Mistakes, Treasons and Fabrications

Alain Geoffroy

Mistakes, Treasons and Fabrications

Notice

Alice Vere

Presented as a narrative which "may possibly be known to more than one of our readers," this text of 1836 pretends to "infringe upon no feeling of domestic privacy" (118), an introductory precaution meant to make it a report more than a fiction, a literary device widely spread in (short) fictions at the time. Alice Vere's pathetic story is almost entirely situated on board a whaler, if we except her brief preliminary meeting with the narrator, immediately seduced by her "feminine softness of disposition" (119), "one morning in the stage coach for Sag Harbor" (119) where she embarked for her fatal voyage on her way to the Pacific and to a husband she had never met before. At first seen as a hostile environment—the narrator recommends the captain to "secure her whatever attention it was in his power to offer" (121)—, the ship becomes Alice's only home and refuge for months, so that she even "wistfully . . . begged to remain" (128) on board for the wedding ceremony. However, the vessel is also her jail for she never has an opportunity to land on the paradisaical islands which they call at, but whose proximity, in the "bland and voluptuous clime" (122) bathing them, lets her "scarcely suppress a scream of delight" (123) when she sees that "her wildest visions of tropical scenery seemed more than realized" (123).

Nevertheless, if she has to keep out of "scenes so fresh and so Elysian" (122), she welcomes "with girlish interest" the approach of natives bringing presents, and above all that of a "striking figure, dressed after the clerical fashion of her own country" (123). Here is the origin not so much of her fatal error, but of her ill-timed fit of love at first sight, both so unexpected and so inevitable. For in the orphan girl's eyes, "bred up in great seclusion in a clergyman's family" (120) and supposed to join her future husband who is a missionary, the nice-looking visitor who "instantly hurrie[s] towards her," dressed in a "deep mourning" (123) as he is, can only be a clergyman. His aspect and his attitude allow the crystallization of her desire, determined both by what she has known and what she is ex-

pecting. In fact, Alice never goes off the rails of her education, but on the contrary sticks to the symbols "for which she was schooled" (121) and which determine her life and her emotional choices.

However, the very symbols Alice naively and desperately clings to lack any reliability, as indicated by the sarcastic remarks of the narrator, who sees missionaries as men "mistaking the promptings of zeal for the inspiration of a special calling, and who, without minds matured by experience or enlightened by education, leave the plough or the shop-board to become the instructors of those who, with feelings as sincere as their own, and understandings far more exercised in knowledge of good and of evil, are expected to bow to their narrow teachings" (127). If this is true, we understand easily why Alice, whose "tender and imaginative temperament" (121) is nothing, perhaps, than a form of honesty, after "a very brief interview [which] sufficed for her to read the character of her destined husband[,] . . . felt that she could never love him" (127). Alice successively undergoes two opposite versions of the same insight: whereas she falls *immediately* in love with the young stranger, she realises *at once* that she cannot love her fiancé. The "fancied portrait of her future husband" becomes that of the inaccessible young man, whereas "the background of the picture" (122) is all that remains of her dreams now turned into a nostalgia for a sense of freedom she has never actually known: "she looked to the *untamed* forest, whose boughs waved unfettered on the shore, . . . the broad main that spread its *free* waves around her, and the *wild* bird that sported over its bosom" (128, emphasis added). Then Nature and the elements, one more time, convey Alice's emotions: while the storm which assailed the ship after her meeting with the unknown young man echoes her frustrated desires, the "tumult of feelings" (128) which overwhelms her during the wedding ceremony triggers off the tempest which raises just after her marriage, as if it were the consequence of a legitimate divine wrath after what appears, emotionally speaking, as a misalliance.

The way Alice sacrifices herself out of despair calls to mind Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's Virginia,[158] also carried away by a gigantic wave during a tropical storm, under the eyes of horrified powerless witnesses, when her ship was anchored near the shore.

---

[158] Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, (1737-1814). *Paul and Virginia* (1788).

Both of them are shown alone on the stern of the ship, Alice "standing upon the taffrail with arms outstretched" (129) and Virginia "in the stern-gallery of the Saint-Geran, stretching out her arms," whereas "[the] cry of horror [which] escaped the revellers" (129) echoes the "redoubled cries from the spectators" in *Paul and Virginia* when a "mountain billow, of enormous magnitude [which] menaced the shattered vessel, towards which it rolled bellowing" parallels the "huge wave that lifted its o'er-arching crest above her, and threatened to engulph the vessel" in "Alice Vere" (129). This tragic ending, added to fictional elements such as frustrated love, beautiful exotic sceneries and raging natural elements, make Alice Vere a convincing Romantic heroine whose misfortune sounds like a condemnation of some of the American moral and educational standards and practices of the time.

