# Selections from Ambrose Bierce

[ Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?) was chiefly known in his day as Newspaper writer of insight, scholarly bent, and caustic wit. He was a constant enemy of corruption and hypocrisy. Hearst, the Newspaper baron, hired him and gave him free reign to write as he wished, and he worked for Hearst newspapers from 1887-1906. Bierce published books of poetry, short stories, and criticism, and is probably best known for his *The Devil's Dictionary*, and his short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," which was the account of the after-death experience of a hanged officer. His mind, writings, and life covered a very wide scope, including heroic action in the Civil War. At over 70 he revisited the Civil War battle sites he had been involved in, and actually disappeared after this time, but was believed by some to have died in Mexico while investigating the Mexican Revolution. ]

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## *Essays*

*Natura Benigna*

It is not always on remote islands peopled with pagans that great disasters occur, as memory witnesseth. Nor are the forces of nature inadequate to production of a fiercer throe than any that we have known. The situation is this: we are tied by the feet to a fragile shell imperfectly confining a force powerful enough under favoring conditions, to burst it asunder and set the fragments wallowing and grinding together in liquid flame, in the blind fury of a readjustment. Nay, it needs no such stupendous cataclysm to de-people this uneasy orb. Let but a square mile be blown out of the bottom of the sea, or a great rift open there. Is it to be supposed that we would be unaffected in the altered conditions generated by a contest between the ocean and the earth's molten core? These fatalities are not only possible but in the highest degree probable. It is probable, indeed, that they have occurred over and over again, effacing all the more highly organized forms of life, and compelling the slow march of evolution to begin anew. Slow? On the stage of Eternity the passing of races - the entrances and exits of Life - are incidents in a brisk and lively drama, following one another with confusing rapidity.

Mankind has not found it practicable to abandon and avoid those places where the forces of nature have been most malign. The track of the Western tornado is speedily re-peopled. San Francisco is still populous, despite its earthquake, Galveston despite its storm, and even the courts of Lisbon are not kept by the lion and the lizard. In the Peruvian village straight downward into whose streets the crew of a United States warship once looked from the crest of a wave that stranded her a half mile inland are heard the tinkle of the guitar and the voices of children at play. There are people living at Herculaneum and Pompeii. On the slopes about Catania the goat-herd endures with what courage he may the trembling of the ground beneath his feet as old Enceladus again turns over on his other side. As the Hoang-Ho goes back inside its banks after fertilizing its contiguity with hydrate of Chinaman the living agriculturist follows the receding wave, sets up his habitation beneath the broken embankment, and again the Valley of the Gone Away blossoms as the rose, its people dicing with Death.

This matter can not be amended: the race exposes itself to peril because it can do no otherwise. In all the world there is no city of refuge - no temple in which to take sanctuary, clinging to the horns of the altar - no "place apart" where, like hunted deer, we can hope to elude the baying pack of Nature's malevolences. The deadline is drawn at the gate of life: Man crosses it at birth. His advent is a challenge to the entire pack - earthquake, storm, fire, flood, drought, heat, cold, wild beasts, venomous reptiles, noxious insects, bacilli, spectacular plague and velvet-footed household disease - all are fierce and tireless in pursuit. Dodge, turn and double how he can, there's no eluding them; soon or late some of them have him by the throat and his spirit returns to the God who gave it - and gave them.

We are told that this earth was made for our inhabiting. Our dearly beloved brethren in the faith, our spiritual guides, philosophers and friends of the pulpit, never tire of pointing out the goodness of God in giving us so excellent a place to live in and commending the admirable adaptation of all things to our needs.

What a fine world it is, to be sure - a darling little world, "so suited to the needs of man." A globe of liquid fire, straining within a shell relatively no thicker than that of an egg - a shell constantly cracking and in momentary danger of going all to pieces! Three-fourths of this delectable field of human activity are covered with an element in which we can not breathe, and which swallows us by myriads:

With moldering bones the deep is white
From the frozen zones to the tropics bright.

Of the other one-fourth more than one-half is uninhabitable by reason of climate. On the remaining one-eighth we pass a comfortless and precarious existence in disputed occupancy with countless ministers of death and pain - pass it in fighting for it, tooth and nail, a hopeless battle in which we are foredoomed to defeat. Everywhere death, terror, lamentation and the laughter that is more terrible than tears - the fury and despair of a race hanging on to life by the tips of its fingers! And the prize for which we strive, "to have and to hold" - what is it? A thing that is neither enjoyed while had, nor missed when lost. So worthless it is, so unsatisfying, so inadequate to purpose, so false to hope and at its best so brief, that for consolation and compensation we set up fantastic faiths of an aftertime in a better world from which no confirming whisper has ever reached us across the void. Heaven is a prophecy uttered by the lips of despair, but Hell is an inference from analogy.

(*Vol. 11, Bierce Collected Works*)

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*Who Are the Great?*

The question having been asked whether Abraham Lincoln was the greatest man this country ever produced, a contemporary writer signifies his own view of the matter thus:

"Abraham Lincoln was a great man, but I am inclined to believe that history will reckon George Washington a greater."

But that is an appeal to an incompetent arbiter. History has always elevated to primacy in greatness that kind of men - men of action, statesmen and soldiers. In my judgment neither of the men mentioned is entitled to the distinction. I should say that the greatest American that we know about, if not George Sterling, was Edgar Allan Poe. I should say that the greatest man is the man capable of doing the most exalted, the most lasting and most beneficial intellectual work - and the highest, ripest, richest fruit of the human intellect is indubitably great poetry. The great poet is the king of men; compared with him, any other man is a peasant; compared with his, any other man's work is a joke. What is it likely that remote ages will think of the comparative greatness of Shakespeare and the most eminent of all Britain's warriors or statesmen? Nothing, for knowledge of the latter's work will have perished. Who was the greatest of Grecians before Homer? Because you are unable to mention offhand the names of illustrious conquerors or empire-builders of the period do you suppose there were none? Their work has perished, that is all - as will perish the work of Washington and Lincoln. But the *Iliad* is with us.

Their work has perished and our knowledge of it. Why? Because no greater man made a record of it. If Homer had celebrated their deeds instead of those of his dubious Agamemnon and impossible Achilles, we should know about them - all that he chose to tell. For a comparison between their greatness and his the data would be supplied by himself. Men of action owe their fame to men of thought. The glory of the ruler, the conqueror or the statesman belongs to the historian or the poet who made it. He can

make it big or little, at his pleasure; he upon whom it is bestowed is as powerless in the matter as is any bystander. If there were no writers how would you know that there was a Washington or a Lincoln? How would you know that there is a Joseph Choate, who was American Ambassador to Great Britain, or a Nelson Miles, sometime Commander of our army? Suppose the writers of this country had in 1896 agreed never again to mention the name of William J. Bryan; where would have been his greatness?

Great writers make great men or unmake them - or can if they like. They kindle a glory where they please, or quench it where it has begun to shine. History's final judgment of Washington and Lincoln will depend upon the will of the immortal author who chooses to write of them. Their deeds, although a thousand times more distinguished, their popularity, though a thousand times greater, can not save from oblivion even so much as their names. And nothing that they built will abide. Of the "topless towers" of empire that the one assisted to erect, and the other to buttress, not a vestige will remain. But what can efface "The Testimony of the Suns"? Who can unwrite "To Helen"?

If there had been no Washington, American independence would nevertheless have been won and the American republic established. But suppose that he alone had taken up arms. He was neither indispensable nor sufficient. Without Lincoln the great rebellion would have been subdued and negro slavery abolished. What kind of greatness is that - to do what another could have done, what was bound to be done anyhow? I call it pretty cheap work. Great statesmen and great soldiers are as common as flies; the world is lousy with them. We recognize their abundance in the saying that the hour brings the man. We do not say that of a literary emergency. There the demand is always calling for the supply, and usually calling in vain. Once or twice in a century, it may be, the great man of thought comes, unforeseen and unrecognized, and makes the age and the glory thereof all his own by saying what none but he could say - delivering a message which none but he could bear. All round him swarm the little great men of action, laying sturdily about them with mace and sword, changing boundaries which are afterward changed back again, serving fascinating principles from which posterity turns away, building states that vanish like castles of cloud, founding thrones and dynasties with which Time plays at pitch-and-toss. But through it all, and after it all, the mighty thought of the man of words flows on and on with the resistless sweep of "the great river where De Soto lies" - an unchanging and unchangeable current of eternal good.

> They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
> The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;
> And Bahram, that great Hunter - the wild ass
> Stamps o'er his Head, but can not break his sleep.

But the courts that Omar reared still stand, perfect as when he "hewed the shaft and laid the the architrave." Not the lion and the lizard - we ourselves keep them and glory in them and drink deep in them, as did he. O'er his head, too; that good man and considerable poet, Mr. Edgar Fawcett, stamped in vain; but a touch on a book, and lo! old Omar is broad awake and with him wakens Israfel, "whose heart-strings are a lute."

Art and literature are the only things of permanent interest in this world. Kings and conquerors rise and fall; armies move across the stage of history and disappear in the wings; mighty empires are evolved and dissolved; religions, political systems, civilizations flourish, die and, except in so far as gifted authors may choose to perpetuate their memory, are forgotten and all is as before. But the thought of a great writer passes from civilization to civilization and is not lost, although his known work, his very name, may perish. You can not unthink a thought of Homer, but the deeds of Agamemnon are long undone, and the only value that he has, the only interest, is that he serves as material for

poets. Of Caesar's work only that of the pen survives. If a statue by Phidias, or a manuscript by Catullus, were discovered today the nations of Europe would be bidding against one another for its possession tomorrow - as one day the nations of Africa may bid for a newly discovered manuscript of some one now long dead and forgotten.

Literature and art are about all that the world really cares for in the end; those who make them are not without justification in regarding themselves as masters in the House of Life and all others as their servitors. In the babble and clamor, the pranks and antics of its countless incapables, the tremendous dignity of the profession of letters is overlooked; but when, casting a retrospective eye into "the dark backward and abysm of time" to where beyond these voices is the peace of desolation, we note the majesty of the few immortals and compare them with the pigmy figures of their contemporary kings, warriors and men of action generally - when across the silent battle fields and hushed *fora* where the dull destinies of nations were determined, nobody cares how, we hear,

> like ocean on a western beach,
> The surge and thunder of the *Odyssey* -

then we appraise literature at its true value; and how little worthwhile seems all else with which Man is pleased to occupy his fussy soul and futile hands!

(*The Controversialist, Vol 10, Bierce Collected Works*)

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*Thought and Feeling*

"What is his idea? - what thought does he express?" asks - rather loftily - a distinguished critic and professor of English literature to whom I submitted a brief poem of Mr. Loveman. I had not known that Mr. Loveman (of whom, by the way, I have not heard so much as I expect to) had tried to express a thought; I had supposed that his aim was to produce an emotion, a feeling. That is all that a poet - as a poet - can do. He may be philosopher as well as poet - may have a thought, as profound a thought as you please, but if he do not express it so as to produce an emotion in an emotional mind he has not spoken as a poet speaks. It is the philosopher's trade to make us think, the poet's to make us feel. If he is so fortunate as to have his thought, well and good; he can make us feel, with it as well as without - and without it as well as with.

One would not care to give up the philosophy that underruns so much of Shakespeare's work, but how little its occasional absence affects our delight is shown by the reading of such "nonsense verses" as the song in "As You Like It," beginning:

> It was a lover and his lass,
> With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino.

One does not need the music; the lines sing themselves, and are full of the very spirit of poetry. What the dickens they may chance to mean is quite another matter. What is poetry, anyhow, but "glorious nonsense"? But how very glorious the nonsense happens to be! What "thought" did Ariel try to express in his songs in "The Tempest"? There is hardly the tenth part of a thought in them; yet who that has a rudimentary, or even a vestigial, susceptibility to sentiment and feeling, can read them without the thrill that is stubborn to the summoning of the profoundest reflections of Hamlet in his inkiest cloak?

Poetry may be conjoined with thought. In the great poets it commonly is - that is to say, we award the palm to him who is great in more than one direction. But the poetry is a

thing apart from the thought and demanding a separate consideration. The two have no more essential connection than the temple and its granite, the statue and its bronze. Is the sculptor's work less great in the clay than it becomes in the hands of the foundry man?

No one, not the greatest poet nor the dullest critic, knows what poetry is. No man, from Milton down to the acutest and most pernicious lexicographer, has been able to define its name. To catch that butterfly the critic's net is not fine enough by much. Like electricity, it is felt, not known. If it could be known, if the secret were accessible to analysis, why, one could be taught to write poetry without having been "born unto singing."

So it happens that the most penetrating criticism must leave eternally unsaid the thing that is most worth saying. We can say of a poem as of a picture, an Ionic column, or any work of art: "It is charming!" But why and how it charms - there we are dumb, its creator no less than another.

What is it in art before which all but the unconscious peasant and the impenitent critic confess the futility of speech? Why does a certain disposition of words affect us deeply when if differently arranged to mean the same thing they stir no emotion whatever? He who can answer that has surprised the secret of the Sphinx, and after him shall be no more poetry forever!

Expound who is able the charm of these lines from "Kubla Khan:"

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw.
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.

There is no "thought" here - nothing but the baldest narrative in common words arranged in their natural order; but upon whose heart-strings does not that maiden play? - and who does not adore her?

Like the entire poem of which they are a part, and like the entire product of which the poem is a part, the lines are all imagination and emotion. They address, not the intellect, but the heart. Let the analyst of poetry wrestle with them if he is eager to be thrown.

(*The Controversialist, v. 10 CW*)

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*"The Kreutzer Sonata"*

[Review of Tolstoy's book]

Nothing in this book directly discloses the author's views of the marriage relation. The horrible story of Posdnyschew's matrimonial experience - an experience which, barring its tragic finale, he affirms not to be an individual but a general one - is related by himself. There is no more in it to show directly what Tolstoi thinks of the matters in hand than there is in a play to show what the playwright thought. We are always citing the authority of Shakespeare by quotations from his plays in which every sentiment is obviously conceived with a view to its fitness to the character of the imaginary person who utters it, and supplies no clew to the author's convictions.

In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, however, the case is somewhat different. Whereas Shakespeare had in view an artistic (and commercial) result, Tolstoi's intention is clearly moral: his aim is not entertainment, but instruction. To that end he foregoes the advantage of those literary effects which he so well knows how to produce, confining his

exceptional powers to bald narrative, overlaid with disquisitions deriving their only vitality from the moral purpose everywhere visible.

A man marries a woman. They quarrel of course; their life is of course wretched beyond the power of words to express. Jealousy naturally ensuing, the man murders the woman. That is the "plot," and it is without embellishment. Its amplification is accomplished by "preaching"; its episodes are sermons on subjects not closely related to the main current of thought. Clearly, the aim of a book so constructed, even by a skilful literary artist, is not an artistic aim. Tolstoi desires it to be thought that he entertains the convictions uttered by the lips of Posdnyschew. He has, indeed, distinctly avowed them elsewhere than in this book. Like other convictions, they must stand or fall according to the stability of their foundation upon the rock of truth; but the fact that they are held by a man of so gigantic powers as Tolstoi gives them an interest and importance which the world, strange to say, has been quick to recognize.

Some of these convictions are peculiarly Tolstoi's own; others he holds in common with all men and women gifted with that rarest of intellectual equipments, the faculty of observation, and blessed with opportunity for its use. Anybody can see, but observation is another thing. It is something more than discernment, yet may be something less than accurate understanding of the thing discerned. Such as it is, Tolstoi has it in the highest degree. Nothing escapes him: his penetration is astonishing: he searches the very soul of things, making record of his discoveries with a pitiless frankness which to feebler understandings is brutal and terrifying. To him nothing is a mere phenomenon; everything is a phenomenon *plus* a meaning connected with a group of meanings. The meanings he may, and in my poor judgment commonly does, misread, but the phenomenon, the naked fact, he will see. Nothing can hide it from him nor make it appear to him better than it is. It is this terrible power of discernment, with this unsparing illumination compelling the reluctant attention of others, which environs him with animosities and implacable resentments. His is the Mont Blanc of minds; about the base of his conspicuous, cold intelligence the Arve and Arvieron of ignorance and optimism rave ceaselessly. It is of the nature of a dunce to confound exposure with complicity. Point out to him the hatefulness of that which he has been accustomed to admire, and nothing shall thenceforward convince him that you have not had a guilty hand in making it hateful.

Tolstoi, in intellect a giant and in heart a child, a man of blameless life, and spotless character, devout, righteous, spectacularly humble and aggressively humane, has had the distinction to be the most widely and sincerely detested man of two continents. He has had the courage to utter a truth of so supreme importance that one-half the civilized world has for centuries been engaged in a successful conspiracy to conceal it from the other half - the truth that the modern experiment of monogamic marriage by the dominant tribes of Europe and America is a dismal failure. He is not the first by many who has testified to that effect, but he is the first in our time whose testimony has arrested so wide and general attention - a result that is to be attributed partly to his tremendous reputation and partly to his method of giving witness. He does not in this book deal in argument, is no controversialist. He says the thing that is in him to say and we can take it or leave it.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* is not an obscene nor even an indelicate book: the mind that finds it so is an indelicate, an obscene mind. It is not, according to our popular notions, "a book for young girls." Nevertheless, it is most desirable that young girls should know - preferably through their parents - who can speak with authority of experience the truth which it enforces: namely, that marriage, like wealth, offers no hope of lasting happiness. Despite the implication that "they lived happily ever after," it is not for nothing that the conventional love story ends with the chime of wedding bells. As the Genius vanished when Mirza asked him what lay under the cloud beyond the rock of adamant, so the story teller prudently forestalls further investigation by taking himself off. He has an innate consciousness that the course of true love whose troubled current he has been tracing

begins at marriage to assume something of the character of a raging torrent.

Tolstoi strikes hard: not one man nor woman a year married but must wince beneath his blows. They are all members of a dishonest conspiracy. They conceal their wounds and swear that all is right and well with them. They give their Hell a good character, but in their secret souls they chafe and groan under the weight and heat of their chains. They come out from among their corruption and dead men's bones only to give the sepulchre another coating of whitewash and call attention to its manifold advantages as a dwelling. They are like the members of some "ancient and honorable order," who gravely repeat to others falsehoods by which they were themselves cheated into membership. The minatory oath alone is lacking, its binding restraint supplied by the cowardice that dares not brave the resentment of co-conspirators and the fury of their dupes.

No human institution is perfect, nor nearly perfect. None comes within a world's width of accomplishing the purpose for which it was devised, and all in time become so perverted as to serve a contrary one. But of all institutions, marriage as we have it here, and as they evidently have it in Russia, most lamentably falls short of its design. Nay, it is the one of them which is become most monstrously wrenched awry to the service of evil. To have observed this - to have had the intrepidity to affirm it in a world infested with fools and malevolents who can not understand how anything can be known except by the feeble and misleading light of personal experience - that is much. It marks Tolstoi in a signal way as one eminent above the cloud-region, with a mental and spiritual outlook unaffected by the ground-reek of darkened counsel and invulnerable to the slings and arrows of defamation. Nevertheless, while admiring his superb courage and attesting the clarity of his vision, I think he imperfectly discerns the underlying causes of the phenomena that he reports.

Schopenhauer explains the shamefacedness of lovers, their tendency to withdraw into nooks and corners to do their wooing, by the circumstance that they plan a crime - they conspire to bring a human soul into a world of woe. Tolstoi takes something of the same ground as to the nature of their offence. Marriage he thinks a sin, and being a religionist regards the resulting and inevitable wretchedness as its appointed punishment

"Little did I think of her physical and intellectual life," says Posdnyschew, in explanation of conjugal antagonism. "I could not understand whence sprang our mutual hostility, but how clearly I see now! This hostility was nothing but the protest of human nature against the beast that threatened to devour it. I could not understand this hatred. And how could it have been different? This hostility was nothing else than the mutual hatred of two accessories in a crime - that of instigation, that of accomplishment."

Marriage being a sin, it follows that celibacy is a virtue and a duty. Tolstoi has the courage of his convictions in this as in other things. He is too sharp not to see where this leads him and too honest to stop short of its logical conclusion. Here he is truly magnificent! He perceives that his ideal, if attained, would be annihilation of the race. That, as he has elsewhere in effect pointed out, is no affair of his. He is not concerned for the perpetuity of the race, but for its happiness through freedom from the lusts of the flesh. What is it to him if the god whom, oddly enough, he worships has done his work so badly that his creatures can not be at the same time chaste, happy and alive? Everyone to his business - God as creator and, if he please, preserver; Tolstoi as reformer.

For his views on the duty of celibacy, it is only fair to say, Tolstoi goes directly to the teaching of Jesus Christ, with what accuracy of interpretation, not being skilled in theology I am unwilling to say.

From his scorn of physicians it may be inferred that our author is imperfectly learned in their useful art, and therefore unfamiliar with whatever physiological side the question of celibacy may have. It is perhaps sufficient to say that in the present state of our knowledge the advantages of a life ordered after the Tolstoian philosophy seem rather

spiritual than physical. Doubtless "they didn't know everything down in Judee," but St. Paul appears to have had a glimmering sense of this fact, if it is a fact.

To attribute the miseries which are inseparable from marriage as the modern Caucasian has the heroism to maintain it to any single and simple cause is most unphilosophical; our civilization is altogether too complex to admit of any such cheap and easy method. Doubtless there are many factors in the problem; a few, however, seem sufficiently obvious to any mind which, having an historical outlook wider than its immediate environment in time and space, with

. . . . . extensive view
Surveys mankind from China to Peru.

The monogamous marriage ignores, for example, the truth that Man is a polygamous animal. Of all the men and women who have been born into this world, only one in many has ever even so much as heard of any other system than polygamy. To suppose that within a few brief centuries monogamy has been by law and by talking so firmly established as effectually to have stayed the momentum of the original instinct is to hold that the day of miracles is not only not past, but has really only recently arrived. It implies, too, and entails, a blank blindness to the most patent facts of easy observation. With admirable gravity the modern Caucasian has legislated himself into theoretical monogamy, but he has, as yet, not effected a repeal of the laws of nature, and has in truth shown very little disposition to disregard them and observe his own. The men of our time and race are in heart and life about as polygamous as their good ancestors were before them, and everybody knows it who knows anything worth knowing. But not she to whom the knowledge would have the greatest practical value; the person whom all the powers of modern society seem in league to cheat; the young girl.

Another cause of the wretchedness of the married state - but of this Tolstoi seems inadequately conscious - is that marriage confers rights deemed incalculably precious which there is no means whatever of confirming and enforcing. The consciousness that these rights are held by the precarious tenure of a "vow" which never had, to one of the parties, much more than a ceremonial significance, and a good faith liable, in the other, to suspension by resentment and the vicissitudes of vanity and caprice; the knowledge that these rights are exposed to secret invasion invincible to the most searching inquiry; the savage superstition that their invasion "dishonors" the one to whom it is most hateful, and who of all persons in the world is least an accomplice all this begets an apprehension which grows to distrust, and from distrust to madness. The apprehension is natural because reasonable: its successive stages of development are what you will, but the culmination is disaster and the wreck of peace.

Of the sombre phenomena of the marriage relation observable by men like Tolstoi, with eyes in their heads, brains behind the eyes and not too much scruple in selecting points of view outside the obscurity and confusion of a personal experience, a hundred additional explanations might be adduced, all more valid, in my judgment, than that to which he pins his too ready faith; but those noted seem sufficient. With regard to any matter touching less nearly the unreasoning sensibilities of the human heart, they would, I think, be deemed more than sufficient.

What, then - rejecting Tolstoi's prescription - is the remedy? In view of the failure of our experiment should we revert to first principles, adopting polygamy with such modifications as would better adapt it to the altered situation? Ought we to try free love, requiring the state to keep off its clumsy hands and let men and women as individuals manage this affair, as they do their religions, their friendships and their diet?

For my part I know of no remedy, nor do I believe that one can be formulated. It is of the nature of the more gigantic evils to be irremediable - a truth against which poor

humanity instinctively revolts, entailing the additional afflictions of augmented nonsense and wasted endeavor. Nevertheless something may be done in mitigation. The marriage relation that we have we shall probably continue to have, and its Dead Sea fruits will grow no riper and sweeter with time. But the lie that describes them as luscious and satisfying is needless. Let the young be taught, not celibacy, but fortitude. Point out to them the exact nature of the fool's paradise into which they will pretty certainly enter and perhaps ought to enter. Teach them that the purpose of marriage is whatever the teacher may conceive it to be, but not happiness. Mercifully reduce the terrible disproportion between expectation and result. In so far as *The Kreutzer Sonata* accomplishes this end, in so far as it teaches this lesson, it is a good book.

*II.*

Tolstoi is a literary giant. He has a "giant's strength," and has unfortunately learned to "use it like a giant" - which, I take it, means not necessarily with conscious cruelty, but with stupidity. Excepting when he confines himself to pure romance, and to creation of works which, after the manner of Dr. Holmes, may be described as medicated fable - the man seems to write with the very faintest possible consciousness of anything good or even passably decent, in human nature. His characters are moved by motives which are redeemed from monstrous baseness only by being pettily base. In *War and Peace*, for example, - a book so crowded with characters, historical and imaginary, that the author himself can not carry them in his memory without dropping them all along his trail - there is but one person who is not either a small rascal or a great fool or both. Such a discreditable multitude of unpleasant persons no one but their maker - in whose image they are not made - ever collected between the covers of a single book. From Napoleon down to the ultimate mujik they go through life with heads full of confusion, hearts distended with selfishness and mouths running over with lies. If Tolstoi wrote as a satirist, with obvious cynicism, all this would be easily enough understood; but nothing, evidently, is further from his intention; he is essentially a preacher and honestly believes that his powerful caricatures are portraits from life; or rather - for that we may admit that the total impression derived from a comprehensive view of them is a true picture of human character, charged in its every shadow (there are no lights) with instruction and edification. I can not say how it goes with others, but all that is left to me by this hideous "march past" of detestables; this sombre tableau of the intellectually dead; this fortuitous concourse of a random rascalry unlawfully begotten of an exuberant fancy and a pitiless observation - "all of it all" that remains with me is a taste in the mouth which I can only describe as pallid.

In his personal character Tolstoi seems to be the only living Christian, in the sense in which Christ was a Christian, - whatever credit may inhere in that of whom we have any account; but in judging his books we have nothing to do with that. He has a superb imagination and must be master of a matchless style, for we get glimpses of it, even through the translations of men who are probably familiar enough with Russian and certainly altogether too familiar with English. The trouble with him is, as Mr. Matthew Arnold said of Byron, he doesn't know enough. He sees everything, but he has not freed his mind from the captivating absurdity, so dominant in the last generation, that human events occur without human agency, individual will counting for no more in the ordering of affairs than does a floating chip in determining the course of the river.

The commander of an army is commanded by his men. Napoleon was pushed by his soldiers hither and thither all over Europe; they by some blindy occult impulse which Tolstoi can not understand. He goes so far as to affirm that an army takes one route instead of another by silent consent and understanding among its widely separated fractions; infantinely unaware that not one of them could move a mile without a dozen sets of detailed instructions to commanders, quartermasters, chiefs of ordnance, commissaries

of subsistence, engineers and so forth. Tolstoi has entered the camp of History with a flag of truce and been blindfolded at the outpost.

When Tolstoi trusts to his imagination and doesn't need to know anything, he is inaccessible to censure. *The Cossacks*, one of his earlier works, is a prodigiously clever novel. About a half of the book, as I remember it, concerns itself with the killing of a single Circassian by a single Cossack. The shadow of that event is over it all, ominous, portentous; and I know of nothing finer nor more dramatic in its way than the narrative of the death of the dead man's avengers, knee to knee among the rain-pools of the steppe, chanting through their beards their last fierce defiance. What to this was the slaughter at Austerlitz, the conflagration at Moscow, flinging its black shadows over half a world, if we have not Hugo's eyes to see them through? Only the gods look large upon Olympus.

But do me the favor to compare Tolstoi at his worst with other popular writers at their best. It is eagle and hens. It is sun and tallow candles. From the heights where he sits conspicuous, they are visible as black beetles. Nay, they are slugs; their brilliant work is a shine of slime which dulls behind them even as they creep. When one of these godlets dies the first man to pass his grave will say: "Why has he no monument?" - the second: "What! a monument? - the third: "Who the devil was he?"

(*Vol. 10, CW*)

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*A Dead Lion*

*I.*

In the history of religious controversy it has sometimes occurred that a fool has risen and shouted out views so typical and representative as to justify a particular attention denied to his less absurd partisans. That was the situation relative to the logomachy that raged over the ashes of the late Col. Robert Ingersoll. Through the ramp and roar of the churches, the thunder of the theological captains and the shouting, rose the penetrating treble of a person so artlessly pious, so devoid of knowledge and innocent of sense, that his every utterance credentialed him as a child of candor, and arrested attention like the wanton shrilling of a noontide locust cutting through the cackle of a hundred hens. That he happened to be an editorial writer was irrelevant, for it was impossible to suspect so ingenuous a soul of designs upon what may be called the Christian vote; he simply poured out his heart with the unpremeditated sincerity of a wild ass uttering its view of the Scheme of Things. I take it the man was providentially "raised up," and spoke by inspiration of the Spirit of Religion.

"Robert G. Ingersoll," says this son of nature, "was not a great atheist, nor a great agnostic. Dissimilar though they are, he aspired in his published lectures and addresses to both distinctions."

As it is no distinction to be either atheist or agnostic, this must mean that Col. Ingersoll "aspired" to be a *great* atheist and a *great* agnostic. Where is the evidence? May not a man state his religious or irreligious views with the same presumption of modesty and mere sincerity that attaches to other intellectual action? Because one publicly affirms the inveracity of Moses must one be charged with ambition, that meanest of all motives? By denying the sufficiency of the evidences of immortality is one self-convicted of a desire to be accounted great?

Col. Ingersoll said the thing that he had to say, as I am saying this - as a clergyman preaches his sermon, as an historian writes his romance: partly for the exceeding great reward of expression, partly, it may be, for the lesser profit of payment. We all move along lines of least resistance; because a few of us find that this leads up to the temple of fame

it does not follow that all are seeking that edifice with a conscious effort to achieve distinction. If any Americans have appraised at its true and contemptible value the applause of the people Robert Ingersoll did. If there has been but one such American he was the man.

Now listen to what further this ineffable dolt had to say of him:

"His irreverence, however, his theory of deistical brutality, was a mere phantasy, unsustained by scholarship or by reason, and contradicted by every element of his personal character. His love for his wife and his children, his tenderness towards relatives and friends, would have been spurious and repulsive if in his heart he had not accepted what in speech he derided and contemned."

Here's richness indeed! Whatever maybe said by scholarship and reason of a "theory of deistical brutality," I do not think - I really have not the civility to admit - that it is contradicted by a blameless life. If it were really true that the god of the Christians is not a particularly "nice" god the love of a man for wife and child would not necessarily and because of that be spurious and repulsive. Indeed, in a world governed by such a god, and subject therefore to all the evils and perils of the divine caprice and malevolence, such affection would be even more useful and commendable than it is in this actual world of peace, happiness and security. As the stars burn brightest in a moonless night, so in the gloom of a wrath-ruled universe all human affections and virtues would have an added worth and tenderness. In order that life might be splendored with so noble and heroic sentiments as grow in the shadow of disaster and are nourished by the sense of a universal peril and sorrow, one could almost wish that some malign deity, omnipotent and therefore able to accomplish his purposes without sin and suffering for his children, had resisted the temptation to do so and had made this a Vale of Tears.

"The Nineteenth Century has produced great agnostics. Strauss the German and Renan the Frenchman were specimens of this particular cult. But Robert G. Ingersoll belonged to a lower range of scholarship and of thought. He had never studied the great German and French critics of the Bible. His 'Mistakes of Moses' were pervaded by misapprehensions of the text of the Pentateuch."

It is indubitably true that Ingersoll was inferior in scholarship to Strauss and Renan, and in that and genius to the incomparable Voltaire; but these deficiencies were not disabilities in the work that he undertook. He knew his limitations and did not transgress them. He was not self-tempted into barren fields of scholastic controversy where common sense is sacrificed to "odious subtlety." In the work that he chose he had no use for the dry-as-dust erudition of the modern German school of Biblical criticism - learned, ingenious, profound, admirable and futile. He was
accomplished in neither Hebrew nor Greek. Aramaic was to him an unknown tongue, and I dare say that if asked he would have replied that Jesus Christ, being a Jew, spoke Hebrew. The "text of the Pentateuch" was not "misapprehended" by him; he simply let it alone. What he criticised in "The Mistakes of Moses" is the English version. If that is not a true translation let those concerned to maintain its immunity from criticism amend it. They are not permitted to hold that it is good enough for belief and acceptance, but not good enough to justify an inexpert dissent. Ingersoll's limitations were the source of his power; at least they confined him to methods that are "understanded of the people"; and to be comprehended by the greatest number of men should be the wish of him who tries to destroy what he thinks a popular delusion.

By the way, I observe everywhere the immemorial dog's-eared complaint that he could "tear down" (we Americans always prefer to say this when we mean pull down) but

could not "build up." I am not aware that he ever tried to "build up." Believing that no religion was needful, he would have thought his work perfect if all religions had been effaced. The clamor of weak minds for something to replace the errors of which they may be deprived is one that the true iconoclast disregards. What he most endeavors to destroy is not idols, but idolatry. If in the place of the image that he breaks he set up another he would be like a physician who having cured his patient of a cramp should inoculate him with an itch. It is only just to say that the devout journalist whose holy utterance I am afflicting myself with the unhappiness of criticising nowhere makes the hoary accusation that Ingersoll could "tear down" but not "build up." He must have overlooked it.

What Ingersoll attacked was the Bible as we have it - the English Bible - not the Bible as it may, can, must, might, would or should be in Hebrew and Greek. He had no controversy with scholars - not only knew himself unable to meet them on their own ground (where is plenty of room for their lonely feet) but was not at all concerned with their faiths and convictions, nor with the bases of them. Hoping to remove or weaken a few popular errors, he naturally examined the book in which he believed them to be found - the book which has the assent and acceptance of those who hold them and derive them from it. He did not go behind the record as it reads - nobody does excepting its advocates when it has been successfully impugned. What has influenced (mischievously, Ingersoll believed) the thought and character of the Anglo-Saxon race is not the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Testament, but the English Bible. The fidelity of that to its originals, its self-sufficiency and independence of such evidences as only scholarship can bring to its exposition, these, as Aristotle would say, are matters for separate consideration.

