swaying his body, like the dervishes hereabouts, at last after this mighty ado, sang—he scarce said it—the interpreted verses; which were these:—

‘Specks, tiny specks, in this translucent amber,

Your leave, bride-roses, may one pry and see?

How odd! a dainty little skeleton-chamber;

And—odder yet—sealed walls but windows be!

Death’s open secret.—Well, we are;

And here comes the jolly angel with the jar!’

Wherein, in the ultimate verse, Lugar-Lips did particularise, doubtless, one of the twain in the relievo of the little medallion on one side of the vase, of which cunning piece I have in the foregoing made account.

‘And is that all?’ said My Lord, composedly, but scarce cheerfully, when the renegado had made an end; ‘and is that all? And call you that a crushing from the grape? the black grape, I wis’; there checking himself, as a wise man will do, catching himself tripping in an indiscreet sincerity; which to cover, peradventure, he, suddenly rising, retired to his chamber, and though commanding his visage somewhat, yet in pace and figure showing the spirit within sadly distraught; forsooth, the last Michaelmas, his birthday, he was threescore and three years old, and in privy fear, as I knew who long was near him, of a certain sudden malady

whereof his father and grandfather before him had died about that age. But for my part I always esteemed it a mighty weakness in so great a man to let the ribald wit of a vain ballader, and he a heathen, make heavy his heart. For me who am but a small one, I was in secret pleased with the lax pleasantry of this Lugar-Lips, but in such sort as one is tickled with the profane capering of a mountebank at Bartholomew's Fair by Thames. Howbeit, had I been, God knows, of equal reverend years with my master, and subject by probable inheritance to the like sudden malady, peradventure I myself in that case might have waxed sorrowful, doubting whether the grape was not indeed the black grape, as he phrased it, wherefrom that vain balladry had been distilled.

But now no more hereof, nor of the amber vase, which like unto some little man in great place hath been made overmuch of, as the judicious reader hereof may opine.

THE MARQUIS DE GRANDVIN

A countryman of Lafayette and Bartholdi, this gentleman is not unknown to some Americans, more especially perhaps, to some of us New Yorkers. He is an honorary member of most of the Fifth Avenue clubs, anything but unwelcome at their chance gatherings, while at their premeditated banquets his appearance—and he always happily times it—is commonly hailed by a plausive clapping of hands simultaneous with the vocal salutation. But a person of genial temper is not only very likely to be a popular man's man, but also, and beyond that, a favourite with the ladies. For it is something less venial than mere error in the old philosopher penally branded with a horrible name—misogynist, I think—and a soggy soul he must have been; it was something less venial than error in him to say, as he did, that women, however apt to that grand passion which makes the one divine rapture of life, have nevertheless a constitutional incapacity for good-fellowship, that is, in the masculine acceptation of the term. Assuredly, Hymen knows, too few of them practically demonstrate their capacity for it. Some musky dew-drops from the Garden expelled Eve unwillingly

carried away quivering in her hair. More than man, she partakes of the paradisiac spirit. Under favourable conditions evincing a quicker aptitude to pleasure than man. How alert to twine the garland for the holiday! How instinctively prompt for that faint semblance of Eden, the picnic in the greenwood!

Now there is something in the fine, open, cheery aspect of the Marquis de Grandvin that conveys a thrill to these frames so exquisitely strung to happiness. Not invariably running the risk of incurring dark clouds from their lords, the dames and sisters of the Benedicks of the clubs, at their balls and parties, cast upon the Marquis that kindled merry glance which, according to the old French epic whose theme is Roncesvalles, the ladies bestowed upon Roland; not alone smitten by the fame and taken with the person of that noble accredited nephew of Charlemagne, but rightly inferring him to be not more a David against the Saracen than a champion against still more flagitious infidels, impugners of the sex. Yes, it is by instinct that all superior women recognise in this gentleman a cordial friend. Nor do they approve him the less for his friendly alliance with his charming sphere. This is a verity not out of keeping with another, namely, this feminine appreciation of the Marquis, gracious though it be, hardly extends to such of his qualities as partake of the Grand Style, as one may say, the highly elevated style; a style apparently demanding for its due appreciation a robust habit, in short, the masculine habit. For the most part, it is for his less exalted qualities that the ladies approve de Grandvin. They approve him for the way in which he contributes to those amenities and gaieties in which the sexes upon common ground participate, and wherein, thanks to their gallantry of good-nature, the countrymen of the Marquis de Grandvin have always excelled.

The foregoing hints as to what is the standing in America, or at least among some of us Americans, of the genial foreigner here ushered into a regard less exclusive; that, by patriotic intention goes before the recital, show that not alone in his own sweet France are the blended suavity and power of his genius estimated at their just rate, but that in the high circles of every European capital he is received with even more

than good-will.

Though the subject of this theme, de Grandvin, be a patrician of hereditary mark, he was not consulted in the matter of his progenitors. At any rate, his cosmopolitan sympathies, transcending his class, go out to mankind. Under auspicious circumstances make his acquaintance, and whatever your degree in the social scale, you will find him friendly company, cordial and frank; without condescension, a solemn popery he was never guilty of.

As to his title, if here he be introduced as the Marquis, it is only because his troops of friends on both sides of the water, not excluding even the Levellers among them, insist upon retaining for him an inherited prefix which he himself long ago renounced; and doubtless for the reason that any appellative at all savouring of arbitrary rank is unsuitable to a man of liberal and catholic mind.

In defence of their insistent employment of the title, a caprice hardly compatible with their political principles, the Levellers of his acquaintance, candid in inconsistency, freely admit that somehow there is something in it felicitously befitting the character innately noble of de Grandvin.

But some fuller account of this genial paragon, upon whom are concentred the otherwise diverging suffrages of the divers parties in Church and State—some account less restricted by considerations of space—is in course of preparation, and if clamorously demanded, may hereafter appear. For the present purpose it will be enough, perhaps, if an outlined picture or two serve to suggest the filled portrait.

Though not so plentiful as our peaches in a good year, there are men of such noble quality that being in their company enriches and mellows one. The wisdom they by contact give out is not celibate and sterile like Solomon’s, but wedded to enjoyment, and hence productive. They would seem to be a confirmation of the otherwise disputable maxim of Spinoza, that every advance in joy implies an ascent in the scale of intelligence and capability. The influence of such a man insensibly disposes

one to gentle charities, brave conceptions, heroic virtues. They have a suggestion of the potentialities in the unvitiated Adam, a creature, according to hallowed authority, originally created but a little lower than the angels. Almost invariably these men have physical beauty; and the moral charm is in keeping with that, apparently a spontaneous emanation from it. It is as golden wine down in a golden chalice, where, seen through the lustre suffusing the shadow, the delicious fluid looks to be the exuded gathered sap of the precious metal.

It was of the Marquis de Grandvin that the landscape painter, B. Hobbema Brown, an inoffensive sort of theoretical misanthrope, with a treacherous flow of loving-kindness in him—to borrow one of his own eccentric phrases; the same B. Hobbema who, were his significant reticence on the point, no unwise thing in him, by the way, conjecturally rendered into words, would seem in his own private judgment to have been treated illiberally enough by the art-dealers, art-critics, and academic hanging-committees, to say nothing of the art public; well, it was of some other than the Marquis that Hobbema B., returning in moonlight from a choice assemblage, where he had been introduced to him, and undergone the inevitable fascination of the contact; it was of him that Brown enthusiastically exclaimed to his companion: ‘What a godsend to meet such a man! He is a set-off against the battalions of his contraries. Between you and me, mankind taken in a lump are the gods’ job-lot; but, by heaven, the race that can produce a Marquis de Grandvin is not promiscuously to be contemned!’

See there how the talismanic something in the sort of nature here indicated can operate upon another nature though of a temper not favourably disposed to receive its benign influence.

In the casual outcome of such a character, gay fancies and suggestions without stint, sallies of wit and bonhomie, all sharing more or less in a certain lyric glow; herein the spiritual bounty to us would seem to be an unconsciousness in the almoner,

involving, too, an indifference or unconcern as to who may appropriate, or as to what purpose the appropriation may be applied. In this particular, what recks the Marquis de Grandvin, for example? He is the ripe peach-tree shedding its abundance, careless of the garner; he is the Prince of Golconda at the ball, some of whose innumerable diamond buttons drop from his raiment unheeded by him in the chance fleeting rubs and collisions of the dance.

But how transitory these prodigal improvident ones can prove!—and once gone, how soon all but good as forgotten! True, were an example here demanded, one adapted for popular illustration, not readily could it be supplied. Literature will not furnish it, since these natures, never directly expressing themselves in literature, have no memorial place in its records. Neither are they Alexanders and Napoleons that the fame which is all but independent of literature should trumpet them. Nevertheless, in local tradition, and comparatively recent, I do find a citable instance which, though below the grade, say, of a de Grandvin, and but in a minor way to the purpose, may perhaps for these reasons serve the better to actualise the general truth, in a measure bring it home.