The Alias—or Mr. St. John

In this short piece, the very European dandyism is somewhat ironically presented in the American setting of Saratoga, whose name still reverberates the echoes of the War of Independence.[159] This humorous narrative both parodies the standards of fashion popularized by "Beau" Brummell[160] in England and contradicts Byron's[161] philosophy of life with its happy, conventional ending. However, the pair of friends who "passed leisurely the spring at Congress Hall" (130) undeniably typify the dandy lifestyle, in particular in their manners and outfits. Phil wears an "eccentric palm leaf sombrero inclined at the merest possible angle to his left eye" not only because he is morbidly eager to display his elegance, but "from a horror of being like other people" (130), a trait which reflects the counter-cultural ambitions of any self-respecting dandy. As for his companion, Mr. R— (alias Mr. St. John), only interested in "the pretty and the piquant" (131), he "can *dress*" (131) and, knowing that

---

[159] See *infra* note 146.

[160] George Bryan Brummell (1778-1840), a fashion leader dandy in Regency England. See Barbey d'Aurevilly's essay *On Dandyism and George Brummell* (1897).

[161] George Gordon, 6th Baron Byron of Rochdale (1788-1824), a leading figure of the British romantic movement, notorious for his love affairs and unconventional lifestyle. See *supra* note 453.

he may be "impudent by candlelight" (132), he strikes the typical self-confident pose of the dandy: "I settled my cravat, and with an assurance that would have astonished myself by daylight, lounged coolly and alone up the middle of the splendid hall, my head slightly inclined in a collected modesty, and my glass passing leisurely over the feet only of the gaily dressed promenaders. I felt that every eye in the room was upon me, but I was sure of my self-possession" (132). After having so pathetically and symbolically occupied a seat "just vacated by an invalid" (131), the so-called Mr St. John, "trusting to the metamorphose of a studied toilet" (132), takes his revenge and unscrupulously mystifies, in an authentic dandyish way, his friend's sister by assuming a false identity.[162]

The trick is mean, but the murky side of it, though never taken really seriously by the narrator, lies beyond the mere breach of trust. The first clue is provided by Harry, the victim's brother, who exclaims unexpectedly: "Gertrude will never recognize you,' . . . You are exquisitely dressed, and look as little like the blushing youth at the table, *as I like Hyperion*" (132, emphasis added). We know that Hyperion was a Titan who married his sister, which should have made Harry's comparison all the more unsettling for his friend. Then Harry introduces his "old friend Mr. R— a man whom [he] ha[s] known *like a brother* for years" (134, emphasis added), the fraternal metaphor reappearing a few lines further on, this time directly linking Mr. R— and Gertrude as Harry insists on their long epistolary relationship, "*like brother and sister*" (134, emphasis added). This symbolically incestuous intimacy, recurrently reminded by Harry, may be responsible for the narrator's emotional state at the beginning of the story as, yielding to an "imperative appetite" (131), he blushes like a young boy caught in the act, feeling not only guilty but ashamed. This ambiguous situation, psychologically embarrassing, may even account for the narrator's unconscious obligation to borrow a false name to become acceptable in his lady friend's eyes, who first deemed him, logically, "the ugliest man she ever saw" (133).

The first step is the hardest, but even comforted by his easy success "under cover" with Gertrude, the narrator still wants to verify that she will accept him once the trick is disclosed. Gertrude's final

---

162 One thinks of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1885) by Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), another dandy.

consent, in spite of her fiancé's impudence, can easily be explained, for their relationships have always been made of the same psychological material, woven of "the thousand indefinite modes of mystifying one another" which eventually had made them "mutually curious to meet" (131). That final mystification was then nothing but the logic outcome of what they were prepared to experience in "the real" after their long-lasting "premonitory" correspondence.

Married by Mistake

One more time, the course of events reported in this narrative starts on board a boat. As in many of these stories, travelling upon waters allows expressions of the imaginary and helps separate literary fiction from mere personal report, as if crossing water led the reader through the looking-glass. Everything starts with a race between two rival boats, "two huge monsters, impatient to display their fiery speed upon the race-course of the Sound" (136). When it comes to describing the race itself, the tone of the narrative borrows from the realm of the Devil, making the competition somewhat diabolic. The passengers of the Spitfire see their captain "descend to the 'inferno'" to boost the steam engine so that the smoke from the funnels "gr[ows] denser and blacker, spreading like the wings of some vast bird," while the vessel, followed by "a trail of sparks," is "cleaving the waves of the Sound with a devilish velocity" (137). Moreover, even if this introduction seems irrelevant to the sequel of the story, it becomes clear that the rivalry between the two captains, Chace and Charcoal, mirrors that which opposes the two Cockneys. Displaying some characteristic features of the tall tale,[163] the whole story is built on the meeting of doubles and the literally unbelievable confusion that entails, which no doubt paves the way for the *devilish* trick played by one of the pairs to the other.