If God has really chosen to give his law to his children in tongues that only an infinitesimal fraction of them can hope to understand - has thrown it down amongst them for ignorant translators to misread, interested priesthoods to falsify and hardy and imaginative commentators to make ridiculous - has made no provision against all this debauching of the text and the spirit of it, this must be because he preferred it so; for whatever occurs must occur because the Omniscience and Omnipotence permitting it wishes it to occur. Such are not the methods of our human legislators, who take the utmost care that the laws be unambiguous, printed in the language of those who are required to obey them and accessible to them in the original text. I'm not saying that this is the better and more sensible way; I only say that if the former is God's way the fact relieves us all of any obligation to "restore" the text before discussing it and to illuminate its obscurities with the side-lights of erudition. Ingersoll had all the scholarship needful to his work: he knew the meaning of English words.

Says the complacent simpleton again:

"It was idle for a man to deny the existence of God who confessed and proclaimed the principle of fraternity. . . . The hard conception of annihilation had no place in sentences that were infused with the heat of immortality."

As logic, this has all the charm inhering in the syllogism, All cows are quadrupeds; this is a quadruped; therefore, this is a cow. The author of that first sentence would express his thought, naturally, something like this: All men are brothers; God is their only father; therefore, there is a God. The other sentence is devoid of meaning, and is quoted only to show the view that this literary lunatic is pleased to think that he entertains of annihilation. It is to him a "hard conception"; that is to say, the state of unconsciousness which he voluntarily and even eagerly embraces every night of his life, and in which he remained without discomfort for countless centuries before his birth, is a most undesirable state. It is, indeed, so very unwelcome that it shall not come to him - he'll not have it so. Out of nothingness he came, but into nothingness he will not return - he'll die first! Life is a new and delightful toy and, faith! he means to keep it. If you'd ask him he would say that

his immortality is proved by his yearning for it; but men of sense know that we yearn, not for what we have, but for what we have not, and most strongly for what we have not the shadow of a chance to get.

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Here is one more quotation from Prof. Peck, the concluding passage of his paper:

"Robert Ingersoll is dead. Death came to him with swiftness and without a warning. Whether he was even conscious of his end no man can say. It may be that before the spark grew quite extinct there was for him a moment of perception - that one appalling moment when, within a space of time too brief for human contemplation, the affrighted mind, as it reels upon the brink, flashes its vivid thought through all the years of its existence and perceives the final meaning of them all. If such a moment came to him, and as the light of day grew dim before his dying eyes his mind looked backward through the past, there can have been small consolation in the thought, that in all the utterances of his public teaching, and in all the phrases of his fervid eloquence, there was nothing that could help to make the life of a man on earth more noble, or more spiritual, or more truly worth living."

This of a man who taught all the virtues as a duty and a delight! - who stood, as no other man among his countrymen has stood, for liberty, for honor, for good will toward men, for truth as it was given to him to see it, for love! - who by personal example taught patience under falsehood and silence under vilification! - who when slandered in debate answered not back, but addressed himself to the argument! - whose entire life was an inspiration to high thought and noble deed, and whose errors, if errors they are, the world can not afford to lose for the light and reason that are in them!

The passage quoted is not without eloquence and that literary distinction which its author gives to so much of what he writes. Withal it is infinitely discreditable. There is in it a distinct undertone of malice - of the same spirit which, among bigots of less civility and franker speech, affirms of an irreligious person's sudden death that it was "a judgment of Heaven," and which gloats upon the possibility that he suffered the pangs of a penitence that came, thank God! too late to command salvation. It is in the same spirit that conceived and keeps in currency the ten-thousand-times-disproved tales of the deathbed remorse of Thomas Paine, Voltaire and all the great infidels. Indubitably posterity will enjoy the advantage of believing the same thing of Ingersoll; and I can not help thinking that in suggesting his remorse as only a possibility, instead of relating it as a fact attested by piteous appeals for divine mercy, Prof. Peck has committed a sin of omission for which on his own deathbed he will himself suffer the keenest regret.

(*The Controversialist, v. 10 CW*)

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*A Flourishing Industry*

The infant industry of buying worthless cattle, inoculating them with pleuro-pneumonia and tuberculosis, and collecting the indemnity when they are officially put to death to prevent the spread of the contagion, is assuming something of the importance and dignity of a national pursuit. The proprietors of one of the largest contageries on Long Island report that the outlook is most encouraging; they begin each fiscal year with a large surplus in their treasury. Some of the Western companies, too, have been highly prosperous and intend to mark their gratification by an immediate issue of new shares as a bonus.

The effect of this industry upon pastoral pursuits is wholesome. The stock ranges of Texas, Wyoming and Montana thrill with a new life, and it is estimated that their enlargement during the next few years will bring not less than five million acres of public land into the service of man and beast. The advantage to manufacturers of barbed-wire fencing is obvious, while the indirect benefit to agriculture through the enhanced price of this now indispensable material will supply the protectionist with a new argument and a peculiar happiness.

Cattle-growing has hitherto been attended with great waste. A large percentage of the "stock on hand" was unsalable. Failure of the cactus crop, destitution of water and prevalence of blizzards, together with such natural ills as cattle flesh is heir to, have frequently so reduced the physical condition of the herds that not more than a half would be acceptable to the buyer. The ailing remainder were of little use. A few of the larger animals could be utilized by preparing them as skeletons of buffaloes for Eastern museums of natural history, but the demand was limited: nine in ten were suffered to expire and become a dead loss. These are now eagerly sought by agents of the contageries, purchased at good prices, driven by easy stages to the railways and, arriving at their final destination, duly infected. They are said to require less infection than they would if they were in good condition, with what the life insurance companies are pleased to call a fair "expectation of life." Some of the breeders prefer to isolate these failures and do their own infecting; but the tendency in the cattle trade, as in all others, is toward division of labor. The regular infectionaries possess superior facilities of inoculation, and government inspectors prefer to do business at a few great pleuro-pneumoniacal and tubercular centers rather than make tedious journeys to distant ranges. The trend of the age is, in fact, toward centralization.

The effect of the new industry upon commerce cannot be accurately foreseen, but it is natural to suppose that it will largely increase the importation of low-grade cattle from South America. Hitherto it has not been profitable to import any that were unfit for beef. But if the *Bos inedibilis*, the milkless crowbait and other varieties "not too good for human nature's daily food" - in fact not good enough - can be laid down in New York or New Orleans at a cost of not more than thirty dollars each, including the purchase price of ten cents, and inoculated before they have eaten their heads off, there would seem to be a reasonable margin of profit in the traffic. If not, the legal allowance for their condemnation and slaughter can be easily increased by legislative action. If Congress will do nothing to encourage capital in that direction the States most benefited by this extension of American commerce can respond to the demand of the hour with a judicious system of bounties. Importation of cheap foreign cattle eligible to pleuro-pneumonia and the junior disorder will provide employment to a great number of persons who, without apt appropriation's artful aid, might languish on farms and in workshops, a burden to the community and a sore trial to themselves.

(*The March Hare*)

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*The Jamaican Mongoose*

When man undertakes for some sordid purpose to disturb the balance of natural forces concerned in the conservation and in the destruction of life on this planet he is all too likely to err. For example, when some public-spirited Australian, observing a dearth of donkeys in his great lone land, thoughtfully imported a shipload of rabbits, believing that they would grow up with the country, learn to carry loads and eventually bray, he performed a disservice to his fellow colonists which they would gladly requite by skinning

him alive if they could lay hands on him. It is well known that our thoughtless extermination of the American Indian has been followed by an incalculable increase of the grasshoppers which once served him as food. So strained is the resulting situation that some of our most prominent seers are baffled in attempting to forecast the outcome; and it is said that the Secretary of Agriculture holds that farming on this continent is doomed unless we take to a grasshopper diet ourselves.

The matter lends itself to facile illustration: one could multiply instances to infinity. We might cite the Australian ladybird, which was by twenty well defined and several scientists brought here and acclimated at great expense to feed upon a certain fruit pest, but which, so far, has confined its ravages mainly to the fruit.

The latest, and in some ways the most striking, instance of the peril of making a redistribution of the world's fauna, is supplied by the beautiful tropical isle of Jamaica, home of the Demon Rum. It appears that someone in Jamaica was imperfectly enamored of the native rats, which are creatures of eminent predacity, intrepid to a degree that is most disquieting. This person introduced from a foreign land the mongoose - an animal whose name it seems prudent to give in the singular number. The mongoose, as is well known, is affected with an objection to rats compared with which the natural animosity of a dog to another dog is a mild passion indeed, and that of a collector of customs to holy water seems hardly more than a slight coolness. Jamaica is now ratless, but, alas, surpassingly tickful. The ticks have so multiplied upon the face of the earth that man and beast are in equal danger of extinction. The people hardly dare venture out-of-doors to plant the rum vine and help the north-bound steamers to take on monkeys. The mongoose alone is immune to ticks.

It appears that when this creature had effaced the rats it was itself threatened with effacement from lack of comestible suited to its tooth; but instead of wasting its life in repinings and unavailing regrets - instead of yielding to the insidious importunities of nostalgia, it fell upon the lizards and banqueted royally if roughly; and soon the lizards had gone to join the rats in the Unknown. Now, the Jamaica lizard had for countless ages "wittled free" upon ticks, maintaining among them a high death-rate with which, apparently, their own dietetic excesses (for ticks are greatly addicted to the pleasures of the table) had nothing to do. The lizard abating his ravages, through being himself abated by the mongoose, the tick holds dominion by the unchallenged authority of numbers. Man, the whilom tyrant, flees to his mountain fastnesses, the rum vine withers in the fields and the northbound steamer sails monkey-less away. Jamaica's last state is worse than her first and almost as bad as ours. She is as yet, however, spared the last and lowest humiliation that a brave and generous people can experience; her parasites do not pose as patriots, nor tickle the vanity of those whom they bleed.

(*The March Hare*)

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*The Shadow on the Dial*

There is a deal of confusion and uncertainty in the use of the words "socialist," "anarchist," and "nihilist." Even the 'ist himself commonly knows with as little accuracy what he is as the rest of us know why he is. The socialist believes that most human affairs should be regulated and managed by the state - the government - that is to say, the majority. Our own system has many socialist features and the trend of republican government is all that way. The anarchist favors abolition of all law and frequently belongs to an organization that secures his allegiance by solemn oaths and dreadful penalties. "Nihilism" is a name given by Turgenieff to the general body of Russian discontent which

finds expression in antagonizing authority and killing authorities. Constructive politics would seem, as yet, to be a cut above the nihilist's intelligence; he is essentially a destructionary. He is so diligently engaged in unweeding the soil that he has not given a thought to what he will grow there. Nihilism may be defined as a policy of assassination tempered by reflections on Siberia. American sympathy with it is the offspring of an unholy union between the tongue of a liar and the ear of a dupe.

Upon examination it will be seen that political dissent, when it takes any form more coherent than the mere brute dissatisfaction of a mind that does not know what it wants to want, finds expression in one of but two ways - in Socialism or in Anarchism. Whatever methods one may think will best replace a system gradually evolved from our needs and our natures with a system existing only in the minds of dreamers, one is bound to choose between these two dreams. Yet such is the intellectual delinquency of many who most strenuously denounce the system that we have that we not infrequently find the same man advocating in one breath, Socialism, in the next, Anarchism. Indeed, few of these sons of darkness know that even as coherent dreams the two are incompatible. With Anarchy triumphant the socialist would be a thousand years further from realization of his hope than he is today. Set up Socialism on a Monday and on Tuesday the country would be *en fete*, gaily hunting down anarchists. There would be little difficulty in trailing them, for they have not so much sense as a deer, which, running down the wind, sends its tell-tale fragrance on before.

Socialism and Anarchism are parts of the same thing, in the sense that the terminal points of a road are parts of the same road. Between them, about midway, lies the system that we have the happiness to endure. It is a "blend" of Socialism and Anarchism in about equal parts: all that is not one is the other. Cooperation is Socialism; competition is Anarchism. Competition carried to its logical conclusion (which only cooperation prevents or can prevent) would leave no law in force, no property possible, no life secure.

Of course the words "cooperation" and "competition" are not here used in a merely industrial and commercial sense; they are intended to cover the whole field of human activity. Two voices singing a duet - that is cooperation - Socialism. Two voices singing each a different tune and trying to drown each other - that is competition - Anarchism; each is a law unto itself - that is to say, it is lawless. Everything that ought to be done the socialist hopes to do by associated endeavor, as an army wins battles; Anarchism is socialist in its means only: by cooperation it tries to render cooperation impossible - combines to kill combination. Its method says to its purpose: "Thou fool!"

*II.*

Everything foretells the doom of authority. The killing of kings is no new industry; it is as ancient as the race. Always and everywhere persons in high place have been the assassin's prey. We have ourselves lost three presidents by murder, and shall doubtless lose many another before the book of American history is closed. If anything is new in this activity of the regicide it is found in the choice of victims. The contemporary "avenger" slays, not the merely "exalted," but the good and the inoffensive - an American president who had struck the chains from millions of slaves; a Russian czar who against the will and work of his own powerful nobles had freed their serfs; a French president from whom the French people had received nothing but good; a powerless Austrian empress, whose weight of sorrows had touched the world to tears; a blameless Italian king beloved of his people; such is a part of the recent record of the regicide, whose every entry is a tale of infamy unrelieved by one circumstance of justice, decency or good intention.

This recent uniformity of malevolence in the choice of victims is not without significance. It points unmistakably to two facts: first, that the selections are made, not by the assassins themselves, but by some central control inaccessible to individual preference and unaffected by the fortunes of its instruments; second, that there is a

constant purpose to manifest an antagonism, not to any individual ruler, but to rulers; not to any system of government, but to government. The issue is defined, the alignment made, the battle set: Chaos against Order, Anarchy against Law.

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We shall learn that our blind dependence upon the magic of words is a fatuous error; that the fortuitous arrangement of consonants and vowels which we worship as Liberty is of slight efficacy in disarming the lunatic brandishing a bomb. Liberty, indeed! The murderous wretch loves it a deal better than we, and wants more of it. Liberty! one almost sickens of the word, so quick and glib it is on every lip - so destitute of meaning.

There is no such thing as abstract liberty; it is not even thinkable. If you ask me, "Do you favor liberty?" I reply, "Liberty for whom to do what?"

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The truth is that the men of "principle" are a pretty dangerous class, generally speaking - and they are generally speaking. It is they that hamper us in every war. It is they who, preventing concentration and regulation of unabolishable evils, promote their distribution and liberty. Moral principles are pretty good things - for the young and those not well grounded in goodness. If one have an impediment in his thought, or is otherwise unequal to emergencies as they arise, it is safest to be provided beforehand with something to refer to in order that a right decision may be made without taking thought. But spirits of a purer fire prefer to decide each question as it comes up, and to act upon the merits of the case, unbound and unpledged. With a quick intelligence, a capable conscience and a habit of doing right automatically, one has little need to burden one's mind and memory with a set of solemn principles formulated by owlish philosophers who do not happen to know that what is right is merely what, in the long run and with regard to the greater number of cases, is expedient.

Principle is not always an infallible guide. For illustration, it is not always expedient - that is, for the good of all concerned - to tell the truth, to be entirely just or merciful, to pay a debt. I can conceive a case in which it would be right to assassinate one's neighbor. Suppose him to be a desperate scoundrel of a chemist who has devised a means of setting the atmosphere afire. The man who should go through life on an inflexible line of principle would border his path with a havoc of human happiness.

What one may think perfect one may not always think desirable. By "perfect" one may mean merely complete, and the word was so used in my reference to Socialism. I am not myself an advocate of "perfect Socialism," but as to government ownership of railways, there is doubtless a good deal to be said on both sides. One argument in its favor appears decisive; under a system subject to popular control the law of gravitation would be shorn of its preeminence as a means of removing personal property from the baggage car. . . . . .

There are two forms of real government; absolute Monarchy and absolute Democracy; all others are bastard forms attesting the failure of these, and themselves doomed to fail. The cause of failure lies in the essential folly and badness of human nature. From a stupid and selfish people there is no certainty of getting a wise and conscientious sovereign. Even when that miracle has been wrought, good government has not resulted, for the sovereign, however absolute in theory, however good and wise in fact, is compelled to work through shallow and selfish officials. Democracy suffers the same disability, with the added disadvantage of a sovereign that is never wise and never just.

As to limited Monarchies and constitutional Democracies, they are similarly and equally futile. Divided authority is divided responsibility. Restraint of the power to do evil is restraint of the power to do good. Under the "one-man power" (a name, by the way, that our good forefathers singularly chose to give to the rule of the British ministry and parliament) it is at least known who is to blame for sins of administration, and to whom is

due the credit for what is creditable. The autocrat can not hide behind his own back.

In all the various and vain experiments in government the one cause of failure is eternally manifest; the general moral and intellectual delinquency that makes government necessary - the folly and depravity of human nature.

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It is easy to forecast the first stages of the End's approach: Rioting. Disaffection of constabulary and troops. Subversion of the Government. A policy of decapitation. Parliament of the people. Divided counsels. Pandemonium. The man on horseback. Gusts of grape. ----?

The gods kept their secrets by telling them to Cassandra, whom nobody believed. I am entrusted with the secret that the shadow on the dial of civilization is moving backward. Believe or disbelieve - what matter? Revelers with wine-dipped wreaths upon their heads do not care to know the hour. Yet there are signs and portents - whispers and cries in the air; stealthy tread of invisible feet along the ground; sudden clamor of startled fowls at dead of the night; crimson dewdrops on the roadside grass of a morning. But pray do not disturb yourselves: eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow comes Logical Democracy.

(*Vol. 11 CW*)

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*Religion*

This is my ultimate and determining test of right - "What, in the circumstances, would Jesus have done?" - the Jesus of the New Testament, not the Jesus of the commentators, theologians, priests and parsons. The test is perhaps not infallible, but it is exceedingly simple and gives as good practical results as any. I am not a Christian, but so far as I know, the best and truest and sweetest character in literature, next to Buddha, is Jesus Christ. He taught nothing new in goodness, for all goodness was ages old before he came; but with an almost infallible intuition he applied to life and conduct the entire law of righteousness. He was a moral lightning calculator: to his luminous intelligence the statement of the problem carried the solution - he could not hesitate, he seldom erred. That upon his deeds and words was founded a religion which in a debased form persists and even spreads to this day is attestation of his marvelous gift: adoration is merely a primitive form of approval.

It seems a pity that this wonderful man had not a longer life under more complex conditions - conditions more nearly resembling those of the modern world and of the future. One would like to be able to see, through the eyes of his biographers, his genius applied to more and other difficult questions. Yet one can hardly go wrong in inference of his thought and act. In many of the complexities and entanglements of modern affairs it is no easy matter to find an answer off-hand to the question, "What is it right to do?" But put it in another way: "What would Christ have done?" and lo! there is light! Doubt spreads her bat-like wings and is away; the sun of truth springs into the sky, splendoring the path of right and masking that of wrong with a deeper shade.

. . . . . For example, there is the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst, whose defense was published with the *Review's* attack. I shall give a single illustration of how this more celebrated than cerebrated "divine" is pleased to think that he thinks. He is replying to some one's application to this matter of Christ's injunction, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." This command, he gravely says, "is not against money, nor against the making of money, but against the loving it for its own sake and the dedicating of it to self-aggrandizing uses." I call this a foolish utterance, because it violates the good old rule of not telling an obvious falsehood. In no word nor syllable does Christ's injunction give the

least color of truth to the reverend gentleman's "interpretation;" that is the reverend gentleman's very own, and doubtless he feels an honest pride in it. It is the product of a controversial need - a characteristic attempt to creep out of a hole in an enclosure which he was not invited to enter. The words need no "interpretation;" are susceptible to none; are as clear and unambiguous a proposition as language can frame. Moreover, they are consistent with all that we think we know of their author's life and character, for he not only lived in poverty and taught poverty as a blessing, but commanded it as a duty and a means to salvation. The probable effect of universal obedience among those who adore him as a god is not at present an urgent question. I think even so faithful a disciple as the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst has still a place to lay his head, a little of the wherewithal to be clothed, and a good deal of the power of interpretation to excuse it. . . . . .

There are other hypocrites than those of the pulpit. Dr. Gatling, the ingenious scoundrel who invented the gun that bears his name with commendable fortitude, says he has given much thought to the task of bringing the forces of war to such perfection that war will be no more. Commonly the man wlio talks of war becoming so destructive as to be impossible is only a harmless lunatic, but this fellow utters his cant to conceal his cupidity. If he thought there was any danger of the nations beating their swords into plowshares we should see him "take the stump" against agriculture forthwith. The same is true of all military inventors. They are lions' parasites; themselves of cold blood, they fatten upon hot. The sheep-tick's paler fare is not at all to their taste.

I sometimes wish that I were a preacher: preachers do so blindly ignore their shining opportunities. I am indifferently versed in theology - whereof, so help me Heaven, I do not believe one word - but know something of religion. I know, for example, that Jesus Christ was no soldier; that war has two features which did not command his approval - usually: aggression and defense. He taught not only abstention from aggression but non-resistance. Now what do we see? Nearly all the so-called Christian nations of the world sweating and groaning under their burden of debt contracted in violation of these injunctions which they believe divine - contracted in perfecting their means of offense and defense. "We must have the best," they cry; and if armor plates for ships were better when alloyed with silver, and guns if banded with gold, such armor plates would be put upon the ships, such guns would be freely made. No sooner does one nation adopt some costly device for taking life or protecting it from the taker (and inventors will as readily sell the product of their malign ingenuity to one nation as to another) than all the rest either possess themselves of it, or adopt something superior and more expensive; and so all pay the penalty for the sins of each. A hundred million dollars is a moderate estimate of what it has cost the world to abstain from strangling the infant Gatling in his cradle. . . . .

From Earth to Heaven in unceasing ascension flows a stream of prayer for every blessing that man desires, yet man remains unblest, the victim of his own folly and passions, the sport of fire, flood, tempest and earthquake, afflicted with famine and disease, war, poverty and crime, his world an incredible welter of evil, his life a curse and his hope a lie. Is it possible that all this praying is futilized and invalidated by lack of faith? - that the "asking" is not credentialed by the "believing?" When the anointed minister of Heaven spreads his palms and uprolls his eyes to beseech a general blessing or some special advantage is he the celebrant of a hollow, meaningless rite, or the dupe of a false promise? One does not know, but if one is not a fool one does know that his every resultless petition proves him by the inexorable laws of logic to be the one or the other. . . . .

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*Charity*

The promoter of organized charity protests against "the wasteful and mischievous method of undirected relief." He means, naturally, relief that is not directed by somebody else than the person giving it - undirected by him and his kind - professional almoners - philanthropists who deem it more blessed to allot than to bestow. Indubitably much is wasted and some mischief done by indiscriminate giving - and individual givers are addicted to that faulty practice. But there is something to be said for "undirected relief," quite the same. It blesses not only him who receives (when he is worthy; and when he is not, upon his own head be it) but him who gives. To those uncalculating persons who, despite the protests of the organized charitable, concede a certain moral value to the spontaneous impulses of the heart and read in the word "relief " a double meaning, the office of the mere distributor is imperfectly sacred. He is even without scriptural authority, and lives in the perpetual challenge of a moral *quo warranto*. Nevertheless he is not without his uses. He is a tapper of tills that do not open automatically. He is almoner to the uncompassionate, who but for him would give no alms. He negotiates unnatural but not censurable relations between selfishness and ingratitude. The good that he does is purely material. He makes two leaves of fat to grow where but one grew before, lessens the sum of gastric pangs and dorsal chills. All this is something, certainly, but it generates no warm and elevated sentiments and does nothing in mitigation of the poor's animosity to the rich. Organized charity is an insipid and savorless thing; its place among moral agencies is no higher than that of root beer.

Christ did not say, "Sell that thou hast and give to the church to give to the poor." He did not mention the Associated Charities of the period. I do not find the words, "The Little Sisters of the Poor ye have always with you," nor, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these Dorcas societies ye have done it unto me." Nowhere do I find myself commanded to enable others to comfort the afflicted and visit the sick and those in prison. Nowhere is recorded God's blessing upon him who makes himself a part of a charity machine - no, not even if he be the guiding lever of the whole mechanism.

Organized charity is a delusion and a snare. It enables Munniglut to think himself a good man for paying annual dues and buying transferable meal tickets. Munniglut is not thereby a good man. On the Last Great Day, when he cowers in the Ineffable Presence and is asked for an accounting it will not profit him to say, "Hearing that A was in want, I gave money for his need to B." Nor will it advantage B to say, "When A was in distress I asked C to relieve him, and myself allotted the relief according to a resolution of D, E and F."

There are blessings and benefactions that one would willingly forego - among them the poor. Quack remedies for poverty amuse; a real specific would kindle a noble enthusiasm. Yet the world would lose much by it; human nature would suffer a change for the worse. Happily and unhappily, poverty is not abolishable: "The poor ye have always with you" is a sentence that can never become unintelligible. Effect of a thousand permanent causes, poverty is invincible, eternal. And since we must have it let us thank God for it and avail ourselves of all its advantages to mind and character. He who is not good to the deserving poor; who knows not those of his immediate environment; who goes not among them making inquiry of their personal needs; who does not wish with all his heart and strive with both his hands to relieve them - is wasteful and improvident.

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*The Opposing Sex*

. . . . . Lively Woman is indeed, as Carlyle would put it, "hell-bent" on purification of politics by adding herself as an ingredient. It is unlikely that the injection of her personality into the contention (and politics is essentially a contention) will allay any animosities, sweeten any tempers, elevate any motives. The strifes of women are distinctly meaner than those of men - which are out of all reason mean; their methods of overcoming opponents distinctly more unscrupulous. That their participation in politics will notably alter the conditions of the game is not to be denied; so much, unfortunately, is obvious; but that it will make the player less malignant and the playing more honorable is a proposition in support of which one can utter a deal of gorgeous nonsense with a less insupportable sense of its unfitness than in the service of almost any other delusion.

The frosty truth is that except in the home the influence of women is not elevating, but debasing. When they stoop to uplift men who need uplifting, they are themselves pulled down, and that is all that is accomplished. Wherever they come into familiar contact with men who are not their relatives they impart nothing, they receive all; they do not affect us with their notions of morality; we infect them with ours. In the last forty years, in this country, they have entered a hundred avenues of activity from which they were previously debarred by unwritten law. They are found in the offices, the shops, the factories; like Charles Lamb's fugitive pigs, they have run up all manner of streets. Does any one think that in that time there has been an advance in professional, commercial and industrial morality? Are lawyers more scrupulous, tradesmen more honest? When one has been served by a "saleslady" does one leave the shop with a feebler sense of injury than was formerly inspired by a transaction at the counter - a duller consciousness of being oneself the commodity that has changed hands? Have actresses elevated the stage to a moral altitude congenial to the colder virtues? In studios of artists is the "sound of revelry by night" invariably a deep, masculine bass? In literature are the immoral books - the books dealing with questionable "questions" - always, or even commonly, written by men? . . . .

If we wish to have women who are different from ourselves in knowledge, character, accomplishments, manners; as different mentally as physically - and in these and in all other expressible differences reside all the charms that they have for us - we must keep them, or they must keep themselves, in an environment unlike our own. . . . God has made no law of miracles and none of his laws is going to be suspended in deference to woman's desire to achieve familiarity without contempt. If she wants to please she must retain some scrap of novelty; if she desires our respect she must not be always in evidence, disclosing the baser side of her character, as in competition with us she must do - as we do to one another. Mrs. Edmund Gosse, like "Ouida," Mrs. Atherton, and all other women of brains, thinks that the taking of unfair advantages - the lack of magnanimity - is a leading characteristic of her sex. . . . .

It is of the nature of men - themselves cheerful polygamists, with no penitent intentions - to set a high value upon chastity in woman. (We need not point out why they do so; those to whom the reasons are not clear can profitably remain in the valley of the shadow of ignorance.) Valuing it, they purpose having it, or some considerable numerical presumption of it. As they perceive that in a general way women are virtuous in proportion to the remoteness of their lives and interests from the lives and interests of men - their seclusion from the influences of which men's own vices are a main part - an easy and peaceful means will doubtless be found for repression of the shouters.

In the orchestration of mind, woman's instruments might have kept silence without injury to the volume and quality of the music; efface the impress of her touch upon the world, and by those who come later the blank must be diligently sought. Go to the top of any large city and look about and below. It is not much that you will see, but it represents an amazing advance from the conditions of primitive man. Nowhere in the wide survey will

you see the work of woman. It is all the work of men's hands, and before it was wrought into form and substance, existed as conscious creations in men's brains. Concealed within the visible forms of buildings and ships - themselves miracles of thought - lie such wonder-worlds of invention and discovery as no human life is long enough to explore, no human understanding capacious enough to hold in knowledge. If, like Asmodeus, we could rive the roofs and see woman's part of this prodigious exhibition - the things that she has actually created with her brain - what kind of display would it be? It is probable that all the intellectual energy expended by women from first to last would not have sufficed, if directed into one channel, for the genesis and evolution of the modern bicycle.

"There is no sex in brain," says the Female Militant. I beg her pardon: there is sex in every organ, every tissue, every cell and atom of the human body; but in nothing do men and women differ so widely, so conspicuously, so essentially as in mind. They think after altogether different methods; their mental processes are to a clear and competent observation without resemblance to ours. So different is the mental constitution of the two sexes that whereas all see not mainly with the eye, but with the judgment, the understanding, even the outer aspect of things is, I am persuaded, not the same to a woman that it is to a man. I have taken some trouble to test this theory, with results of the most interesting character, which I purpose giving to the world some day. It is my conviction that if a man who had lived all his life in New York were to become a woman while passing along Broadway she would be unable to find her way home without inquiry.

I once heard a woman who had playfully competed with men in a jumping match gravely attribute her defeat to the trammeling of her skirt. Similarly, women are pleased to explain their penury of mental achievement by repressive education and custom. But even in regions where they have ever had full freedom of the quarries they have not builded themselves monuments. Nobody, for example, is holding them from greatness in poetry, which needs no special education, and music, in which they have always been specially educated; yet where is the great poem by a woman? where the great musical composition? In the grammar of literature what is the feminine of Homer, of Shakespeare, of Goethe, of Hugo? What female names are the equivalents of the names of Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Wagner? Women are not musicians - they "sing and play." In short, if woman had no better claim to respect and affection than her brain; no sweeter charms than those of her reason; no means of suasion but her power upon men's convictions, she would long ago have been "improved off the face of the earth." As she is, men accord her such homage as is compatible with contempt, such immunities as are consistent with control; but whereas she is not altogether filled with light, and is, moreover, imperfectly reverent, it is but right that in obedience to scriptural injunction she keep silence in our churches while we are worshiping Ourselves.

She will not have it so, the good, good girl; as moral as the best of us, she will be as intellectual as the rest of us. She will have out her little taper and set the rivers of thought all ablaze, legging it over the land from stream to stream till all are fired. She will widen her sphere, forsooth, herself no wider than before. It is not enough that we have edified her a pedestal and perform impossible rites in celebration of her altitude and distinction. It does not suffice that with never a smile we assure her that she is the superior sex. That she is indubitably gifted with pulchritude and an unquestionable genius for its embellishing; that Nature has endowed her with a prodigious knack at accroachment, whereby the male of her species is lured to a suitable doom - this does not satisfy her. No; she has taken unto herself in these evil days that "intelligent discontent" which giveth its beloved fits. To her flock of graces and virtues she must add our one poor ewe lamb of brains. Well, I tell her that intellect is a monster which devours beauty; that the woman of exceptional mind is exceptionally masculine in face, figure, action. And so, with a reluctant farewell to Lovely Woman, I humbly withdraw from her presence and hasten to overtake the receding periphery of her "sphere."

One moment more, mesdames: I crave leave to estop your disfavor - which were affliction and calamity - by "defining my position" in the words of one of yourselves, who has said of me (though with reprehensible exaggeration, believe me) that I hate woman and love women - have an acute animosity to your sex, adoring each individual member of it. What matters my opinion of your understandings so long as I am in bondage to your charms? Moreover, there is one service of incomparable utility and dignity for which I esteem you eminently fit - to be mothers of men.

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*A Mad World*

Let us suppose that in tracing its cycloidal curves through the unthinkable reaches of space traversed by the solar system our planet should pass through a "belt" of attenuated matter having the property of dementing us! It is a conception easily enough entertained. That space is full of malign conditions incontinuously distributed; that we are at one time traversing a zone comparatively innocuous and at another spinning through a region of infection; that away behind us in the wake of our swirling flight are fields of plague and pain still agitated by our passage through them, - all this is as good as known. It is almost as certain as it is that in our little annual circle round the sun are points at which we are stoned and brickbatted like a pig in a potato-patch - pelted with little nodules of meteoric metal flung like gravel, and bombarded with gigantic masses hurled by God knows what? What strange adventures await us in those yet untraveled regions toward which we speed? - into what malign conditions may we not at any time plunge? - to the strength and stress of what frightful environment may we not at last succumb? The subject lends itself readily enough to a jest, but I am not jesting: it is really altogether probable that our solar system, racing through space with inconceivable velocity, will one day enter a region charged with something deleterious to the human brain, minding us all madwise.

By the way, dear reader, did you ever happen to consider the possibility that you are a lunatic, and perhaps confined in an asylum? It seems to you that you are not - that you go with freedom where you will, and use a sweet reasonableness in all your works and ways; but to many a lunatic it seems that he is Rameses II, or the Holkar of Indore. Many a plunging maniac, ironed to the floor of a cell, believes himself the Goddess of Liberty careering gaily through the Ten Commandments in a chariot of gold. Of your own sanity and identity you have no evidence that is any better than he has of his. More accurately, I have none of mine; for anything I know, you do not exist, nor any one of all the things with which I think myself familiarly conscious. All may be fictions of my disordered imagination. I really know of but one reason for doubting that I am an inmate of an asylum for the insane - namely, the probability that there is nowhere any such thing as an asylum for the insane.

This kind of speculation has charms that get a good neck-hold upon attention. For example, if I am really a lunatic, and the persons and things that I seem to see about me have no objective existence, what an ingenious though disordered imagination I must have! What a clever *coup* it was to invent Mr. Rockefeller and clothe him with the attribute of permanence! With what amusing qualities I have endowed my laird of Skibo, philanthropist. What a masterpiece of creative humor is my Fatty Taft, statesman, taking himself seriously, even solemnly, and persuading others to do the same! And this city of Washington, with its motley population of Silurians, parvenoodles and scamps pranking unashamed in the light of day, and its saving contingent of the forsaken righteous, their

seed begging bread, - did Rabelais' exuberant fancy ever conceive so - but Rabelais is, perhaps, himself a conception.