Rufus Choate, the Boston advocate, when inspired to his best before an audience, how he exhilarated and elevated and transported his hearers. But he is gone; and all those fireworks of elfish passion and wit, where are they? Vainly in the Ceramicus of the libraries will you seek any enduring monument of that oratorical pyrotechnist. As well ransack the museums of Natural History for the bottled-up tail of Encke's comet. What shall we say, then? Are there natures strong to draw and enthrall, yet whose influence is like that of the magnet, only operative as a bodily presence? Yes, withdraw the magnet and all is over. And holds this true as to the Marquis de Grandvin? Yea, and shall he also at last vanish, sailing into the boundless Nil, leaving no phosphorescent wake or magic moon-glade behind? Shall naught remain of his cherub sparkle and spirit?—nothing of all those ineffable qualities that make him what Raphael, Milton's affable archangel, would be seen to be were he

commissioned hither to dissuade mankind from ever perpetrating an inhumanity or a pun? And, oh, thou Admirable Crichton, nay, a thousandfold more admirable than he, for art thou not kindly as wise?—of all thy more sustained sallies of bright fantasy and humour, let alone thy erratic coruscations, shall nothing be crystallised into permanence? Nothing at last remain of our Lord Bountiful but the empty larder and void dusty bin? When we laud thee departed, shall the infidel twit us with—What were his assets? If the very plenitude and variety of thy shining gifts, and the preoccupation of thy social charm, if these indispose thee to drudge it as an 'author,' or operate as disqualifications; will no painstaking aspirant for the literary fame essay the task of methodising thee, or some little segment of thee, into the literary form? But even thy foremost disciple, Jack Gentian, though out of humble emulation he strive to follow thy devious footing, yet thy brow is among the stars; he ventures not to lift his head to thy height.

But I—ah, brimmed with thy genial flood—I, here, in the small hour, not long returned from a richer than Plato's 'Banquet,' where thou didst pour from thy cornucopia, with a hand redundant as that of Millet's seed-sower, the profusion of thy good things; I, audacious as I am, resolved upon an emprise.

The Marquis, methought, though glorious, is not of the gods, the more reproach to their synod; but I will make them yield a place for him on their golden benches; I will make him an Immortal! How? Monumentalise him to the remotest posterity in a book fragrant as violets, yet lasting as the Pyramids!

Yes, and as the prophets of old, announcing the mind of their deity, in some instances dramatically put on his personality, even so will I assume that of de Grandvin. How otherwise, indeed? since he it is that kindles me, inspires me, usurps me. I will snatch at those themes—New Italy and the Old Masters—wherein this very night we heard him so sportively romance. I will render the fine festivity of his tone, as well as the loftier touch; catch the rhythm of the waves of his seas of

invention; swim out there; in short, I did by implication say to myself an insane thing—I will imitate the inimitable!

The issue of the temerarious resolve, how humiliating! And no wonder. The inordinate aim, and the inadequate achievement! The soaring ambition of the balloon, and its abrupt drop at a fatal puncture!

You who have basked in the vital beams of the Marquis, place not in contrast his own radiant aspect side by side with the dim delineation of him in the preceding sketch. And, for the attempted rendering of his thought and style in the piece to follow, take charitable example from the Persian, who in his comment upon the Icelandic version of the fervid orientalisms of Sadi and Hafiz, made humane allowance for the inherent difficulties and presumably numb fingers of the translator in penning it.

PORTRAIT OF A GENTLEMAN

John Gentian, Esq., or Major Gentian, or the Dean, or the Major, or Jack—for all these styles are his according to circumstances and the person mentioning or addressing him—is one of those socially notable characters whose names for all the notability will be found rather in the trustworthy City Directory than in the not-always-reliable Biographical Dictionary. Accordingly in the former ‘John Gentian’ is set down as hailing from the ‘Burgundy Club,’ the street and number of the club-house duly and accurately given. In brief, John Gentian is a bachelor having chambers on an upper story of the club-house, a privilege which at his solicitation was cheerfully accorded him, as by seniority of membership, to say nothing of happy qualifications in his character, Dean of the Chapter of Burgundians, for so do they denominate themselves, the brethren of that congenial fraternity.

This captain of the good fellows belongs to a transplanted shoot of Southern stock for two generations taking root and branching out in the North, within the borders of a State which, thanks to its relative geographical position and circumstances

originating in that, least partakes of a sectional spirit. For now a fair period, ever since the latter part of 1865, the Dean has gone on in what would seem to be the after-mission of his life, namely, the dispensing of those less abbreviated greetings on the Avenue and considerate old-school hospitalities of the board, hardly practicable for the ‘business-man’ of our day, or, for that matter, the man of leisure either, unless abounding in natural benevolence backed up by its desirable concomitant, a comfortable bank account. Do not infer, however, that there is aught of Count D’Orsay superannuated, or Sir Charles Grandison, become senile, in our Dean of the Burgundians. He is no prodigal in airs and graces, and, on the contrary, sometimes takes singular liberties with etiquette, not out of ignorance, to be sure, or the Leveller’s contempt; no, but from a certain impulsive straightforwardness at times, hardly compatible with the abstract theory of a formalised gentlemanhood. Furthermore, he of late has permitted himself an easy latitude in his dress, evincing a lack of proper reverence for mercers and the mode. But yet more astray, he will, upon provocation—say, at some story of perfidy or brutal behaviour—incontinently rap out an expletive, startling to the ladies as Brandt’s flourished tomahawk at the London masked ball long ago. Then again, as if there were no end to his derelictions, he, when convenient to him, thinks nothing of carrying a brown paper parcel in the street rather than trouble the shopkeeper to send some inexpensive small matter to his rooms. Notwithstanding these deviations from the conventionally correct, there is that in the look of Major Gentian, something in the ‘cut of his jib,’ as the sailors say, if not in the end of his coat, that involuntarily inspires respect, yes, even in cabby himself. Cabby, before club-house or theatre, poised on the curb, expectant of the prey, would never dream of hailing him (the Dean) with the ambiguous ‘Gent.’ Should he do so, whether out of ignorance or sly impudence, the Major would have to hold his temper well in hand to obviate a violent breach of the peace. To Boss he objects not, that Dutch monosyllable having an honest bovine sound to it, and being, in fact, a natural localism of a city first settled by the

Hollander; and if master be not the word's exact equivalent, it would be difficult to find one.

The Major's propensity is to occasional unlicensed emphasis in his talk, a thing assuredly not commendable in anybody, very likely contracted from certain experiences, namely, his adventures in early life among our frontiersmen. Nor could his subsequent campaignings during our Civil War have served to displace the secular expletives by Biblical ejaculations such as those attributed to Cromwell's pious troopers, though, indeed, the historical sceptics of our time have suggested doubts as to whether even these same martial deacons for all their psalmody in the tents did not during active operations against the foe indulge more or less in that 'horrible swearing' wherewith 'the army in Flanders' stands pre-eminently charged. To terrorise, if possible, this pertains to the true function of a soldier in the field. The point is energetically put by a Roman consul, one of those schooling his infantry on the eve of an eye-to-eye and hand-to-hand encounter of ancient war. To the same purpose is a well-known passage in Shakespeare. But there are various modes of terrorising as a preliminary to closely engaging. The Chinese Achilles, for example, hurls at the foe missiles of an unmentionable name in English, and which explode an abomination of stench. The sequence is hot air, though disagreeable, and what is 'horrible swearing' but the same? It is perhaps equally efficacious, and, in military ethics, why may not either be used as an adjunct to the artillery? But alas for the oathing. It becomes a habit, and so in times of peace is mechanically resorted to by the retired Christian veteran when there is no military call for it. In short, a soldier's or sailor's oath, however shocking to ears polite, is, at least when the man is not actually engaged in tussle with the foe public or private, but an idiocratic form given to whatever meaning may lurk in such phrases as Bless my soul! Thunder! Goodness gracious!

If, however, sin be not of the heart but the tongue, a theological opinion to which some would seem to incline, then woe to no few of our warriors in the late Civil

Unhappiness. For, in that case, who but an orthodox Calvinist can with any adequacy appreciate the sublime disinterestedness of their patriotism, since from his point of view, not alone did our heroes jeopardise their lives for us, but mortally endangered their souls. And for what? Oh futility! in the attempts to terrorise enemies who, being our own countrymen, of course, refused to be terrified, though in the end fate, working through force, made them succumb.

Though of all men Jack be the least exclusive as to the company he keeps, and is anything but bumptious in his manner, there have not been wanting detractors who have insinuated a charge against him rather serious in a democratic community, namely, not alone a tendency to the aristocratic in general, but a weakness for certain gewgaws, that savour of the monarchical. True, at certain grand banquets, where as an honorary guest he sits at the high table, banquets more especially of those national societies wherewith our cosmopolitan city abounds—the St. Denis, St. Nicholas, St. Patrick, St. George, St. Andrew; on these occasions the Major a little lays himself open to invidious suspicion by wearing on his left lapel the eagle wings in gold of the Cincinnati, a venerable order whereof he who still reigns ‘first in the hearts of his countrymen’ was the original head. This decoration descended to the Major from his great-grandfather, a South Carolinian, a white-haired captain of infantry at the battle of Saratoga Springs, who therefore, being eligible as a Revolutionary officer, was enrolled in the order upon its formation just after the Peace.

Now, an inherited badge of the Cincinnati, every American, however ultra in his democracy, must allow to be something of which no other American need be ashamed. As the Major himself once demanded, and with some animation—‘Compared with this bit of old gold,’ tapping it with his hand, ‘what is the insignia of the Knights of the Golden Fleece or the Knights of the Spanish Order of the Holy Ghost? Gimcracks, sir! and the last, in fact as in name, but a ghostly sort of vanity.’

TO MAJOR JOHN GENTIAN, DEAN OF THE BURGUNDY CLUB

With thy rare single-mindedness, so resented by the ambidextrous double-dealers, a virtue putting thee in a worldly sense almost as much at disadvantage with them as thy single arm (the other lost in the Wilderness under Grant) assuredly would in a personal encounter; the genial humour of thy club-chat, garnished, as not unfrequently it is, even like to a holiday barn, with sprigs of classic parsley set about it or inserted cloves of old English proverbs, or yet older Latin ones equally commonplace, yet never losing the verity in them, their preservative spice; thy yellow, wrinkled parchment from Harvard hung up framed in thy bachelor quarters (so convenient to the Club); thy cherished eagle of the Society of the Cincinnati, a golden insignia thou polishest up and sportest on occasion; and—be it never omitted—thy high relish for the qualities of M. de Grandvin, through frequent communion with whom thou hast caught much of his generous spirit enhancing what is naturally thine own, yes, and something of his beaming aspect as well; insomuch that unto thee—after him—belong all the titles of good fellowship. Dean of the Burgundians, but I love thee! Though some of the points just cited might of themselves avail to denote thee, Dean, two other characteristics there are which peradventure may serve to signalise. Though a soldier of the Civil War, and a gazetted one, thou at all times, even upon that legal holiday which has undesignedly become the annual commemoration of that war, refrainest from wearing on thy person any memorial thereof. And, ever since the Peace, even as during the entire military contest, no superfluous syllable ever fell from thy lips touching the Southern half of thy country.