The first incident opposes, in a rather burlesque mise en scène, two travellers who look almost uncannily alike. Both of them are Cockneys, wear the same "square-cut green coats, garnished with brass buttons;" they share "a certain spruce grubness in their noses

---

163 An extravagant and humorous story, often exaggerated, telling the exploits of American frontiersmen.

and a carroty tinge in their cropped locks" (136), and last but not least, they have the same "too common name" (142)—John Smith. If the purpose of a race is to establish a hierarchy between a winner and a loser, often as a pure matter of honor, so is it for a duel, especially if it is supposed to repair a minor offence. In this story, the two Cockneys confront each other because one of them has "trod on the gouty toe of an unhappy bulldog, who uttered a low growl . . . signifying thereby that he had the will, if not the power, to avenge an insult" (136). To prompt the British pair to settle this matter of honor, the facetious American midshipman realtes how he and his friends fought one another after a drunken brawl in a tavern; however, the duel ran beyond any rule or etiquette: "we drew lots for sides. Principals and seconds fought at the same time. I shot at my friend, and Ned Halyard lodged a bullet in his crony. But there was no great harm done, and we shook hands and breakfasted together" (139). Interestingly, four months later, Edgar Allan Poe published in the same *American Monthly Magazine* another criticism of the duel tradition based on a mystification in "Von Jung, the Mystific".[164] The two narratives, though different in substance, use the same pseudo-dramatic effects. When, for instance, "somebody threw a decanter at somebody else's head" (139), in Poe's story, Von Jung "hurled the decanter, full of wine, against the mirror which hung directly opposite Hermann; striking the reflection of his person with great precision." In both cases, the duel tradition appears more as a source of comic effects than as a serious matter.

The parodic side of the story is still emphasized by the presence of two pairs, one, of English origin, portrayed as naïve and out of place, the other, "a couple of American gentlemen" (137) ready to entertain themselves at the expense of the former, and of a third victim, "a very pretty girl" (142) who is the betrothed of one of the duellists. The outcome of the arranged duel is that one Cockney believes that "having killed [his] brother traveller" he is now "a fratricide" (140), a mystification finally cleared up *after* he has unscrupulously married the fiancée of his fellow countryman. In this American farce, the American protagonists ostensibly make fun of their British counterparts, but are eventually outdone, in terms of cynicism, by the young American girl who, "when she found that one

[164] See note 12.

Mr. John Smith was quite as respectable and wealthy as the other" (143) declared, in the name of "love, law, and religion" (143), the marriage valid and that she was fully satisfied with her husband, making this tricky practical joke a variant case of the biter bit.

The Gold-Hunter ; a Tale of Massachusetts

This tale in four episodes published in 1837 borrows from the literary clichés of the buried treasure and that of the easy wealth acquired with the complicity of the Devil. Like Timon of Athens, whose name appears in the epigraph, Joe Bolton is a wealthy and generous man who is tricked by those he too naively trusted. But the story of the gullible barfly, ironically called "Canny Bolton," does not exploit the theme of swindling to produce a tragedy but a joyful tale with a moral which echoes Aesop's fables—"All is not gold that glitters" (156)—by developing variations on a theme already largely exploited in literature, from the Greek fabulist to Shakespeare (*The Merchant of Venice*: 1598) and Cervantes (*Don Quixote*: 1605-1615) to mention but some of the most internationally celebrated works.