Surely he is no common maniac who has wrought out of nothing the history, the philosophies, sciences, arts, laws, religions, politics and morals of this imaginary world. Nay, the world itself, tumbling uneasily through space like a beetle's ball, is no mean achievement, and I am proud of it. But the mental feat in which I take most satisfaction, and which I doubt not is most diverting to my keepers, is that of creating Mr. W. R. Hearst, pointing his eyes toward the White House and endowing him with a perilous Jacksonian ambition to defile it. The Hearst is distinctly a treasure.

On the whole, I have done, I think, tolerably well, and when I contemplate the fertility and originality of my inventions, the queer unearthliness and grotesque actions of the characters whom I have evolved, isolated and am cultivating, I cannot help thinking that if Heaven had not made me a lunatic my peculiar talent might have made me an entertaining writer.

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*The Right to Work*

All kinds of relief, charitable or other, doubtless tend to perpetuation of pauperism, inasmuch as paupers are thereby kept alive; and living paupers unquestionably propagate their unthrifty kind more diligently than dead ones. It is not true, though, that relief interferes with Nature's beneficent law of the survival of the fittest, for the power to excite sympathy and obtain relief is a kind of fitness. I am still a devotee of the homely primitive doctrine that mischance, disability or even unthrift, is not a capital crime justly and profitably punishable by starvation. I still regard the Good Samaritan with a certain toleration and Jesus Christ's tenderness to the poor as something more than a policy of obstruction.

Who is more truly "deserving" than an able-bodied man out of work through no delinquency of will and no default of effort? Is hunger to him and his less poignant than to the feeble in body and mind whom we support for nothing in almshouse or asylum? Are cold and exposure less disagreeable to him than to them? Is not his claim to the right to live as valid as theirs if backed by the will to pay for life with work? And in denial of his claim is there not latent a far greater peril to society than inheres in denial of theirs? So unfortunate and dangerous a creature as a man able and willing to work, yet having no work to do, should be unknown outside the literature of satire. Doubtless there would be enormous difficulties in devising a practicable and beneficent system, and doubtless the reform, like all permanent and salutary reforms, will have to grow. The growth, naturally, will be delayed by opposition of the workingmen themselves - precisely as they oppose prison labor from ignorance that labor makes opportunity to labor.

It matters not that nine in ten of all our tramps and vagrants are such from choice, and are irreclaimable degenerates as well; so long as one worthy man is out of employment and unable to obtain it our duty is to provide it by law. Nay, so long as industrial conditions are such that so pathetic a phenomenon is possible we have not the moral right to disregard that possibility. The right to employment being the right to life, its denial is, in a sense, homicide. It should be needless to point out the advantages of its concession. It would preserve the life and self-respect of him who is needy through misfortune, and supply an infallible means of detection of his criminal imitator, who could then be dealt with as he deserves, without the lenity that finds justification in doubt and compassion. It would diminish crime, for an empty stomach has no morals. With a wage

rate lower than the commercial, it would disturb no private industries by luring away their workmen, and with nothing made to sell, there would be no competition with private products. Properly directed, it would give us much that we shall not otherwise have.

It is difficult to say if our laws relating to vagrancy and vagrants are more cruel or more absurd. If not so atrocious they would evoke laughter; if less ridiculous we should read them with indignation. Here is an imaginary conversation:

*The Law:* It is forbidden to you to rob. It is forbidden to you to steal. It is forbidden to you to beg.

*The Vagrant:* Being without money, and denied employment, I am compelled to obtain food, shelter and clothing in one of these ways, else I shall be hungry and cold.

*The Law*: That is no affair of mine. Yet I am considerate - you are permitted to be as hungry as you like and as cold as may suit you.

*The Vagrant*: Hungry and cold, yes, and many thanks to you; but if I go naked I am arrested for indecent exposure. You require me to wear clothing.

*The Law:* You'll admit that you need it.

*The Vagrant*: But not that you provide a way for me to get it. No one will give me shelter at night; you forbid me to sleep in a straw stack.

*The Law*: Ungrateful man! we provide a cell.

*The Vagrant*: Even when I obey you, starving all day and freezing all night, and holding my tongue about it, I am liable to arrest for being "without visible means of support."

*The Law*: A most reprehensible condition.

*The Vagrant:* One thing has been over-looked - a legal punishment for soliciting work.

*The Law:* True; I am not perfect.

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*Hypnotism*

We are all hypnotists. Every human being has in some degree the power to influence the thought and action of another, or some others, by what we will consent to call "hypnotic suggestion," though the term, while serviceable, is inaccurate. Most of us have the power in varying degrees of feebleness, but few know how to apply what they have of it; but some have it so strong as to be able to control an unresisting will. Assent, however, is not always, nor usually, to be inferred from consent, even when consent is given in good faith; there is such a thing as unconscious resistance. In those having no knowledge of hypnotism, resistance is the natural attitude, for they think that susceptibility to control implies a weak will or a low intelligence, which is an error. At least the contrary view is supported by my own observation; and I accept some things, despite the fact that I have observed them to be true.

The mysterious force which in its more spectacular manifestations we call hypnotism, and one form of which is known as "mind-reading," is at the back of all kinds and degrees of affection and persuasion. Why is one person loved better than another person more worthy of love? Because he has more "personal magnetism." This term is an old acquaintance; for many decades we have been using it to signify an engaging manner. We thought it a figurative expression; that is why it commended itself to us. But it denotes a fact with literalness; some persons have a quality, or rather a property, which actually does draw other persons toward and to them, as a magnet attracts steel; and it is the same property in magnet and in man, and can be augmented by the scientific use of

apparatus. A favorite "subject" of mine when blindfolded and turned loose in a room and commanded to find a hidden object will sometimes fail. But she never fails if the object is a horse-shoe magnet.

Did you ever, by oral argument, convince anyone that he was wrong and you right? Not often, of course, but sometimes, you think. If you are a member of Congress you are very sure about it; that is what you are a member of Congress for. I venture to believe that you never did. It was by unconscious hypnotism that you did the trick. Your argument (on the cogency and eloquence of which I congratulate you) served only to hold your victim's attention to the matter in hand. Without it he might have thought you wanted him to become a horse, and would indubitably have neighed and pranced.

In the Twenty-first Century, doubtless, a legislator will owe his election to the confidence of his constituents in his ability to exert this kind of suasion. The candidate who can not by the power of his unaided eye compel his opponent to eat shoe-blacking and jump over a broomstick will not have the ghost of a chance at the polls.

Suppose, madam, that your husband had relied upon argument to convince you that you ought to marry him. Of course he did have to plead long and hard - that is conceded; but suppose that while doing so he had always worn green spectacles. Or suppose that in all his long and arduous courtship he had never looked you squarely (and impudently) in the eyes - gloated upon you. I deem it certain, madam, that you would now be the wife of a wiser man, probably a deaf mute.

In our present stage of controversial progress speech is not without a certain clumsy utility. It enables you to apprise your opponent of the views to which you invite his allegiance. But for the purpose of inducing him to accept them it is destitute of effect is not at all superior to the plunk-plunking of a banjo, or that favorite political argument, the braying of a brass band. Your success in convincing another person depends upon (1) the degree of your hypnotic power, (2) your opportunities of exerting it and (3) his susceptibility to it. In brief, the business of converting the several kinds of heathens is a thing which, like checking the too rapid increase of population, cannot be done by talking. I have tried to show you how it can be done if you have the gift. If you have not, be thankful, for you will escape much defamation from those who believe hypnotism a kind of sorcery liable to the basest abuses and practiced only for purposes of sin. Is it possible so to practice it? Why, yes, if I can hypnotize a thief I can make him steal. If I can hypnotize a bad girl - but that would be needless. Whatever in one's normal state one is willing to do, or wants to do, one can be made to do by hypnotic control. That is as far as the power can go; it cannot make a sinner out of a saint, a demagogue out of a gentleman, nor a mute out of Theodore Roosevelt .

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*The Chair of Little Ease*

Not many years ago, as I remember, a deal of deprecatory talk was in evolution about a certain Governor of a Persian province, who was said to have been boiled alive by order of the Shah. Our shouting and shrilling in this matter were not altogether becoming, considering whose progeny we are. It is not so very long since all the nations of Europe practiced boiling alive - commonly in oil, which was thought to impart a fine discomfort to the person so unlucky as to be in the cauldron. In England boiling was the legal punishment for poisoners for a long time, beginning in 1531, in the reign of Henry VII. Among those who suffered this discomfort was a man mentioned in the chronicle of the Grey Friars, who was let down into the kettle by a chain until he was done. He, however,

was not boiled in oil - just plain. Some of the items of an expense account relating to the execution of Friar Stone at Canterbury are interesting in their homely way:

Paid 2 men that sat by the kettle and parboiled him ..... 1*s*
To 3 men that carried his quarters to the gates and set them up ..... 1*s*
For a woman that scoured the kettle ..... 2*d*

With regard to that last item one cannot repress the flame of a consuming curiosity to know if the scouring was done before or afterward. If afterward, the poor woman seems to have been miserably underpaid.

But call it a long time ago, protesting that the tendency to boil one another has exhausted its impetus, or, if you please, worked itself out of our clarifying blood. But the year 1790 is not so far back, and burning at the stake probably generates an uneasiness to which that of the oil-boiled gentry of the earlier period was nowise superior. It was in the year mentioned - in the reign of his most gracious Majesty George, the third of that name - that burning at the stake ceased to be the legal penalty for "coining," which was accounted "treason," and murder of a husband, which was "petty treason." But wife-killers and coiners, male, were hanged. The last woman burned alive departed this life, I think, in 1789. Men are living today whose fathers were living then and may, as children, have played in the ashes.

Still (it may be urged) it was not actually we who did it: in our milder day we have neither the cauldron nor the stake. Ah, but we have the dynamo. We have the custom of putting a small percentage of our assassins into an "electrical chair" and doing them to death by pressing a button - a process to which in defiance of two languages we have given the name "electrocution." For encouragement of the rising young assassin, physicians assure us that this gives a painless death.

The physicians know nothing about it; for anything they know to the contrary, death by electricity may be the most frightful torment that it is possible for any of nature's forces or processes to produce. The agony may be not only inconceivably great, but to the sufferer it may seem to endure for a period inconceivably long. That many of the familiar physical indications of suffering are absent (though "long, shuddering sighs" and "straining at the straps" are not certainly symptoms of joy) is very little to the purpose when we know that electricity paralyzes the muscles by whose action pain is familiarly manifested. We know that it paralyzes all the seats of sensation, for that matter, and puts an end to possibilities of pain. That is only to say that it kills. But by what secret and infernal pang may not all this be accompanied or accomplished? Through what unnatural exaltation of the senses may not the moment of its accomplishing be commuted into unthinkable cycles of time? Of all this the physicians can have no more knowledge than so many toads under stones.

It is probable, at least it is possible, that a "victim's" sum of suffering from his instantaneous pervasion with enough of the fluid to kill him is no less than if it were leisurely rilled through him a little faster than he could bear until he should die of it that way. Theories of the painlessness of sudden death appear to be based mostly upon the fact that those who undergo it make no entries of their sensations in their diaries. It is to be wished that they would be more thoughtful and less selfish. The man smitten by lightning, or widely distributed by a hitch in the proceedings at a powder mill, owes a duty to his fellow men of which he commonly appears to have but an imperfect sense. A careful and analytic record of his sensations at every stage of his mischance would be a precious contribution to medical literature. Published under some such title as *A Diary of Sudden Death; by a Public-Spirited Observer on the Inside* it would serve many useful purposes, and also profit the publisher. What we most need - next to more doctors at executions - is some person having experience of the matter, to tell us fairly in inoffensive English,

interlarded with "Soche-sorte Latin as physickers doe use," just how it feels to be dead all over at once.

(*Vol. 11, CW*)

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*A Bivouac of the Dead*

A way up in the heart of the Allegheny mountains, in Pocahontas county, West Virginia, is a beautiful little valley through which flows the east fork of the Greenbrier River. At a point where the valley road intersects the old Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike, a famous thoroughfare in its day, is a post office in a farm house. The name of the place is Travelers' Repose, for it was once a tavern. Crowning some low hills within a stone's throw of the house are long lines of old Confederate fortifications, skillfully designed and so well "preserved" that an hour's work by a brigade would put them into serviceable shape for the next civil war. This place had its battle - what was called a battle in the "green and salad days" of the great rebellion. A brigade of Federal troops, the writer's regiment among them, came over Cheat mountain, fifteen miles to the westward, and, stringing its lines across the little valley, felt the enemy all day; and the enemy did a little feeling, too. There was a great cannonading, which killed about a dozen on each side; then, finding the place too strong for assault, the Federals called the affair a reconnaissance in force, and burying their dead withdrew to the more comfortable place whence they had come. Those dead now lie in a beautiful national cemetery at Grafton, duly registered, so far as identified, and companioned by other Federal dead gathered from the several camps and battlefields of West Virginia. The fallen soldier (the word "hero" appears to be a later invention) has such humble honors as it is possible to give.

His part in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the Summer hills
  Is that his grave is green.

True, more than a half of the green graves in the Grafton cemetery are marked "Unknown," and sometimes it occurs that one thinks of the contradiction involved in "honoring the memory" of him of whom no memory remains to honor; but the attempt seems to do no great harm to the living, even to the logical.

A few hundred yards to the rear of the old Confederate earthworks is a wooded hill. Years ago it was not wooded. Here, among the trees and in the undergrowth, are rows of shallow depressions, discoverable by removing the accumulated forest leaves. From some of them may be taken (and reverently replaced) small thin slabs of the split stone of the country, with rude and reticent inscriptions by comrades. I found only one with a date, only one with full names of man and regiment. The entire number found was eight.

In these forgotten graves rest the Confederate dead - between eighty and one hundred, as nearly as can be made out. Some fell in the "battle;" the majority died of disease. Two, only two, have apparently been disinterred for reburial at their homes. So neglected and obscure in this *campo santo* that only he upon whose farm it is - the aged postmaster of Travelers' Repose - appears to know about it. Men living within a mile have never heard of it. Yet other men must be still living who assisted to lay these Southern soldiers where they are, and could identify some of the graves. Is there a man, North or South, who would begrudge the expense of giving to these fallen brothers the tribute of green graves? One would rather not think so. True, there are several hundreds of such places still discoverable in the track of the great war. All the stronger is the dumb demand

- the silent plea of these fallen brothers to what is "likest God within the soul."

They were honest and courageous foemen, having little in common with the political madmen who persuaded them to their doom and the literary bearers of false witness in the aftertime. They did not live through the period of honorable strife into the period of vilification - did not pass from the iron age to the brazen - from the era of the sword to that of the tongue and pen. Among them is no member of the Southern Historical Society. Their valor was not the fury of the non-combatant; they have no voice in the thunder of the civilians and the shouting. Not by them are impaired the dignity and infinite pathos of the Lost Cause. Give them, these blameless gentlemen, their rightful part in all the pomp that fills the circuit of the summer hills.

1903

(*Vol. 11, CW*)

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*Visions of the Night*

I hold the belief that the Gift of Dreams is a valuable literary endowment - that if by some art not now understood the elusive fancies that it supplies could be caught and fixed and made to serve we should have a literature "exceeding fair." In captivity and domestication the gift could doubtless be wonderfully improved, as animals bred to service acquire new capacities and powers. By taming our dreams we shall double our working hours and our most fruitful labor will be done in sleep. Even as matters are, Dreamland is a tributary province, as witness "Kubla Khan."

What is a dream? A loose and lawless collocation of memories - a disorderly succession of matters once present in the waking consciousness. It is a resurrection of the dead, pell-mell - ancient and modern, the just and the unjust - springing from their cracked tombs, each "in his habit as he lived," pressing forward confusedly to have an audience of the Master of the Revel, and snatching one another's garments as they run. Master? No; he has abdicated his authority and they have their will of him; his own is dead and does not rise with the rest. His judgment, too, is gone, and with it the capacity to be surprised. Pained he may be and pleased, terrified and charmed, but wonder he can not feel. The monstrous, the preposterous, the unnatural - these all are simple, right and reasonable. The ludicrous does not amuse, nor the impossible Umaze. The dreamer is your only true poet; he is "of imagination all compact."

Imagination is merely memory. Try to imagine something that you have never observed, experienced, heard of or read about. Try to conceive an animal, for example, without body, head, limbs or tail - a house without walls or roof. But, when awake, having assistance of will and judgment, we can somewhat control and direct; we can pick and choose from memory's store, taking that which serves, excluding, though sometimes with difficulty, what is not to the purpose; asleep, our fancies "inherit us." They come so grouped, so blended and compounded the one with another, so wrought of one another's elements, that the whole seems new; but the old familiar units of conception are there, and none beside. Waking or sleeping, we get from imagination nothing new but new adjustments: "the stuff that dreams are made on" has been gathered by the physical senses and stored in memory, as squirrels hoard nuts. But one, at least, of the senses contributes nothing to the fabric of the dream: no one ever dreamed an odor. Sight, hearing, feeling, possibly taste, are all workers, making provision for our nightly entertainment; but Sleep is without a nose. It surprises that those keen observers, the ancient poets, did not so describe the drowsy god, and that their obedient servants, the ancient sculptors, did not so represent him. Perhaps these latter worthies, working for

posterity, reasoned that time and mischance would inevitably revise their work in this regard, conforming it to the facts of nature.

Who can so relate a dream that it shall seem one? No poet has so light a touch. As well try to write the music of an Aeolian harp. There is a familiar species of the genus Bore (*Penetrator intolerabilis*) who having read a story - perhaps by some master of style - is at the pains elaborately to expound its plot for your edification and delight; then thinks, good soul, that now you need not read it. "Under substantially similar circumstances and conditions" (as the interstate commerce law hath it) I should not be guilty of the like offence; but I purpose herein to set forth the plots of certain dreams of my own, the "circumstances and conditions" being, as I conceive, dissimilar in this, that the dreams themselves are not accessible to the reader. In endeavoring to make record of their poorer part I do not indulge the hope of a higher success. I have no salt to put upon the tail of a dream's elusive spirit.

I was walking at dusk through a great forest of unfamiliar trees. Whence and whither I did not know. I had a sense of the vast extent of the wood, a consciousness that I was the only living thing in it. I was obsessed by some awful spell in expiation of a forgotten crime committed, as I vaguely surmised, against the sunrise. Mechanically and without hope, I moved under the arms of the giant trees along a narrow trail penetrating the haunted solitudes of the forest. I came at length to a brook that flowed darkly and sluggishly across my path, and saw that it was blood. Turning to the right, I followed it up a considerable distance, and soon came to a small circular opening in the forest, filled with a dim, unreal light, by which I saw in the center of the opening a deep tank of white marble. It was filled with blood, and the stream that I had followed up was its outlet. All round the tank, between it and the enclosing forest - a space of perhaps ten feet in breadth, paved with immense slabs of marble - were dead bodies of men - a score; though I did not count them I knew that the number had some significant and portentous relation to my crime. Possibly they marked the time, in centuries, since I had committed it. I only recognized the fitness of the number, and knew it without counting. The bodies were naked and arranged symmetrically around the central tank, radiating from it like spokes of a wheel. The feet were outward, the heads hanging over the edge of the tank. Each lay upon its back, its throat cut, blood slowly dripping from the wound. I looked on all this unmoved. It was a natural and necessary result of my offence, and did not affect me; but there was something that filled me with apprehension and terror - a monstrous pulsation, beating with a slow, inevitable recurrence. I do not know which of the senses it addressed, or if it made its way to the consciousness through some avenue unknown to science and experience. The pitiless regularity of this vast rhythm was maddening. I was conscious that it pervaded the entire forest, and was a manifestation of some gigantic and implacable malevolence.

Of this dream I have no further recollection. Probably, overcome by a terror which doubtless had its origin in the discomfort of an impeded circulation, I cried out and was awakened by the sound of my own voice.

The dream whose skeleton I shall now present occurred in my early youth. I could not have been more than sixteen. I am considerably more now, yet I recall the incidents as vividly as when the vision was "of an hour's age" and I lay cowering beneath the bed-covering and trembling with terror from the memory.

I was alone on a boundless level in the night - in my bad dreams I am always alone and it is usually night. No trees were anywhere in sight, no habitations of men, no streams nor hills. The earth seemed to be covered with a short, coarse vegetation that was black and stubbly, as if the plain had been swept by fire. My way was broken here and there as I went forward with I know not what purpose, by small pools of water occupying shallow depressions, as if the fire had been succeeded by rain. These pools were on every side, and kept vanishing and appearing again, as heavy dark clouds drove athwart those parts

of the sky which they reflected, and passing on disclosed again the steely glitter of the stars, in whose cold light the waters shone with a black luster. My course lay toward the west, where low along the horizon burned a crimson light beneath long strips of cloud, giving that effect of measureless distance that I have since learned to look for in Dore's pictures, where every touch of his hand has laid a portent and a curse. As I moved I saw outlined against this uncanny background a silhouette of battlements and towers which, expanding with every mile of my journey, grew at last to an unthinkable height and breadth, till the building subtended a wide angle of vision, yet seemed no nearer than before. Heartless and hopeless I struggled on over the blasted and forbidding plain, and still the mighty structure grew until I could no longer compass it with a look, and its towers shut out the stars directly overhead; then I passed in at an open portal, between columns of cyclopean masonry whose single stones were larger than my father's house.

Within all was vacancy; everything was coated with the dust of desertion. A dim light - the lawless light of dreams, sufficient unto itself - enabled me to pass from corridor to corridor, and from room to room, every door yielding to my hand. In the rooms it was a long walk from wall to wall; of no corridor did I ever reach an end. My footfalls gave out that strange, hollow sound that is never heard but in abandoned dwellings and tenanted tombs. For hours I wandered in this awful solitude, conscious of a seeking purpose, yet knowing not what I sought. At last, in what I conceived to be an extreme angle of the building, I entered a room of the ordinary dimensions, having a single window. Through this I saw the same crimson light still lying along the horizon in the measureless reaches of the west, like a visible doom, and knew it for the lingering fire of eternity. Looking upon the red menace of its sullen and sinister glare, there came to me the dreadful truth which years later as an extravagant fancy I endeavored to express in verse:

Man is long ages dead in every zone,
The angels all are gone to graves unknown;
  The devils, too, are cold enough at last,
And God lies dead before the great white throne!

The light was powerless to dispel the obscurity of the room, and it was some time before I discovered in the farthest angle the outlines of a bed, and approached it with a prescience of ill. I felt that here somehow the bad business of my adventure was to end with some horrible climax, yet could not resist the spell that urged me to the fulfillment. Upon the bed, partly clothed, lay the dead body of a human being. It lay upon its back, the arms straight along the sides. By bending over it, which I did with loathing but no fear, I could see that it was dreadfully decomposed. The ribs protruded from the leathern flesh; through the skin of the sunken belly could be seen the protuberances of the spine. The face was black and shriveled and the lips, drawn away from the yellow teeth, cursed it with a ghastly grin. A fullness under the closed lids seemed to indicate that the eyes had survived the general wreck; and this was true, for as I bent above them they slowly opened and gazed into mine with a tranquil, steady regard. Imagine my horror how you can - no words of mine can assist the conception; the eyes were my own! That vestigial fragment of a vanished race - that unspeakable thing which neither time nor eternity had wholly effaced - "that hateful and abhorrent scrap of mortality, still sentient after death of God and the angels, was I !

There are dreams that repeat themselves. Of this class is one of my own,* which seems sufficiently singular to justify its narration, though truly I fear the reader will think the realms of sleep are anything but a happy hunting-ground for my night-wandering soul. This is not true; the greater number of my incursions into dreamland, and I suppose those of most others, are attended witfi the happiest results. My imagination returns to the body like a bee to the hive, loaded with spoil which, reason assisting, is transmuted to honey

and stored away in the cells of memory to be a joy forever. But the dream which I am about to relate has a double character; it is strangely dreadful in the experience, but the horror it inspires is so ludicrously disproportionate to the one incident producing it, that in retrospection the fantasy amuses.

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* At my suggestion the late Flora Macdonald Shearer put this drama into sonnet form in her book of poems, *The Legend of Aulus.*

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I am passing through an open glade in a thinly wooded country. Through the belt of scattered trees that bound the irregular space there are glimpses of cultivated fields and the homes of strange intelligences. It must be near daybreak, for the moon, nearly at full, is low in the west, showing blood-red through the mists with which the landscape is fantastically freaked. The grass about my feet is heavy with dew, and the whole scene is that of a morning in early summer, glimmering in the unfamiliar light of a setting full moon. Near my path is a horse, visibly and audibly cropping the herbage. It lifts its head as I am about to pass, regards me motionless for a moment, then walks toward me. It is milk-white, mild of mien and amiable in look. I say to myself: "This horse is a gentle soul," and pause to caress it. It keeps its eyes fixed upon my own, approaches and speaks to me in a human voice, with human words. This does not surprise, but terrifies, and instantly I return to this our world.

The horse always speaks my own tongue, but I never know what it says. I suppose I vanish from the land of dreams before it finishes expressing what it has in mind, leaving it, no doubt, as greatly terrified by my sudden disappearance as I by its manner of accosting me. I would give value to know the purport of its communication.

Perhaps some morning I shall understand - and return no more to this our world.

(*Vol. 10, CW*)

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## *Fiction*

### An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the ties supporting the rails of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners - two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as "support," that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest - a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the center of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into

a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground - a gentle slope topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loopholed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Midway up the slope between the bridge and fort were the spectators - a single company of infantry in line, at "parade rest," the butts of their rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the center of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good - a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well fitting frock coat. He wore a moustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his "unsteadfast footing," then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift - all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by - it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each new stroke with impatience and - he knew not why - apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the trust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. "If I could free my

hands," he thought, "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader's farthest advance."

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

*II.*

Peyton Fahrquhar was a well to do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician, he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with that gallant army which had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in wartime. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in the aid of the South, no adventure to perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Fahrquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Fahrquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

"The Yanks are repairing the railroads," said the man, "and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels, or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order."

"How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?" Fahrquhar asked.

"About thirty miles."

"Is there no force on this side of the creek?"

"Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge."

"Suppose a man - a civilian and student of hanging - should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel," said Fahrquhar, smiling, "what could he accomplish?"

The soldier reflected. "I was there a month ago," he replied. "I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tinder."

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

*III.*

As Peyton Fahrquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened - ages later, it seemed to him - by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fiber of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fullness - of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud splash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river! - the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface - knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. "To be hanged and drowned," he thought, "that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair."

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort! - what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water snake. "Put it back, put it back!" He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire, his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf - he saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon flies' wings, the strokes of the water spiders' legs, like oars which had lifted their boat - all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter-swirl had caught Fahrquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking at the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly - with what an even, calm intonation, presaging, and enforcing tranquility in the men - with what accurately measured interval fell those cruel words:

"Company! . . . Attention! . . . Shoulder arms! . . . Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!"

Fahrquhar dived - dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dull thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther downstream - nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning:

"The officer," he reasoned, "will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!"

An appalling splash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, DIMINUENDO, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps! A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken an hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

"They will not do that again," he thought; "the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me - the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun."

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round - spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men, all were commingled and

blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color - that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream - the southern bank - and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of Aeolian harps. He had not wish to perfect his escape - he was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whiz and a rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famished. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which - once, twice, and again - he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue - he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene - perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forwards with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon - then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Fahrquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

*(From Gutenberg.org; In the Midst of Life; Vol. 2 Collected Writings)*

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*Fantastic Fables*
*(from Vol. 6 CW)*

*Moral Principle and Material Interest*

A Moral Principle met a Material Interest on a bridge wide enough for but one.

"Down, you base thing!" thundered the Moral Principle, "and let me pass over you!"

The Material Interest merely looked in the other's eyes without saying anything.

"Ah," said the Moral Principle, hesitatingly, "let us draw lots to see which one of us shall retire till the other has crossed."

The Material Interest maintained an unbroken silence and an unwavering stare.

"In order to avoid a conflict," the Moral Principle resumed, somewhat uneasily, "I shall myself lie down and let you walk over me."

Then the Material Interest found his tongue. "I don't think you are very good walking," he said. "I am a little particular about what I have underfoot. Suppose you get off into the water."

It occurred that way.

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*The Holy Deacon*

An Itinerant Preacher who had wrought hard in the moral vineyard for several hours whispered to a Holy Deacon of the local church:

"Brother, these people know you, and your active support will bear fruit abundantly. Please pass the plate for me, and you shall have one fourth."

The Holy Deacon did so, and putting the money into his pocket waited till the congregation was dismissed, then said goodnight.

"But the money, brother, the money that you collected!" said the Itinerant Preacher.

"Nothing is coming to you," was the reply; "the Adversary has hardened their hearts and one fourth is all they gave."

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*A Hasty Settlement*

"Your Honor," said an Attorney, rising, "what is the present status of this case - as far as it has gone?"

"I have given a judgment for the residuary legatee under the will," said the Court, "put the costs upon the contestants, decided all questions relating to fees and other charges; and, in short, the estate in litigation has been settled, with all controversies, disputes, misunderstandings and differences of opinion thereunto appertaining."

"Ah, yes, I see," said the Attorney, thoughtfully, "we are making progress - we are getting on famously."

"Progress?" echoed the Judge - "progress? Why, sir, the matter is concluded!"

"Exactly, exactly; it had to be concluded in order to give relevancy to the motion that I am about to make. Your Honor, I move that the judgment of the Court be set aside and the case reopened."

"Upon what ground, sir?" the Judge asked in surprise.

"Upon the ground," said the Attorney, "that after paying all fees and expenses of litigation and all charges against the estate there will still be something left."

"There may have been an error," said his Honor, thoughtfully - "the Court may have underestimated the value of the estate. The motion is taken under advisement."

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*The Poet's Doom*

An Object was walking along the King's highway wrapped in meditation and with little else on, when he suddenly found himself at the gates of a strange city. On applying for admittance, he was arrested as a necessitator of ordinances and taken before the King.

"Who are you," said the King, "and what is your business in life?"

"Snouter the Sneak," replied the Object, with ready invention - "pick-pocket."

The King was about to command him to be released when the Prime Minister suggested that the prisoner's fingers be examined. They were found greatly flattened and calloused at the ends.

"Ha!" cried the King; "I told you so! - he is addicted to counting syllables. He is a poet. Turn him over to the Lord High Dissuader from the Head Habit."

"My liege," said the Inventor-in-Ordinary of Ingenious Penalties, "I venture to suggest a keener affliction."

"Name it," the King said.

"Let him retain that head!"

It was so ordered.

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*The Reform School Board*

The members of the School Board in Doosnoswair being suspected of appointing female teachers for an improper consideration, the people elected a Board composed wholly of women. In a few years the scandal was at an end; there were no female teachers in the Department.

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*The Man with No Enemies*

An Inoffensive Person walking in a public place was assaulted by a Stranger with a Club, and severely beaten.

When the Stranger with a Club was brought to trial, the complainant said to the Judge:

"I do not know why I was assaulted; I have not an enemy in the world."

"That," said the defendant, "is why I struck him."

"Let the prisoner be discharged," said the Judge; "a man who has no enemies has no friends. The courts are not for such."

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*The Angel's Tear*

An Unworthy Man who had laughed at the woes of a woman whom he loved, was bewailing his indiscretion in sack-cloth-of-gold and ashes-of-roses, when the Angel of Compassion looked down upon him, saying: "Poor mortal! - how unblest not to know the wickedness of laughing at another's misfortune!"

So saying, he let fall a great tear, which, encountering in its descent a current of cold air, was congealed into a hail-stone. This struck the Unworthy Man upon the head and set him rubbing that bruised organ vigorously with one hand while vainly attempting to expand an umbrella with the other.

Thereat the Angel of Compassion did most shamelessly and wickedly laugh.

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*The City of Political Distinction*

Jamrach the Rich, being anxious to reach the City of Political Distinction before nightfall, arrived at a fork of the road and was undecided which branch to follow; so he consulted a Wise-Looking Person who sat by the wayside.

"Take that road," said the Wise-Looking Person, pointing it out; "it is known as the Political Highway."

"Thank you," said Jamrach, and was about to proceed.

"About how much do you thank me?" was the reply. "Do you suppose I am here for my health?"

As Jamrach had not become rich by stupidity he handed something to his guide and hastening on soon came to a toll-gate kept by a Benevolent Gentleman, to whom he gave something and was suffered to pass. A little farther along he came to a bridge across an imaginary stream, where a Civil Engineer (who had built the bridge) demanded something for interest on his investment, and it was forthcoming. It was growing late when Jamrach came to the margin of what appeared to be a lake of black ink, and there the road terminated. Seeing a Ferryman in his boat he paid something for his passage and was about to embark.

"No," said the Ferryman, "Put your neck in this noose, and I will tow you over. It is the only way," he added, seeing that the passenger was about to complain of the accommodations.

In due time he was dragged across, half strangled and dreadfully beslubbered by the feculent waters. "There," said the Ferryman, hauling him ashore and disengaging him, "you are now in the City of Political Distinction. It has fifty millions of inhabitants, and as the color of the Filthy Pool does not wash off, they all look exactly alike."

"Alas!" exclaimed Jamrach, weeping and bewailing the loss of all his possessions, paid out in tips and tolls; "I will go back with you."

"I don't think you will," said the Ferryman, pushing off; "this city is situated on the Island of the Unreturning."

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*An Invitation*

A Pious Person who had overcharged his paunch with dead bird by way of attesting his gratitude for escaping the many calamities which Heaven had sent upon others fell asleep at table and dreamed. He thought he lived in a country where turkeys were the ruling class, and every year they held a feast to manifest their sense of Heaven's goodness in sparing their lives, to kill them later. One day, about a week before one of these feasts, he met the Supreme Gobbler, who said:

"You will please get yourself into good condition for the Thanksgiving dinner."

"Yes, your Excellency," replied the Pious Person, delighted, "I shall come hungry, I assure you. It is no small privilege to dine with your Excellency."

The Supreme Gobbler eyed him for a moment in silence; then he said:

"As one of the lower domestic animals, you cannot be expected to know much, but you might know something. Since you do not, you will permit me to point out that being asked to dinner is one thing; being asked to dine is another and different thing."