Now, as to the personal memorial, honourably worn by so many, if thou declined to wear it, was this because thou wert in sympathy with the spirit of thy deplored New England friend, Charles Sumner—whom, for what was sterling in him, thou didst so sincerely honour, though far from sharing in all his advocated measures? Years ago Grant and Lee joined hands at Appomattox. Art thou such an old-fashioned Roman

in thy patriotism that thou wouldst consign to oblivion the fact that thy countrymen, claiming the van of Adam's alleged advance, were but yesterday plunged in patricidal strife? And, for thy never being a partisan animadverter, is that because for all the free thought that beats in thy brain, at heart thou art the captive of Christ, yea, even something of a Christian, and though but dimly conscious of it, perhaps, art not unmindful of the divine text which implies that if sinners abound they are not in vain demarked from the saints by any parallel of latitude. Or, rather, that there are no saints, but that all mankind, not excluding Americans, are sinners—miserable sinners, as even no few Bostonians themselves nowadays contritely respond in the liturgy.

However this be, both the omission and the abstention referred to are in significant contrast with thy words relative to that elder war wherein thy grandfather was one of the 'rebels,' a contrast emphasised though involuntarily in thy social utterances upon every recurrence of our one national holiday.

On the fourth morning of each July, about the tenth hour by the club clock, spruced up in thy goodly person and decked at lapel with the golden eagle suspended by the white-bordered blue ribbon, an order which Washington and Lafayette and thy grandfather and father wore before thee, thou takest thy customary place at the club's bay-window. There thou comfortably settlest thyself till lunch-time, discoursing at whiles with whomsoever may, fortunately for himself, happen to be at hand.

Now thy Fourth-of-July outgivings, though indeed yearly varying in expression, yet in spirit are much the same. Dost thou remember all that thou saidest on the last Fourth, Major? Hardly. But I do; and will try to refresh thy memory by reproducing it, with some accompanying circumstances, and as if all were of to-day.

After gazing out of the open window for a time, noting the strange Sabbatarian quiet of the Avenue, on other week-days so abounding with diversified life, thou mutterest

to thyself a strange litany of lamentations touching the general falling-off in the old-time celebration. ‘Well, well,’ thou mutterest, ‘it is getting along now in its second century, this anniversary, and nearly everything falls off with years. In Victoria’s reign is Guy Fawkes’ Day what it was in Elizabeth’s? I trow not. Sic transit, Sic transit!’

Here some swift return of thought to its everyday channel causes thee suddenly to wheel in thy revolving chair and face inward. Thou remarkest the vacant lounges and sofas, thou absorbest the drear silence. Is it the tabernacle on a week-day? Evidently, thou bethinkest thee of the many absentees. Anon, with thy ample white handkerchief mopping the beads from thy brow, thou exclaimest, ‘Shame upon them! Why, even the thermometer, though a creature metallic, is more sensitive than these renegades to the momentous occasion. Sure, the mercury rises to it! But they—they run from it. Now degenerate, not only from their sires, but their own boyhood. Ah, my good sir,’ giving another impulsive turn to the revolving chair so as directly to face the one person present, a somewhat reserved gentleman of mature years engaged in methodically refolding a letter just perused, ‘Ah, my good sir, it is your boy who is your true patriot. He made on the Third for Long Branch or elsewhere? Nay, sir, on the Third, if not before, he lays in his ammunition, his powder-crackers; at early dawn on the blessed Fourth he crams his breeches-pockets with them, and though in his heedless enthusiasm, mixing them up there with his matches, they get ignited and suddenly begin going off like minute-guns hurried up, making him a spluttering blunderbuss to himself and the crowd, what recks he if but luckily he come out of it unharmed? Another boy, a yet more devoted young acolyte of the Salii, should repeated discharges at last burst his toy-cannon, and he go to Hades for it, what then? Ducit amor patriae! That’s the inscription, sir, on General Worth’s monument you and I pass every day. Ten to one you never noticed it—the inscription, I mean. Ah, but he was a paladin, a homespun paladin, General Worth. And happy in his surname, though indeed his worth was of another sort than that of

the purse.'

'And did you personally know the General, Dean?' inquires the solitary auditor, his curiosity here doing away with a taciturnity seldom yielding but through the persuasive mediation of wine. 'Did you, personally, know the General, sir?' 'Ay, indeed!' And, after losing thee in revery awhile, and reminiscently ejaculating something to thyself, 'The last time I saw Will Worth was on the night-boat coming down from Albany—by Jove, it seems but a week or two ago—he then being bound for Mexico to pay his military respects to General Santa Anna in the field. But he came back horizontal who went forth so erect! Ay, but like the great Gustavus, sir, from Lützen field, if dirged yet laurelled. Pray, sir, can you repeat the battle-names on the monumental shaft? Chermbusco, Buena Vista, Resaca de la Palma, San Antonio, Cerro Gordo. There's a valley for you of vowels and victory! Ay, and Monterey, too, that superb dash of arms, one inspiring my chivalric friend, Charlie Fenno Hoffman—remember Charlie, sir? No, no; you don't go back so far—inspired his fine lyric.' Now, after a moment's pause, to rally the memory belike, thou didst kindle, and springing from thy seat, leaving it spinning on its pivot, thy adorned chest expanded, thou didst sonorously declaim this stanza:—

'The foe himself recoiled aghast,

When striking where he strongest lay,

We swoopt his flanking batteries past,

And braving full their murderous blast

Stormed home the towers of Monterey!'

Then reseating thee, a little panting, and pressing one hand to thy side: 'Ay, stirring deeds beget stirring rhymes. But stirring rhymes bestir overmuch the cardiac arteries in an old fellow like me. Well, well,' in reaction lapsing into a muffled mutter, a sort of audible musing, 'Well, well—they are gone, both gone, hero and bard—long ago. Sic transit.—They sleep, sleep.—In pace, in pace—Requiescant!'

And slowly removing thy gold-rimmed glasses and assiduously rubbing them with thy ample handkerchief, in tone a bit tremulous, thou addressest the mild gentleman thy hearer. ‘The heat of this unwonted season, sir, would not be so inconvenient but for the confounded humidity dampening one’s spectacles so. But where, where now was I? Astraying I’ve been: Let me see—’ shutting thine eyes and clapping a hand to brow, ‘ah, yes, yes—patriotism of boyhood. Well, such a spluttering blunderbuss as I was speaking of a while ago, or rather such a feu de joie in persona our venerable friend, Judge van Groot, inadvertently made himself as a boy, recruiting his fagged patriotism on doughnuts and cider in one of those booths which in auld lang syne belted about our City Hall Park every Fourth. I hear the sharp, quick percussion even now—see the lad starting up, clapping his hands to his exploding powder-houses, and yet more rapidly withdrawing them, till the booth-keeper put him out by dashing a handy bucket of cider on his trowsers. That was—bless my soul—nigh threescore years ago!—And now? Yesterday with one foot in prunella, his Honour limped off to Saratoga, and, I dare say, sir, without so much as a single powder-cracker in his vest pocket; nay, and very likely never once recalling the circumstances that Saratoga as a great Revolutionary battlefield, or giving name to one, is signally associated with this blessed day.’ Then after a few moments of meditative silence, ‘Myndert van Groot is—let me see—yes, about mine own age. His bay-tree, though planted by the rivers of Burgundy, won’t flourish more than a hundred years longer.—Well, well—tempus does fugit—Memento mori!—die we must—consign to dust—leave all!’ Here, settling back in thy chair, thine eyes fixed upon vacancy, thou murmurest from thy Horace in quite other tones than those which late rolled forth the Monterey stanza:—

‘The purple vineyard’s luscious stores,

Secured by trebly bolted doors,

Excite in vain your care;

Soon shall the rich and sparkling hoard

Flow largely o'er the festive board

Of your unsparing heir.'

Silence again. Then, suddenly brisking up, 'But à propos, as the Marquis says'; and, pulling out thy big watch, 'ay, the lunch hour is at hand. Tobias, hither, thou Rose of Sharon,' summoning a ruddy-cheeked young servitor, 'go, see if the steward has ordered it as I directed, kept that Chambertin three leagues from his refrigerator and the bottles in readiness to be gently immersed up to the neck—mind, up to the neck in a water-cooler, the water of its natural temperature at this season. Go, lad, it is important.' Then turning to the quiet listener, 'Sir, for myself I am not so particular about these matters, but the two friends I expect to dine with me—Jerry Bland and Captain Don Tempest of the Navy—well, you know them—are; and one must humour the peculiar tastes of one's friends, you know.' Here, suddenly reminded that an immediate courtesy was due. 'Of course, my good sir, you will join us. Nay, I insist upon it. Not good for a man to be alone, especially on the immortal Fourth. Tobias, come back. Tut, he's gone. William! Go, say we will dine at the round table in the south-west corner, and let there be four covers—four, mind.'

Even so, Major, or much so, on the last Fourth, sitting in the club parlour didst thou by turns ruminate and expatiate, and humorously rail and feelingly evoke the bygone and glow as in the poetic fervour of youth, and involuntarily sigh the sigh of old philosophy, till in the end the home-sense of the eternal sagacity of all things did but result in awakening in thee but the more vividly thy relish for life and the Chambertin.