However, beyond its universal dimension, "The Gold-Hunter" appears as a very American tale, as the subtitle suggests, by referring to Massachusetts and its lifestyle. First of all, the American countryside is depicted at leisure in the introductory section by praising the assets of the region in September, in terms which evoke the front page of a tourist guide[165] but also Irving's most bucolic descriptions: "The winding river reflects the deep azure of the sky, save where its ripples sparkle in the sun like shivered glass" (145); or else: "The pumpkin-fields display their orange-colored hoards; and association brings to mind the pleasures of Thanksgiving—its hearty hospitality and earth, and rustic pleasantry" (145). Rip van Winkle's "rich, misty hills" (144) are turned into those of "Sleepy Hollow" as the sweet atmosphere and the generosity of Nature "exert a gentle influence upon the soul" (144). Unmistakably, Hollywood, nestled "in the heart of a hilly country" (145), is one of "those little nooks of still

---

[165] See *infra* "A September Trip to Catskill" (1838).

water" dear to Irving which have remained "undisturbed by the rush of the passing current".[166]

If Joe Bolton who "rose at five and worked till dark" (146) does not share Rip's irrepressible taste for laziness, more than one aspect of his life calls to mind Irving's famous sleeper: like his predecessor, Joe is the victim of "a shrewish wife" (145) and he occasionally indulges in "a day's fishing in a neighboring pond" (146), not to mention his "one bad habit" which consists in "a propensity to lounge of evenings in a pet chair in the bar-room of the Banner of Liberty" where he joins "two or three dissipated hangers-on . . . who were topers by profession" (146), who obviously echo Rip's "club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village".[167] However, Joe's hard work and sturdy constitution make him "comfortable loike" (146) and his wife, although she is not "the most amiable of women" (146), satisfies him as she "annually present[s] him with a pledge of her affection," namely "a dozen sturdy boys," which provide him with an extra "source of revenue" (146). The author ironizes here about an established socio-economic fact in American colonial history, according to which manpower (scarce) and land (abounding) were the most valuable commodities for a farmer.

Here again, the "story within the story" structure is used by the author to credit the narrative with a quite fabricated genuineness. The fictional storyteller, "the Sir Walter of the village" (146), an old drunkard who has been "the hero of sham-fights" (148), introduces the tale itself by referring to the good old days, "when this here toun was all timber and swamp-land" (148), namely the early times of colonisation, when the Pequot were still the masters of the land. As in an authentic legend, he introduces his hero, "the first settler" (148) who met a Native chief who was unexpectedly wearing "rale goold bracelets, and a rattler of a bit of goold as big as a hunk of gingerbread about his neck" (149) instead of the usual glass beads, a clear hint at many settlers' expectancies who came to America in the hope of finding gold, attracted by a northern version of the myth of El Dorado. This narrative prepares Joe Bolston for the trick of which he will be the naïve victim, so that the association of the Devil with the presumed gold vein makes him as imaginative as Irving's Ichabod

166 Washington Irving, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1819).
167 Washington Irving, "Rip van Winkle" (1819).

Crane on his way back home, after his nocturnal visit to his future, wealthy father-in-law, when, "as he crossed a lonely stile, he thought he saw a tall black figure stealing over the grass, but it was only the lengthened shadows of the swaying birch-tree" (149). As in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," greed and mysterious tales make the credulous protagonist interpret ordinary objects as signs of a devilish presence, producing more comic effects than real suspense.

If Rip van Winkle was robbed of twenty years of his life after having drunk too heavily of a mysterious liqueur in the mountains, Joe's intoxication with the Dutch doctor's "magical Elixir" (153) earned him to be robbed, according to the symbolic equivalence of time and money, of "one hundred guineas" (154). Moreover, Joe Bolton's wanderings in the swamps, as he looked for his buried treasure, evoke another of Irving's short stories in which a poverty-stricken farmer meets the Devil in dark murky marshes also located "[a] few miles from Boston, in Massachusetts [near] a thickly wooded swamp, or morass";[168] moreover, the repetitive calling of his name—"he thought he detected, mingling with a dry, suppressed chuckle, the cries of "Bolton ! Joe Bolton ! Joe ! Joe ! Joe !" (150)—echoes the Dutch stranger's voice insistently calling Rip van Winkle in the mountains, which, added to the presence of the very Irvingian Dutch doctor, Nicholas Vanbrunner, demonstrates clearly that the author borrows largely from Irving's way of Americanizing his fictions, yet without sheepishly plagiarizing them.

A Legend of Mont St. Michel

The events related in this narrative are presented as legend but are in fact inspired by reality, in keeping with the subtitle: "A Sketch from History." In 1591, the Count of Montgomery, Gabriel II, then the leader of the Huguenot insurrection in Normandy after his father's death, plotted to capture "the impregnable fortress" (159) of Mont Saint Michel thanks to the complicity, in the monastery itself, of a Norman soldier who eventually betrayed him. The

168 Published in *Tales of a Traveller* (1824), Washington Irving's "The Devil and Tom Walker" tells the very Faustian story of a man who makes a fortune with the help of the Devil.

narrative is remarkably conform to what history reports which makes the term "legend" in the title all the more surprising.