With this significant remark the Supreme Gobbler left him, and thenceforward the Pious Person dreamed of himself as white meat and dark until rudely awakened by terror.

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*The Ashes of Madame Blavatsky*

The brightest two Lights of Theosophy being in the same place at once in company with the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, an Inquiring Soul thought the time propitious to learn something worthwhile. So he sat at the feet of one awhile, and then he sat awhile at the feet of the other, and at last he applied his ear to the keyhole of the casket containing the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky. When the Inquiring Soul had completed his course of instruction he declared himself the Ahkoond of Swat, fell into the baleful habit of standing on his head and swore that the mother who bore him was a pragmatic paralogism. Wherefore he was held in so high reverence that when the two other gentlemen were hanged for lying the Theosophists elected him to the leadership of their Disastral Body, and after a quiet life and an honorable death by the kick of a jackass he was reincarnated as a Yellow Dog. As such he ate the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, and Theosophy was no more.

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*Physicians Two*

A Wicked Old Man finding himself ill sent for a Physician, who prescribed for him and went away. Then the Wicked Old Man sent for Another Physician, saying nothing of the first, and an entirely different treatment was ordered. This continued for some weeks, the physicians visiting him on alternate days and treating him for two different disorders, with constantly enlarging doses of medicine and more and more rigorous nursing. But one day they accidentally met at his bedside while he slept and, the truth coming out, a violent quarrel ensued.

"My good friends," said the patient, awakened by the noise of the dispute, and apprehending the cause of it, "pray be more reasonable. If I could for weeks endure you both, can you not for a little while endure each other? I have been well for ten days, but have remained in bed in the hope of gaining by repose the strength that would justify me in taking your medicines. So far I have touched none of them."

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*A Radical Parallel*

Some White Christians engaged in driving Chinese Heathens out of an American town found a newspaper published in Peking in the Chinese tongue and compelled one of their victims to translate an editorial. It turned out to be an appeal to the people of the province of Pang Ki to drive the foreign devils out of the country and burn their dwellings and churches. At this evidence of Mongolian barbarity the White Christians were so greatly incensed that they carried out their original design.

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*The Compassionate Physician*

A Kind-Hearted Physician sitting at the bedside of a patient afflicted with an incurable and painful disease heard a noise behind him and turning saw a Cat laughing at the feeble efforts of a wounded Mouse to drag itself out of the room.

"You cruel beast!" he cried. "Why don't you kill it at once, like a lady?"

Rising, he kicked the Cat out of the door and picking up the Mouse compassionately put it out of its misery by pulling off its head. Recalled to the bedside by the moans of his patient, the Kind-Hearted Physician administered a stimulant, a tonic and a nutrient, and went away.

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*A Prophet of Evil*

An Undertaker Who Was a Member of a Trust saw a Man Leaning on a Spade, and asked him why he was not at work.

"Because," said the Man Leaning on a Spade, "I belong to the Gravediggers' National Extortion Society, and we have decided to limit the production of graves and get more money for the reduced output. We have a corner in graves and purpose working it to the best advantage."

"My friend," said the Undertaker Who Was a Member of the Trust, "this is a most hateful and injurious scheme. If people cannot be assured of graves I fear they will no longer die, and the best interests of civilization will wither like a frosted leaf."

And blowing his eyes upon his handkerchief, he walked away lamenting.

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*Religions of Error*

Hearing a sound of strife, a Christian in the Orient asked his Dragoman the cause of it.

"The Buddhists are cutting Mohammedan throats," the Dragoman replied, with Oriental composure.

"I did not know," remarked the Christian, with scientific interest, "that that would make so much noise."

"The Mohammedans are cutting Buddhist throats," added the Dragoman.

"It is astonishing," mused the Christian, "how violent and how general are religious animosities."

So saying he visibly smugged and went off to telegraph for a brigade of cut-throats to protect Christian interests.

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*The Circular Clew*

A Detective searching for the murderer of a dead man was accosted by a Clew.

"Follow me," said the Clew, "and there's no knowing what you may discover."

So the Detective followed the Clew a whole year through a thousand sinuosities and at last found himself in the office of the Morgue.

"There!" said the Clew, pointing to the open register.

The Detective eagerly scanned the page and found an official statement that the deceased was dead. Thereupon he hastened to Police Headquarters to report progress. The Clew, meanwhile, sauntered among the busy haunts of men, arm in arm with an Ingenious Theory.

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*The No Case*

A Statesman who had been indicted by an unfeeling Grand Jury was arrested by a Sheriff and thrown into jail. As this was abhorrent to his fine spiritual nature, he sent for the District Attorney and asked that the case against him be dismissed.

"Upon what grounds?" asked the District Attorney.

"Lack of evidence to convict," replied the accused.

"Do you happen to have the lack with you?" the official asked. "I should like to see it."

"With pleasure," said the other; "here it is."

So saying he handed the other a check, which the District Attorney carefully examined, and then pronounced it the most complete absence of both proof and presumption that he had ever seen. He said it would acquit the poorest man in the world.

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*The Prerogative of Might*

A Slander traveling rapidly through the land upon his joyous mission was accosted by a Retraction and commanded to halt and be killed.

"Your career of mischief is at an end," said the Retraction, drawing his club, rolling up his sleeves and spitting on his hands.

"Why should you slay me?" protested the Slander. "Whatever my intentions were, I have been innocuous, for you have dogged my strides and counteracted my influence."

"Dogged your grandmother!" said the Retraction, with contemptuous vulgarity of speech. "In the order of nature it is appointed that we two shall never travel the same road."

"How then," the Slander asked, triumphantly, "have you overtaken me?"

"I have not," replied the Retraction; "we have accidentally met. I came round the world the other way."

But when he tried to execute his fell purpose he found that in the order of nature it was appointed that he himself perish miserably in the encounter.

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*Deceased and Heirs*

A Man died leaving a large estate and many sorrowful relations who claimed it. After some years, when all but one had had judgment given against them, that one was awarded the estate, which he asked his Attorney to have appraised.

"There is nothing to appraise," said the Attorney, pocketing his last fee.

"Then," said the Successful Claimant, "what good has all this litigation done me?"

"You have been a good client to me," the Attorney replied, gathering up his books and papers, "but I must say you betray a surprising ignorance of the purpose of litigation."

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*At the Pole*

After a great expenditure of life and treasure a Daring Explorer had succeeded in reaching the North Pole, when he was approached by a Native Galeut who lived there.

"Good morning," said the Native Galeut. "I'm very glad to see you, but why did you come here?"

"Glory," said the Daring Explorer, curtly.

"Yes, yes, I know," the other persisted; "but of what benefit to man is your discovery? To what truths does it give access which were inaccessible before? - facts, I mean, having a scientific value?"

"I'll be Tom scatted if I know," the great man replied, frankly; "you will have to ask the Scientist of the Expedition."

But the Scientist of the Expedition explained that he had been so engrossed with the care of his instruments and the study of his tables that he had found no time to think of it.

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*Philosophers Three*

A Bear, a Fox and an Opossum were attacked by an inundation.

"Death loves a coward," said the Bear, and went forward to fight the flood.

"What a fool!" said the Fox. "I know a trick worth two of that." And he slipped into a hollow stump.

"There are malevolent forces," said the Opossum, "which the wise will neither confront nor avoid. The thing is to know the nature of your antagonist."

So saying the Opossum lay down and pretended to be dead.

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*Six and One*

The Committee on Gerrymander worked late into the night drawing intricate lines on a map of the State, and being weary sought repose in a game of poker. At the close of the game the six Republican members were bankrupt and the single Democrat had all the money. On the next day, when the Committee was called to order for business, one of the luckless six mounted his legs, and said:

"Mr. Chairman, before we bend to our noble task of purifying politics in the interest of good government I wish to say a word of the untoward events of last evening. If my memory serves me the disasters which overtook the Majority of this honorable body always befell when it was the Minority's deal. It is my solemn conviction, Mr. Chairman, and to its affirmation I pledge my life, my sacred fortune and my honor, that that wicked and unscrupulous Minority redistricted the cards!"

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*Two Dogs*

The Dog as created had a rigid tail, but after some centuries of a cheerless existence, unappreciated by Man, who made him work for his living, he implored the Creator to endow him with a wag. This being done he was able to dissemble his resentment with a sign of affection, and the earth was his and the fullness thereof. Observing this, the Politician (an animal created later) petitioned that a wag might be given him too. As he was incaudate it was conferred upon his chin, which he now wags with great profit and gratification except when he is at his meals.

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*The Ancient Order*

Hardly had that ancient order, the Sultans of Exceeding Splendor, been completely founded by the Grand Flashing Inaccessible, when a question arose as to what should be the title of address among the members. Some wanted it to be simply "my lord," others held out for "your dukeness," and still others preferred "my sovereign liege." Finally the gorgeous jewel of the order gleaming upon the breast of every member suggested "your badgesty," which was adopted and the order became popularly known as the Kings of Catarrh.

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*Man and Bird*

A Man with a Shotgun said to a Bird:

"It is all nonsense, you know, about shooting being a cruel sport. I put my skill

against your cunning - that is all there is of it. It is a fair game."

"True," said the Bird, "but I don't wish to play."

"Why not?" inquired the Man with a Shotgun.

"The game," the Bird replied, "is fair as you say; the chances are about even; but consider the stake. I am in it for you, but what is there in it for me?"

Not being prepared with an answer to the question, the Man with a Shotgun sagaciously removed the propounder.

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*Diplomacy*

"If you do not submit my claim to arbitration," wrote the President of Omohu to the President of Modugy, "I shall take immediate steps to collect it in my own way!"

"Sir," replied the President of Modugy, "you may go to the devil with your threat of war."

"My great and good friend," wrote the other, "you mistake the character of my communication. It is an antepenultimatum."

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*The Secret of Happiness*

Having been told by an angel that Noureddin Becar was the happiest man in the world, the Sultan caused him to be brought to the palace and said:

"Impart to me, I command thee, the secret of thy happiness."

"O father of the sun and the moon," answered Noureddin Becar, "I did not know that I was happy."

"That," said the Sultan, "is the secret that I sought."

Noureddin Becar retired in deep dejection, fearing that his new-found happiness might forsake him.

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*Improvidence*

A Person who had fallen from wealth to indigence appealed to a Rich Man for alms.

"No," said the Rich Man, "you did not keep what you had. What assurance have I that you will keep what I may give you?"

"But I don't want it to keep," the beggar explained; "I want to exchange it for bread."

"That is just the same," said the Rich Man. "You would not keep the bread."

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*Corrupting the Press*

When Joel Bird was up for Governor of Missouri, Sam Henly was editing the *Berrywood Bugle*; and no sooner was the nomination made by the State Convention than he came out hot against the party. He was an able writer, was Sam, and the lies he invented about our candidate were shocking! That, however, we endured very well, but presently Sam turned squarely about and began telling the truth. This was a little too much; the County Committee held a hasty meeting, and decided that it must be stopped; so I, Henry Barber, was sent for to make arrangements to that end. I knew something of Sam: had purchased him several times, and I estimated his present value at about one

thousand dollars. This seemed to the committee a reasonable figure, and on my mentioning it to Sam he said "he thought that about the fair thing; it should never be said that the *Bugle* was a hard paper to deal with."

There was, however, some delay in raising the money; the candidates for the local offices had not disposed of their autumn hogs yet, and were in financial straits. Some of them contributed a pig each, one gave twenty bushels of corn, another a flock of chickens; and the man who aspired to the distinction of County Judge paid his assessment with a wagon. These things had to be converted into cash at a ruinous sacrifice, and in the meantime Sam kept pouring an incessant stream of hot shot into our political camp. Nothing I could say would make him stay his hand; he invariably replied that it was no bargain until he had the money. The committeemen were furious; it required all my eloquence to prevent their declaring the contract null and void; but at last a new, clean one thousand-dollar note was passed over to me, which in hot haste I transferred to Sam at his residence.

That evening there was a meeting of the committee: all seemed in high spirits again, except Hooker of Jayhawk. This old wretch sat back and shook his head during the entire session, and just before adjournment said, as he took his hat to go, that "p'r'aps 'twas orl right and on the squar'; maybe thar war'n't any shenannigan, but he war dubersome - yes, he war dubersome." The old curmudgeon repeated this until I was exasperated beyond restraint.

"Mr. Hooker," said I, "I've known Sam Henly ever since he was so high, and there isn't an honester man in old Missouri. Sam Henly's word is as good as his note! What's more, if any gentleman thinks he would enjoy a first-class funeral, and if he will supply the sable accessories, I'll supply the corpse. And he can take it home with him from this meeting."

At this point Mr. Hooker was troubled with leaving.

Having got this business off my conscience I slept late next day. When I stepped into the street I saw at once that something was "up." There were knots of people gathered at the corners, some reading eagerly that morning's issue of the *Bugle*, some gesticulating, and others stalking moodily about muttering curses, not loud but deep. Suddenly I heard an excited clamor - a confused roar of many lungs, and the trampling of innumerable feet. In this babel of noises I could distinguish the words "Kill him!" "Wa'm his hide!" and so forth; and, looking up the street, I saw what seemed to be the whole male population racing down it. I am very excitable, and, though I did not know whose hide was to be warmed, nor why anyone was to be killed, I shot off in front of the howling masses, shouting "Kill him!" and "Warm his hide!" as loudly as the loudest, all the time looking out for the victim. Down the street we flew like a storm; then I turned a corner, thinking the scoundrel must have gone up that street; then bolted through a public square; over a bridge; under an arch; finally back into the main street; yelling like a panther, and resolved to slaughter the first human being I should overtake. The crowd followed my lead, turning as I turned, shrieking as I shrieked, and - all at once it came to me that I was the man whose hide was to be warmed!

It is needless to dwell upon the sensation this discovery gave me; happily I was within a few yards of the committee-rooms, and into these I dashed, closing and bolting the doors behind me, and mounting the stairs like a flash. The committee was in solemn session, sitting in a nice, even row on the front benches, each man with his elbows on his knees, and his chin resting in the palms of his hands - thinking. At each man's feet lay a neglected copy of the *Bugle*. Every member fixed his eyes on me, but no one stirred, none uttered a sound. There was something awful in this preternatural science, made more impressive by the hoarse murmur of the crowd outside, breaking down the door. I could endure it no longer, but strode forward and snatched up the paper lying at the feet of the chairman. At the head of the editorial columns, in letters half an inch long, were the

following amazing headlines:

"Dastardly Outrage! Corruption Rampant in Our Midst! The Vampires Foiled! Henry Barber at his Old Game! The Rat Gnaws a File! The Democratic Hordes Attempt to Ride Roughshod Over a Free People! Base Endeavor to Bribe the Editor of this Paper with a Twenty-Dollar Note! The Money Given to the Orphan Asylum."

I read no farther, but stood stock still in the center of the floor, and fell into a reverie. Twenty dollars! Somehow it seemed a mere trifle. Nine hundred and eighty dollars! I did not know there was so much money in the world. Twenty - no, eighty - one thousand dollars! There were big, black figures floating all over the floor. Incessant cataracts of them poured down the walls, stopped, and shied off as I looked at them, and began to go it again when I lowered my eyes. Occasionally the figures 20 would take shape somewhere about the floor, and then the figures 980 would slide up and overlay them. Then, like the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream, they would all march away and devour the fat noughts of the number 1,000. And dancing like gnats in the air were myriads of little caduceus-like, phantoms, thus - $$$$$. I could not at all make it out, but began to comprehend my position directly. Old Hooker, without moving from his seat, began to drown the noise of countless feet on the stairs by elevating his thin falsetto:

"P'r'aps, Mr. Cheerman, it's orl on the squar'. We know Mr. Henly can't tell a lie; but I'm powerful dubersome that thar's a balyance dyue this yer committee from the gent who hez the flo' - if he ain't done gone laid it yout fo' sable ac - ac - fo' fyirst-class funerals."

I felt at that moment as if I should like to play the leading character in a first-class funeral myself. I felt that every man in my position ought to have a nice, comfortable coffin, with a silver door-plate, a foot-warmer, and bay-windows for his ears. How do you suppose you would have felt?

My leap from the window of that committee room, my speed in streaking it for the adjacent forest, my self-denial in ever afterward resisting the impulse to return to Berrywood and look after my political and material interests there - these I have always considered things to be justly proud of, and I hope I am proud of them.

(*The Fourth Estate*)

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*"The Bubble Reputation" - How Another Man's was Sought and Pricked*

It was a stormy night in the autumn of 1930. The hour was about eleven. San Francisco lay in darkness, for the laborers at the gas works had struck and destroyed the company's property because a newspaper to which a cousin of the manager was a subscriber had censured the course of a potato merchant related by marriage to a member of the Knights of Leisure. Electric lights had not at that period been reinvented. The sky was filled with great masses of black cloud which, driven rapidly across the star-fields by winds unfelt on the earth and momentarily altering their fantastic forms, seemed instinct with a life and activity of their own and endowed with awful powers of evil, to the exercise of which they might at any time set their malignant will.

An observer standing, at this time, at the corner of Paradise avenue and Great White Throne walk in Sorrel Hill cemetery would have seen a human figure moving among the graves toward the Superintendent's residence. Dimly and fitfully visible in the intervals of thinner gloom, this figure had a most uncanny and disquieting aspect. A long black cloak shrouded it from neck to heel. Upon its head was a slouch hat, pulled down across the forehead and almost concealing the face, which was further hidden by a half-mask, only the beard being occasionally visible as the head was lifted partly above the collar of the cloak. The man wore upon his feet jack-boots whose wide, funnel-shaped legs had

settled down in many a fold and crease about his ankles, as could be seen whenever accident parted the bottom of the cloak. His arms were concealed, but sometimes he stretched out the right to steady himself by a headstone as he crept stealthily but blindly over the uneven ground. At such times a close scrutiny of the hand would have disclosed in the palm the hilt of a poniard, the blade of which lay along the wrist, hidden in the sleeve. In short, the man's garb, his movements, the hour - everything proclaimed him a reporter.

But what did he there?

On the morning of that day the editor of the *Daily Malefactor* had touched the button of a bell numbered 216 and in response to the summons Mr. Longbo Spittleworth, reporter, had been shot into the room out of an inclined tube.

"I understand," said the editor, "that you are 216 - am I right?"

"That," said the reporter, catching his breath and adjusting his clothing, both somewhat disordered by the celerity of his flight through the tube, - "that is my number."

"Information has reached us," continued the editor, "that the Superintendent of the Sorrel Hill cemetery - one Inhumio, whose very name suggests inhumanity - is guilty of the grossest outrages in the administration of the great trust confided to his hands by the sovereign people."

"The cemetery is private property," faintly suggested 216.

"It is alleged," continued the great man, disdaining to notice the interruption, "that in violation of popular rights he refuses to permit his accounts to be inspected by representatives of the press."

"Under the law, you know, he is responsible to the directors of the cemetery company," the reporter ventured to interject.

"They say," pursued the editor, heedless, "that the inmates are in many cases badly lodged and insufficiently clad, and that in consequence they are usually cold. It is asserted that they are never fed - except to the worms. Statements have been made to the effect that males and females are permitted to occupy the same quarters, to the incalculable detriment of public morality. Many clandestine villainies are alleged of this fiend in human shape, and it is desirable that his underground methods be unearthed in the *Malefactor.* If he resists we will drag his family skeleton from the privacy of his domestic closet. There is money in it for the paper, fame for you - are you ambitious, 216?"

"I am - bitious."

"Go, then," cried the editor, rising and waving his hand imperiously - "go and 'seek the bubble reputation'."

"The bubble shall be sought," the young man replied, and leaping into a manhole in the floor, disappeared. A moment later the editor, who after dismissing his subordinate, had stood motionless, as if lost in thought, sprang suddenly to the manhole and shouted down it:

"Hello, 216?"

"Aye, aye, sir," came up a faint and far reply.

"About that 'bubble reputation' - you understand, I suppose, that the reputation which you are to seek is that of the other man."

In the execution of his duty, in the hope of his employer's approval, in the costume of his profession, Mr. Longbo Spittleworth, otherwise known as 216, has already occupied a place in the mind's eye of the intelligent reader. Alas for poor Mr. Inhumio!

A few days after these events that fearless, independent and enterprising guardian and guide of the public, the San Francisco *Daily Malefactor*, contained a whole-page article whose headlines are here presented with some necessary typographical mitigation:

"Hell Upon Earth! Corruption Rampant in the Management of the Sorrel Hill Cemetery. The Sacred City of the Dead in the Leprous Clutches of a Demon in Human Form. Fiendish Atrocities Committed in 'God's Acre.' The Holy Dead Thrown around

Loose. Fragments of Mothers. Segregation of a Beautiful Young Lady Who in Life Was the Light of a Happy Household. A Superintendent Who Is an Ex-Convict. How He Murdered His Neighbor to Start the Cemetery. He Buries His Own Dead Elsewhere. Extraordinary Insolence to a Representative of the Public Press. Little Eliza's Last Words: 'Mamma, Feed Me to the Pigs.' A Moonshiner Who Runs an Illicit Bone-Button Factory in One Corner of the Grounds. Buried Head Downward. Revolting Mausoleistic Orgies. Dancing on the Dead. Devilish Mutilation - a Pile of Late Lamented Noses and Sainted Ears. No Separation of the Sexes; Petitions for Chaperons Unheeded. 'Veal' as Supplied to the Superintendent's Employees. A Miscreant's Record from His Birth. Disgusting Subserviency of Our Contemporaries and Strong Indications of Collusion. Nameless Abnormalities. 'Doubled Up Like a Nut-Cracker.' 'Wasn't Planted White.' Horribly Significant Reduction in the Price of Lard. The Question of the Hour: Whom Do You Fry Your Doughnuts In?"

(*The Fourth Estate*)

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*A Horseman in the Sky*

One sunny afternoon in the autumn of the year 1861, a soldier lay in a clump of laurel by the side of a road in Western Virginia. He lay at full length, upon his stomach, his feet resting upon the toes, his head upon the left forearm. His extended right hand loosely grasped his rifle. But for the somewhat methodical disposition of his limbs and a slight rhythmic movement of the cartridge box at the back of his belt, he might have been thought to be dead. He was asleep at his post of duty. But if detected he would be dead shortly afterward, that being the just and legal penalty of his crime.

The clump of laurel in which the criminal lay was in the angle of a road which, after ascending, southward, a steep acclivity to that point, turned sharply to the west, running along the summit for perhaps one hundred yards. There it turned southward again and went zig-zagging downward through the forest. At the salient of that second angle was a large flat rock, jutting out from the ridge to the northward, overlooking the deep valley from which the road ascended. The rock capped a high cliff; a stone dropped from its outer edge would have fallen sheer downward one thousand feet to the tops of the pines. The angle where the soldier lay was on another spur of the same cliff. Had he been awake he would have commanded a view, not only of the short arm of the road and the jutting rock but of the entire profile of the cliff below it. It might well have made him giddy to look.

The country was wooded everywhere except at the bottom of the valley to the northward, where there was a small natural meadow, through which flowed a stream scarcely visible from the valley's rim. This open ground looked hardly larger than an ordinary dooryard, but was really several acres in extent. Its green was more vivid than that of the inclosing forest. Away beyond it rose a line of giant cliffs similar to those upon which we are supposed to stand in our survey of the savage scene, and through which the road had somehow made its climb to the summit. The configuration of the valley, indeed, was such that from our point of observation it seemed entirely shut in, and one could not but have wondered how the road which found a way out of it had found a way into it, and whence came and whither went the waters of the stream that parted the meadow two thousand feet below.

No country is so wild and difficult but men will make it a theatre of war; concealed in the forest at the bottom of that military rat trap, in which half a hundred men in possession of the exits might have starved an army to submission, lay five regiments of Federal infantry. They had marched all the previous day and night and were resting. At

nightfall they would take to the road again, climb to the place where their unfaithful sentinel now slept, and, descending the other slope of the ridge, fall upon a camp of the enemy at about midnight. Their hope was to surprise it, for the road led to the rear of it. In case of failure their position would be perilous in the extreme; and fail they surely would should accident or vigilance apprise the enemy of the movement.

The sleeping sentinel in the clump of laurel was a young Virginian named Carter Druse. He was the son of wealthy parents, an only child, and had known such ease and cultivation and high living as wealth and taste were able to command in the mountain country of Western Virginia. His home was but a few miles from where he now lay. One morning he had risen from the breakfast table and said, quietly but gravely: "Father, a Union regiment has arrived at Grafton. I am going to join it."

The father lifted his leonine head, looked at the son a moment in silence, and replied: "Go, Carter, and, whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty. Virginia, to which you are a traitor, must get on without you. Should we both live to the end of the war, we will speak further of the matter. Your mother, as the physician has informed you, is in a most critical condition; at the best she cannot be with us longer than a few weeks, but that time is precious. It would be better not to disturb her."

So Carter Druse, bowing reverently to his father, who returned the salute with a stately courtesy which masked a breaking heart, left the home of his childhood to go soldiering. By conscience and courage, by deeds of devotion and daring, he soon commended himself to his fellows and his officers; and it was to these qualities and to some knowledge of the country that he owed his selection for his present perilous duty at the extreme outpost. Nevertheless, fatigue had been stronger than resolution, and he had fallen asleep. What good or bad angel came in a dream to rouse him from his state of crime who shall say? Without a movement, without a sound, in the profound silence and the languor of the late afternoon, some invisible messenger of fate touched with unsealing finger the eyes of his consciousness - whispered into the ear of his spirit the mysterious awakening word which no human lips have ever spoken, no human memory ever has recalled. He quietly raised his forehead from his arm and looked between the masking stems of the laurels, instinctively closing his right hand about the stock of his rifle.

His first feeling was a keen artistic delight. On a colossal pedestal, the cliff, motionless at the extreme edge of the capping rock and sharply outlined against the sky, was an equestrian statue of impressive dignity. The figure of the man sat the figure of the horse, straight and soldierly, but with the repose of a Grecian god carved in the marble which limits the suggestion of activity. The grey costume harmonised with its aerial background; the metal of accoutrement and caparison was softened and subdued by the shadow; he animal's skin had no points of high light. A carbine, strikingly foreshortened, lay across the pommel of the saddle, kept in place by the right hand grasping it at the "grip"; the left hand, holding the bridle rein, was invisible. In silhouette against the sky, the profile of the horse was cut with the sharpness of a cameo; it looked across the heights of air to the confronting cliffs beyond. The face of the rider, turned slightly to the left, showed only an outline of temple and beard; he was looking downward to the bottom of the valley. Magnified by its lift against the sky and by the soldier's testifying sense of the formidableness of a near enemy, the group appeared of heroic, almost colossal, size.

For an instant Druse had a strange, half-defined feeling that he had slept to the end of the war and was looking upon a noble work of art reared upon that commanding eminence to commemorate the deeds of an heroic past of which he had been an inglorious part. The feeling was dispelled by a slight movement of the group; the horse, without moving its feet, had drawn its body slightly backward from the verge; the man remained immobile as before. Broad awake and keenly alive to the significance of the situation, Druse now brought the butt of his rifle against his cheek by cautiously pushing the barrel forward through the bushes, cocked the piece, and, glancing through the sights,

covered a vital spot of the horseman's breast. A touch upon the trigger and all would have been well with Carter Druse. At that instant the horseman turned his head and looked in the direction of his concealed foeman - seemed to look into his very face, into his eyes, into his brave compassionate heart.

Is it, then, so terrible to kill an enemy in war - an enemy who has surprised a secret vital to the safety of one's self and comrades - an enemy more formidable for his knowledge than all his army for its numbers? Carter Druse grew deathly pale; he shook in every limb, turned faint, and saw the statuesque group before him as black figures, rising, falling, moving unsteadily in arcs of circles in a fiery sky. His hand fell away from his weapon, his head slowly dropped until his face rested on the leaves in which he lay. This courageous gentleman and hardy soldier was near swooning from intensity of emotion.

It was not for long; in another moment his face was raised from earth, his hands resumed their places on the rifle, his forefinger sought the trigger; mind, heart, and eyes were clear, conscience and reason sound. He could not hope to capture that enemy; to alarm him would but send him dashing to his camp with his fatal news. The duty of the soldier was plain: the man must be shot dead from ambush without warning, without a moment's spiritual preparation, with never so much as an unspoken prayer, he must be sent to his account. But no there is a hope; he may have discovered nothing - perhaps he is but admiring the sublimity of the landscape. If permitted he may turn and ride carelessly away in the direction whence he came. Surely it will be possible to judge at the instant of his withdrawing whether he knows. It may well be that his fixity of attention Druse turned his head and looked below, through the deeps of air downward, as from the surface to the bottom of a translucent sea. He saw creeping across the green meadow a sinuous line of figures of men and horses - some foolish commander was permitting the soldiers of his escort to water their beasts in the open, in plain view from a hundred summits!

Druse withdrew his eyes from the valley and fixed them again upon the group of man and horse in the sky, and again it was through the sights of his rifle. But this time his aim was at the horse. In his memory, as if they were a divine mandate, rang the words of his father at their parting. "Whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty." He was calm now. His teeth were firmly but not rigidly closed; his nerves were as tranquil as a sleeping babe's - not a tremor affected any muscle of his body; his breathing, until suspended in the act of taking aim, was regular and slow. Duty had conquered; the spirit had said to the body: "Peace, be still." He fired.

At that moment an officer of the Federal force, who, in a spirit of adventure or in quest of knowledge, had left the hidden bivouac in the valley, and, with aimless feet, had made his way to the lower edge of a small open space near the foot of the cliff, was considering what he had to gain by pushing his exploration further. At a distance of a quarter-mile before him, but apparently at a stone's throw, rose from its fringe of pines the gigantic face of rock, towering to so great a height above him that it made him giddy to look up to where its edge cut a sharp, rugged line against the sky. At some distance away to his right it presented a clean, vertical profile against a background of blue sky to a point half of the way down, and of distant hills hardly less blue thence to the tops of the trees at its base. Lifting his eyes to the dizzy altitude of its summit, the officer saw an astonishing sight - a man on horseback riding down into the valley through the air!

Straight upright sat the rider, in military fashion, with a firm seat in the saddle, a strong clutch upon the rein to hold his charger from too impetuous a plunge. From his bare head his long hair streamed upward, waving like a plume. His right hand was concealed in the cloud of the horse's lifted mane. The animal's body was as level as if every hoof stroke encountered the resistant earth. Its motions were those of a wild gallop, but even as the officer looked they ceased, with all the legs thrown sharply forward as in the act of alighting from a leap. But this was a flight!

Filled with amazement and terror by this apparition of a horseman in the sky - half

believing himself the chosen scribe of some new Apocalypse, the officer was overcome by the intensity of his emotions; his legs failed him and he fell. Almost at the same instant he heard a crashing sound in the trees - a sound that died without an echo, and all was still.

The officer rose to his feet, trembling. The familiar sensation of an abraded shin recalled his dazed faculties. Pulling himself together, he ran rapidly obliquely away from the cliff to a point a half-mile from its foot; thereabout he expected to find his man; and thereabout he naturally failed. In the fleeting instant of his vision his imagination had been so wrought upon by the apparent grace and ease and intention of the marvellous performance that it did not occur to him that the line of march of aerial cavalry is directed downward, and that he could find the objects of his search at the very foot of the cliff. A half hour later he returned to camp.

This officer was a wise man; he knew better than to tell an incredible truth. He said nothing of what he had seen. But when the commander asked him if in his scout he had learned anything of advantage to the expedition, he answered: -

"Yes, sir; there is no road leading down into this valley from the southward."

The commander, knowing better, smiled.

After firing his shot private Carter Druse reloaded his rifle and resumed his watch. Ten minutes had hardly passed when a Federal sergeant crept cautiously to him on hands and knees. Druse neither turned his head nor looked at him, but lay without motion or sign of recognition.

"Did you fire?" the sergeant whispered.

"Yes."

"At what?"

"A horse. It was standing on yonder rock pretty far out. You see it is no longer there. It went over the cliff."

The man's face was white but he showed no other sign of emotion. Having answered, he turned away his face and said no more. The sergeant did not understand.

"See here, Druse," he said, after a moment's silence, "it's no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody on the horse?"

"Yes."

'Who?"

"My father."

The sergeant rose to his feet and walked away. "Good God!" he said.

(*In the Midst of Life*)

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*One of the Missing*

Jerome Searing, a private soldier of General Sherman's army, then confronting the enemy at and about Kenesaw Mountain, Georgia, turned his back upon a small group of officers, with whom he had been talking in low tones, stepped across a light line of earthworks, and disappeared in a forest. None of the men in line behind the works had said a word to him, nor had he so much as nodded to them in passing, but all who saw understood that this brave man had been intrusted with some perilous duty. Jerome Searing, though a private, did not serve in the ranks; he was detailed for service at division headquarters, being borne upon the rolls as an orderly. "Orderly" is a word covering a multitude of duties. An orderly may be a messenger, a clerk, an officer's servant - anything . He may perform services for which no provision is made in orders and army regulations. Their nature may depend upon his aptitude, upon favour, upon accident. Private Searing, an incomparable marksman, young - it is surprising how young we all

were in those days - hardy, intelligent, and insensible to fear, was a scout. The general commanding his division was not content to obey orders blindly without knowing what was in his front, even when his command was not on detached service, but formed a fraction of the line of the army; nor was he satisfied to receive his knowledge of his *vis-a-vis* through the customary channels; he wanted to know more than he was apprised of by the corps commander and the collisions of pickets and skirmishers. Hence Jerome Searing - with his extraordinary daring, his woodcraft, his sharp eyes and truthful tongue. On this occasion his instructions were simple: to get as near the enemy's lines as possible and learn all that he could.

In a few moments he had arrived at the picket line, the men on duty there lying in groups of from two to four behind little banks of earth scooped out of the slight depression in which they lay, their rifles protruding from the green boughs with which they had masked their small defences. The forest extended without a break toward the front, so solemn and silent that only by an effort of the imagination could it be conceived as populous with armed men, alert and vigilant - a forest formidable with possibilities of battle. Pausing a moment in one of the rifle pits to apprise the men of his intention, Searing crept stealthily forward on his hands and knees and was soon lost to view in a dense thicket of underbrush.

"That is the last of him," said one of the men; "I wish I had his rifle; those fellows will hurt some of us with it."

Searing crept on, taking advantage of every accident of ground and growth to give himself better cover. His eyes penetrated everywhere, his ears took note of every sound. He stilled his breathing, and at the cracking of a twig beneath his knee stopped his progress and hugged the earth. It was slow work, but not tedious; the danger made it exciting, but by no physical signs was the excitement manifest. His pulse was as regular, his nerves were as steady, as if he were trying to trap a sparrow.