But on the forenoon of each thirtieth of May, seated—minus the aforesaid historic decoration—in thy reserved corner of the club balcony, in graven sort thou lookest down on the floral march of the Grand Army. Then seemed thou even less intent on returning the greetings from some hale comrade in the ranks, or less hearty hero

borne along in open barouche; less dwelling, too, on the processional wains of nodding flowers, followed close by nodding plumes of the escort—to thee and the other veterans—a new generation of Mars—less absorbed by all this, than musing on the many mounds those same flowers ere nightfall shall dress. Thy constitutional good spirits seem strangely overcast that day. Thou forgoest the banquet. Nevertheless, it is observable that in the balcony thy empty sleeve is disposed more picturesquely, nay, somehow more conspicuously on that aforesaid thirtieth of every May, than on any other morning of the year. It more catches the eye. Now and then, during pauses in the procession, the crowd on the sidewalk below glance up at it, and expressively, and thou turnest not aside.

‘Ah, Major,’ I said, ‘I love thee; yes, and it is as much for thy queer little human foibles as thy not-so-common virtues. Come now, for all thy annual megrims, prouder art thou of that empty sleeve of thine than even of thy grandfather’s Revolutionary insignia, for this thou didst but inherit, the other, conferred on thee at first hand, and by the God of Battles.’

Not often dost thou discuss the tactics of thy Virginia campaigns, but what things hast thou told us of its byplay—the scouting, the foraging, the riding up to lovely mansions garrisoned by a faithful old slave or two, servants to lovely damsels more terrible than Mars in their feminine indignation at the insolent invader; in other instances being coquettishly served at an improvised lunch on some broad old piazza by less implacable beauties reduced by the calamities to dispensing hospitality for the enemy’s greenbacks. In such and similar passages of the war thou aboundest, passages luckily not susceptible of being formalised into professed history.

But the better for the felicity of thy friends, thou hast more than one string to thy harp, Major. Did any listener ever tire of thy reminiscences of European travel? What signifies that they date so far back, before some of us were born? Even so do sundry inestimable vintages in the Club’s cellar. Pleasant it is when weary of the

never-ending daily news, the same sort of thing forever, how pleasant to be spirited back by a tale, by some veteran's living voice and eloquent gestures, to a period that is no news at all, a time prior to those more pronounced changes which have come over so few portions of that ancient and manifold world across the Atlantic, a world to which we are bound by unsunderable ties of genealogy.

Highly, Major, didst thou relish that title whereby, as regards so many of us Americans, a rare son of New England with happiest simplicity designated that Elder England, from which his progenitor came—Our Old Name. But if thy filial appreciation of the historic Past has something of Nathaniel Hawthorne in it, the medium, Dean, through which thou recallest it, viewing it as through an irradiated vapour, this is not without a touch of our incomparable friend, the Marquis. He, as well thou knowest, never is so happy, never so blissfully serene, as when wandering in a haze along that enchanted beach.

Among all thy over-sea reminiscences not the least entertaining to us juniors is thy liberal version of that famous Afternoon in Naples. In the wee hours, more especially if inspired by the beaming presence of M. de Grandvin, how affluent hast thou been on that theme; how vivid in description; and, for the rest, how frolic, pathetic, indignant, philosophic; and throughout how catholic and humane. But shall such a recital be confined to the small group of the convivially elect, brothers of the Burgundy? Savours that not a little of the exclusive? Have a care, Dean. With even more than is implied in that term, one not lightly to be applied in a democracy, thou hast, unbeknown to thee, perhaps, been reproached.

When General Grant, a bigot for his friends—and thou wert one of his military family in the field—when he, as President, nominated thee consul at that very Naples thou so entertainest us with, what whisper, doubtless started by some rival applicant, what ridiculous whisper, was it buzzed in the lobbies, that in spite even of Grant's nomination, stranded thee unconfirmed by the Senate? But 'Pshaw!' thou

exclaimest, amused at the enthusiasm of sophomores, when, ending thy Neapolitan romance we contendingly fire away with:—

‘Bravissimo!’

‘Encore!’

‘Write it out, Major!’

‘Put it in verse!’

‘Good, it will immortalise thee!’

‘And consider, Dean, the glory redounding to the Club!’

To all which thy expression ‘Pshaw!’ and the politely proffered snuff-box by way of an added parry, and little more do we get from thee, O Dean of the Burgundians!

Well, Major, what thou in thy impatience of pen-drudgery and indifference to any reputation except that old-fashioned one of being a man of honour; what thou, for these reasons, perchance, never couldst be persuaded to undertake, I, even I, unsolicited have had the temerity to essay.

And in so doing I have adopted thy earlier rendering of That Afternoon in Naples ere yet thou begannest to exclaim, ‘I don’t know what the dogs is the reason, but I can’t remember anything’; that version seeming to me akin to what engravers call the first proofs, less free from the blur that ensues after repeated impressions from the plate. Moreover, not unmindful of the enthusiastic injunction, ‘Put it in verse,’ I have after a fashion done accordingly. As to the interspersed ballads and ditties—at the which, peradventure, thou mayest stare even as Rip van Winkle, after his resurrection, did at his son—I do assure thee, Dean, they are essentially but thoughts and conceits of thine own, the product of seeds which planted and spontaneously developing in me, eventually effloresced into rhyme.

But to soften the liberty here taken, as well as the licence throughout, yes, and not without hope to propitiate and even please thee, I have so contrived matters that thou

personated the part here allotted thee at the special instance of M. de Grandvin; thus in a literary way associating thee with one whose social companionship thou so unaffectedly lovest, and whose magnanimous spirit thou art ever fain to imbibe. Vale!

JACK GENTIAN

(Omitted from the final sketch of him.)

True, hardly to-day art thou what formerly thou wast. Thou thyself sometimes hintest that thy decline has even more than begun. With which confession for warrant some there be—alas for them! who in private are not slow to contribute confirmatory words and enlarge thereon.

'Failing?' says one. 'To be sure! And how manifest the signs. In July you see him parrying the sun with his big white umbrella green-line; nevertheless, ere the straw hats yet begin to disappear from the promenade, reassuming his slouched felt sombrero he betakes himself to the street's sunny side.' 'I have noted that,' says another; 'but—will you believe it?—late I espied him musing on a shaded bench in Madison Square; in the forenoon it was, too, not far from a seated file of disreputable nondescripts, non-producers in deplorable attire, plunged in lugubrious reveries on their doubtless misspent lives. Yes, and presently he rose, and after looking about him went straight up to a solitary old vagabond, and standing before him seemed making personal inquiries of him, and concluded by putting hand in pocket and bestowing something upon him. Now seems not that an indication of impaired senses?—deliberately to put a premium on improvidence and thriftlessness, or worse?' 'You go a little too far there,' observes a middle-aged merchant and vestryman, the comfortable president of a charity; 'the Major was always benevolent, as officially I have reason to know, always benevolent, but too often, as I hear, unsystematically so; and this unwisdom may very likely increase with years. But I hardly thought that he had any way so far decayed in his sense of

what is beseeming in a gentleman whatever his years, as publicly to idle, and in business hours, and in such vicinity as you mention. Besides, those Madison Square benches so frequented by the untidy, how can some of them be otherwise than infected, yes, and with vermin. Dear me,' in a tone of real concern, 'it were almost enough to banish him from respectable society were it not the esteemed Major and the Dean.'

'And with a warm deposit at his bank, too; forget not that, my good sir,' gravely observed a waggish young berry-brown cynic in yachtsman's attire, secretly amused at all this. Whereat the respectable vestryman with some severity, 'Sir, that has nothing to do with the matter. This is America, Christian America, thank God; where, be it what it may, one's bank account is of no account whatever in an American's estimate of a fellow American.' Upon which the elders cast a quiet glance toward the young gentleman, significant of their sense that he had been justly rebuked; and the rebuked wag, as conscious of the fact, assumed a contrite demeanour into which, however, he contrived to infuse a twinkle of irony.

'I was at Mrs. Jones's dinner,' volunteered another sexagenarian in an arrested stage of development between the ear and the silk purse; 'I was at Mrs. Jones's dinner the other evening—and, by the way, there was twenty-three million represented by the group, twenty-three million dollars, think of that, so I computed it—and between certain parties there was some random talk about Major Gentian, to the effect that he did well in resigning his place as a leading director of the Dime Savings Bank, considering that he had generally outlived his usefulness.'

'The Major ought to have an attendant,' says a sunken-cheeked, heron-legged bachelor of uncertain years, a sort of man the natural product of the clubs and club-life, so at least the moralising enemies of clubs would doubtless maintain; 'he ought to have an attendant, at any rate it will come to that before long. Tom Dutcher tells me that at Newport last season, instead of sedately sitting in white waistcoat

and armchair on piazza talking stocks and dividends like most respectable old worthies of his kind, the Major more than ever before took to skylarking with those immature little specimens of humanity, obstreperous enough of themselves, Malthusian superfluities of the household, the chastisement of intemperate wedlock, and the bane, as we all have experienced, of many summer resorts. But you know second childhood has a natural affinity for the first.'

'To be sure!' chimes in a young Crœsus of complexion pink and white, recently returned from a four-in-hand coaching trip in Scotland. 'To be sure! And how tediously, too, does he repeat in the smoking-room of the Come-and-Goes, where he occasionally resorts, his musty old romances of travel, and every version varies from the other. His memory is like wares at the auction—going, going, and anon it will be gone.'

'Yes,' says yet another, 'I was talking with him at the 'Windsor' yesterday, and his sporadic ideas were like fishing smacks lost in a Newfoundland fog.'