The story consists mainly in the firsthand memory of an old man who reports how he had "one day narrowly escape[d] a horrid death" (158) during the French Wars of Religion. Obviously a Protestant, he gives a tongue-in-cheek description of the coast of Normandy, mentioning "the mud and filth of the place" (157) as well as the proleptical treacherous side of "la belle France" (157), whose "picturesque cottages and busy peasantry present[s] only an appearance of neatness and industry" (157). Even the Catholic monks who reside in the monastery do not comply with the rules of honesty which should be attached to their status as they are known to introduce secretly "goods they were ashamed to carry in through the open gate, and in the broad light of day" (160). As a consequence, the reader suspects from the onset that treason may easily flourish in that world of falsity.

As in any legend, the narrative begins by introducing a hero of extraordinary stature, namely the Count of Montgomery, "whose noble nature would not suffer him to behold the wrongs of an oppressed people without attempting redress" (159). Then, if the sequel of the story is conform to a banal account of brave deeds accomplished in time of war, the ending consists in a gory description of a horrific massacre perpetrated behind the walls of the fortress. The terms used in the evocation of that "sight of horror" are particularly shocking, as are successively mentioned "a grim and bloodstained executioner" by whose side "was piled a horrid heap of ghastly heads" and "the gush of the warm blood [spurting] from the [eightieth] headless trunk" (162). The scene links the text to a literary genre which, from Matthew Gregory Lewis's *Ambrosio, or, The monk, a Romance* (1796) to Vernon Lee's "The Virgin of the Seven Daggers" (1889), gathers narratives characterized by their spectacular use of gore in various Gothic settings.[169]

The conclusion brings a legendary touch to historical facts so far realistically reported as the assaillants are pursued by a "taunting devilish laugh that broke from those accursed battlements" swelling to the dimension of a cosmic piece of devilry: "I fancied that from

[169] Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), English author influenced by the writings of Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823). Vernon Lee (Violet Paget: 1856-1935), Victorian author of supernatural tales, a follower of Walter Pater (1839-1894).

every lowering cloud that swept by on the wings of the wind, I could see misshapen forms leaning, and pealing forth that demoniac laugh" (162). However, despite the presence of some of the compulsory ingredients of a genuine legend, the text fails to reach the dimensions of it, unless we reconsider the peculiar position of its author.

While the abortive onslaught dates back to 1591, the narrative itself is set in 1620, a date which is far from being meaningless for an American author, and which obviously has not been selected at random. Indeed, the date does not fail to evoke the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers on the coast of Massachusetts "in that new world beyond the sea" (159), a founding event which has almost reached the dimension of a legend in American history. Moreover, despite the undeniable European origin of the two strollers in the introductory section, the discourse of the narrator is tinged with something unmistakably American supported by an improbable remark concerning "the dread tornado we hear of" and the consecutive damages for a "new world" (159) located on the other side of the Atlantic. Although no region of the United States is potentially spared by twisters, they appear more likely in the "Tornado Alley", *i.e.* parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska, all of them regions which were hardly known or had remained unexplored by the Europeans in 1620. Although part of Texas was early explored by the Spanish discoverer Cabeza de Vaca,[170] and even if tornadoes caused by hurricanes were observed in other colonized regions in mid-sixteenth century such as Florida,[171] it is unlikely for a European person to have heard of American tornadoes, and even if so, he would certainly have used a less exotic comparison to evoke the devastation caused by a civil war. It is this undeniable though subtle American dimension of the narrative which provides a distance both in time and in space between the narrator and the related facts and allows the story to appear as a legend.

[170] Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1490?-1557) survive a wreckage in 1528 and lived on as a small trader among the Natives of the Texas coast.

[171] Discovered by Juan Ponce de Leon (1460-1521) in 1513, Florida's first European settlement, under Tristan de Luna (c.1519-1573), dates back to 1559, but the small colony was destroyed by a hurricane.

THE

AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER, 1836 (VOL. VIII.)

ALICE VERE.

"Young bride,
No keener dreg shall quiver on thy lip
'Till the last ice-cup cometh."

The Missionary Bride.[*]

THE leading circumstances of the following narrative may possibly be known to more than one of our readers. But if now recognized notwithstanding the altered guise in which they are here given, we trust that they are still so presented to the public as to infringe upon no feeling of domestic privacy.