"It seems a long time," he thought, "but I cannot have come very far; I am still alive."

He smiled at his own method of estimating distance, and crept forward. A moment later be suddenly flattened himself upon the earth and lay motionless, minute after minute. Through a narrow opening in the bushes he had caught sight of a small mound of yellow clay - one of the enemy's rifle pits. After some little time he cautiously raised his head, inch by inch, then his body upon his hands, spread out on each side of him, all the while intently regarding the hillock of clay. In another moment he was upon his feet, rifle in hand, striding rapidly forward with little attempt at concealment. He had rightly interpreted the signs, whatever they were; the enemy was gone.

To assure himself beyond a doubt before going back to report upon so important a matter, Searing pushed forward across the line of abandoned pits, running from cover to cover in the more open forest, his eyes vigilant to discover possible stragglers. He came to the edge of a plantation - one of those forlorn, deserted homesteads of the last years of the war, upgrown with brambles, ugly with broken fences, and desolate with vacant buildings having blank apertures in place of doors and windows. After a keen reconnaissance from the safe seclusion of a clump of young pines, Searing ran lightly across a field and through an orchard to a small structure which stood apart from the other farm buildings, on a slight elevation, which he thought would enable him to overlook a large scope of country in the direction that he supposed the enemy to have taken in withdrawing. This building, which had originally consisted of a single room, elevated upon four posts about ten feet high, was now little more than a roof; the floor had fallen away, the joists and planks loosely piled on the ground below or resting on end at various angles, not wholly torn from their fastenings above. The supporting posts were themselves no longer vertical. It looked as if the whole edifice would go down at the touch of a finger.

Concealing himself in the debris of joists and flooring, Searing looked at the open

ground between his point of view and a spur of Keuesaw Mountain, a half mile away. A road leading up and across this spur was crowded with troops - the rear guard of the retiring enemy, their gun barrels gleaming in the morning sunlight. Searing had now learned all that he could hope to know. It was his duty to return to his own command with all possible speed and report his discovery. But the grey column of infantry toiling up the mountain road was singularly tempting. His rifle an ordinary "Springfield," but fitted with a globe sight and hair trigger would easily send its ounce and a quarter of lead hissing into their midst. That would probably not affect the duration and result of the war, but it is the business of a soldier to kill. It is also his pleasure if he is a good soldier. Searing cocked his rifle and "set" the trigger.

But it was decreed from the beginning of time that Private Searing was not to murder anybody that bright summer morning, nor was the Confederate retreat to be announced by him. For countless ages events had been so matching themselves together in that wondrous mosaic to some parts of which, dimly discernible, we give the name of history, that the acts which he had in will would have marred the harmony of the pattern.

Some twenty-five years previously the Power charged with the execution of the work according to the design had provided against that mischance by causing the birth of a certain male child in a little village at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, had carefully reared it, supervised its education, directed its desires into a military channel, and in due time made it an officer of artillery. By the concurrence of an infinite number of favouring influences and their preponderance over an infinite number of opposing ones, this officer of artillery had been made to commit a breach of discipline and fly from his native country to avoid punishment. He had been directed to New Orleans (instead of New York), where a recruiting officer awaited him on the wharf. He was enlisted and promoted, and things were so ordered that he now commanded a Confederate battery some three miles along the line from where Jerome Searing, the Federal scout, stood cocking his rifle. Nothing had been neglected at every step in the progress of both these men's lives, and in the lives of their ancestors and contemporaries, and of the lives of the contemporaries of their ancestors - the right thing had been done to bring about the desired result. Had anything in all this vast concatenation been overlooked, Private Searing might have fired on the retreating Confederates that morning, and would perhaps have missed. As it fell out, a captain of artillery, having nothing better to do while awaiting his turn to pull out and be off, amused himself by sighting a field piece obliquely to his right at what he took to be some Federal officers on the crest of a hill, and discharged it. The shot flew high of its mark.

As Jerome Searing drew back the hammer of his rifle, and, with his eyes upon the distant Confederates, considered where he could plant his shot with the best hope of making a widow or an orphan or a childless mother - perhaps all three, for Private Searing, although he had repeatedly refused promotion, was not without a certain kind of ambition - he heard a rushing sound in the air, like that made by the wings of a great bird swooping down upon its prey. More quickly than he could apprehend the gradation, it increased to a hoarse and horrible roar, as the missile that made it sprang at him out of the sky, striking with a deafening impact one of the posts supporting the confusion of timbers above him, smashing it into matchwood, and bringing down the crazy edifice with a loud clatter, in clouds of blinding dust!

Lieutenant Adrian Searing, in command of the picket guard on that part of the line through which his brother Jerome had passed on his mission, sat with attentive ears in his breastwork behind the line. Not the faintest sound escaped him; the cry of a bird, the barking of a squirrel, the noise of the wind among the pines all were anxiously noted by his overstrained sense. Suddenly, directly in front of his line, he heard a faint, confused rumble, like the clatter of a falling building translated by distance. At the same moment an officer approached him on foot from the rear and saluted.

"Lieutenant," said the aide, "the colonel directs you to move forward your line and feel the enemy if you find him. If not, continue the advance until directed to halt. There is reason to think that the enemy has retreated."

The lieutenant nodded and said nothing; the other officer retired. In a moment the men, apprised of their duty by the non-commissioned officer in low tones, had deployed from their rifle pits and were moving forward in skirmishing order, with set teeth and beating hearts. The lieutenant mechanically looked at his watch. Six o'clock and eighteen minutes.

When Jerome Searing recovered consciousness, he did not at once understand what had occurred. It was, indeed, some time before he opened his eyes. For a while he believed that he had died and been buried, and he tried to recall some portions of the burial service. He thought that his wife was kneeling upon his grave, adding her weight to that of the earth upon his breast. The two of them, widow and earth, had crushed his coffin. Unless the children should persuade her to go home, he would not much longer be able to breathe. He felt a sense of wrong. "I cannot speak to her," he thought; "the dead have no voice; and if I open my eyes I shall get them full of earth."

He opened his eyes - a great expanse of blue sky, rising from a fringe of the tops of trees. In the foreground, shutting out some of the trees, a high, dun mound, angular in outline and crossed by an intricate, patternless system of straight lines; in the centre a bright ring of metal - the whole an immeasurable distance away - a distance so inconceivably great that it fatigued him, and he closed his eyes. The moment that he did so he was conscious of an insufferable light. A sound was in his ears like the low, rhythmic thunder of a distant sea breaking in successive waves upon the beach, and out of this noise, seeming a part of it, or possibly coming from beyond it, and intermingled with its ceaseless undertone, came the articulate words: "Jerome Searing, you are caught like a rat in a trap in a trap, trap trap."

Suddenly there fell a great silence, a black darkness, an infinite tranquility, and Jerome Searing, perfectly conscious of his rathood, and well assured of the trap that he was in, remembered all, and, nowise alarmed, again opened his eyes to reconnoitre, to note the strength of his enemy, to plan his defense.

He was caught in a reclining posture, his back firmly supported by a solid beam. Another lay across his breast, but he had been able to shrink a little way from it so that it no longer oppressed him, though it was immovable. A brace joining it at an angle had wedged him against a pile of boards on his left, fastening the arm on that side. His legs, slightly parted and straight along the ground, were covered upward to the knees with a mass of debris which towered above his narrow horizon. His head was as rigidly fixed as in a vice; he could move his eyes, his chin no more. Only his right arm was partly free. "You must help us out of this," he said to it. But he could not get it from under the heavy timber athwart his chest, nor move it outward more than six inches at the elbow.

Searing was not seriously injured, nor did he suffer pain. A smart rap on the head from a flying fragment of the splintered post, incurred simultaneously with the frightfully sudden shock to the nervous system, had momentarily dazed him. His term of unconsciousness, including the period of recovery, during which he had had the strange fancies, had probably not exceeded a few seconds, for the dust of the wreck had not wholly cleared away as he began an intelligent survey of the situation.

With his partly free right hand he now tried to get hold of the beam which lay across, but not quite against, his breast. In no way could he do so. He was unable to depress the shoulder so as to push the elbow beyond that edge of the timber which was nearest his knees; failing in that, he could not raise the forearm and hand to grasp the beam. The brace that made an angle with it downward and backward prevented him from doing anything in that direction, and between it and his body the space was not half as wide as the length of his forearm. Obviously he could not get his hand under the beam nor over it;

he could not, in fact, touch it at all. Having demonstrated his inability, he desisted, and began to think if he could reach any of the debris piled upon his legs.

In surveying the mass with a view to determining that point, his attention was arrested by what seemed to be a ring of shining metal immediately in front of his eyes. It appeared to him at first to surround some perfectly black substance, and it was somewhat more than a half inch in diameter. It suddenly occurred to his mind that the blackness was simply shadow, and that the ring was in fact the muzzle of his rifle protruding from the pile of debris. He was not long in satisfying himself that this was so - if it was a satisfaction. By closing either eye he could look a little way along the barrel - to the point where it was hidden by the rubbish that held it. He could see the one side, with the corresponding eye, at apparently the same angle as the other side with the other eye. Looking with the right eye, the weapon seemed to be directed at a point to the left of his head, and *vice versa*. He was unable to see the upper surface of the barrel, but could see the under surface of the stock at a slight angle. The piece was, in fact, aimed at the exact centre of his forehead.

In the perception of this circumstance, in the recollection that just previously to the mischance of which this uncomfortable situation was the result, he had cocked the gun and set the trigger so that a touch would discharge it, Private Searing was affected with a feeling of uneasiness. But that was as far as possible from fear; he was a brave man, somewhat familiar with the aspect of rifles from that point of view, and of cannon, too; and now he recalled, with something like amusement, an incident of his experience at the storming of Missionary Ridge, where, walking up to one of the enemy's embrasures from which he had seen a heavy gun throw charge after charge of grape among the assailants, he thought for a moment that the piece had been withdrawn; he could see nothing in the opening but a brazen circle. What that was he had understood just in time to step aside as it pitched another peck of iron down that swarming slope. To face firearms is one of the commonest incidents in a soldier's life - firearms, too, with malevolent eyes blazing behind them. That is what a soldier is for. Still, Private Searing did not altogether relish the situation, and turned away his eyes.

After groping, aimless, with his right hand for a time, he made an ineffectual attempt to release his left. Then he tried to disengage his head, the fixity of which was the more annoying from his ignorance of what held it. Next he tried to free his feet, but while exerting the powerful muscles of his legs for that purpose it occurred to him that a disturbance of the rubbish which held them might discharge the rifle; how it could have endured what had already befallen it he could not understand, although memory assisted him with various instances in point. One in particular he recalled, in which, in a moment of mental abstraction, he had clubbed his rifle and beaten out another gentleman's brains, observing afterward that the weapon which he had been diligently swinging by the muzzle was loaded, capped, and at full cock - knowledge of which circumstance would doubtless have cheered his antagonist to longer endurance. He had always smiled in recalling that blunder of his "green and salad days" as a soldier, but now he did not smile. He turned his eyes again to the muzzle of the gun, and for a moment fancied that it had moved; it seemed somewhat nearer.

Again he looked away. The tops of the distant trees beyond the bounds of the plantation interested him; he had not before observed how light and feathery they seemed, nor how darkly blue the sky was, even among their branches, where they somewhat paled it with their green; above him it appeared almost black. "It will be uncomfortably hot here," he thought, "as the day advances. I wonder which way I am looking."

Judging by such shadows as he could see, he decided that his face was due north; he would at least not have the sun in his eyes, and north well, that was toward his wife and children.

"Bah! "he exclaimed aloud, "what have they to do with it?"

He closed his eyes. "As I can't get out, I may as well go to sleep. The rebels are gone, and some of our fellows are sure to stray out here foraging. They'll find me."

But he did not sleep. Gradually he became sensible of a pain in his forehead - a dull ache, hardly perceptible at first, but growing more and more uncomfortable. He opened his eyes and it was gone - closed them and it returned. "The devil!" he said irrelevantly, and stared again at the sky. He heard the singing of birds, the strange metallic note of the meadow lark, suggesting the clash of vibrant blades. He fell into pleasant memories of his childhood, played again with his brother and sister, raced across the fields, shouting to alarm the sedentary larks, entered the sombre forest beyond, and with timid steps followed the faint path to Ghost Rock, standing at last with audible heart-throbs before the Dead Man's Cave and seeking to penetrate its awful mystery. For the first time he observed that the opening of the haunted cavern was encircled by a ring of metal. Then all else vanished, and left him gazing into the barrel of his rifle as before. But whereas before it had seemed nearer, it now seemed an inconceivable distance away, and all the more sinister for that. He cried out, and, startled by something in his own voice - the note of fear - lied to himself in denial: "If I don't sing out I may stay here till I die."

He now made no further attempt to evade the menacing stare of the gun barrel. If he turned away his eyes an instant it was to look for assistance (although he could not see the ground on either side the ruin), and he permitted them to return, obedient to the imperative fascination. If he closed them, it was from weariness, and instantly the poignant pain in his forehead - the prophecy and menace of the bullet - forced him to reopen them.

The tension of nerve and brain was too severe; nature came to his relief with intervals of unconsciousness. Reviving from one of these, he became sensible of a sharp, smarting pain in his right hand, and when he worked his fingers together, or rubbed his palm with them, he could feel that they were wet and slippery. He could not see the hand, but he knew the sensation; it was running blood. In his delirium he had beaten it against the jagged fragments of the wreck, had clutched it full of splinters. He resolved that he would meet his fate more manly. He was a plain, common soldier, had no religion and not much philosophy; he could not die like a hero, with great and wise last words, even if there were someone to hear them, but he could die "game," and he would. But if he could only know when to expect the shot!

Some rats which had probably inhabited the shed came sneaking and scampering about. One of them mounted the pile of debris that held the rifle; another followed, and another. Searing regarded them at first with indifference, then with friendly interest; then, as the thought flashed into his bewildered mind that they might touch the trigger of his rifle, he screamed at them to go away. "It is no business of yours," he cried.

The creatures left; they would return later, attack his face, gnaw away his nose, cut his throat - he knew that, but he hoped by that time to be dead.

Nothing could now unfix his gaze from the little ring of metal with its black interior. The pain in his forehead was fierce and constant. He felt it gradually penetrating the brain more and more deeply, until at last its progress was arrested by the wood at the back of his head. It grew momentarily more insufferable; he began wantonly beating his lacerated hand against the splinters again to counteract that horrible ache. It seemed to throb with a slow, regular, recurrence, each pulsation sharper than the preceding, and sometimes he cried out, thinking he felt the fatal bullet. No thoughts of home, of wife and children, of country, of glory. The whole record of memory was effaced. The world had passed away - not a vestige remained. Here, in this confusion of timbers and boards, is the sole universe. Here is immortality in time - each pain an everlasting life. The throbs tick off eternities.

Jerome Searing, the man of courage, the formidable enemy, the strong, resolute

warrior, was as pale as a ghost. His jaw was fallen; his eyes protruded; he trembled in every fibre; a cold sweat bathed his entire body; he screamed with fear. He was not insane - he was terrified.

In groping about with his torn and bleeding hand he seized at last a strip of board, and, pulling, felt it give way. It lay parallel with his body, and by bending his elbow as much as the contracted space would permit, he could draw it a few inches at a time. Finally it was altogether loosened from the wreckage covering his legs; he could lift it clear of the ground its whole length. A great hope came into his mind: perhaps he could work it upward, that is to say backward, far enough to lift the end and push aside the rifle; or, if that were too tightly wedged, so hold the strip of board as to deflect the bullet. With this object he passed it backward inch by inch, hardly daring to breath, lest that act somehow defeat his intent, and more than ever unable to remove his eyes from the rifle, which might perhaps now hasten to improve its waning opportunity. Something at least had been gained; in the occupation of his mind in this attempt at self-defense he was less sensible of the pain in his head and had ceased to scream. But he was still dreadfully frightened, and his teeth rattled like castanets.

The strip of board ceased to move to the suasion of his hand. He tugged at it with all his strength, changed the direction of its length all he could, but it had met some extended obstruction behind him, and the end in front was still too far away to clear the pile of debris and reach the muzzle of the gun. It extended, indeed, nearly as far as the trigger-guard, which, uncovered by the rubbish, he could imperfectly see with his right eye. He tried to break the strip with his hand, but had no leverage. Perceiving his defeat, all his terror returned, augmented tenfold. The black aperture of the rifle appeared to threaten a sharper and more imminent death in punishment of his rebellion. The track of the bullet through his head ached with an intenser anguish. He began to tremble again.

Suddenly he became composed. His tremor subsided. He clinched his teeth and drew down his eyebrows. He had not exhausted his means of defense; a new design had shaped itself in his mind - another plan of battle. Raising the front end of the strip of board, he carefully pushed it forward through the wreckage at the side of the rifle until it pressed against the trigger guard. Then he moved the end slowly outward until he could feel that it had cleared it, then, closing his eyes, thrust it against the trigger with all his strength! There was no explosion; the rifle had been discharged as it dropped from his hand when the building fell. But Jerome Searing was dead.

A line of Federal skirmishers swept across the plantation toward the mountain. They passed on both sides of the wrecked building, observing nothing. At a short distance in their rear came their commander, Lieutenant Adrian Searing. He casts his eyes curiously upon the ruin and sees a dead body half buried in boards and timbers. It is so covered with dust that its clothing is Confederate grey. Its face is yellowish white; the cheeks are fallen in, the temples sunken, too, with sharp ridges about them, making the forehead forbiddingly narrow; the upper lip, slightly lifted, shows the white teeth, rigidly clinched. The hair is heavy with moisture, the face as wet as the dewy grass all about. From his point of view the officer does not observe the rifle; the man was apparently killed by the fall of the building.

"Dead a week," said the officer curtly, moving on, mechanically pulling out his watch as if to verify his estimate of time. Six o'clock and forty minutes.

(*In the Midst of Life*)

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*Killed at Resaca*

The best soldier of our staff was Lieutenant Herman Brayle, one of the two aides-de-camp. I don't remember where the general picked him up; from some Ohio regiment, I think; none of us had previously known him, and it would have been strange if we had, for no two of us came from the same State, nor even from adjoining States. The general seemed to think that a position on his staff was a distinction that should be so judiciously conferred as not to beget any sectional jealousies and imperil the integrity of that portion of the Union which was still an integer. He would not even choose them from his own command, but by some jugglery at department headquarters obtained them from other brigades. Under such circumstances a man's services had to be very distinguished indeed to be heard of by his family and the friends of his youth; and "the speaking trump of fame" was a trifle hoarse from loquacity, anyhow.

Lieutenant Brayle was more than six feet in height and of splendid proportions, with the light hair and grey-blue eyes which men similarly gifted usually find associated with a high order of courage. As he was commonly in full uniform, especially in action, when most officers are content to be less flamboyantly attired, he was a very striking and conspicuous figure. As for the rest, he had a gentleman's manners, a scholar's head, and a lion's heart. His age was about thirty.

We all soon came to like Brayle as much as we admired him, and it was with sincere concern that in the engagement at Stone's River - our first action after he joined us - we observed that he had one most objectionable and unsoldierly quality, he was vain of his courage. During all the vicissitudes and mutations of that hideous encounter, whether our troops were fighting in the open cotton fields, in the cedar thickets, or behind the railway embankment, he did not once take cover, except when sternly commanded to do so by the general, who commonly had other things to think of than the lives of his staff officers - or those of his men, for that matter.

In every subsequent engagement while Brayle was with us it was the same way. He would sit his horse like an equestrian statue, in a storm of bullets and grape, in the most exposed places - wherever, in fact, duty, requiring him to go, permitted him to remain - when, without trouble and with distinct advantage to his reputation for common sense, he might have been in such security as is possible on a battle field in the brief intervals of personal inaction.

On foot, from necessity or in deference to his dismounted commander or associates, his conduct was the same. He would stand like a rock in the open when officers and men alike had taken to cover; while men older in service and years, higher in rank and of unquestionable intrepidity, were loyally preserving behind the crest of a hill lives infinitely precious to their country, this fellow would stand, equally idle, on the ridge, facing in the direction of the sharpest fire.

When battles are going on in open ground it frequently occurs that the opposing lines, confronting one another within a stone's throw for hours, hug the earth as closely as if they loved it. The line officers in their proper places flatten themselves no less, and the field officers, their horses all killed or sent to the rear, crouch beneath the infernal canopy of hissing lead and screaming iron without a thought of personal dignity.

In such circumstances the life of a staff officer of a brigade is distinctly "not a happy one," mainly because of its precarious tenure and the unnerving alternations of emotion to which he is exposed. From a position of that comparative security from which a civilian would ascribe his escape to a "miracle," he may be dispatched with an order to some commander of a prone regiment in the front line - a person for the moment inconspicuous and not always easy to locate without a deal of search among men somewhat preoccupied, and in a din in which question and answer alike must be imparted in the sign language. It is customary in such cases to duck the head and scuttle away on a keen run, an object of lively interest to some thousands of admiring marksmen. In returning - well, it

is not customary to return.

Brayle's practice was different. He would consign his horse to the care of an orderly - he loved his horse - and walk quietly away on his horrible errand with never a stoop of the back, his splendid figure, accentuated by his uniform, holding the eye with a strange fascination. We watched him with suspended breath, our hearts in our mouths. On one occasion of this kind, indeed, one of our number, an impetuous stammerer, was so possessed by his emotion that he shouted at me:

"I'll b-b-bet you t-two d-d-dollars they d-drop him b-b-fore he g-gets to that d-d-ditch!"

I did not accept the brutal wager; I thought they would. Let me do justice to a brave man's memory; in all these needless exposures of life there was no visible bravado nor subsequent narration. In the few instances when some of us had ventured to remonstrate, Brayle had smiled pleasantly and made some light reply, which, however, had not encouraged a further pursuit of the subject. Once he said: -

"Captain, if ever I come to grief by forgetting your advice, I hope my last moments will be cheered by the sound of your beloved voice breathing into my ear the blessed words, "I told you so."

We laughed at the captain - just why we could probably not have explained - and that afternoon when he was shot to rags from an ambuscade Brayle remained by the body for some time, adjusting the limbs with needless care - there in the middle of a road swept by gusts of grape and canister! It is easy to condemn this kind of thing, and not very difficult to refrain from imitation, but it is impossible not to respect, and Brayle was liked none the less for the weakness which had so heroic an expression. We wished he were not a fool, but he went on that way to the end, sometimes hard hit, but always returning to duty as good as new.

Of course, it came at last; he who defies the law of probabilities challenges an adversary that is never beaten. It was at Resaca, in Georgia, during the movement that resulted in the capture of Atlanta. In front of our brigade the enemy's line of earthworks ran through open fields along a slight crest. At each end of this open ground we were close up to them in the woods, but the clear ground we could not hope to occupy until night, when the darkness would enable us to burrow like moles and throw up earth. At this point our line was a quarter-mile away in the edge of a wood. Roughly, we formed a semicircle, the enemy's fortified line being the chord of the arc.

"Lieutenant, go tell Colonel Ward to work up as close as he can get cover, and not to waste much ammunition in unnecessary firing. You may leave your horse."

When the general gave this direction we were in the fringe of the forest, near the right extremity of the arc. Colonel Ward was at the left. The suggestion to leave the horse obviously enough meant that Brayle was to take the longer line, through the woods and among the men. Indeed, the suggestion was needless; to go by the short route meant absolutely certain failure to deliver the message. Before anybody could interpose, Brayle had centered lightly into the field and the enemy's works were in crackling conflagration.

"Stop that d---d fool!" shouted the general.

A private of the escort, with more ambition than brains, spurred forward to obey, and within ten yards left himself and horse dead on the field of honour.

Brayle was beyond recall, galloping easily along parallel to the enemy and less than two hundred yards distant. He was a picture to see! His hat had been blown or shot from his head, and his long blonde hair rose and fell with the motion of his horse. He sat erect in the saddle, holding the reins lightly in his left hand, his right hanging carelessly at his side. An occasional glimpse of his handsome profile as he turned his head one way or the other proved that the interest which he took in what was going on was natural and without affectation.

The picture was intensely dramatic, but in no degree theatrical. Successive scores

of rifles spat at him viciously as he came within range, and our own line in the edge of the timber broke out in visible and audible defence. No longer regardful of themselves or their orders, our fellows sprang to their feet, and, swarming into the open, sent broad sheets of bullets against the blazing crest of the offending works, which poured an answering fire into their unprotected groups with deadly effect. The artillery on both sides joined the battle, punctuating the rattle and roar with deep earth-shaking explosions, and tearing the air with storms of screaming grape, which, from the enemy's side, splintered the trees and spattered them with blood, and from ours defiled the smoke of his arms with banks and clouds of dust from his parapet.

My attention had been for a moment averted to the general combat, but now, glancing down the unobscured avenue between these two thunderclouds, I saw Brayle, the cause of the carnage. Invisible now from either side, and equally doomed by friend and foe, he stood in the shot-swept space, motionless, his face toward the enemy. At some little distance lay his horse. I instantly divined the cause of his inaction.

As topographical engineer I had, early in the day, made a hasty examination of the ground, and now remembered that at that point was a deep and sinuous gully, crossing half the field from the enemy's line, its general course at right angles to it. From where we were it was invisible, and Brayle had evidently not known of it. Clearly, it was impassable. Its salient angles would have afforded him absolute security if he had chosen to be satisfied with the miracle already wrought in his favour. He could not go forward, he would not turn back; he stood awaiting death. It did not keep him long waiting.

By some mysterious coincidence, almost instantaneously as he fell, the firing ceased, a few desultory shots at long intervals serving rather to accentuate than break the silence. It was as if both sides had suddenly repented of their profitless crime. Four stretcher-bearers, following a sergeant with a white flag, soon afterward moved unmolested into the field, and made straight for Brayle's body. Several Confederate officers and men came out to meet them, and, with uncovered heads, assisted them to take up their sacred burden. As it was borne away toward us we heard beyond the hostile works, fifes and a muffled drum - a dirge. A generous enemy honoured the fallen brave.

Amongst the dead man's effects was a soiled Russia-leather pocketbook. In the distribution of mementoes of our friend, which the general, as administrator, decreed, this fell to me.

A year after the close of the war, on my way to California, I opened and idly inspected it. Out of an overlooked compartment fell a letter without envelope or address. It was in a woman's handwriting, and began with words of endearment, but no name.

It had the following date line: "San Francisco, Cal., July 9, 1862." The signature was "Darling," in marks of quotation. Incidentally, in the body of the text, the writer's full name was given - Marian Mendenhall.

The letter showed evidence of cultivation and good breeding, but it was an ordinary love letter, if a love letter can be ordinary. There was not much in it, but there was something. It was this: -

"Mr. Winters, whom I shall always hate for it, has been telling that at some battle in Virginia, where he got his hurt, you were seen crouching behind a tree. I think he wants to injure you in my regard, which he knows the story would do if I believed it. I could bear to hear of my soldier lover's death, but not of his cowardice."

These were the words which on that sunny afternoon, in a distant region, had slain a hundred men. Is woman weak?

One evening I called on Miss Mendenhall to return the letter to her. I intended, also, to tell her what she had done but not that she did it. I found her in a handsome dwelling on Eincon Hill. She was beautiful, well-bred in a word, charming.

"You knew Lieutenant Herman Brayle," I said, rather abruptly. "You know, doubtless, that he fell in battle. Among his effects was found this letter from you. My

errand here is to place it in your hands."

She mechanically took the letter, glanced through it with deepening colour, and then, looking at me with a smile, said: -

"It is very good of you, though I am sure it was hardly worthwhile." She started suddenly, and changed colour. "This stain," she said, "is it --- surely it is not."

"Madam," I said, "pardon me, but that is the blood of the truest and bravest heart that ever beat."

She hastily flung the letter on the blazing coals. "Ugh! I cannot bear the sight of blood!" she said. "How did he die?"

I had involuntarily risen to rescue that scrap of paper, sacred even to me, and now stood partly behind her. As she asked the question, she turned her face about and slightly upward. The light of the burning letter was reflected in her eyes, and touched her cheek with a tinge of crimson like the stain upon its page. I had never seen anything so beautiful as this detestable creature.

"He was bitten by a snake," I replied.

(*In the Midst of Life*)

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*Parker Anderson, Philosopher*

"Prisoner, what is your name?"

"As I am to lose it at daylight tomorrow morning, it is hardly worth concealing. Parker Anderson."

"Your rank?"

"A somewhat humble one; commissioned officers are too precious to be risked in the perilous business of a spy. I am a sergeant."

"Of what regiment?"

"You must excuse me; if I answered that it might, for anything I know, give you an idea of whose forces are in your front. Such knowledge as that is what I came into your lines to obtain, not to impart."

"You are not without wit."

"If you have the patience to wait, you will find me dull enough tomorrow."

"How do you know that you are to die tomorrow morning?"

"Among spies captured by night that is the custom. It is one of the nice observances of the profession."

The general so far laid aside the dignity appropriate to a Confederate officer of high rank and wide renown as to smile. But no one in his power and out of his favour would have drawn any happy augury from that outward and visible sign of approval. It was neither genial nor infectious; it did not communicate itself to the other persons exposed to it - the caught spy who had provoked it and the armed guard who had brought him into the tent and now stood a little apart, watching his prisoner in the yellow candle-light. It was no part of that warrior's duty to smile; he had been detailed for another purpose. The conversation was resumed; it was, in fact, a trial for a capital offence.

"You admit, then, that you are a spy that you came into my camp disguised as you are, in the uniform of a Confederate soldier, to obtain information secretly regarding the numbers and disposition of my troops?"

"Regarding, particularly, their numbers. Their disposition I already knew. It is morose."

The general brightened again; the guard, with a severer sense of his responsibility, accentuated the austerity of his expression and stood a trifle more erect than before.

Twirling his grey slouch hat round and round upon his forefinger, the spy took a leisurely survey of his surroundings. They were simple enough. The tent was a common "wall tent," about eight feet by ten in dimensions, lighted by a single tallow-candle stuck into the haft of a bayonet, which was itself stuck into a pine-table, at which the general sat, now busily writing and apparently forgetful of his unwilling guest. An old rag-carpet covered the earthen floor; an older hair-trunk, a second chair, and a roll of blankets were about all else that the tent contained; in General Clavering's command, Confederate simplicity and penury of "pomp and circumstance" had attained their highest development. On a large nail driven into the tent-pole at the entrance was suspended a sword-belt supporting a long sabre, a pistol in its holster, and, absurdly enough, a bowie knife. Of that most unmilitary weapon it was the general's habit to explain that it was a cherished souvenir of the peaceful days when he was a civilian.

It was a stormy night. The rain cascaded upon the canvas in torrents, with the dull, drum-like sound familiar to dwellers in tents. As the whooping blasts charged upon it the frail structure shook and swayed and strained at its confining stakes and ropes.

The general finished writing, folded the half sheet of paper, and spoke to the soldier guarding Anderson: "Here, Tassman, take that to the adjutant-general; then return."

"And the prisoner, general?" said the soldier, saluting, with an inquiring glance in the direction of that unfortunate.

"Do as I said," replied the officer, curtly.

The soldier took the note and ducked himself out of the tent. General Clavering turned his handsome, clean-cut face toward the Federal spy, looked him in the eye, not unkindly, and said: "It is a bad night, my man."

"For me, yes."

"Do you guess what I have written?"

"Something worth reading, I dare say. And perhaps it is my vanity I venture to suppose that I am mentioned in it."

"Yes; it is a memorandum for an order to be read to the troops at reveille concerning your execution. Also some notes for the guidance of the provost-marshal in arranging the details of that event."

"I hope, general, the spectacle will be intelligently arranged, for I shall attend it myself."

"Have you any arrangements of your own that you wish to make? Do you wish to see a chaplain, for example?"

"I could hardly secure a longer rest for myself by depriving him of some of his."

"Good God, man! do you mean to go to your death with nothing but jokes upon your lips? Do you not know that this is a serious matter?"

"How can I know that? I have never been dead in all my life. I have heard that death is a serious matter, but never from any of those who have experienced it."

The general was silent for a moment; the man interested, perhaps amused, him - a type not previously encountered.

"Death," he said, "is at least a loss a loss of such happiness as we have, and of opportunities for more."

"A loss of which we will never be conscious can be borne with composure and therefore expected without apprehension. You must have observed, general, that of all the dead men with whom it is your soldierly pleasure to strew your path, none show signs of regret."

"If the being dead is not a regrettable condition, yet the becoming so - the act of dying - appears to be distinctly disagreeable in one who has not lost the power to feel."

"Pain is disagreeable, no doubt. I never suffer it without more or less discomfort. But he who lives longest is most exposed to it. What you call dying is simply the last pain - there is really no such thing as dying. Suppose, for illustration, that I attempt to escape.

You lift the revolver that you are courteously concealing in your lap, and --- "

The general blushed like a girl, then laughed softly, disclosing his brilliant teeth, made a slight inclination of his handsome head, and said nothing. The spy continued: "You fire, and I have in my stomach what I did not swallow. I fall, but am not dead. After a half hour of agony I am dead. But at any given instant of that half hour I was either alive or dead. There is no transition period."

"When I am hanged tomorrow morning it will be quite the same; while conscious I shall be living; when dead, unconscious. Nature appears to have ordered the matter quite in my interest - the way that I should have ordered it myself. It is so simple," he added with a smile, "that it seems hardly worth while to be hanged at all."

At the finish of his remarks there was a long silence. The general sat impassive, looking into the man's face, but apparently not attentive to what had been said. It was as if his eyes had mounted guard over the prisoner, while his mind concerned itself with other matters. Presently he drew a long, deep breath, shuddered, as one awakened from a dreadful dream, and exclaimed almost inaudibly: "Death is horrible!" - this man of death.

"It was horrible to our savage ancestors," said the spy, gravely, "because they had not enough intelligence to dissociate the idea of consciousness from the idea of the physical forms in which it is manifested - as an even lower order of intelligence, that of the monkey, for example, may be unable to imagine a house without inhabitants, and seeing a ruined hut fancies a suffering occupant. To us it is horrible because we have inherited the tendency to think it so, accounting for the notion by wild and fanciful theories of another world - as names of places give rise to legends explaining them, and reasonless conduct to philosophies in justification. You can hang me, general, but there your power of evil ends; you cannot condemn me to heaven."