'Very much so,' solemnly remarks a clerical-looking citizen, a politician high in municipal office; 'very much so indeed. But have you observed one little circumstance, gentlemen, and weighed its significance as a marked symptom—at least some of it—of that irreparable change that, alas, comes with years? Major Gentian, though a soldier on the right side in the war, besides being of double Revolutionary descent—so I am told—nevertheless is far from being that sanguine New Yorker he used to be, and which in true patriotism we are all bound to be? What is this, I would like to know, but the natural optimist doting into the deplorable pessimist.'

Indeed, Dean, but they do cut and come again at thee, yes, even say these things of thee and more. But never a Burgundian among them, our Club harbouring none of that kidney. Outsiders they are, the profane; the seniors, some of them, confirmed tipplers of tea, a decoction that enlarges the spleen and warpest the brain, or lightly

floating the spirit for a while at last lands it in a dry place. However, I will not gainsay these young roosters and old hens, since on some points upon which they click-clock the basis of their talk is true enough. But in the crooked mouth of the invidious, imparting its own twist to all it utters, in effect even veracity lies. Fail thou yet mayest, Major, but never degenerate. Thou mayest outlive thy usefulness (execrable phrase!) but never thy loving-kindness. To the last thou wilt be Jack Gentian; not too dignified to be humane; a democrat, though less of the stump than the heart. And should mortal decline come—which Heaven long defer—and the Black Brunswicker lay siege to thee in thy bachelor tower, thy compatriots, those who best know the true temper of thy genial spirit, would still call thee Jack as in the days of their youth, and though debility should then tongue-tie thee, thou wouldst still respond to them out of thy waning eyes.

MAJOR GENTIAN AND COLONEL J. BUNKUM

… As witness this long newspaper clipping without caption inserted in somebody's scrap-book.

'Note that badge Major Gentian wears upon occasion. It is a military badge. It is the badge of the national brotherhood of veterans in whose Chapters the grade of the field is ignored, and the general salutes the private—comrade! Is Major Gentian's badge this badge?' touching a bronze button on his lapel. 'Is it the badge of the Grand Army of the Republic? No, men and brethren, it is another sort of badge. A badge which by the original constitution of the order it symbolises was restricted to the officers of the Army of the Revolution, to them, and in primogeniture to their descendants. I remember long ago in my youth the eldest son of a revolutionary officer, and as such an inheritor of the Cincinnati badge, saying, over the Madeira, to his own son, then a stripling, "My boy, if ever there is a recognised order of nobility in this land, it will be formed of the sons of the officers of the Revolution." What a frank letting-out was that—thanks to the old Madeira—of the spirit animating the

Cincinnati in the second generation, even as in the first. And to the Cincinnati Major Gentian belongs; and he prides himself upon it; and his pride here makes him throw back his shoulders, old man though he be—yea, and lends an inch to his stature.

‘Now, gratefully and very fervently do we hold in reverence the memory of the heroes of Seventy-six. Yet who but they founded this order? Did John Hancock withstand King George’s tea-tax in the spirit of John Hampden resisting King Charles’s impost of ship-money? Yes, so; but only so. Unto John Hancock the rich merchant, no more than to John Hampden the rich country gentleman of a prior generation, had any practical purpose revealed the gospel of man’s unconditioned equality. Urge not against this aught in the Declaration of Independence. For when the passage “All men are born free and equal,” when that passage was being written were not some of the signers legalised owners of slaves?

‘Too evident is it that in throwing off the British plush, the men of Seventy-six did not shed the colonial skin. In divers respects, social and political, they remained loyal to British tradition, though justified rebels to the British crown. Assuredly no, in the characterising significance of the word as now current, they can hardly be considered Americans. It is we, their posterity, that are Americans—we, the people, the sovereign American people, who from English and European colonists have in process of time, and under the special guidance of God, developed into Americans. And in view of all this, does not Major Gentian’s Society, the Society of the Cincinnati, lag among us as much out of place as would the old Spanish Order of the Knights of the Holy Ghost.

‘I said just now that Major Gentian is vastly proud of his insignia, and I will do him the justice of admitting that this is not altogether because it is an aristocratic one, but in part because of its historic significance. But ours is a practical age. Not altogether sentimentally do we determine the relative greatness of events present and past. Into such determinations, the elements of number, man, yea, and the no less weighty

element of cost, enter in. Well, then, there is Bunker Hill. A famous good fight. Yes, indeed. But how much of a muster-roll? How much of a pay-roll? Why, in Virginia we fought battles where a hundred thousand and more would be engaged. While east, west, and south, our files under arms fell not short of a million. And our war-debt, arising in no small part from generous bounties and the regular army pay-roll, soared aloft into two or three thousand millions. Then there is the pension-roll. That, too, is on a scale commensurate with the colossal magnitude of the Great Republic. Why is the blue ribbon of Major Gentian's badge bordered with white? Major Gentian will reply, very likely, "That is in compliment to our revolutionary ally." Indeed? But is not white the heraldic colour of the Bourbons, one of whom still preposterously advances his claim to the throne of liberated France? What a fling, then, is this white border at the tricolour of our sister the French Republic! Yes, and what a left-handed slur coming home to ourselves. Men and brethren, for aught I know, an enlightened young Englishman in superannuated old England may be at liberty to speak up for democracy; but in energetic young America, much as we respect old age, shall a hoary-headed old American be tolerated as an advocate of monarchy, or, what is equivalent to that, parading under the Stars and Stripes the craven white of the monarchical Bourbons, the beggars? And is such a man—I put it to your conscience—the sort of man to take place with the law-makers of a people, the chosen people, the advance-guard of progress, a friendly people, the Levite of the nations, to whose custody Jehovah has entrusted the sacred ark of human freedom? (Cries of "No, No," and riotous applause.)

'Thou laughest at this, Major, and, after laughing, pooh-poohest it: "Bless you, I divine who it was said all that. But how? Why, much as a blind musician infers who the unseen fiddler is by the twang of his fiddle. It was Colonel Bunkum—Colonel Josiah Bunkum. And, of course, he must have declaimed it at some political meeting—yes, I think I remember reading some report of it—during the canvas, when my insistent friends ran me for the legislature. Incidentally, I became

acquainted with Colonel Bunkum in Virginia, now more than five-and-twenty years ago. A sunburnt whiskerando he was, whiskers bristling like a thorn hedge; valiant, indeed, but of a contorted sort of valour, quite at odds with the magnanimities and martial amenities. Ay, brave enough, you understand, but no Chevalier Bayard. Less mature, too, in mind than in muscle. Rash in opinion, very rash, headlong. Not a man of broad judicial temper, sir, nor replete with the sapient humour and wise patriarchal quality of our good old Father Abraham. You shall judge, sir. Quoting Scripture, 'My people perish through ignorance,' and applying it to the South, and chafing under McClellan's Fabian tactics, he was forthwith marching from the Potomac to the Gulf with a wagon-train of Webster's Spelling-Books, backed by another train of heavy artillery. Shot and shell and spelling-books were to be distributed broadcast and gratis, a sort of Mahommed, sir, of the Malthusian sort. Strange, how the coolest valour may go along with a hot brain-pan. Well, well, robust as ever, the colonel is now a distinguished officer in the Grand Army; and finding that I, a brother-veteran, refrain from joining it, and knowing naught of those scruples, patriotic scruples, sir, which sway me; and, unfortunately, without the intuition that might divine them, why, being more of a hero than a philosopher, it puzzles him, it irritates him—he can't help it, it's all natural enough—and so, dear me, for something tangible to bite at very conscientiously, doubtless he snaps at my poor little ribbon here. The good God enlighten and redeem him!"

'That is charity, Major, Christian charity with a vengeance. But some of us ere now have thought that by such charitable construings (or, are they indolently stoical ones?) of words or actions not charitable, thy failing to take the trouble to resent them, however absurd they may be, and vindicate thyself, thou hast—and more than once or twice—been something of a loser.'

THE CINCINNATI

A NOTE

A member of the Burgundy, possessing an unusual library of Americana, which he is at the greatest pains and expense continually augmenting, thus evincing a singular interest in his country, but who, singularly enough, never votes, leaving that function to men wiser than himself (so he puts it), and who for this and the like eccentricities is familiarly known at the Burgundy as the philosopher; to this gentleman I submitted in manuscript my sketch of the Dean. He did not disapprove of the sketch, but pointed out one little oversight, as he civilly called it. 'In your mention of the ribbon of the Society of the Cincinnati, or rather in Colonel Josiah Bunkum's mention of it, you in your cursory way too severely tax the information of the general reader should you have any. Walk Broadway from Times Square to the Battery, and could you interrogate every man you should meet, with—"Excuse me, but pray, sir, would you be kind enough to tell me the reason why the blue ribbon of the Cincinnati is bordered with white?" I warrant you not ten of those tens of thousands would be able to answer you. You might as well interrogate them as to the exact form of the insignia of the old Spanish Order of the Knights of the Holy Ghost.'

'I see your drift,' said I, amused at his closing allusion; 'some sort of note to the passage is needed. And who better qualified to supply it than yourself, my dear sir, with your fine library of Americana?'

He replied that he would be happy so to do, and the following somewhat simplified dissertation is the result, which is given, as I rather rashly engaged, without alteration or curtailment, and is very characteristic of the Burgundy's eccentric philosopher.

In the ribbon of the Cincinnati, the white bounding the blue commemorates the French alliance during the War of Independence. At the founding of the Society, France was a monarchy, and its natural colour was that of the Bourbons—white. Eligible to the order were all commissioned officers of the Continental army and

navy. Eligible to be life-members were also the admirals and captains of the French fleet, co-operating with the colonists in the war, as well as the generals and colonels of the allied French army, and to these in especial compliment was sent the medal of the Society. As to the Continental officers, membership was declared thereby.