In the spring of 18—, the Rev., Mr. B** of—, in Connecticut, received a letter from his old friend and college chum, the Rev. E*** T***, who had been for some time established as a Missionary in one of the islands in the Pacific, soliciting the fulfilment on the part of his friend of a most delicate and peculiar office for him. The request of T—, who, having been long isolated from the world, had arrived at the age of forty without marrying was nothing more nor less than that B—would choose a wife for him, and prevail upon the lady to come out to her expectant husband by the first opportunity. Strange as it may seem, Mr. B.—found but little difficulty in complying with the request of his friend. The subject of Missions at that time filled the minds of the whole religious community, and in some sections of the Union a wild zeal wrought so powerfully in the breasts of individuals, that they were eager to abandon their homes and their country, and sunder every domestic tie, in order "to do their master's bidding" in strange and inhospitable lands. Nor was this a mere burst of enthusiasm, that was to pass off with other fashions of the day, for its fruits are still constantly maturing ; and now, as then, there are not a few instances of young females of respectability and

[*] By Mrs. Sigourney, Vid. Am. Mon., Jan. 1836 (*note of the author*). See *infra* note 5 (*note of the editor*).

accomplishment educating themselves for the avowed purpose of becoming the wives of Missionaries. With these preliminary remarks I will at once introduce the reader to the subject of the following sketch, with whom I became acquainted in the manner here related.

I had been enjoying a week's shooting at Quogue[172] on Long Island, when wishing to return to New-York by steamboat through the Sound,[173] I engaged a seat one morning in the stage coach for Sag Harbor[174] which sometimes stopped for dinner at my host's, Mr. Howell's. In the present instance it delayed merely long enough to receive my luggage and myself. The only other passenger was a female, whom, notwithstanding the effectual screen of her long poke bonnet, I knew to be pretty from the quizzical look my landlord put on as he shook hands with me at parting after I had taken my seat by her side.

The day was warm, and we had not driven far, before, without appearing officious, I had an opportunity of obtaining a glimpse of my companion's face, while leaning before her to adjust the curtains on her side of the coach. It was beautiful, exceedingly beautiful. Not the beauty which arises from regularity of feature or brilliancy of complexion, though in the latter it was not deficient ; but that resistless and thoroughly womanish charm which lies in expression solely. It evinced that feminine softness of disposition which is often the farthest removed from weakness of character, though by the careless observer it is generally confounded with it ; and which, though sometimes it may mislead one in judging of the temper of the possessor, yet almost invariably, like the ore-blossom upon the soil that is rich in mines beneath, bespeaks the priceless treasure of an affectionate and noble heart. The reader who would realize the attractions of the countenance before me, need only call up their most winning expression in the features he most admires.

I gradually fell into conversation with my companion, and stopping at South-Hampton[175] to change horses, her first remark, upon our again taking our seats, was, that she feared we would not

---

172 A village located in Suffolk County, on Long Island (NY).

173 Arm of the Atlantic Ocean, about 100 miles long, separating Long Island from New York mainland and Connecticut.

174 A village of southeast New York, on the eastern end of Long Island, then an important whaling port.

175 A village on the southeast coast of Long Island.

get into Sag Harbor until after dark, when she would be unable to find *the ship* which was expected to sail in the morning. As I knew that no ships but whalers lay at that time in Sag Harbor,[176] I could not at first possibly conceive what a young and delicate female could have to do aboard of such a vessel ; and then the idea suggesting itself that she might be the daughter or sister of the captain, who came to bid him farewell for his two years' cruise, I asked her if she expected to remain on board the ship till she sailed.

"Oh yes, sir," was the reply, "I go out in her."

"What ! to the South Sea !"[177] rejoined I. "You have relations on board though, I suppose !"

"No, Sir, I don't know any one in the ship, but I have a letter for the captain, which I think will procure me a safe voyage to the ***** Islands."

"The *****Islands ! Is it possible you have friends in so remote a place as the Islands ? They must be dear friends too—pardon me—to carry you unprotected so far."

"My hu-us-band is there," she answered with some embarrassment, though the growing twilight prevented me from seeing whether the confusion extended from her voice to her countenance. The peculiarity in the young lady's manner, as she pronounced the word "husband," piqued my curiosity, but as it would have been impertinent to push my inquiries further, I did not urge the subject, but merely remarked that her youth had prevented me from taking her for a married woman.

"Nor am I married yet," was the reply ; "and indeed," she continued with a slight tremor in her voice, "I have never seen the man who is to be my husband." An expression of unfeigned surprise, of a more lively interest, perhaps—for I have said the young lady was beautiful, and we had now been some hours tête-à-tête—escaped me : I scarcely remember what followed, but before we reached the inn door, the ingenuous girl had given me full account of herself and her fortunes. She was an orphan child, and bred up in great seclusion in a clergyman's family in western New-York. She was, in a word,

---

176 First pursued off Newfoundland, whaling led American fishers to the south seas in their quest for sperm whales, producing superior quality oil. From the 1790s on, they rounded the Cape of Good Hope and hunted in the Pacific during voyages which lasted several years.