The general appeared not to have heard; the spy's talk had merely turned his thoughts into an unfamiliar channel, but there they pursued their will independently to conclusions of their own. The storm had ceased, and something of the solemn spirit of the night had imparted itself to his reflections, giving them the sombre tinge of a supernatural dread. Perhaps there was an element of prescience in it. "I should not like to die," he said, "not tonight."

He was interrupted if, indeed, he had intended to speak further by the entrance of an officer of his staff, Captain Hasterlick, the provost-marshal. This recalled him to himself; the absent look passed away from his face.

"Captain," he said, acknowledging the officer's salute, "this man is a Yankee spy captured inside our lines with incriminating papers on him. He has confessed. How is the weather?"

"The storm is over, sir, and the moon shining."

"Good; take a file of men, conduct him at once to the parade-ground, and shoot him."

A sharp cry broke from the spy's lips. He threw himself forward, thrust out his neck, expanded his eyes, clenched his hands.

"Good God!" he cried hoarsely, almost inarticulately; "you do not mean that! You forget - I am not to die until morning."

"I have said nothing of morning," replied the general, coldly; "that was an assumption of your own. You die now."

'But, general, I beg --- I implore you to remember; I am to hang! It will take some time to erect the gallows = two hours - an hour. Spies are hanged; I have rights under military law. For Heaven's sake, general, consider how short --- "

"Captain, observe my directions."

The officer drew his sword, and, fixing his eyes upon the prisoner, pointed silently to the opening of the tent. The prisoner, deathly pale, hesitated; the officer grasped him by the collar and pushed him gently forward. As he approached the tent-pole the frantic man

sprang to it, and, with cat-like agility, seized the handle of the bowie knife, plucked the weapon from the scabbard, and, thrusting the captain aside, leaped upon the general with the fury of a madman, hurling him to the ground and falling headlong upon him as he lay. The table was over-turned, the candle extinguished, and they fought blindly in the darkness. The provost-marshal sprang to the assistance of his superior officer, and was himself prostrated upon the struggling forms. Curses and inarticulate cries of rage and pain came from the welter of limbs and bodies; the tent came down upon them, and beneath its hampering and enveloping folds the struggle went on. Private Tassman, returning from his errand and dimly conjecturing the situation, threw down his rifle, and, laying hold of the flouncing canvas at random, vainly tried to drag it off the men under it; and the sentinel who paced up and down in front, not daring to leave his beat though the skies should fall, discharged his piece.

The report alarmed the camp; drums beat the long roll and bugles sounded the assembly, bringing swarms of half-clad men into the moonlight, dressing as they ran, and falling into line at the sharp commands of their officers. This was well; being in line the men were under control; they stood at arms while the general's staff and the men of his escort brought order out of confusion by lifting off the fallen tent and pulling apart the breathless and bleeding actors in that strange contention.

Breathless, indeed, was one; the captain was dead, the handle of the bowie knife protruding from his throat and pressed back beneath his chin until the end had caught in the angle of the jaw, and the hand that delivered the blow had been unable to remove the weapon. In the dead man's hand was his sword, clenched with a grip that defied the strength of the living. Its blade was streaked with red to the hilt.

Lifted to his feet, the general sank back to the earth with a moan and fainted. Besides his bruises he had two sword-thrusts - one through the thigh, the other through the shoulder.

The spy had suffered the least damage. Apart from a broken right arm, his wounds were such only as might have been incurred in an ordinary combat with nature's weapons. But he was dazed, and seemed hardly to know what had occurred. He shrank away from those attending him, cowered upon the ground, and uttered unintelligible remonstrances. His face, swollen by blows and stained with gouts of blood, nevertheless showed white beneath his disheveled hair - as white as that of a corpse.

"The man is not insane," said the surgeon in reply to a question; "he is suffering from fright. Who and what is he?"

Private Tassman began to explain. It was the opportunity of his life; he omitted nothing that could in any way accentuate the importance of his own relation to the night's events. When he had finished his story and was ready to begin it again, nobody gave him any attention.

The general had now recovered consciousness. He raised himself upon his elbow, looked about him, and, seeing the spy crouching by a campfire, guarded, said simply:

"Take that man to the parade-ground and shoot him."

"The general's mind wanders," said an officer standing near.

"His mind does not wander," the adjutant-general said. "I have a memorandum from him about this business; he had given that same order to Hasterlick" - with a motion of the hand toward the dead provost-marshal - "and, by God! it shall be executed."

Ten minutes later Sergeant Parker Anderson, of the Federal army, philosopher and wit, kneeling in the moonlight and begging incoherently for his life, was shot to death by twenty men. As the volley rang out upon the keen air of the winter midnight, General Clavering, lying white and still in the red glow of the campfire, opened his big blue eyes, looked pleasantly upon those about him, and said, "How silent it all is!"

The surgeon looked at the adjutant-general, gravely and significantly. The patient's eyes slowly closed, and thus he lay for a few moments; then, his face suffused with a

smile of ineffable sweetness, he said faintly, "I suppose this must be death," and so passed away.

(*In the Midst of Life*)

---

*An Inhabitant of Carcosa*

"For there be divers sorts of death - some wherein the body remaineth; and in some it vanisheth quite away with the spirit. This commonly occurreth only in solitude (such is God's will) and, none seeing the end, we say the man is lost, or gone on a long journey - which indeed he hath; but sometimes it hath happened in sight of many, as abundant testimony showeth. In one kind of death the spirit also dieth, and this it hath been known to do while yet the body was in vigour for many years. Sometimes, as is veritably attested, it dieth with the body, but after a season it is raised up again in that place that the body did decay."

Pondering these words of Hali (whom God rest) and questioning their full meaning, as one who, having an intimation yet doubts if there be not something behind other than that which he has discerned, I noted not whither I had strayed until a sudden chill wind striking my face revived in me a sense of my surroundings. I observed with astonishment that everything seemed unfamiliar. On every side of me stretched a bleak and desolate expanse of plain, covered with a tall overgrowth of sere grass, which rustled and whistled in the autumn wind with heaven knows what mysterious and disquieting suggestion. Protruded at long intervals above it, stood strangely-shaped and sombre-coloured rocks, which seemed to have an understanding with one another and to exchange looks of uncomfortable significance, as if they had reared their heads to watch the issue of some foreseen event. A few blasted trees here and there appeared as leaders in this malevolent conspiracy of silent expectation. The day, I thought, must be far advanced, though the sun was invisible; and although sensible that the air was raw and chill, my consciousness of that fact was rather mental than physical - I had no feeling of discomfort. Over all the dismal landscape a canopy of low, lead-coloured clouds hung like a visible curse. In everything there was a menace and a portent - a hint of crime, an intimation of doom. Bird, beast, or insect there was none. The wind sighed in the bare branches of the dead trees and the grey grass bent to whisper its dread secret to the earth; but no other sound or motion broke the awful repose of that dismal place.

I observed in the herbage a number of weather-worn stones, evidently shaped with tools. They were broken, covered with moss, and half sunken in the earth. Some lay prostrate, some leaned at various angles, none were vertical. They were obviously headstones of graves, though the graves themselves no longer existed as either mounds or depressions; the years had levelled all. Scattered here and there, more massive blocks showed where some pompous tomb or ambitious monument had once flung its feeble defiance at oblivion. So old seemed these relics, these vestiges of vanity and memorials of affection and piety - so battered and worn and stained, so neglected, deserted, forgotten the place, that I could not help thinking myself the discoverer of the burial-ground of a prehistoric race of men - a nation whose very name was long extinct.

Filled with these reflections, I was for some time heedless of the sequence of my own experiences, but soon I thought, "How came I hither?" A moment's reflection seemed to make this all clear, and explain at the same time, though in a disquieting way, the singularly weird character with which my fancy had invested all that I saw and heard. I was ill. I remembered now how I had been prostrated by a sudden fever, and how my

family had told me that in my periods of delirium I had constantly cried out for liberty and air, and had been held in bed to prevent my escape out-of-doors. Now I had eluded the vigilance of my attendants, and had wandered hither to --- to where? I could not conjecture.

Clearly I was at a considerable distance from the city where I dwelt - the ancient and famous city of Carcosa. No signs of human life were anywhere visible or audible; no rising smoke, no watchdog's bark, no lowing of cattle, no shouts of children at play - nothing but this dismal burial-place, with its air of mystery and dread, due to my own disordered brain. Was I not becoming again delirious, there, beyond human aid? Was it not indeed all an illusion of my madness? I called aloud the names of my wife and sons, reached out my hands in search of theirs, even as I walked among the crumbling stones and in the withered grass.

A noise behind me caused me to turn about. A wild animal - a lynx - was approaching. The thought came to me: If I break down here in the desert- if the fever returns and I fail, this beast will be at my throat. I sprang toward it, shouting. It trotted tranquilly by, within a hand's breadth of me, and disappeared behind a rock. A moment later a man's head appeared to rise out of the ground a short distance away. He was ascending the far slope of a low hill whose crest was hardly to be distinguished from the general level. His whole figure soon came into view against the background of grey cloud. He was half naked, half clad in skins. His hair was unkempt, his beard long and ragged. In one hand he carried a bow and arrow; the other held a blazing torch with a long trail of black smoke. He walked slowly and with caution, as if he feared falling into some open grave concealed by the tall grass. This strange apparition surprised but did not alarm, and, taking such a course as to intercept him, I met him almost face to face, accosting him with the salutation, "God keep you!"

He gave no heed, nor did he arrest his pace.

"Good stranger," I continued, "I am ill and lost. Direct me, I beseech you, to Carcosa."

The man broke into a barbarous chant in an unknown tongue, passing on and away. An owl on the branch of a decayed tree hooted dismally, and was answered by another in the distance. Looking upward I saw, through a sudden rift in the clouds, Aldebaran and the Hyades! In all this there was a hint of night - the lynx, the man with a torch, the owl. Yet I saw I saw even the stars in absence of the darkness. I saw, but was apparently not seen nor heard. Under what awful spell did I exist?

I seated myself at the root of a great tree, seriously to consider what it was best to do. That I was mad I could no longer doubt, yet recognised a ground of doubt in the conviction. Of fever I had no trace. I had, withal, a sense of exhilaration and vigour altogether unknown to me - a feeling of mental and physical exaltation. My senses seemed all alert; I could feel the air as a ponderous substance, I could hear the silence.

A great root of the giant tree against whose trunk I leaned as I sat held inclosed in its grasp a slab of granite, a portion of which protruded into a recess formed by another root. The stone was thus partly protected from the weather, though greatly decomposed. Its edges were worn round, its corners eaten away, its face deeply furrowed and scaled. Glittering particles of mica were visible in the earth beneath it - vestiges of its decomposition. This stone had apparently marked the grave out of which the tree had sprung ages ago. The tree's exacting roots had robbed the grave and made the stone a prisoner.

A sudden wind pushed some dry leaves and twigs from the uppermost face of the stone; I saw the low-relieved letters of an inscription and bent to read it. God in heaven! my name in full! the date of my birth! the date of my death!

A level shaft of rosy light illuminated the whole side of the tree as I sprang to my feet in terror. The sun was rising in the east. I stood between the tree and his broad red disk -

no shadow darkened the trunk! A chorus of howling wolves saluted the dawn. I saw them sitting on their haunches, singly and in groups, on the summits of irregular mounds and tumuli, filling a half of my desert prospect and extending to the horizon; and then I knew that these were the ruins of the ancient and famous city of Carcosa.

Such are the facts imparted to the medium Bayrolles by the spirit Hoselb Alar Robardin.

(*In the Midst of Life*)

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*Haita the Shepherd*

In the heart of Haita the illusions of youth had not been supplanted by those of age and experience. His thoughts were pure and pleasant, for his life was simple and his soul devoid of ambition. He rose with the sun, and went forth to pray at the shrine of Hastur, the god of shepherds, who heard and was pleased. After performance of this pious rite Haita unbarred the gate of the fold, and with a cheerful mind drove his flock afield, eating his morning meal of curds and oatcake as he went, occasionally pausing to add a few berries, cold with dew, or to drink of the waters that came away from the hills to join the stream in the middle of the valley and be borne along with it, he knew not whither.

During the long summer day, as his sheep cropped the good grass which the gods had made to grow for them, or lay with their forelegs doubled under their breasts and indolently chewed the cud, Haita, reclining in the shadow of a tree, or sitting upon a rock, played so sweet music upon his reed pipe that sometimes from the corner of his eye he got accidental glimpses of the minor sylvan deities, leaning forward out of the copse to hear; but if he looked at them directly, they vanished. From this - for he must be thinking if he would not turn into one of his own sheep - he drew the solemn inference that happiness may come if not sought, but if looked for will never be seen; for, next to the favour of Hastur, who never disclosed himself, Haita most valued the friendly interest of his neighbours, the sky immortals of the wood and stream. At nightfall he drove his flock back to the fold, saw that the gate was secure, and retired to his cave for refreshment and for dreams.

So passed his life, one day like another, save when the storms uttered the wrath of an offended god. Then Haita cowered in his cave, his face hidden in his hands, and prayed that he alone might be punished for his sins and the world saved from destruction. Sometimes when there was a great rain, and the stream came out of its banks, compelling him to urge his terrified flock to the uplands, he interceded for the people in the great cities, which he had been told lay in the plain beyond the two blue hills which formed the gateway of his valley.

"It is kind of thee, O Hastur," so he prayed, "to give me mountains so near to my dwelling and my fold that I and my sheep can escape the angry torrents; but the rest of the world thou must thyself deliver in some way that I know not of, or I will no longer worship thee."

And Hastur, knowing that Halta was a youth who kept his word, spared the cities and turned the waters into the sea.

So he had lived since he could remember. He could not rightly conceive any other mode of existence. The holy hermit who lived at the head of the valley, a full hour's journey away, from whom he had heard the tale of the great cities where dwelt people - poor souls! - who had no sheep, gave him no knowledge of that early time, when, so he reasoned, he must have been small and helpless like a lamb.

It was through thinking on these mysteries and marvels, and on that horrible change

to silence and decay which he felt sure must sometime come to him, as he had seen it come to so many of his flock - as it came to all living things except the birds - that Haita first became conscious how miserable was his lot.

"It is necessary," he said, "that I know whence and how I came; for how can one perform his duties unless able to judge what they are by the way in which he was intrusted with them? And what contentment can I have when I know not how long it is going to last? Perhaps before another sun I may be changed, and then what will become of the sheep? What, indeed, will have become of me?"

Pondering these things, Haita became melancholy and morose. He no longer spoke cheerfully to his flock, nor ran with alacrity to the shrine of Hastur. In every breeze he heard whispers of malign deities whose existence he now first observed. Every cloud was a portent signifying disaster, and the darkness was full of new terrors. His reed pipe when applied to his lips gave out no melody but a dismal wail; the sylvan and riparian intelligences no longer thronged the thicket-side to listen, but fled from the sound, as he knew by the stirred leaves and bent flowers. He relaxed his vigilance, and many of his sheep strayed away into the hills and were lost. Those that remained became lean and ill for lack of good pasturage, for he would not seek it for them, but conducted them day after day to the same spot, through mere abstraction, while puzzling about life and death - of immortality he knew nothing.

One day, while indulging in the gloomiest reflections, he suddenly sprang from the rock upon which he sat, and, with a determined gesture of the right hand, exclaimed: "I will no longer be a suppliant for knowledge which the gods withhold. Let them look to it that they do me no wrong. I will do my duty as best I can, and if I err, upon their own heads be it."

Suddenly, as he spoke, a great brightness fell about him, causing him to look upward, thinking the sun had burst through a rift in the clouds; but there were no clouds. Hardly more than an arm's length away stood a beautiful maiden. So beautiful she was that the flowers about her feet folded their petals in despair and bent their heads in token of submission; so sweet her look that the humming birds thronged her eyes, thrusting their thirsty bills almost into them, and the wild bees were about her lips. And such was her brightness that the shadows of all objects lay divergent from her feet, turning as she moved.

Haita was entranced. Rising, he knelt before her in adoration, and she laid her hand upon his head.

"Come," she said in a voice which had the music of all the bells of his flock "come, thou art not to worship me, who am no goddess, but if thou art truthful and dutiful, I will abide with thee."

Haita seized her hand, and stammering his joy and gratitude, arose, and hand in hand they stood and smiled in one another's eyes. He gazed upon her with reverence and rapture. He said: "I pray thee, lovely maid, tell me thy name and whence and why thou comest."

At this she laid a warning finger on her lip and began to withdraw. Her beauty underwent a visible alteration that made him shudder, he knew not why, for still she was beautiful. The landscape was darkened by a giant shadow sweeping across the valley with the speed of a vulture. In the obscurity the maiden's figure grew dim and indistinct and her voice seemed to come from a distance, as she said, in a tone of sorrowful reproach: "Presumptuous and ungrateful man! must I then so soon leave thee? Would nothing do but thou must at once break the eternal compact?" Inexpressibly grieved, Haita fell upon his knees and implored her to remain - rose and sought her in the deepening darkness - ran in circles, calling to her aloud, but all in vain. She was no longer visible, but out of the gloom he heard her voice saying: "Nay, thou shalt not have me by seeking. Go to thy duty, faithless shepherd, or we never meet again."

Night had fallen, the wolves were howling in the hills, and the terrified sheep crowding about his feet. In the demands of the hour he forgot his disappointment, drove his flock to the fold, and repairing to the place of worship poured out his heart in gratitude to Hastur for permitting him to save his flock, then retired to his cave and slept.

When Haita awoke, the sun was high and shone in at his cave, illuminating it with a great glory. And there, beside him, sat the maiden. She smiled upon him with a smile that seemed the visible music of his pipe of reeds. He dared not speak, fearing to offend her as before, for he knew not what he could venture to say.

"Because," she said, "thou didst thy duty by the flock, and didst not forget to thank Hastur for staying the wolves of the night, I am come to thee again. Wilt thou have me for a companion?"

'Who would not have thee forever?" replied Haita. "Oh! never again leave me until I change and become silent and motionless."

Haita had no word for death.

"I wish, indeed," he continued, "that thou wert of my own sex, that we might wrestle and run races and so never tire of being together."

At these words the maiden arose and passed out of the cave, and Haita, springing from his couch of fragrant boughs to overtake and detain her, observed, to his astonishment, that the rain was falling and the stream in the middle of the valley had come out of its banks. The sheep were bleating in terror, for the rising waters had invaded their fold. And there was danger for the unknown cities of the distant plain.

It was many days before Haita saw the maiden again. One day he was returning from the head of the valley, where he had gone with ewe's milk and oatcake and berries for the holy hermit, who was too old and feeble to provide himself with food.

"Poor old man!" he said aloud, as he trudged along homeward. "I will return tomorrow and bear him on my back to my own dwelling, where I can care for him. Doubtless it is for that that Hastur has reared me all these years, and gives me health and strength."

As he spoke, the maiden, clad in glittering garments, met him in the path with a smile which took away his breath.

"I am come again," she said, "to dwell with thee if thou wilt now have me, for none else will. Thou mayest have learned wisdom, and art willing to take me as I am, nor care to know."

Haita threw himself at her feet. "Beautiful being," he cried, "if thou wilt but deign to accept all the devotion of my heart and soul - after Hastur be served - it is yours forever. But, alas! thou art capricious and wayward. Before tomorrow's sun I may lose thee again. Promise, I beseech thee, that however in my ignorance I may offend, thou wilt forgive and remain always with me."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when a troop of wolves sprang out of the hills, and came racing toward him with crimson mouths and fiery eyes. The maiden again vanished, and he turned and fled for his life. Nor did he stop until he was in the cot of the holy hermit, whence he had set out. Hastily barring the door against the wolves, he cast himself upon the ground and wept.

"My son," said the hermit from his couch of straw, freshly gathered that morning by Haita's hands, "it is not like thee to weep for wolves - tell me what sorrow has befallen thee, that age may minister to the hurts of youth with such balms as it hath of its wisdom."

Haita told him all: how thrice he had met the radiant maid, and thrice she had left him forlorn. He related minutely all that had passed between them, omitting no word of what had been said.

When he had ended, the holy hermit was a moment silent, then said: "My son, I have attended to thy story, and I know the maiden. I have myself seen her, as have many. Know, then, that her name, which she would not even permit thee to inquire, is Happiness.

Thou saidst the truth to her, that she was capricious, for she imposes conditions that man cannot fulfill, and delinquency is punished by desertion. She cometh only when unsought, and will not be questioned. One manifestation of curiosity, one sign of doubt, one expression of misgiving, and she is away! How long didst thou have her at any time before she fled?"

"But a single instant," answered Haita, blushing with shame at the confession. "Each time I drove her away in one moment."

"Unfortunate youth!" said the holy hermit, "but for thine indiscretion thou mightst have had her for two."

(*In the Midst of Life*)

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*The Mocking-Bird*

The time, a pleasant Sunday afternoon in the early autumn of 1861. The place, a forest's heart in the mountain region of southwestern Virginia. Private Grayrock of the Federal Army is discovered seated comfortably at the root of a great pine tree, against which he leans, his legs extended straight along the ground, his rifle lying across his thighs, his hands (clasped in order that they may not fall away to his sides) resting upon the barrel of the weapon. The contact of the back of his head with the tree has pushed his cap downward over his eyes, almost concealing them; one seeing him would say that he slept.

Private Grayrock did not sleep; to have done so would have imperiled the interests of the United States, for he was a long way outside the lines and subject to capture or death at the hands of the enemy. Moreover, he was in a frame of mind unfavorable to repose. The cause of his perturbation of spirit was this: during the previous night he had served on the picket-guard, and had been posted as a sentinel in this very forest. The night was clear, though moonless, but in the gloom of the wood the darkness was deep. Grayrock's post was at a considerable distance from those to right and left, for the pickets had been thrown out a needless distance from the camp, making the line too long for the force detailed to occupy it.

The war was young, and military camps entertained the error that while sleeping they were better protected by thin lines a long way out toward the enemy than by thicker ones close in. And surely they needed as long notice as possible of an enemy's approach, for they were at that time addicted to the practice of undressing - than which nothing could be more unsoldierly. On the morning of the memorable 6th of April, at Shiloh, many of Grant's men when spitted on Confederate bayonets were as naked as civilians; but it should be allowed that this was not because of any defect in their picket line. Their error was of another sort: they had no pickets. This is perhaps a vain digression. I should not care to undertake to interest the reader in the fate of an army; what we have here to consider is that of Private Grayrock.

For two hours after he had been left at his lonely post that Saturday night he stood stock-still, leaning against the trunk of a large tree, staring into the darkness in his front and trying to recognize known objects; for he had been posted at the same spot during the day. But all was now different; he saw nothing in detail, but only groups of things, whose shapes, not observed when there was something more of them to observe, were now unfamiliar. They seemed not to have been there before. A landscape that is all trees and undergrowth, moreover, lacks definition, is confused and without accentuated points upon which attention can gain a foothold. Add the gloom of a moonless night, and something more than great natural intelligence and a city education is required to preserve

one's knowledge of direction. And that is how it occurred that Private Grayrock, after vigilantly watching the spaces in his front and then imprudently executing a circumspection of his whole dimly visible environment (silently walking around his tree to accomplish it) lost his bearings and seriously impaired his usefulness as a sentinel. Lost at his post - unable to say in which direction to look for an enemy's approach, and in which lay the sleeping camp for whose security he was accountable with his life - conscious, too, of many another awkward feature of the situation and of considerations affecting his own safety, Private Grayrock was profoundly disquieted. Nor was he given time to recover his tranquillity, for almost at the moment that he realized his awkward predicament he heard a stir of leaves and a snap of fallen twigs, and turning with a stilled heart in the direction whence it came, saw in the gloom the indistinct outlines of a human figure.

"Halt!" shouted Private Grayrock, peremptorily as in duty bound, backing up the command with the sharp metallic snap of his cocking rifle - "who goes there?"

There was no answer; at least there was an instant's hesitation, and the answer, if it came, was lost in the report of the sentinel's rifle. In the silence of the night and the forest the sound was deafening, and hardly had it died away when it was repeated by the pieces of the pickets to right and left, a sympathetic fusillade. For two hours every unconverted civilian of them had been evolving enemies from his imagination, and peopling the woods in his front with them, and Grayrock's shot had started the whole encroaching host into visible existence. Having fired, all retreated, breathless, to the reserves - all but Grayrock, who did not know in what direction to retreat. When, no enemy appearing, the roused camp two miles away had undressed and got itself into bed again, and the picket line was cautiously re-established, he was discovered bravely holding his ground, and was complimented by the officer of the guard as the one soldier of that devoted band who could rightly be considered the moral equivalent of that uncommon unit of value, "a whoop in hell."

In the mean time, however, Grayrock had made a close but unavailing search for the mortal part of the intruder at whom he had fired, and whom he had a marksman's intuitive sense of having hit; for he was one of those born experts who shoot without aim by an instinctive sense of direction, and are nearly as dangerous by night as by day. During a full half of his twenty-four years he had been a terror to the targets of all the shooting-galleries in three cities. Unable now to produce his dead game he had the discretion to hold his tongue, and was glad to observe in his officer and comrades the natural assumption that not having run away he had seen nothing hostile. His "honorable mention" had been earned by not running away anyhow.

Nevertheless, Private Grayrock was far from satisfied with the night's adventure, and when the next day he made some fair enough pretext to apply for a pass to go outside the lines, and the general commanding promptly granted it in recognition of his bravery the night before, he passed out at the point where that had been displayed. Telling the sentinel then on duty there that he had lost something, - which was true enough - he renewed the search for the person whom he supposed himself to have shot, and whom if only wounded he hoped to trail by the blood. He was no more successful by daylight than he had been in the darkness, and after covering a wide area and boldly penetrating a long distance into "the Confederacy" he gave up the search, somewhat fatigued, seated himself at the root of the great pine tree, where we have seen him, and indulged his disappointment.

It is not to be inferred that Grayrock's was the chagrin of a cruel nature balked of its bloody deed. In the clear large eyes, finely wrought lips, and broad forehead of that young man one could read quite another story, and in point of fact his character was a singularly felicitous compound of boldness and sensibility, courage and conscience.

"I find myself disappointed," he said to himself, sitting there at the bottom of the golden haze submerging the forest like a subtler sea - "disappointed in failing to discover a

fellow-man dead by my hand! Do I then really wish that I had taken life in the performance of a duty as well performed without? What more could I wish? If any danger threatened, my shot averted it; that is what I was there to do. No, I am glad indeed if no human life was needlessly extinguished by me. But I am in a false position. I have suffered myself to be complimented by my officers and envied by my comrades. The camp is ringing with praise of my courage. That is not just; I know myself courageous, but this praise is for specific acts which I did not perform, or performed - otherwise. It is believed that I remained at my post bravely, without firing, whereas it was I who began the fusillade, and I did not retreat in the general alarm because bewildered. What, then, shall I do? Explain that I saw an enemy and fired? They have all said that of themselves, yet none believes it. Shall I tell a truth which, discrediting my courage, will have the effect of a lie? Ugh! it is an ugly business altogether. I wish to God I could find my man!"

And so wishing, Private Grayrock, overcome at last by the languor of the afternoon and lulled by the stilly sounds of insects droning and prosing in certain fragrant shrubs, so far forgot the interests of the United States as to fall asleep and expose himself to capture. And sleeping he dreamed.

He thought himself a boy, living in a far, fair land by the border of a great river upon which the tall steamboats moved grandly up and down beneath their towering evolutions of black smoke, which announced them long before they had rounded the bends and marked their movements when miles out of sight. With him always, at his side as he watched them, was one to whom he gave his heart and soul in love - a twin brother. Together they strolled along the banks of the stream; together explored the fields lying farther away from it, and gathered pungent mints and sticks of fragrant sassafras in the hills overlooking all - beyond which lay the Realm of Conjecture, and from which, looking southward across the great river, they caught glimpses of the Enchanted Land. Hand in hand and heart in heart they two, the only children of a widowed mother, walked in paths of light through valleys of peace, seeing new things under a new sun. And through all the golden days floated one unceasing sound - the rich, thrilling melody of a mocking-bird in a cage by the cottage door. It pervaded and possessed all the spiritual intervals of the dream, like a musical benediction. The joyous bird was always in song; its infinitely various notes seemed to flow from its throat, effortless, in bubbles and rills at each heart-beat, like the waters of a pulsing spring. That fresh, clear melody seemed, indeed, the spirit of the scene, the meaning and interpretation to sense of the mysteries of life and love.

But there came a time when the days of the dream grew dark with sorrow in a rain of tears. The good mother was dead, the meadowside home by the great river was broken up, and the brothers were parted between two of their kinsmen. William (the dreamer) went to live in a populous city in the Realm of Conjecture, and John, crossing the river into the Enchanted Land, was taken to a distant region whose people in their lives and ways were said to be strange and wicked. To him, in the distribution of the dead mother's estate, had fallen all that they deemed of value - the mocking-bird. They could be divided, but it could not, so it was carried away into the strange country, and the world of William knew it no more forever. Yet still through the aftertime of his loneliness its song filled all the dream, and seemed always sounding in his ear and in his heart.

The kinsmen who had adopted the boys were enemies, holding no communication. For a time letters full of boyish bravado and boastful narratives of the new and larger experience - grotesque descriptions of their widening lives and the new worlds they had conquered - passed between them; but these gradually became less frequent, and with William's removal to another and greater city ceased altogether. But ever through it all ran the song of the mocking-bird, and when the dreamer opened his eyes and stared through the vistas of the pine forest the cessation of its music first apprised him that he was awake.

The sun was low and red in the west; the level rays projected from the trunk of each giant pine a wall of shadow traversing the golden haze to eastward until light and

shade were blended in undistinguishable blue.

Private Grayrock rose to his feet, looked cautiously about him, shouldered his rifle and set off toward camp. He had gone perhaps a half-mile, and was passing a thicket of laurel, when a bird rose from the midst of it and perching on the branch of a tree above, poured from its joyous breast so inexhaustible floods of song as but one of all God's creatures can utter in His praise. There was little in that - it was only to open the bill and breathe; yet the man stopped as if struck - stopped and let fall his rifle, looked upward at the bird, covered his eyes with his hands and wept like a child! For the moment he was, indeed, a child, in spirit and in memory, dwelling again by the great river, over-against the Enchanted Land! Then with an effort of the will he pulled himself together, picked up his weapon and audibly damning himself for an idiot strode on. Passing an opening that reached into the heart of the little thicket he looked in, and there, supine upon the earth, its arms all abroad, its gray uniform stained with a single spot of blood upon the breast, its white face turned sharply upward and backward, lay the image of himself! - the body of John Grayrock, dead of a gunshot wound, and still warm! He had found his man.

As the unfortunate soldier knelt beside that masterwork of civil war the shrilling bird upon the bough overhead stilled her song and, flushed with sunset's crimson glory, glided silently away through the solemn spaces of the wood. At roll-call that evening in the Federal camp the name William Grayrock brought no response, nor ever again thereafter.

(*Vol. 2, CW*)

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*The Applicant*

Pushing his adventurous shins through the deep snow that had fallen overnight, and encouraged by the glee of his little sister, following in the open way that he made, a sturdy small boy, the son of Grayville's most distinguished citizen, struck his foot against something of which there was no visible sign on the surface of the snow. It is the purpose of this narrative to explain how it came to be there.

No one who has had the advantage of passing through Grayville by day can have failed to observe the large stone building crowning the low hill to the north of the railway station - that is to say, to the right in going toward Great Mowbray. It is a somewhat dull-looking edifice, of the Early Comatose order, and appears to have been designed by an architect who shrank from publicity, and although unable to conceal his work - even compelled, in this instance, to set it on an eminence in the sight of men - did what he honestly could to insure it against a second look. So far as concerns its outer and visible aspect, the Abersush Home for Old Men is unquestionably inhospitable to human attention. But it is a building of great magnitude, and cost its benevolent founder the profit of many a cargo of the teas and silks and spices that his ships brought up from the under-world when he was in trade in Boston; though the main expense was its endowment. Altogether, this reckless person had robbed his heirs-at-law of no less a sum than half a million dollars and flung it away in riotous giving. Possibly it was with a view to get out of sight of the silent big witness to his extravagance that he shortly afterward disposed of all his Grayville property that remained to him, turned his back upon the scene of his prodigality and went off across the sea in one of his own ships. But the gossips who got their inspiration most directly from Heaven declared that he went in search of a wife - a theory not easily reconciled with that of the village humorist, who solemnly averred that the bachelor philanthropist had departed this life (left Grayville, to wit) because the marriageable maidens had made it too hot to hold him. However this may have been, he had not returned, and although at long intervals there had come to Grayville, in a desultory

way, vague rumors of his wanderings in strange lands, no one seemed certainly to know about him, and to the new generation he was no more than a name. But from above the portal of the Home for Old Men the name shouted in stone.

Despite its unpromising exterior, the Home is a fairly commodious place of retreat from the ills that its inmates have incurred by being poor and old and men. At the time embraced in this brief chronicle they were in number about a score, but in acerbity, querulousness, and general ingratitude they could hardly be reckoned at fewer than a hundred; at least that was the estimate of the superintendent, Mr. Silas Tilbody. It was Mr. Tilbody's steadfast conviction that always, in admitting new old men to replace those who had gone to another and a better Home, the trustees had distinctly in will the infraction of his peace, and the trial of his patience. In truth, the longer the institution was connected with him, the stronger was his feeling that the founder's scheme of benevolence was sadly impaired by providing any inmates at all. He had not much imagination, but with what he had he was addicted to the reconstruction of the Home for Old Men into a kind of "castle in Spain," with himself as castellan, hospitably entertaining about a score of sleek and prosperous middle-aged gentlemen, consummately good-humored and civilly willing to pay for their board and lodging. In this revised project of philanthropy the trustees, to whom he was indebted for his office and responsible for his conduct, had not the happiness to appear. As to them, it was held by the village humorist aforementioned that in their management of the great charity Providence had thoughtfully supplied an incentive to thrift. With the inference which he expected to be drawn from that view we have nothing to do; it had neither support nor denial from the inmates, who certainly were most concerned. They lived out their little remnant of life, crept into graves neatly numbered, and were succeeded by other old men as like them as could be desired by the Adversary of Peace. If the Home was a place of punishment for the sin of unthrift the veteran offenders sought justice with a persistence that attested the sincerity of their penitence. It is to one of these that the reader's attention is now invited.