Forthwith upon its establishment the Society encountered much adverse criticism, and from some noted public characters, who being civilians were ineligible to membership. Ere long the violent democratic crusade beginning in France, sympathy intensified this criticism into popular hostility. Some members of the order resigned; and even the staid mind of Washington, the General-President of the Society, was swayed on grounds of prudence to question the expediency of maintaining it. But, taking in sail, as it were, the Society rode out the tempest; and now for years has been the least demonstrative of bodies.

As at the outset, it intermeddled not with political parties, and refrained, among other things, from agitating for augmenting pensions, its members long content with the poor pittance the new government with difficulty at last provided; so throughout it has never deviated from its one main principle, the priestly one of keeping alive the sacred fire of patriotism.

If the Society of the Cincinnati, a heritage from the Fathers, be really worthy of a respect bordering upon reverence, it is of the sort that the Catholics pay to the bones of the saints; for, indeed, this venerable institution survives but as a relic.

It seems amid the bustle of another age like the Greek monolith, the Fire Column so called, in Constantinople, which unconsumed by the repeated conflagrations of that capital, and rising from among all sorts of lesser erections, attests a temper and an era that shall never be restored. It is a remarkable monument of the times when the British colonist in the spirit of John Hampden resisting the imposition of the tea-tax, and indirectly the Crown, developed in the process of time into a generation less impatient of imposts; pushing no quarrel, indeed, against fiscal arbitrariness, or any

sort of power so it be but plural and domestic, wears a hat like the rest of us, and is careful to put on that same humble deference toward the People, which all kings and emperors scrupulously profess for Him Whom—with exemplary meekness ignoring themselves—they officially denominate the Supreme Arbiter of Events. In short, the Society is archaic, originating at a period before we became, to all practical purposes, a distinct People; a race which, though having various superficial traits in common with the English inheriting the same blood with ourselves, is nevertheless, at bottom, unlike; as is frequently observable in uterine brothers who, while in physical aspect a stranger can hardly tell them apart, yet brought to the test of essential character, may be even more than dissimilar.

FRAGMENT

Of such redundant natures can it be possible that any can at last be narrowed down to the bier? Yes, die, and in a sense, intestate, too, as leaving no intellectual estate? Nothing indeed but an imperfect memory that ages avow, and is gone? Is this the end of that splendour? But why not? According to authoritative interpreters, the evanescence, the nothingness of things glorious, redounds to the glory of Omnipotence. And with what other aim in view, the theologians would like to know, did the Magnanimous call out the worlds? Two or three hundred years ago, to the amazement of the telescopes, a strange star appeared in the constellation of Cassiopeia, and shining there like a planet for a brief term, abruptly disappeared, and was seen no more. Nor was any star-dust left to tell of the fleet passage. True, out of the same Unknown or Nothing, and back into it again, millions of small meteors come and go; but extinction is signalised in the instance of stars of magnitude; and in corresponding degree the glory of God is magnified, who can work such wonders, to whom the planets are of even less consideration than to the Grand Mogul his golden buttons.

FRAGMENTS FROM A WRITING-DESK

CLIPPING FROM THE ‘DEMOCRATIC PRESS AND LANSINGBURGH ADVERTISER’

No. 1

Lansingburgh, N.Y.,

Saturday, May 4, 1839.

My dear M—, I can imagine you seated on that dear, delightful, old-fashioned sofa, your head supported by its luxurious padding, and with feet aloft on the aspiring back of that straight-limbed, stiff-necked, quaint old chair, which, as our facetious W— assured me, was the identical seat in which old Burton composed his Anatomy of Melancholy. I see you reluctantly raise your optics from the ugh-clasped [sic] quarto which encumbers your lap, to receive the package which the servant hands you, and can almost imagine that I see those beloved features illumined for a moment with an expression of joy, as you read the superscription of your gentle protégé. Lay down, I beseech you, that odious black-lettered volume and let not its musty and withered leaves sully the virgin purity and whiteness of the sheet which is the vehicle of so much good sense, sterling thought, and chaste and elegant sentiment.

You remember how you used to rate me for my hang-dog modesty, my mauvaise honte, as my Lord Chesterfield would style it. Well! I have determined that hereafter you shall not have occasion again to inflict upon me those flattering appellations of ‘Fool!’ ‘Dolt!’ ‘Sheep!’ which in your indignation you used to shower upon me, with a vigour and a facility which excited my wonder, while it provoked my resentment.

And how do you imagine that I rid myself of this annoying hindrance? Why, truly, by coming to the conclusion that in this pretty corpus of mine was lodged every manly grace; that my limbs were modelled in the symmetry of the Phidian Jupiter;

my countenance radiant with the beams of wit and intelligence, and my whole person the envy of the beaux, the idol of the women, and the admiration of the tailor. And then my mind! why, sir, I have discovered it to be endowed with the most rare and extraordinary powers, stored with universal knowledge, and embellished with every polite accomplishment.

Pollux! what a comfortable thing is a good opinion of one's self when I walk the Broadway of our village with a certain air, that puts me down at once in the estimation of any intelligent stranger who may chance to meet me, as a distingué of the purest water, a blade of the true temper, a blood of the first quality! Lord! how I despise the little sneaking vermin who dodge along the street as though they were so many footmen or errand-boys; who have never learned to carry the head erect in conscious importance, but hang that noblest of the human members as though it had been boxed by some virago of an Amazon; who shuffle along the walk, with a quick, uneasy step, a hasty, clownish motion, which by the magnitude of the contrast, set off to advantage my own slow and magisterial gait, which I can at pleasure vary to an easy, abandoned sort of carriage, or to the more engaging, alert, and lively walk, to suit the varieties of time, occasion, and company.

And in society, too, how often have I commiserated the poor wretches who stood aloof, in a corner, like a flock of scared sheep; while myself, beautiful as Apollo, dressed in a style which would extort admiration from a Brummell, and belted round with self-esteem as with a girdle, sallied up to the ladies—complimenting one, exchanging a repartee with another; tapping this one under the chin, and clasping this one round the waist; and finally, winding up the operation by kissing round the whole circle to the great edification of the fair, and to the unbounded horror, amazement, and ill-suppressed chagrin of the aforesaid sheepish multitude, who, with eyes wide open and mouths distended, afforded good subjects on whom to exercise my polished wit, which like the glittering edge of a Damascus sabre 'dazzled all it shone upon.'

And then, when the folding-doors are thrown open, as the lacquey announces supper to be ready, how often have I stepped forward and with a profound obeisance to the ladies, bowing by the bow of Cupid, and appealing to Venus for my sincerity, when I wished I had an hundred arms at their service, escorted them right gallantly and merrily to the banquet; while those poor, bashful creatures, like a drove of dumb cattle, strayed into the apartment, stumbling, blushing, stammering, and alone.

Verily, by my elegant accomplishments and superior parts, by my graceful address, and above all by my easy self-possession, I have unwittingly provoked to an irreconcilable degree the resentment of half a score of these village beaux; whom, although I had rather have their esteem, I value too little to dread their malice.

By my halidome, sir, this same village of Lansingburgh contains within its pretty limits as fair a set of blushing damsels as one would wish to look upon on a dreamy summer day! When I traverse the broad pavements of my own metropolis, my eyes are arrested by beautiful forms flitting hither and thither; and I pause to admire the elegance of their attire, the taste displayed in their embellishments; the rich mesh of the material; and sometimes, it may be, the loveliness of the features, which no art can heighten and no negligence conceal.

But here, sir, here, where woman seems to have erected her throne, and established her empire; here, where all feel and acknowledge her sway, she blooms in unborrowed charms; and the eye, undazzled by the profusion of extraneous ornament, settles at once upon the loveliest faces which our clayey natures can assume. The poet has sung:—

‘When first the Rhodian’s mimic art array’d

The queen of Beauty in her Cyprian shade,

The happy master mingled on his piece

Each look that charm’d him in the fair of Greece.

To faultless nature true, he stole a grace

From every finer form and sweeter face;

And, as he sojourn'd on the Ægean isles,

Woo'd all their love and treasured all their smiles;

Then glow'd the tints, pure, precious, and refined,

And mortal charms seemed heavenly when combined.'

Now, had this same Apelles flourished in our own enlightened day, and more particularly, had he taken up his domicile in this goodly village, I could with ease have presented him with many a Hebe, in whom were united all the requisite graces which make up the beau-ideal of female loveliness. Nor, my dear M—, does there reign in all this bright display that same monotony of feature, form, complexion, which elsewhere is beheld; no, here are all varieties, all the orders of Beauty's architecture; the Doric, the Ionic, the Corinthian, all are here.

I have in 'my mind's eye, Horatio,' three (the number of the Graces, you remember) who may stand, each at the head of their respective orders. The one, were she arrayed in sylvan garb, and did she in her hand carry her bow, might with equal justice and propriety stand, the picture of Diana herself. Her figure is bold, her stature erect and tall, her presence queenly and commanding, and her complexion is clear and fair as the face of heaven on a May day, through which sparkles an eye of that indefinable hue, which is beyond comparison the most striking that can garnish the human countenance. The vermilion in her cheeks perpetually wears that ruddy, healthful tint, which one is accustomed to behold illumine, but for a moment, alas! the face of a city belle when she takes her annual ramble in the country, to revel for a period in the retreats of rustic life.

If to these qualities you superadd that majesty of carriage and dignity of mien, which we would fancy the royal mistress of Antony to have possessed; together with that heroic and Grecian cast of countenance which the imagination unconsciously ascribes to the Jewess, Rebecca, when resisting the vile arts of the Templar—you

have in my poor opinion the portraiture of .

When I venture to describe the second of this beautiful trinity, I feel my powers of delineation inadequate to the task; but nevertheless I will try my hand at the matter, although, like an unskilful limner, I am fearful I shall but scandalise the charms I endeavour to copy.