177 *El Mar del Sur*, name originally given to the Pacific by Spanish conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1475-1519) who discovered it in 1513.

the young enthusiast whom the Rev. Mr. B— had chosen as a wife for his Missionary friend, and prevailed upon to encounter a six months' voyage through stormy latitudes for the purpose of connecting herself for life with a man she had never seen. I did not express a sympathy that would be useless in her situation, much less did I give vent to the indignation with which her story filled me : her fanatical friends, who permitted a young, a beautiful, and delicate female, to take so wild a step, had, perhaps, after all, acted from the best of motives. Indeed, the poor thing herself though not exactly proud of having been chosen to the station she was about to fill, seemed about to enter upon it with all the exalted feeling of one who fulfils a high duty, and who is on the certain road to a preferment which most of her sex might envy. It would certainly have been a very equivocal kindness to have interposed another view of the subject, and disturbed the honest convictions of propriety which could alone have sustained her in a situation, for a woman, so appalling.

I accompanied Alice Vere—for such I learned her name to be[178]—to the vessel, and, after bidding her a kind farewell, I took an opportunity while passing over the side to whisper a few words to the captain, which might induce him to believe that she was not so friendless as she appeared to be, and secure her whatever attention it was in his power to offer. In the morning, having a few moments to spare before breakfast, I again strolled down to the pier, but the whaler had hoisted sail with the dawn, and a brisk wind had already carried her out into the Sound ; nor was it till years after that I heard again the name of Alice Vere, and learned the issue of her voyage ; though the name and the features and voice of her who bore it, did, I confess, long haunt me. It was too pretty a name I thought to be changed lightly, and somehow, when I heard it, I could not, for the life of me, ask that into which it was to be merged for ever. The rest of her story I learned from a friend, whose vessel being driven from her course in coming from the East Indies, stopped at the *****Islands to water, where he casually heard the fate of the Missionary girl.

The tender and imaginative temperament of Alice Vere, though perhaps it impelled her to make the sacrifice, for which she was schooled by those who called themselves her friends, but illy fit-

---

178 The Vere Plain is a fertile region of Jamaica.

ted her for the cold destiny to which she was condemned. The imagination of any woman, isolated upon the great deep for six long months, with nothing to think of but the stranger husband, to whose arms she was consigned, could not but be active, whatever her mental discipline might be. But with a girl of fancy and feeling, who had taken a step so irretrievable when surrounded by approving and encouraging friends, what must have been her emotions in the solitude of her own cabin, when such an influence— such a sustaining atmosphere of opinion—was wholly withdrawn. Doubt and fear would at first creep into her mind, and when these disheartening guests could no longer be controlled by the factitious notions of duty, fancy would throw her fairy veil around their forms, and paint some happy termination of a prospect so forbidding. And thus was it with Alice Vere. Anxiety soon yielded to hope ; her future husband and her future home filled her mind with a thousand dreaming fancies. She was no romance-reader, and therefore could not make a *hero* of the future partner of her bosom ; but a saint he indeed might be, a saint too not less in form than in godliness, for the association of physical and moral beauty is almost inseparable in the minds of the young and the inexperienced. She imagined him too as one who, though not "looking from Nature up to Nature's God,"[179] for "God must be first and all in all with him,"[180] would still be one whose mind would look from the Creator to his works, with a soul to appreciate all their excellencies. The fancied portrait of her future husband was laid in simple though impressive colors, but the background of the picture was filled with all time splendors of a tropical clime, of groves such as the early Christians wandered through in Grecian isles, and skies such as bent over Him who taught beneath them in the golden orient. True, she was to be exiled for ever from the sheltered scenes and quiet fireside of her youth ; but would she not be content to rove for ever with one only companion whose soul could fully sympathize with hers in scenes so fresh and so Elysian.

With a mind softened, if not enervated, by these day dreams not less than by the bland and voluptuous clime in which they had

---

179 Alexander Pope (1688-1744): "Slave to no sect, who takes no private road, / But looks through nature up to nature's God" *An Essay on Man* (1733), Epistle IV: "Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to Happiness," v).