In the matter of attire this person was not altogether engaging. But for this season, which was midwinter, a careless observer might have looked upon him as a clever device of the husbandman indisposed to share the fruits of his toil with the crows that toil not, neither spin - an error that might not have been dispelled without longer and closer observation than he seemed to court; for his progress up Abersush Street, toward the Home in the gloom of the winter evening, was not visibly faster than what might have been expected of a scarecrow blessed with youth, health, and discontent. The man was indisputably ill-clad, yet not without a certain fitness and good taste, withal; for he was obviously an applicant for admittance to the Home, where poverty was a qualification. In the army of indigence the uniform is rags; they serve to distinguish the rank and file from the recruiting officers.

As the old man, entering the gate of the grounds, shuffled up the broad walk, already white with the fast-falling snow, which from time to time he feebly shook from its various coigns of vantage on his person, he came under inspection of the large globe lamp that burned always by night over the great door of the building. As if unwilling to incur its revealing beams, he turned to the left and, passing a considerable distance along the face of the building, rang at a smaller door emitting a dimmer ray that came from within, through the fanlight, and expended itself incuriously overhead. The door was opened by no less a personage than the great Mr. Tilbody himself. Observing his visitor, who at once uncovered, and somewhat shortened the radius of the permanent curvature of his back, the great man gave visible token of neither surprise nor displeasure. Mr. Tilbody was, indeed, in an uncommonly good humor, a phenomenon ascribable doubtless to the cheerful influence of the season; for this was Christmas Eve, and the morrow would be that blessed 365th part of the year that all Christian souls set apart for mighty feats of goodness and joy. Mr. Tilbody was so full of the spirit of the season that his fat face and

pale blue eyes, whose ineffectual fire served to distinguish it from an untimely summer squash, effused so genial a glow that it seemed a pity that he could not have lain down in it, basking in the consciousness of his own identity. He was hatted, booted, overcoated, and umbrellaed, as became a person who was about to expose himself to the night and the storm on an errand of charity; for Mr. Tilbody had just parted from his wife and children to go "down town" and purchase the wherewithal to confirm the annual falsehood about the hunch-bellied saint who frequents the chimneys to reward little boys and girls who are good, and especially truthful. So he did not invite the old man in, but saluted him cheerily:

"Hello! just in time; a moment later and you would have missed me. Come, I have no time to waste; we'll walk a little way together."

"Thank you," said the old man, upon whose thin and white but not ignoble face the light from the open door showed an expression that was perhaps disappointment; "but if the trustees - if my application - "

"The trustees," Mr. Tilbody said, closing more doors than one, and cutting off two kinds of light, "have agreed that your application disagrees with them."

Certain sentiments are inappropriate to Christmastide, but Humor, like Death, has all seasons for his own.

"Oh, my God!" cried the old man, in so thin and husky a tone that the invocation was anything but impressive, and to at least one of his two auditors sounded, indeed, somewhat ludicrous. To the Other - but that is a matter which laymen are devoid of the light to expound.

"Yes," continued Mr. Tilbody, accommodating his gait to that of his companion, who was mechanically, and not very successfully, retracing the track that he had made through the snow; "they have decided that, under the circumstances - under the very peculiar circumstances, you understand - it would be inexpedient to admit you. As superintendent and *ex officio* secretary of the honorable board" - as Mr. Tilbody "read his title clear" the magnitude of the big building, seen through its veil of falling snow, appeared to suffer somewhat in comparison - "it is my duty to inform you that, in the words of Deacon Byram, the chairman, your presence in the Home would - under the circumstances - be peculiarly embarrassing. I felt it my duty to submit to the honorable board the statement that you made to me yesterday of your needs, your physical condition, and the trials which it has pleased Providence to send upon you in your very proper effort to present your claims in person; but, after careful, and I may say prayerful, consideration of your case - with something too, I trust, of the large charitableness appropriate to the season - it was decided that we would not be justified in doing anything likely to impair the usefulness of the institution intrusted (under Providence) to our care."

They had now passed out of the grounds; the street lamp opposite the gate was dimly visible through the snow. Already the old man's former track was obliterated, and he seemed uncertain as to which way he should go. Mr. Tilbody had drawn a little away from him, but paused and turned half toward him, apparently reluctant to forego the continuing opportunity.

"Under the circumstances," he resumed, "the decision - "

But the old man was inaccessible to the suasion of his verbosity; he had crossed the street into a vacant lot and was going forward, rather deviously toward nowhere in particular - which, he having nowhere in particular to go to, was not so reasonless a proceeding as it looked.

And that is how it happened that the next morning, when the church bells of all Grayville were ringing with an added unction appropriate to the day, the sturdy little son of Deacon Byram, breaking a way through the snow to the place of worship, struck his foot against the body of Amasa Abersush, philanthropist.

(*Vol. 2, CW*)

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*Objective Ideas*

We all remember that the sound of a trumpet has been described as scarlet. The fact that we do remember it is evidence that the incident of a physical sensation masquerading in a garment appropriate to the guest of another sense than the one entertaining it is a general, not an individual, experience. Not, of course, that a trumpet-call impresses us all with a sense of color, but the odd description would long ago have been forgotten had not each mind recognized it as the statement of a fact belonging to a class of facts of which itself has had knowledge. For myself, I never hear good music without wishing to paint it - which I should certainly do with divine success if I understood music and could paint. The hackneyed and tiresome fashion of calling certain pictures "symphonies" in this or that color has a basis of reason - which will somewhat discredit it in the esteem of those whom it has enslaved. I never hear a man talking of "symphonies" in gray, green, pepper-and-salt, crushed banana, ashes-of-heretic or toper's-nose without thinking with satisfaction of the time when he will himself be a symphony in flame-color, lighting up the landscape of the underworld like a flamingo in the dun expanse of a marsh in the gloaming.

I have in mind a notable instance of a sensation taking on three dimensions - one for which I am not indebted, probably, to the courtesy of some forgotten experience producing an association of ideas. It will be conceded that it is at least unlikely that one should ever enjoy simultaneously the double gratification of eating a pineapple and seeing a man hanged; such felicity is reserved, I fancy, for creatures more meritorious than poor sinful human beings. Nevertheless, I never taste pineapple without a lively sense of a man with his head in a black bag, depending from his beam. It is not that I am at the same time conscious of the fruit and of that solemn spectacle; it simply seems to me that a man hanging is the taste of that fruit. It is needless to add that when thinking of those unworthy persons, my enemies, I derive a holy delight from consuming generous slices of pineapple.

There is a class of mental phenomena which, so far as my knowledge goes, has never been "spread upon the record." Possibly they are peculiar to my own imperfect understanding, and a saner consciousness is innocent of them. If so it will gratify my pride of monopoly to admit the public to a view of my intellectual chattels. The mental process of enumeration is with me a gliding upward in various directions from 1 to 100; not along a column of successive figures, like a cat scampering up a staircase, but along a smooth, pale-bluish, angular streak, with the hither-and-yon motion of a soaring snipe. From 1 to 10 the line runs upward, and to the right at an angle with the horizon of about sixty degrees. There it turns sharply back to the left and the grade to 20 is nearly flat. Thence to 30 the ascent is vertical. From 30 to 50 there is an ascent of 10 degrees to the right and slightly away from me. The course to 60 is to the left again, the angle, say 10 degrees. From 60 to 90 there is no break, the course, too, is almost level and directly away; thence to 100 nearly vertical. It will be observed that the angles are all at 10 and its multiples, but there is no angle at 40, none at 70, nor at 80. I may explain that the interval between 10 and 20 is greatly longer than it ought to be, and I venture to protest against the exceptional and unwarrantable brevity of that between 90 and 100.

Every time I count I am compelled to ascend some part of this reasonless and ridiculous Jacobus-ladder, with a "hitchety, hatchety, up I go" movement, like Jack mounting his bean-stalk; and it is ludicrously true that I feel a sense of relief on arriving at the more nearly level stages, and on them am conscious of an augmented speed. I can count from 60 to 70 twice as quickly as I can from 90 to 100. Investigation and comparison of such conceptions as these can but result in unspeakable advancement of

knowledge. If any gentleman has similar ones and a little leisure for their discussion I hope he will consent to meet me in Heaven.

(*Vol. 12, CW*)

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*The Evolution of a Story*

On a calm evening in the early summer, a young girl stood leaning carelessly against a donkey at the top of Plum Hill, daintily but with considerable skill destroying a biscuit by mastication's artful aid. The sun had been for some time behind the sea, but the conscious West was still suffused with a faint ruddiness, like the reflection from an army of boiled lobsters marching below the horizon for a flank attack upon the stomach of Boston.

Slowly and silently the ruby legion held its way. Not a word was spoken; commands given by the general were passed from mouth to mouth, like a single bit of chewing gum amongst the seven children immortalized by Edward Bok, who was more than usually active this evening, if that were possible. And it was possible; in no spirit of bravado, but with firm reliance on the blanc mange he had eaten for dinner, and which was even now shaping itself into exquisite fancies in the laboratory of his genius, the great editor had resolved to reach a higher excellence, or perish in the attempt, as the tree frog, baffled by the smooth bark of the beech, falls exhausted into the spanning jaws of the serpent biding his time below.

Having swallowed the frog, the reptile turned to go away, and by a sinuous course soon reached the highway. Here he stood up and looked about him. There was no living thing in sight. To the right hand and the left the dusty white road stretched away without a break in its dreary, mathematical sameness. Beyond a belt of pines on the opposite side rose a barren, rounded hilltop, resembling the bald crown of a game keeper thrust upward from behind a hedge to offer a shining mark for the poacher.

Grimly the poacher raised and sighted his gun, charged with a double quantity of heavy slugs. There was a moment of silence - a silence so profound, so deathlike in its intensity, that a keen ear might have heard the spanking of an infant in a distant village.

This infant had come, no one knew whence. The story went that it had tramped into town one cold morning, with its cradle slung across its back, and after being refused admittance to the hotel, had gone quietly to the back door and lain down, having first written and pinned to its gown the following placard: "This unfortunate child is the natural son of a foreign prince, who until he shall succeed to the throne of his ancestors begs that the illustrious waif may be tenderly cared for. His Royal Highness cannot say how long his own worthless father may continue to disgrace the realm, but hopes not long. At the end of that time, his Royal Highness will appear to the child's astonished benefactor, crusted as thickly with gems as a toad with warts."

These troublesome excrescences had given the poor toad much pain. Everything that science had devised, and skill applied, had been a mere waste of money; and now at the age of four hundred years, with life just opening before him, with other toads reveling about him in all the jump-up-and-come-down-hardness of their hearts he was compelled to drag himself nervelessly through existence, with no more hope of happiness than a piano has of marriage.

It was not a nice piano; the keys were warped, the mainspring was relaxed, the cog-wheels would not have anything to do with one another, and the pendulum would swing only one way. Altogether a disreputable and ridiculous old instrument. But such as it was, it had stood in that dim old attic, man and boy, for more than thirty years. Its very infirmities, by exciting pity, had preserved it; not one of the family would have laid an axe

at the root of that piano for as much gold as could be drawn by a team of the strongest horses.

Of these rare and valuable animals we shall speak in our next chapter.

(*Vol. 12, CW*)

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## *Verse*

*The Passing Show*

I know not if it was a dream.  I viewed
A city where the restless multitude,
  Between the eastern and the western deep
Had reared gigantic fabrics, strong and rude.

Colossal palaces crowned every height;
Towers from valleys climbed into the light;
  O'er dwellings at their feet, great golden domes
Hung in the blue, barbarically bright.

But now, new-glimmering to-east, the day
Touched the black masses with a grace of gray,
  Dim spires of temples to the nation's God
Studding high spaces of the wide survey.

Well did the roofs their solemn secret keep
Of life and death stayed by the truce of sleep,
  Yet whispered of an hour when sleepers wake,
The fool to hope afresh, the wise to weep.

. . . . . .

I know not if it was a dream.  I came
Unto a land where something seemed the same
  That I had known as 't were but yesterday,
But what it was I could not rightly name.

It was a strange and melancholy land,
Silent and desolate.  On either hand
  Lay waters of a sea that seemed as dead,
And dead above it seemed the hills to stand.

Grayed all with age, those lonely hills - ah me,
How worn and weary they appeared to be!
  Between their feet long dusty fissures clove
The plain in aimless windings to the sea.

One hill there was which, parted from the rest,
Stood where the eastern water curved a-west.

Silent and passionless it stood.  I thought
I saw a scar upon its giant breast.

The sun with sullen and portentous gleam
Hung like a menace on the sea's extreme;
Nor the dead waters, nor the far, bleak bars
Of cloud were conscious of his failing beam.

It was a dismal and a dreadful sight,
That desert in its cold, uncanny light;
No soul but I alone to mark the fear
And imminence of everlasting night!

All presages and prophecies of doom
Glimmered and babbled in the ghastly gloom,
And in the midst of that accursed scene
A wolf sat howling on a broken tomb.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

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*Novum Organum*

In Bacon see the culminating prime
Of Anglo-Saxon intellect and crime.
He dies and Nature, settling his affairs,
Parts his endowments among us, his heirs
To every one a pinch of brain for seed,
And, to develop it, a pinch of greed.
Each thrifty heir, to make the gift suffice,
Buries the talent to manure the vice.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Politics*

That land full surely hastens to its end
Where public sycophants in homage bend
The populace to flatter, and repeat
The doubled echoes of its loud conceit.
Lowly their attitude but high their aim,
They creep to eminence through paths of shame,
Till fixed securely in the seats of pow'r,
The dupes they flattered they at last devour.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

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*Religion*

Hassan Bedreddin, clad in rags, ill-shod,
Sought the great temple of the living God.
  The worshipers arose and drove him forth,
And one in power beat him with a rod.

"Allah," he cried, "thou seest what I got;
Thy servants bar me from the sacred spot."
  "Be comforted," the Holy One replied;
"It is the only place where I am not."

(*Shapes of Clay*)

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*Visions of Sin*

Kraslajorsk, Siberia, March 29
"My eyes are better, and I shall travel slowly toward home." - Danenhower

From the regions of the Night,
Coming with recovered sight -
From the spell of darkness free,
What will Danenhower see?

He will see when he arrives,
Doctors taking human lives.
He will see a learned judge
Whose decision will not budge
Till both litigants are fleeced
And his palm is duly greased.
Lawyers he will see who fight
Day by day and night by night;
Never both upon a side,
Though their fees they still divide.
Preachers he will see who teach
That it is divine to preach -
That they fan a sacred fire
And are worthy of their hire.
He will see a trusted wife
(Pride of some good husband's life)
Enter at a certain door
And - but he will see no more.
He will see Good Templars reel -
See a prosecutor steal,
And a father beat his child.
He'll perhaps see Oscar Wilde.

From the regions of the Night
Coming with recovered sight -
From the bliss of blindness free,

That 's what Danenhower'll see.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Laus Lucis*

Theosophists are about to build a "Temple for the Revival of the Mysteries of Antiquity." - *Vide the Newspapers, passim.*

Each to his taste: some men prefer to play
At mystery, as others at piquet.
Some sit in mystic meditation; some
Parade the street with tambourine and drum.
One studies to decipher ancient lore
Which, proving stuff, he studies all the more;
Another swears that learning is but good
To darken things already understood,
Then writes upon Simplicity so well
That none agree on what he wants to tell,
And future ages will declare his pen
Inspired by gods with messages to men.
To found an ancient order those devote
Their time - with ritual, regalia, goat,
Blankets for tossing, chairs of little ease
And all the modern inconveniences;
These, saner, frown upon unmeaning rites
And go to church for rational delights.
So all are suited, shallow and profound,
The prophets prosper and the world goes round.
For me - unread in the occult, I'm fain
To damn all mysteries alike as vain,
Spurn the obscure and base my faith upon
The Revelations of the good St. John.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Nanine*

We heard a song-bird trilling -
'T was but a night ago.
Such rapture he was rilling
As only we could know.

This morning he is flinging
His music from the tree,
But something in the singing
Is not the same to me.

His inspiration fails him,
  Or he has lost his skill.
Nanine, Nanine, what ails him
  That he should sing so ill?

Nanine is not replying -
  She hears no earthly song.
The sun and bird are lying
  And the night is, O, so long!

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*A Reply to a Letter*

O nonsense, parson - tell me not they thrive
  And jubilate who follow your dictation.
The good are the unhappiest lot alive -
  I know they are from careful observation.
  If freedom from the terrors of damnation
Lengthens the visage like a telescope,
And lacrymation is a sign of hope,
  Then I'll continue, in my dreadful plight,
To tread the dusky paths of sin, and grope
  Contentedly without your lantern's light;
  And though in many a bog beslubbered quite,
Refuse to flay me with ecclesiastic soap.

You say 'tis a sad world, seeing I'm condemned,
  With many a million others of my kidney.
Each continent's Hammed, Japheted and Shemmed
  With sinners - worldlings like Sir Philip Sidney
And scoffers like Voltaire, who thought it bliss
To simulate respect for Genesis -
  Who bent the mental knee as if in prayer,
  But mocked at Moses underneath his hair,
And like an angry gander bowed his head to hiss.

Seeing such as these, who die without contrition,
Must go to - beg your pardon, sir - perdition,
  The sons of light, you tell me, can't be gay,
But count it sin of the sort called omission
. . . . . .

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*To Oscar Wilde*

Because from Folly's lips you got

Some babbled mandate to subdue
The realm of Common Sense, and you
Made promise and considered not -

Because you strike a random blow
At what you do not understand,
And beckon with a friendly hand
To something that you do not know,

I hold no speech of your desert,
Nor answer with porrected shield
The wooden weapon that you wield,
But meet you with a cast of dirt.

Dispute with such a thing as you -
Twin show to the two-headed calf?
Why, sir, if I repress my laugh,
It is more than half the world can do.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

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*By a Defeated Litigant*

Liars for witnesses;  for lawyers brutes
Who lose their tempers to retrieve their suits;
Cowards for jurors;  and for judge a clown
Who ne'er took up the law, yet lays it down;
Justice denied, authority abused,
And the one honest person the accused -
Thy courts, my country, all these awful years,
Move fools to laughter and the wise to tears.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

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*Fate*

Alas, alas, for the tourist's guide! -
He turned from the beaten trail aside,
Wandered bewildered, lay down and died.

O grim is the Irony of Fate:
It switches the man of low estate
And loosens the dogs upon the great.

It lights the fireman to roast the cook;
The fisherman squirms upon the hook,
And the flirt is slain with a tender look.

The undertaker it overtakes;
It saddles the cavalier, and makes
The haughtiest butcher into steaks.

Assist me, gods, to balk the decree!
Nothing I'll do and nothing I'll be,
In order that nothing be done to me.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Philosopher Bimm*

Republicans think Jonas Bimm
  A Democrat gone mad,
And Democrats consider him
  Republican and bad.

The Tough reviles him as a Dude
  And gives it him right hot;
The Dude condemns his crassitude
  And calls him *sans culottes*.

Derided as an Anglophile
  By Anglophobes, forsooth,
As Anglophobe he feels, the while,
  The Anglophilic tooth.

The Churchman calls him Atheist;
  The Atheists, rough-shod,
Have ridden o'er him long and hissed
  "The wretch believes in God!"

The Saints whom clergymen we call
  Would kill him if they could;
The Sinners (scientists and all)
  Complain that he is good.

All men deplore the difference
  Between themselves and him,
And all devise expedients
  For paining Jonas Bimm.

I too, with wild demoniac glee,
  Would put out both his eyes;
For Mr. Bimm appears to me
  Insufferably wise!

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Reminded*

Beneath my window twilight made
Familiar mysteries of shade.
Faint voices from the darkening down
Were calling vaguely to the town.

Intent upon a low, far gleam
That burned upon the world's extreme,
I sat, with short reprieve from grief,
And turned the volume, leaf by leaf,
Wherein a hand, long dead, had wrought
A million miracles of thought.
My fingers carelessly unclung
The lettered pages, and among
Them wandered witless, nor divined
The wealth in which, poor fools, they mined.
The soul that should have led their quest
Was dreaming in the level west,
Where a tall tower, stark and still,
Uplifted on a distant hill,
Stood lone and passionless to claim
Its guardian star's returning flame.
. . . . . .

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*To Nanine*

Dear, if I never saw your face again;
  If all the music of your voice were mute
  As that of a forlorn and broken lute;
If only in my dreams I might attain
The benediction of your touch, how vain
  Were Faith to justify the old pursuit
  Of happiness, or Reason to confute
The pessimist philosophy of pain.
Yet Love not altogether is unwise,
  For still the wind would murmur in the corn,
    And still the sun would splendor all the mere;
    And I - I could not, dearest, choose but hear
Your voice upon the breeze and see your eyes
  Shine in the glory of the summer morn.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*A Black-List*

"Resolved that we will post," the tradesmen say,
"All names of debtors who do never pay."
"Whose shall be first?" inquires the ready scribe -
"Who are the chiefs of the marauding tribe?"
Lo! high Parnassus, lifting from the plain,
Upon his hoary peak, a noble fane!
Within that temple all the names are scrolled
Of village bards upon a slab of gold;
To that bad eminence, my friend, aspire,
And copy thou the Roll of Fame, entire.
Yet not to total shame those names devote,
But add in mercy this explaining note:
"These cheat because the law makes theft a crime,
And they obey all laws but laws of rhyme."

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Oneiromancy*

I fell asleep and dreamed that I
Was flung, like Vulcan, from the sky;
Like him was lamed another part:
His leg was crippled and my heart.
I woke in time to see my love
Conceal a letter in her glove.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Constancy*

Dull were the days and sober,
  The mountains were brown and bare,
For the season was sad October
  And a dirge was in the air.

The mated starlings flew over
  To the isles of the southern sea.
She wept for her warrior lover -
  Wept and exclaimed:  "Ah, me!

"Long years have I mourned my darling
  In his battle-bed at rest;
And it's O, to be a starling,
  With a mate to share my nest!"

The angels pitied her sorrow,
  Restoring her warrior's life;
And he came to her arms on the morrow

To claim her and take her to wife.

An aged lover - a portly,
Bald lover, a trifle too stiff,
With manners that would have been courtly,
And would have been graceful, if -

If the angels had only restored him
Without the additional years
That had passed since the enemy bored him
To death with their long, sharp spears.

As it was, he bored her, and she rambled
Away with her father's young groom,
And the old lover smiled as he ambled
Contentedly back to the tomb.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*A Bit of Science*

What! photograph in colors? 'T is a dream
And he who dreams it is not overwise,
If colors are vibration they but seem,
And have no being. But if Tyndall lies,
Why, come, then - photograph my lady's eyes.
Nay, friend, you can't; the splendor of their blue,
As on my own beclouded orbs they rest,
To naught but vibratory motion's due,
As heart, head, limbs and all I am attest.
How could her eyes, at rest themselves, be making
In me so uncontrollable a shaking?

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*An Augury*

Upon my desk a single spray,
With starry blossoms fraught.
I write in many an idle way,
Thinking one serious thought.

"O flowers, a fine Greek name ye bear,
And with a fine Greek grace."
Be still, O heart, that turns to share
The sunshine of a face.

"Have ye no messages, - no brief,

Still sign:  'Despair', or 'Hope'?"
A sudden stir of stem and leaf -
A breath of heliotrope!

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Detected*

In Congress once great Mowther shone,
Debating weighty matters;
Now into an asylum thrown,
He vacuously chatters.

If in that legislative hall
His wisdom still he'd vented,
It never had been known at all
That Mowther was demented.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Unexpounded*

On Evidence, on Deeds, on Bills,
On Copyhold, on Loans, on Wills,
Lawyers great books indite;
The creaking of their busy quills
I've never heard on Right.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*The Man Born Blind*

A man born blind received his sight
By a painful operation;
And these are things he saw in the light
Of an infant observation.

He saw a merchant, good and wise,
And greatly, too, respected,
Who looked, to those imperfect eyes,
Like a swindler undetected.

He saw a patriot address
A noisy public meeting.
And said:  "Why, that's a calf, I guess,
That for the teat is bleating."

A doctor stood beside a bed
  And shook his summit sadly.
"O see that foul assassin!" said
  The man who saw so badly.

He saw a lawyer pleading for
  A thief whom they'd been jailing,
And said:  "That 's an accomplice, or
  My sight again is failing."

Upon the Bench a Justice sat,
  With nothing to restrain him;
"'Tis strange," said the observer, "that
  They ventured to unchain him."

With theologic works supplied,
  He saw a solemn preacher;
"A burglar with his kit," he cried,
  "To rob a fellow creature."

A bluff old farmer next he saw
  Sell produce in a village,
And said:  "What, what! is there no law
  To punish men for pillage?"

A dame, tall, fair and stately, passed,
  Who many charms united;
He thanked his stars his lot was cast
  Where sepulchers were whited.

He saw a soldier stiff and stern,
  "Full of strange oaths" and toddy;
But was unable to discern
  A wound upon his body.

Ten square leagues of rolling ground
  To one great man belonging,
Looked like one little grassy mound
  With worms beneath it thronging.

A palace's well-carven stones,
  Where Dives dwelt contented,
Seemed built throughout of human bones
  With human blood cemented.

He watched the yellow shining thread
  A silk-worm was a-spinning;
"That creature's coining gold!" he said,
  "To pay some girl for sinning."

His eyes were so untrained and dim

All politics, religions,
Arts, sciences, appeared to him
But modes of plucking pigeons.

And so he drew his final breath,
And thought he saw with sorrow
Some persons weeping for his death
Who'd be all smiles tomorrow.

(*Shapes of Clay*)

---

*Matter for Gratitude*

[Especially should we be thankful for having escaped the ravages of the yellow scourge by which our neighbors have been so sorely afflicted. - *Governor Stoneman's Thanksgiving Proclamation.]*

Be pleased, O Lord, to take a people's thanks
That Thine avenging sword has spared our ranks -
That Thou hast parted from our lips the cup
And forced our neighbors' lips to drink it up.
Father of Mercies, with a heart contrite
We thank Thee that Thou goest south to smite,
And sparest San Francisco's loins, to crack
Thy lash on Hermosillo's bleeding back -
That o'er our homes Thine awful angel spread
His wings in vain, and Guaymas weeps instead.

We praise Thee, God, that Yellow Fever here
His horrid banner has not dared to rear,
Consumption's jurisdiction to contest,
Her dagger deep in every second breast!
Catarrh and Asthma and Congestive Chill
Attest Thy bounty and perform Thy will.
These native messengers obey Thy call -
They summon singly, but they summon all.
Not, as in Mexico's impested clime,
Can Yellow Jack commit recurring crime.
We thank Thee that Thou killest all the time.

Thy tender mercies, Father, never end:
Upon all heads Thy blessings still descend,
Though their forms vary. Here the sown seeds yield
Abundant grain that whitens all the field -
There the smit corn stands barren on the plain,
Thrift reaps the straw and Famine gleans in vain.
Here the fat priest to the contented king
Points out the contrast and the people sing -
There mothers eat their offspring. Well, at least
Thou hast provided offspring for the feast.

An earthquake here rolls harmless through the land,
And Thou art good because the chimneys stand -
There templed cities sink into the sea,
And damp survivors, howling as they flee,
Skip to the hills and hold a celebration
In honor of Thy wise discrimination.

O God, forgive them all, from Stoneman down,
Thy smile who construe and expound Thy frown,
And fall with saintly grace upon their knees
To render thanks when Thou dost only sneeze.

(*Black Beetles in Amber*)

---

*The Spirit of a Sponge*

I dreamed one night that Stephen Massett died,
And for admission up at Heaven applied.
"Who are you?" asked St. Peter. Massett said:
"Jeems Pipes, of Pipesville." Peter bowed his head,
Opened the gates and said: "I'm glad to know you,
And wish we'd something better, sir, to show you."
"Don't mention it," said Stephen, looking bland,
And was about to enter, hat in hand,
When from a cloud below such fumes arose
As tickled tenderly his conscious nose.
He paused, replaced his hat upon his head,
Turned back and to the saintly warden said,
O'er his already sprouting wings: "I swear
I smell some broiling going on down there!"
So Massett's paunch, attracted by the smell,
Followed his nose and found a place in Hell.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*To E.S. Salomon*

Who in a Memorial Day oration protested bitterly against decorating the graves of Confederate dead.

What! Salomon! such words from you,
Who call yourself a soldier? Well,
The Southern brother where he fell
Slept all your base oration through.

Alike to him - he cannot know
Your praise or blame: as little harm
Your tongue can do him as your arm
A quarter-century ago.

The brave respect the brave.  The brave
  Respect the dead;  but *you* - you draw
  That ancient blade, the ass's jaw,
And shake it o'er a hero's grave.

Are you not he who makes today
  A merchandise of old renown
  Which he persuades this easy town
He won in battle far away?

Nay, those the fallen who revile
  Have ne'er before the living stood
  And stoutly made their battle good
And greeted danger with a smile.

What if the dead whom still you hate
  Were wrong?  Are you so surely right?
  We know the issue of the fight -
The sword is but an advocate.

Men live and die, and other men
  Arise with knowledges diverse:
  What seemed a blessing seems a curse,
And Now is still at odds with Then.

The years go on, the old comes back
  To mock the new - beneath the sun.
  Is *nothing* new;  ideas run
Recurrent in an endless track.

What most we censure, men as wise
  Have reverently practiced;  nor
  Will future wisdom fail to war
On principles we dearly prize.

We do not know - we can but deem,
  And he is loyalest and best
  Who takes the light full on his breast
And follows it throughout the dream.

The broken light, the shadows wide -
  Behold the battlefield displayed!
  God save the vanquished from the blade,
The victor from the victor's pride!

If, Salomon, the blessed dew
  That falls upon the Blue and Gray
  Is powerless to wash away
The sin of differing from you.

Remember how the flood of years

Has rolled across the erring slain;
Remember, too, the cleansing rain
Of widows' and of orphans' tears.

The dead are dead - let that atone:
And though with equal hand we strew
The blooms on saint and sinner too,
Yet God will know to choose his own.

The wretch, whate'er his life and lot,
Who does not love the harmless dead
With all his heart and all his head -
May God forgive him - *I* shall not.

When, Salomon, you come to quaff
The Darker Cup with meeker face,
I, loving you at last, shall trace
Upon your tomb this epitaph:

"Draw near, ye generous and brave -
Kneel round this monument and weep:
It covers one who tried to keep
A flower from a dead man's grave."

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*Emancipation*

Behold! the days of miracle at last
Return - if ever they were truly past:
From sinful creditors' unholy greed
The church called Calvary at last is freed -
So called for there the Savior's crucified,
Roberts and Carmany on either side.

The circling contribution-box no more
Provokes the nod and simulated snore;
No more the Lottery, no more the Fair,
Lure the reluctant dollar from its lair,
Nor Ladies' Lunches at a bit a bite
Destroy the health yet spare the appetite,
While thrifty sisters o'er the cauldron stoop
To serve their God with zeal, their friends with soup,
And all the brethren mendicate the earth
With viewless placards: "We've been *so* from birth!"

Sure of his wage, the pastor now can lend
His whole attention to his latter end,
Remarking with a martyr's prescient thrill
The Hemp maturing on the cheerless Hill.

The holy brethren, lifting pious palms,
Pour out their gratitude in prayer and psalms,
Chant *De Profundis*, meaning "out of debt,"
And dance like mad - or would if they were let.

Deeply disguised (a deacon newly dead
Supplied the means) Jack Satan holds his head
As high as any and as loudly sings
His *jubilate* till each rafter rings.
"Rejoice, ye ever faithful," bellows he,
"The debt is lifted and the temple free!"
Then says, aside, with gentle cachination:
"I've got a mortgage on the congregation."

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*Johndonkey*

[There isn't a man living who does not have at least a sneaking reverence for a horseshoe. - *Evening Post*.]

Thus the poor ass whose appetite has ne'er
Known than the thistle any sweeter fare
Thinks all the world eats thistles. Thus the clown,
The wit and Mentor of the country town,
Grins through the collar of a horse and thinks
Others for pleasure do as he for drinks,
Though secretly, because unwilling still
In public to attest their lack of skill.
Each dunce whose life and mind all follies mar
Believes as he is all men living are -
His vices theirs, their understandings his;
Naught that he knows not, all he fancies, *is.*
How odd that any mind such stuff should boast!
How natural to write it in the *Post!*

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*Hell*

The friends who stood about my bed
Looked down upon my face and said:
"God's will be done - the fellow's dead."

When from my body I was free
I straightway felt myself, ah me!
Sink downward to the life to be.

Full twenty centuries I fell,
And then alighted.  "Here you dwell
For aye," a Voice cried - "this is Hell!"

A landscape lay about my feet,
Where trees were green and flowers sweet.
The climate was devoid of heat.

The sun looked down with gentle beam
Upon the bosom of the stream,
Nor saw I any sign of steam.

The waters by the sky were tinged,
The hills with light and color fringed.
Birds warbled on the wing unsinged.

"Ah, no, this is not Hell," I cried;
"The preachers ne'er so greatly lied.
This is Earth's spirit glorified!

"Good souls do not in Hades dwell,
And, look, there's John P. Irish!"  "Well,"
The Voice said, "that's what makes it Hell."

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*A Controversialist*

I've sometimes wished that Ingersoll were wise
To hold his tongue, nor rail against the skies;
  For when he's made a point some pious dunce
Like Bartlett of the *Bulletin* "replies."

I brandish no iconoclastic fist,
Nor enter the debate an atheist;
  But when they say there is a God I ask
Why Bartlett, then, is suffered to exist.

Even infidels that logic might resent,
Saying:  "There's no place for his punishment
  That's worse than earth."  But humbly I submit
That he would make a hell wherever sent.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*Thersites*

So, in the Sunday papers *you*, Del Mar,

Damn, all great Englishmen in English speech?
I am no Englishman, but in my reach
A rogue shall never rail where heroes are.

You are the man, if I mistake you not,
Who lately with a supplicating twitch
Plucked at the pockets of the London rich
And paid your share-engraver all you got.

Because that you have greatly lied, because
You libel nations, and because no hand
Of officer is raised to bid you stand,
And falsehood is unpunished of the laws,

I stand here in a public place to mark
With level finger where you part the crowd -
I stand to name you and to cry aloud:
"Behold mendacity's great hierarch!"

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*A Prayer*

Sweet Spirit of Cesspool, hear a mother's prayer:
Her terrors pacify and offspring spare!
Upon Silurians alone let fall
(And God in Heaven have mercy on them all!)
The red revenges of your fragrant breath,
Hot with the flames invisible of death.
Sing in each nose a melody of smells,
And lead them snoutwise to their several hells!