Come to my aid, ye guardian spirits of the Fair! Guide my awkward hand, and preserve from mutilation the features ye hover over and protect! Pour down whole floods of sparkling champagne, my dear M—, until your brain grows giddy with emotion; con over the latter portion of the first canto of Childe Harold, and ransack your intellectual repository for the liveliest visions of the Fairy Land, and you will be in a measure prepared to relish the epicurean banquet I shall spread.

The stature of this beautiful mortal (if she be indeed of earth) is of that perfect height, which, while it is freed from the charge of being low, cannot with propriety be denominated tall. Her figure is slender almost to fragility, but strikingly modelled in spiritual elegance, and is the only form I ever saw, which could bear the trial of a rigid criticism.

Every man who is gifted with the least particle of imagination, must in some of his reveries have conjured up from the realms of fancy, a being bright and beautiful beyond everything he had ever before apprehended, whose main and distinguishing attribute invariably proves to be a form the indescribable loveliness of which seems to

—‘Sail in liquid light,

And float on seas of bliss.’

The realisation of these seraphic visions is seldom permitted us; but I can truly say that when my eyes for the first time fell upon this lovely creature, I thought myself transported to the land of dreams, where lay embodied the most brilliant conceptions of the wildest fancy. Indeed, could the Promethean spark throw life and animation

into the Venus de' Medici, it would but present the counterpart of .

Her complexion has the delicate tinge of the brunette, with a little of the roseate hue of the Circassian; and one would swear that none but the sunny skies of Spain had shone upon the infancy of the being, who looks so like her own 'dark-glancing daughters.'

The outline of her head, together with the profile of her countenance, are sketched in classic purity, and while the one indicates refined and elegant sentiment, the other is not more chaste and regular than the mind which beams from every feature of the face. Her hair is black as the wing of the raven, and is parted à la Madonna over a forehead where sits, girt round with her sister graces, the very genius of poetic beauty, hope, and love.

And then her eyes! They open their dark, rich orbs upon you like the full noon of heaven, and blaze into your very soul the fires of day! Like the offerings laid upon the sacrificial altars of the Hebrews, when in an instant the divine spark falling from the propitiated God kindled them in flames; so, a single glance from that Oriental eye as quickly fires your soul, and leaves your bosom in a perfect conflagration! Odds Cupids and Darts! with one broad sweep of vision in a crowded ballroom, that splendid creature would lay around her like the two-handed sword of Minotti, hearts on hearts, piled round in semicircles! But it is well for the more rugged sex that this glorious being can vary her proud dominion, and give to the expression of her eye a melting tenderness which dissolves the most frigid heart, and heals the wounds she gave before.

If the devout and exemplary Mussulman, who dying fast in the faith of his Prophet, anticipates reclining on beds of roses, gloriously drunk through all the ages of eternity, is to be waited on by Houris such as these: waft me, ye gentle gales, beyond this lower world and,

'Lap me in soft Lydian airs!'

But I am falling into I know not what extravagances, so I will briefly give you a portrait of the last of these three divinities, and will then terminate my tiresome lucubrations.

This last is a Lilliputian beauty; diminutive in stature, fair-haired, and with a foot for which Cinderella's slipper would be too large; a countenance sweet and interesting, and in her manners eminently refined and engaging. The cast of her physiognomy is singularly mild and amiable, and her whole person is replete with every feminine grace. Her eyes

'Effuse the mildness of their azure beam;'

and to her, above all her sex, are applicable the lines of our gentle Coleridge:—

'Maid of my Love, sweet

In Beauty's light you glide along:

Your eye is like the star of eve,

And sweet your Voice as Seraph's song.

Yet not your heavenly Beauty gives

This heart with passion soft to glow:

Within your soul a Voice there lives!

It bids you hear the tale of Woe.

When sinking low the Sufferer wan

Beholds no hand outstretched to save,

Fair as the bosom of the Swan

That rises graceful o'er the wave,

I've seen your breast with pity heave,

And therefore love I you, sweet .'

Here, my dear M—, closes this catalogue of the Graces, this chapter of Beauties,

and I should implore your pardon for trespassing so long on your attention. If you, yourself, in whose breast may possibly be extinguished the amatory flame, should not feel an interest in these three ‘counterfeit presentments,’ do not fail to show them to , and solicit her opinion as to their respective merits.

Tender my best acknowledgments to the Major for his prompt attention to my request, and, for yourself, accept the assurance of my undiminished regard; and hoping that the smiles of heaven may continue to illuminate your way,—I remain, ever yours, L. A. V.

Written in long hand (by Melville) across the inner margin:—

‘When I woke up this morning, what the devil should I see but your cane along in bed with me. I shall keep it for you when you come up here again.’

FRAGMENTS FROM A WRITING-DESK

No. 2

Lansingburgh, N.Y.,

Saturday, May 18, 1839.

‘Confusion seize the Greek!’ exclaimed I, as wrathfully rising from my chair, I flung my ancient lexicon across the room, and seizing my hat and cane, and throwing on my cloak, I sallied out into the clear air of heaven. The bracing coolness of an April evening calmed my aching temples, and I slowly wended my way to the river-side. I had promenaded the bank for about half an hour, when flinging myself upon the grassy turf, I was soon lost in revery, and up to the lips in sentiment.

I had not lain more than five minutes, when a figure, effectually concealed in the ample folds of a cloak, glided past me, and hastily dropping something at my feet, disappeared behind the angle of an adjoining house, ere I could recover from my astonishment at so singular an occurrence.

‘Cerbes!’ cried I, springing up, ‘here is a spice of the marvellous!’ and stooping

down, I picked up an elegant little rose-coloured, lavender-scented billet-doux, and hurriedly breaking the seal (a heart, transfixed with an arrow) I read by the light of the moon the following:—

‘Gentle Sir,—If my fancy has painted you in genuine colours, you will on the receipt of this, incontinently follow the bearer where she will lead you.

‘Inamorata.’

‘The deuce I will!’ exclaimed I. ‘But soft!’ And I reperused this singular document, turned over the billet in my fingers, and examined the handwriting, which was femininely delicate, and I could have sworn was a woman’s. Is it possible, thought I, that the days of romance are revived? No, ‘The days of chivalry are over!’ says Burke.

As I made this reflection, I looked up, and beheld the same figure which had handed me this questionable missive, beckoning me forward. I started toward her; but, as I approached, she receded from me, and fled swiftly along the margin of the river at a pace, which, encumbered as I was with my heavy cloak and boots, I was unable to follow; and which filled me with sundry misgivings as to the nature of the being who could travel with such amazing celerity. At last, perfectly breathless, I fell into a walk; which my mysterious fugitive perceiving, she likewise lessened her pace, so as to keep herself still in sight, although at too great a distance to permit me to address her.

Having recovered from my fatigue, and regained my breath, I loosened the clasp of my cloak, and inwardly resolving that I would come at the bottom of the mystery, I desperately flung the mantle from my shoulders, and dashing my beaver to the ground, gave chase in good earnest to the tantalising stranger. No sooner did I from my extravagant actions announce my intention to overtake her, than with a light laugh of derision, she sprang forward at a rate, which in attempting to outstrip, soon left me far in the rear, heartily disconcerted and crestfallen, and inly cursing the

ignis fatuus that danced so provokingly before me.

At length, like everyone else, learning wisdom from experience, I thought my policy lay in silently following the footsteps of my eccentric guide, and quietly waiting the dénouement of this extraordinary adventure. So soon as I relaxed my speed, and gave evidence of having renounced my more summary mode of procedure, the stranger, regulating her movements by mine, proceeded at a pace which preserved between us a uniform distance, ever and anon looking back like a wary general to see if I were again inclined to try the mettle of her limbs.

After pursuing our way in this monotonous style for some time, I observed that my conductress rather abated in her precautions, and had not for the last ten or fifteen minutes taken her periodical survey over her shoulder; whereat plucking up my spirits, which I can assure you, courteous reader, had fallen considerably below zero by the ill-success of my previous efforts, I again rushed madly forward at the summit of my speed, and having advanced ten or twelve rods unperceived, was flattering myself that I should this time make good my purpose; when, turning suddenly round, as though reminded of her late omission, and descrying me plunging ahead like an infuriated steed, she gave a slight audible scream of surprise, and once more fled, as though helped forward by invisible wings.

This last failure was too much. I stopped short, and stamping the ground in ungovernable rage, gave vent to my chagrin in a volley of exclamations: in which, perhaps, if narrowly inspected, might have been detected two or three expressions which savoured somewhat of the jolly days of the jolly cavaliers. But if a man was ever excusable for swearing, surely the circumstances of the case were palliative of the crime. What! to be thwarted by a woman! Peradventure baffled by a girl! Confusion! It was too bad! To be outgeneraled, routed, defeated by a mere rib of the earth? It was not to be borne! I thought I should never survive the inexpressible mortification of the moment, and in the height of my despair I bethought me of

putting a romantic end to my existence upon the very spot which had witnessed my discomfiture.

But when the first transports of my wrath had passed away, and perceiving that the waters of the river, instead of presenting an unruffled calm, as they are wont to do on so interesting an occasion, were discomposed and turbid; and remembering, that beside this, I had no other means of accomplishing my heroic purpose except the vulgar and inelegant one of braining myself against the stone wall which traversed the road; I sensibly determined after taking into consideration the afore-mentioned particulars, together with the fact that I had an unfinished game of chess to win, on which depended no inconsiderable wager, that to commit suicide under such circumstances would be highly inexpedient, and probably be attended with many inconveniences. During the time I had consumed in arriving at this most wise and discreet conclusion, my mind had time to recover its former tone, and had become comparatively calm and collected; and I saw my folly in endeavouring to trifle with one apparently so mysterious and inexplicable.