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*The Perverted Village*

. . . . . .
Sweet Auburn! liveliest village of the plain,
Where Health and Slander welcome every train,
Whence smiling innocence, its tribute paid,
Retires in terror, wounded and dismayed -
Dear lovely bowers of gossip and disease,
Whose climate cures us that thy dames may tease,
How often have I knelt upon thy green
And prayed for death, to mitigate their spleen!
How often have I paused on every charm
With mingled admiration and alarm -
The brook that runs by many a scandal-mill,

The church whose pastor groans upon the grill,
The cowthorn bush with seats beneath the shade,
Where hearts are struck and reputations flayed;
How often wished thine idle wives, some day,
Might more at whist, less at the devil, play.

Unblest retirement! ere my life's decline
(Killed by detraction) may I witness thine.
How happy she who, shunning shades like these,
Finds in a wolf-den greater peace and ease;
Who quits the place whence truth did earlier fly,
And rather than come back prefers to die!
For her no jealous maids renounce their sleep,
Contriving malices to make her weep;
No iron-faced dames her character debate
And spurn imploring mercy from the gate;
But down she lies to a more peaceful end,
For wolves do not calumniate, but rend -
Sinks piecemeal to their maws, a willing prey,
While resignation lubricates the way,
And all her prospects brighten at the last:
To wolves, not women, an approved repast.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*A Political Apostate*

Good friend, it is with deep regret I note
The latest, strangest turning of your coat;
Though any way you wear that mental clout
The seamy side seems always to be out.
Who could have thought that you would e'er sustain
The Southern shotgun's arbitrary reign! -
Your sturdy hand assisting to replace
The broken yoke on a delivered race;
The ballot's purity no more your care,
With equal privilege to dark and fair.
To Yesterday a traitor, to Today
You're constant but the better to betray
Tomorrow.  Your convictions all are naught
But the wild asses of the world of thought,
Which, flying mindless o'er the barren plain,
Perceive at last they've nothing so to gain,
And, turning penitent upon their track,
Economize their strength by flying back.
. . . . . .
The time must come - Heaven expedite the day! -
When all mankind shall their decrees obey,
And nations prosper in their peaceful sway.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*Bats in Sunshine*

Well, Mr. Kemble, you are called, I think,
  A great divine, and I'm a great profane.
You as a Congregationalist blink
  Some certain truths that I esteem a gain,
  And drop them in the coffers of my brain,
Pleased with the pretty music of their chink.
Perhaps your spiritual wealth is such
A golden truth or two don't count for much.

You say that you've no patience with such stuff
  As by Renan is writ, and when you read
(Why *do* you read?) have hardly strength enough
  To hold your hand from flinging the vile screed
  Into the fire.  That were a wasteful deed
Which you'd repent in sackcloth extra rough;
For books cost money, and I'm told you care
To lay up treasures Here as well as There.

I fear, good, pious soul, that you mistake
  Your thrift for toleration.  Never mind:
Renan in any case would hardly break
  His great, strong, charitable heart to find
  The bats and owls of your myopic kind
Pained by the light that his ideas make.
'Tis Truth's best purpose to shine in at holes
Where cower the Kembles, to confound their souls!

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*A Word to the Unwise*

[Charles Main, of the firm of Main & Winchester, has ordered a grand mausoleum for his plot in Mountain View Cemetery. - *City Newspaper*.]

Charles Main, of Main & Winchester, attend
With friendly ear the chit-chat of a friend
  Who knows you not, yet knows that you and he
Travel two roads that have a common end.

We journey forward through the time allowed,
I humbly bending, you erect and proud.
 Our heads alike will stable soon the worm -
The one that's lifted, and the one that's bowed.

You in your mausoleum shall repose,
I where it pleases Him who sleep bestows;
  What matter whether one so little worth
Shall stain the marble or shall feed the rose?

Charles Main, I had a friend who died one day.
A metal casket held his honored clay.
  Of cyclopean architecture stood
The splendid vault where he was laid away.

A dozen years, and lo! the roots of grass
Had burst asunder all the joints; the brass,
 The gilded ornaments, the carven stones
Lay tumbled all together in a mass.

A dozen years! That taxes your belief.
Make it a thousand if the time's too brief.
  'Twill be the same to you;  when you are dead
You cannot even count your days of grief.

Suppose a pompous monument you raise
Till on its peak the solar splendor blaze
  While yet about its base the night is black;
But will it give your glory length of days?

Say, when beneath your rubbish has been thrown,
Some rogue to reputation all unknown -
  Men's backs being turned - should lift his thieving hand,
Efface your name and substitute his own.

Whose then would be the monument?  To whom
Would be the fame?  Forgotten in your gloom,
 Your very name forgotten - ah, my friend,
The name is all that's rescued by the tomb.

For memory of worth and work we go
To other records than a stone can show.
  These lacking, naught remains;  with these
The stone is needless for the world will know.

Then build your mausoleum if you must,
And creep into it with a perfect trust;
  But in the twinkling of an eye the plow
Shall pass without obstruction through your dust.

Another movement of the pendulum,
And, lo! the desert-haunting wolf shall come,
  And, seated on the spot, shall howl by night
O'er rotting cities, desolate and dumb.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*A Dampened Ardor*

The Chinatown at Bakersfield
  Was blazing bright and high;
The flames to water would not yield,
  Though torrents drenched the sky
And drowned the ground for miles around -
  The houses were so dry.

Then rose an aged preacher man
  Whom all did much admire,
Who said: "To force on you my plan
  I truly don't aspire,
But streams, it seems, might quench these beams
  If turned upon the fire."

The fireman said: "This hoary wight
  His folly dares to thrust
On *us!* 'Twere well he felt our might -
  Nay, he shall feel our must!"
With jet of wet and small regret
  They laid that old man's dust.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*Rejected*

When Dr. Charles O'Donnell died
They sank a box with him inside.

The plate with his initials three
Was simply graven - "C. O' D."

That night two demons of the Pit
Adown the coal-hole shunted it.

Ten million million leagues it fell,
Alighting at the gate of Hell.

Nick looked upon it with surprise,
A night-storm darkening his eyes.

"They've sent this rubbish, C.O.D. -
I'll never pay a cent!" said he.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*To Either*

Back further than
I know, in San
Francisco dwelt a wealthy man.
So rich was he
That none could be
Wise, good and great in like degree.

'Tis true he wrought,
In deed or thought,
But few of all the things he ought;
But men said: "Who
Would wish him to?
Great souls are born to be, not do!"

One thing, indeed,
He did, we read,
Which was becoming, all agreed:
Grown provident,
Ere life was spent
He built a mighty monument.

For longer than
I know, in San
Francisco lived a beggar man;
And when in bed
They found him dead -
"Just like the scamp!" the people said.

He died, they say,
On the same day
His wealthy neighbor passed away.
What matters it
When beggars quit
Their beats? I answer: Not a bit.

They got a spade
And pick and made
A hole, and there the chap was laid.
"He asked for bread,"
'Twas neatly said:
"He'll get not even a stone instead."

The years rolled round:
His humble mound
Sank to the level of the ground;
And men forgot
That the bare spot
Was like (and was) the beggar's lot.

Forgotten, too,
Was t'other, who
Had reared the monument to woo
Inconstant Fame,
Though still his name
Shouted in granite just the same.

That name, I swear,
They both did bear
The beggar and the millionaire.
That lofty tomb,
Then, honored - whom?
For argument here's ample room.

I'll not debate,
But only state
The scamp first claimed it at the Gate.
St. Peter, proud
To serve him, bowed
And showed him to the softest cloud.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*The Valley of the Shadow of Theft*

In fair Yosemite, that den of thieves
Wherein the minions of the moon divide
The travelers' purses, lo! the Devil grieves,
His larger share as leader still denied.

El Capitan, foreseeing that *his* reign
May be disputed too, beclouds his head.
The joyous Bridal Veil is torn in twain
And the crepe steamer dangles there instead.

The Vernal Fall abates her pleasant speed
And hesitates to take the final plunge,
For rumors reach her that another greed
Awaits her in the Valley of the Sponge.

The Brothers envy the accord of mind
And peace of purpose (by the good deplored
As honor among Commissioners) which bind
That confraternity of crime, the Board.

The Half-Dome bows its riven face to weep,
But not, as formerly, because bereft:
Prophetic dreams afflict him when asleep
Of losing his remaining half by theft.

Ambitious knaves! has not the upper sod
  Enough of room for every crime that crawls
But you must loot the Palaces of God
  And daub your filthy names upon the walls?

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*Arbor Day*

Hasten, children, black and white -
Celebrate the yearly rite.
Every pupil plant a tree:
It will grow some day to be
Big and strong enough to bear
A School Director hanging there.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*The Piute*

Unbeautiful is the Piute!
  Howe'er bedecked with bravery,
  His person is unsavory -
Of soap he's destitute.

He multiplies upon the earth
  In spite of all admonishing;
  All censure his astonishing
And versatile unworth.

Upon the Reservation wide
  We give for his inhabiting
  He goes a-jackass rabbiting
To furnish his inside.

The hopper singing in the grass
  He seizes with avidity:
  He loves its tart acidity,
And gobbles all that pass.

He penetrates the spider's veil,
  Industriously pillages
  The toads' defenseless villages,
And shadows home the snail.

He lightly runs to earth the quaint
  Red worm and, deftly troweling,

He makes it with his boweling
Familiarly acquaint.

He tracks the pine-nut to its lair,
Surrounds it with celerity,
Regards it with asperity -
Smiles, and it isn't there!

I wish he'd open up a grin
Of adequate vivacity
And carrying capacity
To take his Agent in.

(*Black Beetles*)

---

*The Foot-Hill Resort*

Assembled in the parlor
Of the place of last resort,
The smiler and the snarler
And the guests of every sort -
The elocution chap
With rhetoric on tap;
The mimic and the funny dog;
The social sponge; the money-hog;
Vulgarian and dude;
And the prude;
The adiposing dame
With pimply face aflame;
The kitten-playful virgin -
Virgin on to fifty years;
The solemn-looking sturgeon
Of a firm of auctioneers;
The widower flirtatious;
The widow all too gracious;
The man with a proboscis and a sepulcher beneath.
One assassin picks the banjo, and another picks his teeth.

(*Black Beetles*)

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*From Top to Bottom*

[Japan has 73,759 Buddhist priests, "most of whom," says a Christian missionary, "are grossly ignorant, and many of them lead scandalous lives."]

O Buddha, had you but foreknown
The vices of your priesthood
It would have made you twist and moan

As any wounded beast would.
You would have damned the entire lot
And turned a Christian, would you not?

There were no Christians, I'll allow,
In your day; that would only
Have brought distinction. Even now
A Christian might feel lonely.
All take the name, but facts are things
As stubborn as the will of kings.

The priests were ignorant and low
When ridiculed by Lucian;
The records, could we read, might show
The same of times Confucian.
And yet the fact I can't disguise
That Deacon Rankin's good and wise.

'Tis true he is not quite a priest,
Nor more than half a preacher;
But he exhorts as loud at least
As any living creature.
And when the plate is passed about
He never takes a penny out.

From Buddha down to Rankin! There, -
I never did intend to.
This pen's a buzzard's quill, I swear,
Such subjects to descend to.
When from the humming-bird I've wrung
A plume I'll write of Mike de Young.

(*Black Beetles*)

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*The Dead King*

Hawaii's King resigned his breath -
Our Legislature guffawed.
The awful dignity of death
Not any single rough awed.
But when our Legislators die
All Kings, Queens, Jacks and Aces cry.

(*Black Beetles*)

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*A Wreath of Immortales*
(Excerpts)

. . . . . .

*The Rev. Joseph*

He preached that sickness he could floor
  By prayer and by commanding;
When sick himself he sent for four
  Physicians in good standing.
He was struck dead despite their care,
 For, fearing their dissension,
He secretly put up a prayer,
  Thus drawing God's attention.

. . . . . .

In Sacramento City here
This wooden monument we rear
In memory of Dr. May,
Whose smile even Death could not allay.
He's buried, Heaven alone knows where,
And only the hyenas care;
This May-pole merely marks the spot
Where, ere the wretch began to rot,
Fame's trumpet, with its brazen bray,
Bawled;  "Who (and why) was Dr. May?"

. . . . . .

John Irish went, one luckless day,
To loaf and fish at San Jose.
He got no loaf, he got no fish:
They brained him with an empty dish!
They laid him in this place asleep -
O come, ye crocodiles, and weep.

. . . . . .

Dennis Spencer's mortal coil
Here is laid away to spoil -
Great riparian, who said
Not a stream should leave its bed.
Now his soul would like a river
Turned upon its parching liver.

. . . . . .

  George Perry here lies stiff and stark,
With stone at foot and stone at head.
  His heart was dark, his mind was dark -
"Ignorant ass!" the people said.

  Not ignorant but skilled, alas,
In all the secrets of his trade:

He knew more ways to be an ass
Than any ass that ever brayed.

. . . . . .

Here lies the last of Deacon Fitch,
Whose business was to melt the pitch.
Convenient to this sacred spot
Lies Sammy, who applied it, hot.
'Tis hard - so much alike they smell -
One's grave from t'other's grave to tell,
But when his tomb the Deacon's burst
(Of two he'll always be the first)
He'll see by studying the stones
That he's obtained his proper bones,
Then, seeking Sammy's vault, unlock it,
And put that person in his pocket.

(*Black Beetles*)

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## Appendix

*Bierce on Marriage*

The following is from *Life of Ambrose Bierce*, by Walter Neale, N.Y., 1929. Neale was a long-time friend of Bierce and in his biography of Bierce he uses quotation marks when paraphrasing Bierce from memory, as well as from direct quotation. So most the following is *not* from Bierce's writings, but from Neale's *memory*. In his Preface Neale writes: "In representing Bierce's thoughts and expressions in this volume I have used three methods: direct quotations, within quotation marks; the expression of his thoughts in language somewhat peculiar to his style, yet not so close to his very words as to justify the use of such marks; and quotation marks, used largely for the convenience of the reader, where the context shows that I quote from memory and do not use Bierce's exact language. I am satisfied that in every instance I have given the spirit of the dialogues and that in many instances the exact language as used by Bierce is recorded." So one can put what value one wishes on Neale's following memories, although they seem in Bierce's style and general attitude, and probably bonafide overall. Bierce was married with three children, and later divorced. - *dig. ed.*

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*Chapter IX - On Marriage*
*(Walter Neale)*

Bierce, in his review of Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata*, written when the reviewer was forty-eight, upholds the Russian's contention that all human copulation is a dismal, heart-rending, tragic disaster, blighting the lives of all who engage in its practice. Within the critic's limitations of space, within the compass of his critique, embodying other

commentaries than those on marriage, he was necessarily restricted to brief comments on only a few aspects of sex relations. In his *Collected Works* he expresses no view as to the effect of institutional marriage (or its substitutes) on the State, beyond saying (In the *Kreutzer Sonata* critique) that:

"Schopenhauer explains the shamefacedness of lovers, their tendency to withdraw into nooks and corners to do their wooing, by the circumstance that they plan a crime - they conspire to bring a human soul into a world of woe. Tolstoi takes something of the same ground as to the nature of their offence. Marriage he thinks a sin, and being a religionist, regards the resulting and inevitable wretchedness as its appointed punishment.

"'Little did I think of her physical and intellectual life,' says Posdnyschew, in explanation of conjugal antagonism. 'I could not understand whence sprang our mutual hostility, but how clearly I see now! This hostility was nothing but the protest of human nature against the beast that threatened to devour it. I could not understand this hatred. And how could it have been different? This hostility was nothing else than the mutual hatred of two accessories in a crime - that of instigation, that of accomplishment.'

"Marriage being a sin, it follows that celibacy is a virtue and a duty. Tolstoi has the courage of his convictions in this as in other things. He is too sharp not to see where this leads him and too honest to stop short of its logical conclusion. Here he is truly magnificent! He perceives that his ideal, if attained, would be annihilation of the race. That, as he has elsewhere in effect pointed out, is no affair of his. He is not concerned for the perpetuity of the race, but for its happiness through freedom from the lusts of the flesh. What is it to him if the god whom, oddly enough, he worships, has done his work so badly that his creatures can not be at the same time chaste, happy and alive? Everyone to his business - God as creator and, if he please, preserver; Tolstoi as reformer. *

"....Ought we to try free love, requiring the State to keep off its clumsy hands and let men and women as individuals manage this affair, as they do their religions, their friendships and their diet?" **

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* *The Collected Works*, Vol. X, pp. 155-6.

** *Ibid*., p. 160.

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But here, quite properly, we have no inkling of Bierce's conclusions as to what would be the effect upon the State of any one of numerous substitutes for marriage as practiced in modern Western civilization. His views as expressed in *The Kreutzer Sonata* critique seem to have undergone no change in the quarter of a century that elapsed from the time it was written until his death. But meditation broadened and strengthened his outlook, and time enabled him (with the experience that went with the passage of years) to weigh with larger scales the problem of mode in sex contacts. Yet he struck the balance always.

In so modern an institution as is Western marriage as it is now practiced, Bierce in his ripest wisdom contended, tottering almost as soon as established, and now practiced by only a small percentage of the inhabitants of the earth - an institution contrary to human nature as man has been revealed through seven thousand years - Bierce said there has not been sufficient time in which thoroughly to test so revolutionary an experiment. Nevertheless, the establishment seemed doomed; and, as he said in his review of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, he could see nothing in marriage (or in any order that might be substituted for it) by which individual happiness could be obtained. The fundamental difficulty being in the act of copulation itself, entailing innumerable other difficulties, chief among them the impossibility of reconciling natures so vastly different as those of man and

woman, the human male and female could not be brought into harmonious association for more than a brief period. For a lifetime! - that, to him, was manifestly impossible. There were innumerable points of divergence, irreconcilable, ending, after a few quarrels, in mutual distrust and hatred.

The passage in the review of *The Kreutzer Sonata* to which I have referred is as follows:

"For my part, I know of no remedy, nor do I believe that one can be formulated. It is of the nature of the more gigantic evils to be irremediable - a truth against which poor humanity instinctively revolts, entailing the additional afflictions of augmented nonsense and wasted endeavor. Nevertheless, something may be done in mitigation. The marriage relation that we have we shall probably continue to have, and its Dead Sea fruits will grow no riper and sweeter with time. But the lie that describes them as luscious and satisfying is needless. Let the young be taught, not celibacy, but fortitude. Point out to them the exact nature of the fool's paradise into which they will pretty certainly enter and perhaps ought to enter. Teach them that the purpose of marriage is whatever the teacher may conceive it to be, but not happiness. Mercifully reduce the terrible disproportion between expectation and result. In so far as *The Kreutzer Sonata* accomplishes this end, in so far as it teaches this lesson, it is a good book." *

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* *Ibid*., pp. 160-1.

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Hence Bierce's position that, since it would be contrary to human nature and to all experience that sex functions should cease, it behooves us to work out the best plan for their regulation, and it may well be that the best would be no plan at all - best even for the State and for the preservation of current Western civilization, entailing the least unhappiness in a situation inevitably fraught with anguish.

*II.*

"The normal healthy male human being is by nature polygamous from the beginning of puberty until the youth of his middle age," Bierce held, "and only by the sternest discipline, however imposed, can be forced to keep within the bounds of monogamy. As he advances in middle life, his tendency is toward monogamy, even to celibacy, and this change in his nature is only in part due to his waning physical powers. It is more largely attributable to satiation, to the gratification of curiosity, to repetition of experiences that pall because of their frequency, and even more largely is due to the elderly man's interest in other and finer things. With copulation, as with other sensual gratifications, the edge of pleasure is blunted by use, until finally no edge is left. In fact, the time comes when the sensualist is nauseated: too much pie has made him sick. At this point his good spouse, if she is still under his roof, wreaks her vengeance upon her consort with all the ingenuity of the Devil and in every form conceived by the furies of Hell. All which strengthens the tendency of the male toward celibacy, and to monogamy - monogamy with another woman.

"But many causes contribute toward man's gradual assumption of monogamy. Its practice becomes a fixed habit, for example, and if polygamous man includes in his polygamous associations the mate he has taken for life, life with her in time becomes a fixed habit - and the matrimonial is the most difficult of all habits for a man to break. And, mind you, copulation in the marriage relationship - and copulation is only one of innumerable points of contact where a man and woman are leading their lives together - is

among the less difficult to break of the multitudinous acts that make the habit of conjugal life. The sum of the causes may be put down as habitation rather than cohabitation."

He referred to his previous remark, that the female wreaks her vengeance upon her man when his celibate tendencies set in, when his monogamous career begins, "these two phases being synchronic," saying, "Madame never gets so old, so senile, so used to connubial dallyings as ever to be willing to leave off. She demands of her mate, to the end, the same ardor in word and deed that animated him in the amorous hours of the honeymoon. She places emphasis on words, too, and on caresses, and on all the boyish inanities that were consistent with betrothal. There is nothing of the sort with which to supply her demands. Her lover died on the bridal night. The next morning he could not be brought to life. He was forever dead. He did not pass on to his successor, the husband, even the memory of the follies of courtship. In sooth, the male mate could not be brought even to surmise what he the lover had done, since he was reluctant to speculate on situations so absurd as those into which his predecessor, the wooer, had been inveigled. Among woman's multiple conceptions, there is not that of the many deaths of a man in his numerous phases as he makes progress toward old age and wisdom. She can see nothing incongruous in a savant skipping rope, in a philosopher playing tiddle-de-winks, in an aged husband uxorlously kissing his old wife's withered lips. Even the very, very old woman looks with loathing upon her capon spouse.

"Having sensed the polygamous nature of her mate through all the dreary years preceding middle age, Madame becomes suspicious as her husband gradually conforms to the 'innocuous desuetude' of monogamy, and is certain that some rival (or many) has robbed her hearth. The air, thick with flying fur from the start of the matrimonial journey, now becomes overladen. It is time to call in Havelock Ellis. He alone can satisfactorily explain this phase of 'happiness' in wedlock. The situation was not foreseen by Marie Corelli; but Laura Jean Libbey, in *When His Love Grew Cold* and in *Lovers Once but Strangers Now*, doubtless supplied excellent homilies on this sinful condition. Now the divorce courts unravel the entanglement."

Thus had Bierce philosophized. He continued: "Despite the caravans of evils that travel over the trails of the Saharas of monogamy and polygamy, both those estates have this in their favor: they reduce copulation to a minimum of frequency yet relieve the mind of the load of lust that is incessantly born of celibacy. Paradoxically, monogamy and polygamy are celibacy; at least, under their practice the body and the mind reach the nearest approach to sex void, which would be absolute celibacy. The sex impulse is so strong, riveted by steel, that it can be broken only by age. That condition familiarly known as celibacy is no less than a charnal-house of concupiscence. Perhaps Saint Paul had in mind the consuming flames of the single estate when he advised that it is better to marry than to burn. In matrimony and its substitutes, however, sex occupies but little of man's thought and time. His active adult sex years are but half of a short life and, even with the most voluptuous of mates, consumes but a few moments of the day, week, month, or year given to sex contact. In marital life, copulation plays so small a part, so far as the individuals directly engaged are concerned, that it may be counted the least of all the activities of the participants, both in the time taken and in the influence it exerts upon them. This is true even of polygamy, and would be as true in that estate as in monogamy if the opportunities were equal and the indulgence as frequent, which is not the case - unless one owns a seraglio."

In sex life, Bierce contended, woman was more difficult of appraisement than man. Physically and mentally weaker, through all time she had been dominated by man, who had forced her to his will and had enacted laws for his own protection - for the protection of his property rights in his woman. He protected her only in so far as he conserved his own belongings. Since numerically the sexes were nearly evenly divided in civilized communities, and the disproportion in tribal life was not very great, monogamy had been

forced upon woman. For every man had his woman to defend. The penalty of the male transgressor being death, the tribal Lothario was cautious. So we are unable accurately to say whether woman is by nature as polygamous as man. She has seldom had the opportunity to demonstrate any sexual gregarious instincts that she may possess.

"Nevertheless," said Bierce, "I may here affirm my conclusion that, however monogamous woman in her youth may be by nature, she is quite as prone to polygamy in middle age and old age as man is during his youth, becoming so by gradations, increasing her growing polygamous impulses until she reaches one hundred - the top age of my sex knowledge of woman. Unfortunately, the old woman is frequently denied the exercise of her propensities through the failure of a man to choose her during the process of natural selection upon which he is bent. Here her misfortune is shared by the male. If he would only forget her face and her 'figger,' he would find a most charming consort, one eager to please, docile, intellectual, and in many respects companionable."

*III.*

"We hear a great deal about children being sufficient compensation for the woe entailed by copulation," said Bierce, "and by persons, too, who would not speak of death by murder as rewarding the bereaved. Of all the evils that flow from matrimony, the child is the greatest - except children. The man and the woman who are so misguided as to mate (say at the age of twenty) and produce children until they are fifty, are seventy years old before they leave off drudgery and are released from the countless anxieties they encounter as parents - leave off and die. During these years some of the earlier born have been growing from youth into middle age and heaping every sort of indignity upon their progenitors. Either indifference or worse is the attitude of the adult man and woman toward the authors of their being until death has removed the old folk, relieving the progeny of care for the aged, or endowing them with the property released by the dead. Both parents spend their entire adult lives in unrelieved slavery, quarreling with each other about their children the while, and unaware that the little miscreants will soon come to hold them in contempt, flout them, and probably never give them a thought after the final separation brought about by death. It is a fact, too, that the human parents' love for their offspring gradually grows cold after separation, just as that of the progeny does, if in a less degree.

"In all vertebrate life, parents separate from their young when the maturity of the offspring is reached. In the case of all vertebrates in scales lower than human beings, all memory of the relationship of parent and progeny is lost soon after the separation. Parent and offspring then, without knowledge of their consanguinity, fight each other in the struggle for existence, or mate and breed among themselves.

"Thus the parent rears a structure through many laborious years, embracing the full period of his adult life - to see it crumble into dust. And the interested aged parent has this additional sorrow: he sees his progeny following the path that he and his spouse have blazed - sees them committing the awful offense of matrimony and the still more dire crime of parenthood. So shall conduct continue until all vertebrate life ceases to exist."

*IV.*

"That copulation is deemed sinful by all humanity," Bierce would say, "is not strange: the act is the result of man's direct inheritance from the ancestral beast. Virtually all vertebrates are ashamed of the gross performance. They have the sense of decency, however, to retire to some secluded place, when it is available, and there do their love-making. In the act of copulation the human being conducts himself in very much the way of the brute. There are only two other natural functions of the body that man exercises *in*

*camera*. He is heartily ashamed of all three.

"It is untrue that either the Old Testament or the New holds that 'marriage is honorable among all men,' with the exception of an isolated expression of Saint Paul to that effect. That was merely the Apostle's euphemistic way of facing the inevitable. He never believed it; nobody has ever believed it.

"God the Father when He made Adam and Eve had no thought that they would disgrace Him by copulating, and forbade them to eat of the fruit of knowledge; then, after they had violated His command, when they stood before Him disgraced, His indignation knew no bounds: Unto the woman he said, 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.' And unto Adam he said, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life,' and went on to flay Adam to His heart's content. That's what God the Father thought of copulation. His punishment was more copulation - more children - on the principle that *similia similibus curantur* - that, in disgust, they would leave off. That would have been my method of terminating the gross iniquity. But the punishment failed of its purpose: disgust of satiety failed to endure.

"The Old Testament is crammed full of references to marriage in which the writers of those Scriptures showed their disgust with the whole process. But, since the relationship seemed inevitable, there grew up a terminology that became matrimony's own, - words and phrases that are now used as a coating of sugar to make palatable a bitter pill. After long usage, this terminology conveys but little or no 'indelicate' meaning these days. The words *love-making, marriage, honeymoon, birth,* are shamelessly uttered in the most polite society of mingled sexes. Copulation, to be sure, still remains in the dictionary, but is not uttered in drawing-rooms. Synonyms of the word - synonyms known to the most modest of little misses in their teens - have been ignored by the lexicographer. Perfectly innocent in themselves, these words describe a 'shameful act,' just as *marriage* does; but, unlike the word *marriage*, the edge has not been worn off and the meaning obscured by frequent use.

"If the clergyman who so sonorously refers to 'the holy estate of matrimony,' repeating what Saint Paul said about it, were to hear somebody ask if his master Jesus had ever had a carnal mate [use here of the phrase used by Bierce would be offensive to some of my readers] he would be inexpressibly shocked. Why? If marriage be honorable, not sinful, not shameful, why should not the man Jesus have mated and reared a progeny? Thus addressed, the clergyman would enter upon a specious argument, in which God the Father and the special mission of His Son would figure, this mission being salvation, not propagation. Nevertheless, the real shock to the good man would be in the suggestion that the Holy Jesus could commit so unholy an act as the one described by the word marriage.

"The Roman Church, because of its knowledge that man holds matrimony to be indecent, sinful, and a form of depravity, wisely excludes its priests from its 'benefits.' Could a penitent go to the confessional with the knowledge that his father-confessor had just come from his connubial couch? To be sure, we close our eyes to the horrible situation in which our great statesmen and philosophers and other honored dignitaries place themselves when they commit matrimony. If caught in marital conjunction, they would be held in the utmost contempt and loathing by the beholder. The coarse and frivolous might give vent to callous merriment. Even the external organs of reproduction are kept covered for very shame.

"If the sex relationship be not awful, why is virginity held in so high esteem and innocence declared to be superior to knowledge? Surely the sexually experienced woman, sanctified by God's sacrament of marriage, should be more praiseworthy than a

virgin. But there is not a man among us, not even among all the husbands, who does not place the ignorant unpracticed maiden upon a higher plane than he does the wedded woman.

"Furthermore, if marriage was ordained by God as a holy estate, and so ordained by Him long before the Nativity, one would think that the clergy would have some difficulty in explaining why the Almighty did not beget His only Son in accordance with His own holy institution. But He selected a wedded woman to be the mother of His only Child - a young girl, a maiden of fifteen, who had not yet had intercourse with her husband, still a virgin, and consequently spiritually superior to one practiced in the matrimonial arts. Upon her person He wrought no 'decency,' but caused her to bring forth a Son, 'begotten, not made.' Again the clergyman would enter upon a long theological discussion, and no doubt would explain to his own satisfaction why God when He set out to achieve one of the results consequent upon matrimony did not go about it according to His own natural law. Ah! does not a still, small voice whisper into every man's ear that copulation is a shameful thing? Here God might indeed have manifested His belief in the sanctity of marriage by its personal practice.

"If all this is not proof of the sinfulness of sex love, it may be multiplied by interminable evidence. But no argument to the contrary could be so specious as to convince anybody; for everybody feels within his soul that mating is inherently offensive.

"Now, if our sky-pilots would frankly admit that our whole structure of marriage has been erected by themselves, not by God, and that they have put into Jehovah's mouth words that He never uttered, they might be on safe ground."

I once told Bierce of an incident that occurred when I was a law student. The class fool interrupted the lecturer on domestic relations, an old and distinguished jurist, to ask the difference between fornication and adultery. The old judge replied: "Well, young man, in law there is a great deal of difference; but in my practice, sir, I have been unable to find any."

"Which reminds me," said Bierce, "although I'm sure I don't know why it should, that those who affirm marriage to be honorable among all men express their abhorrence of lust. They are inconsistent. I seldom turn to a dictionary; but let's see how this one defines the word. Probably it gives the meaning commonly known to the peasantry. 'Lust, *n*. 1. Vehement or covetous affection or desire. 2. Inordinate desire for carnal pleasure.' Anything dishonorable in such emotions? Not if marriage he honorable! But *lust* has come to have another meaning, given to the word by Jews and Christians, none of whom could define it beyond saying that it means something awful, unspeakable, dreadful beyond expression; something of which no decent man could be guilty - beyond even the thought of a virtuous woman. Love, they would say, is something entirely different, sacrosanct, in which lust has no part.

"Now let us turn to the same dictionary for a definition of *love*. 'Love, *n*. 1. A strong complex emotion or feeling causing one to appreciate, delight in, and crave the presence, or possession, of the object and to please and promote the welfare of that object; devoted affection or attachment. 2. Specifically, such feeling between husband and wife or lover and sweetheart. 3. One who is beloved; a sweetheart. 4. Animal passion, or the gratification of it.' Some language! The fellow put on his top-hat and tried to lift himself by his pen to its crown. That was a momentous occasion, when he undertook to define *love*.

"Yet, had *lust* been the word instead of *love*, the meaning would have been equally applicable. There is nothing in this definition of love that does not describe the properties of lust.

"Be ye assured, my sanctimonious friends, no child ever yet was begot without lust - on the part of its father, at least. Even the Psalmist points out: 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' A terribly sinful act, this begetting of children, and necessarily a concupiscent performance!

"Call *lust* by another name, *love*, if you will.
Yet the stench of the carnal will hang round it still. *

"As a matter of fact, the sanctimonious erect upon a granite foundation of lust a tremendous structure that they name *love* - a superstructure that would totter and fall if its base should be blasted. The thing of our imaginative creation known as *love* is simply *lust* glorified. The granite foundation is not impaired by the ornate structure reared upon it."

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* This parody he extemporized without hesitancy.

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*V.*

"So far as society be concerned," Bierce continued, "why should the modern Western institution of marriage be its only safeguard, or even the most preferable form of regulation of sex life? Why should sex life be regulated at all? The stars have looked down upon other earthly civilizations quite as exalted as that of the modern West - civilizations in which children were reared without rules governing the sex life of their parents. I advocate neither free love nor any existing or suggested rules for the governing of sexual intercourse; but I can plainly see that children could be better reared outside of the environs of the homes in which they are brought up - with a few exceptions, but very few. Not the tenth of one percent of the children of any existing civilization are properly reared.

"Oh, yes; there would be all sorts of difficulties to face if the bringing up of children were given over to the State! Among them would be the difficulty of preserving individual characteristics; for the tendency would be to create adults of one pattern. There are thousands of other points that the State would have to face. As it is, every nation confronts millions, and pretty nearly all the problems are due to the haphazard manner in which children are now reared. "After all that has been said by countless thousands, the course of love will continue to run - not smoothly, but pretty much as it damn pleases."

*VI.*

"Yet," Bierce affirmed, "it remains true that love is youth's greatest adventure. Unlike war, love has no horrors while it lasts - none that lovers can detect. Its popularity attests its sinfulness. It will continue to be hotly sought. All thanks be to Israel and to her prophets for surrounding carnal love with the glamor of the forbidden and for making conjugality the cardinal prohibition. Because of this we seize Cupid's quiver with the greater ardor and pursue Folly to the enchanted bowers of Circe."

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## *Sources*

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*Compiled by M.R.J., 2014*

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