I now resolved, that whatever might betide, I would patiently await the issue of the affair, and advancing forward in the direction of my guide, who all this time had maintained her ground, steadfastly watching my actions, we both simultaneously strode forward, and were soon on the same footing as before.

We walked on at an increased pace, and were just past the suburbs of the town when my conductress, plunging into a neighbouring grove, pursued her way with augmented speed, till we arrived at a spot, whose singular and grotesque beauty, even amidst the agitating occurrences of the evening, I could not refrain from observing. A circular space of about a dozen acres in extent had been cleared in the very heart of the grove, leaving, however, two parallel rows of lofty trees, which at the distance of about twenty paces, and intersected in the centre by two similar ranges, traversed the whole diameter of the circle. These noble plants shooting their

enormous trunks to an amazing height, bore their verdant honours far aloft, throwing their gigantic limbs abroad and embracing each other with their rugged arms. This fanciful union of their sturdy boughs formed a magnificent arch, whose grand proportions, swelling upward in proud pre-eminence, presented to the eye a vaulted roof, which to my perturbed imagination at the time, seemed to have canopied the triumphal feasts of the sylvan god. This singular prospect burst upon me in all its beauty, as we emerged from the surrounding thicket, and I had unconsciously lingered on the borders of the wood, the better to enjoy so unrivalled a view, when, as my eye was following the dusky outline of the grove, I caught sight of the diminutive figure of my guide, who, standing at the entrance of the arched way I have been endeavouring to describe, was making the most extravagant gesture of impatience at my delay. Reminded at once of the situation, which put me for a time under the control of this capricious mortal, I replied to her summons by immediately throwing myself forward, and we soon entered the Atlantian arbour, in whose umbrageous shades we were completely hid.

Lost in conjecture, during the whole of this eccentric ramble, as to its probable termination, the sombre gloom of these ancestral trees gave a darkening hue to my imaginings, and I began to repent the inconsiderate haste which had hurried me on in an expedition so peculiar and suspicious. In spite of all my efforts to exclude them, the fictions of the nursery poured in upon my recollections, and I felt with Bob Acres in the Rivals, that ‘my valour was certainly going.’ Once, I am almost ashamed to own it to thee, gentle reader, my mind was so haunted with ghostly images, that in an agony of apprehension I was about to turn and flee, and had actually made some preliminary movements to that effect, when my hand, accidentally straying into my bosom, gripped the billet, whose romantic summons had caused this nocturnal adventure. I felt my soul regain her fortitude, and smiling at the absurd conceits which infested my brain, I once more stalked proudly forward, under the overhanging branches of these ancient trees.

Emergent from the shades of this romantic region, we soon beheld an edifice, which seated on a gentle eminence, and embowered amidst surrounding trees, bore the appearance of a country villa; although its plain exterior showed none of those fantastic devices which usually adorn the elegant châteaux. My conductress, as we neared this unpretending mansion, seemed to redouble her precautions, and although she evinced no positive alarm, yet her quick and startled glances bespoke no small degree of apprehension. Motioning me to conceal myself behind an adjacent tree, she approached the house with rapid but cautious steps; my eyes followed her until she disappeared behind the shadow of the garden wall, and I remained waiting her reappearance with the utmost anxiety. An interval of several moments had elapsed, when I descried her, swinging open a small postern, and beckoning me to advance. I obeyed the summons, and was soon by her side, not a little amazed at the complacency which, after what had transpired, brooked my immediate vicinity. Dissembling my astonishment, however, and rallying all my powers, I followed with noiseless strides the footsteps of my guide, fully persuaded that this mysterious affair was now about to be brought to an éclaircissement.

The appearance of this spacious habitation was anything but inviting; it seemed to have been built with a jealous eye to concealment; and its few, but well-defended windows were sufficiently high from the ground, as effectually to baffle the prying curiosity of the inquisitive stranger. Not a single light shone from the narrow casement; but all was harsh, gloomy, and forbidding. As my imagination, ever alert on such an occasion, was busily occupied in assigning some fearful motive for such unusual precautions, my leader suddenly halted beneath a lofty window, and making a low call, I perceived slowly descending therefrom, a thick silken cord, attached to an ample basket, which was silently deposited at our feet. Amazed at this apparition, I was about soliciting an explanation: when laying her fingers impressively upon her lips, and placing herself in the basket, my guide motioned me to seat myself beside her. I obeyed, but not without considerable trepidation; and, in obedience to the

same low call which had procured its descent, our curious vehicle, with sundry creakings, rose in the air.

To attempt an analysis of my feelings at this moment were impossible. The solemnity of the hour—the romantic nature of my present situation, the singularity of my whole adventure, the profound stillness which prevailed, the solitude of the place, were enough of themselves to strike a panic into the stoutest heart, and to unsettle the strongest nerves. But when to these was added the thought—that at the dead of night, and in the company of a being so perfectly inexplicable, I was effecting a clandestine entrance into so remarkable an abode, the kind and sympathising reader will not wonder, when I wished myself bestowed in my own snug quarters in Street.

Such were the reflections which passed through my mind during our aerial voyage, throughout which my guide maintained the most rigid silence, only broken at intervals by the occasional creakings of our machine, as it rubbed against the side of the house in its ascent. No sooner had we gained the window, than two brawny arms were extended, circling me in their embrace, and ere I was aware of the change of locality, I found myself standing upright in an apartment, dimly illuminated by a solitary taper. My fellow-voyager was quickly beside me, and again enjoining silence with her finger, she seized the lamp, and bidding me follow, conducted me through a long corridor, till we reached a low door concealed behind some old tapestry, which opening to the touch, disclosed a spectacle as beautiful and enchanting as any described in the Arabian Nights.

The apartment we now entered, was fitted up in a style of Eastern splendour, and its atmosphere was redolent of the most delicious perfumes. The walls were hung round with the most elegant draperies, waving in graceful folds, on which were delineated scenes of Arcadian beauty. The floor was covered with a carpet of the finest texture, in which were wrought with exquisite skill the most striking events in ancient

mythology. Attached to the walls by cords composed of alternate threads of crimson silk and gold, were several magnificent pictures illustrative of the loves of Jupiter and Semele, Psyche before the tribunal of Venus, and a variety of other scenes, limned all with felicitous grace. Disposed around the room were luxurious couches, covered with the finest damask, on which were likewise executed after the Italian fashion the early fables of Greece and Rome. Tripods, designed to represent the Graces bearing aloft vases, richly chiselled in the classic taste, were distributed in the angles of the room, and exhaled an intoxicating fragrance.

Chandeliers of the most fanciful description, suspended from the lofty ceiling by rods of silver, shed over this voluptuous scene a soft and tempered light, and imparted to the whole that dreamy beauty which must be seen in order to be duly appreciated. Mirrors of unusual magnitude, multiplying in all directions the gorgeous objects, deceived the eye by their reflections, and mocked the vision with long perspective.

But overwhelming as was the display of opulence, it yielded in attraction to the being for whom all this splendour glistened; and the grandeur of the room served only to show to advantage the matchless beauty of its inmate. These superb decorations, though lavished in boundless profusion, were the mere accessories of a creature, whose loveliness was of that spiritual cast that depended upon no adventitious aid, and which as no obscurity could diminish, so no art could heighten.

When I first obtained a glimpse of this lovely being, she lay reclining upon an ottoman; in one hand holding a lute, and with the other, lost in the profusion of her silken tresses, she supported her head. I could not refrain from recalling the passionate exclamation of Romeo:—

‘See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

O, that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!’

She was habited in a flowing robe of the purest white, and her hair, escaping from the fillet of roses which had bound it, spread its negligent graces over neck and bosom and shoulder, as though unwilling to reveal the extent of such transcendent charms. Her zone was of pink satin, on which were broidered figures of Cupid in the act of drawing his bow; while the ample folds of her Turkish sleeve were gathered at the wrist by a bracelet of immense rubies, each of which represented a heart pierced through by a golden shaft. Her fingers were decorated with a variety of rings, which as she waved her hand to me as I entered, darted forth a thousand coruscations, and gleamed their brilliant splendours to the sight. Peeping from beneath the envious skirts of her mantle, and almost buried in the downy cushion on which it reposed, lay revealed the prettiest foot you can imagine cased in a satin slipper, which clung to the fairylike member by means of a diamond clasp.

As I entered the apartment, her eyes were downcast, and the expression of her face was mournfully interesting; she had apparently been lost in some melancholy revery. Upon my entrance, however, her countenance brightened, as with a queenly wave of the hand she motioned my conductress from the room, and left me standing, mute, admiring, and bewildered in her presence.

For a moment my brain spun round, and I had not at command a single one of my faculties. Recovering my self-possession, however, and with that, my good breeding, I advanced en cavalier, and gracefully sinking on one knee, I bowed my head and exclaimed, ‘Here do I prostrate myself, thou sweet Divinity, and kneel at the shrine of thy beauty.’

Transcriber’s Notes

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Itemized changes from the original text:

p. 8: Supplied comma in phrase “found in every vocation, even the humbler ones” as suggested by end-of-line spacing. p. 155: Supplied opening single quotation mark

before phrase ‘it’s plain that you have not heard the crow of the Emperor of China’s chanticleer.’ p. 223: Supplied closing single quotation mark after phrase ‘to believe in the possibility of his existence.’ p. 225: Replaced period with question mark after phrase ‘with the poor, commonplace plodder Hautboy, an American of forty?’ p. 238: Supplied comma in phrase ‘Sir, this is the very Paradise of Bachelors!’ as suggested by end-of-line spacing. p. 365: Replaced ‘no-so-common’ with ‘not-so-common’ in phrase ‘thy not-so-common virtues.’ p. 375: Replaced question mark with period after phrase ‘That is in compliment to our revolutionary ally.’

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BILLY BUDD ***

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