180 "Don't worry! Peace comes from right priorities. / God must be first." (Matthew 6:25-34).

been for some time sailing, Alice Vere could scarcely suppress a scream of delight, when, upon coming on deck one morning, she found that the ship had cast anchor in the beautiful bay of ****, where her wildest visions of tropical scenery seemed more than realized. The water around the ship was as clear as the mountain streams of her native Country ; and the palm-trees and cocoas that bent over it, lifted their slender columns, and waved their tufted heads against a sky more purely bright than any she had ever beheld ; while clouds of tropical birds of the most dazzling plumage sailed along the shores, or sported around the vessel as if wholly regardless of man.

A number of the natives had launched their light barks from the shore, filled with bread fruit and other acceptable luxuries to those who have been long at sea. Alice was watching their approach with girlish interest in the novelty of the scene, when a boat from the opposite side of the crescent-shaped harbor made the ship, and almost before she was aware of its approach, a striking figure, dressed after the clerical fashion of her own country, in a full suit of black, presented himself at the companionway, and leaping on deck, instantly hurried towards her. She turned round—looked at him intensely for a moment—wade one faltering step towards him, and fainted in his arms.

The gentleman laid her carefully upon a flag that chanced to be folded near, and, still supporting her head upon one knee, gazed upon her features with looks of surprise and anxiety, which soon yielded to complete bewilderment as she addressed him upon coming to herself.

"Thank God !" she exclaimed, gradually reviving, "thank God ! thank God ! how can I ever have deserved this ?"—and bending her face forward, she impressed an almost reverential kiss upon his hand, and then covered her face in confusion.

My readers have all read of *love at first sight*, and some perhaps have heard of instances of it among their acquaintance. The sceptics to the doctrine, however, I imagine, far outnumber those who really believe in it. It is the latter therefore whom I will beg to recollect all the circumstances which preceded this singular scene ; when they cannot deem it unnatural that the wrought up feelings of an ardent and sensitive girl should thus burst forth upon first meeting in her affianced husband—her appointed friend and Protector in a

strange land—him that religion and duty taught her that she must love—upon meeting in him all that her dreams of happiness, for long, long months of anxious solitude, had pictured.

"And is this beautiful island to be our home ? —are those my husband's people around us ? Oh ! how I shall love every thing that belongs to this fair land ! But why do you not speak to your poor wanderer ? Alas ! Alas ! can I ever deserve all these blessings ?"

The embarrassment of the gentleman seemed only to increase as the agitated girl thus poured out her feelings. He begged her to be calm, and seemed most nervously solicitous to restrain her expressions ; and the captain approaching at that moment, he made a hurried and indistinct apology for his abruptness, and, withdrawing his arm from her waist as she regained her feet, moved off to seek the mate in another part of the vessel.

"Ah ! Mr. Supercargo,[181] I mistrust we should find you at this island," exclaimed the mate, turning round and shaking hands with him, as the gentleman touched his shoulder upon joining this officer near the capstan, "All well at home, Mr. F—, here's a letter from your wife."

The other tore open the letter, and devoured it with evident delight ; and then shaking hands again with the officer, exclaimed, "Thank you, thank you, all are well at home, as you tell me. But how in the world came that beautiful insane creature in your vessel ?"

"A mad woman ! The devil a bit of a mad woman or any other woman have we on board, except Mrs. T—, the wife of T—, that is to be."

"The wife of Mr. T— ?"

"Why yes, as good as his wife. She's is a gal from York state we are carrying out to be spliced to old dead-eyes."

The gentlemanlike supercargo seemed struck with concern ; in fact the true state of the case flushed upon his mind in a moment. The deep mourning which he wore out of respect for one of his employers whose ship he was that day to visit, had evidently caused him to be mistaken for a clergyman ; and the excited imagination of the lonely girl had prompted her to see in him the future guardian of her friendless condition. Nothing, however, could be done ; an attempt at explanation would but betray her secret to the coarse natures by

[181] The officer in charge of the cargo and its sale and purchase.

which she was surrounded. Her lot in life, too, was cast—his sympathy could avail her nothing ; and a few days' voyage would consign her to the care of him who might legitimately receive the proofs of tenderness which he had so innocently elicited in his own behalf. He called for his boat, and passing slowly and dejectedly over the side of the vessel, pulled for the shore.

Alice Vere had in the meantime retired to the cabin, where she expected her lover—it was the first time she had even *thought* the word—to join her. Her own feelings had so crowded upon her mind during the brief interview, that they had prevented her from observing his, and the luxury of emotion in which she now indulged and in which she thought there was now not one consideration human or divine, to make it wrong for her to indulge, prevented her from observing the lapse of time. Simple and single-hearted, with a nature whose affluent tenderness piety could regulate and delicacy could temper, though neither could repress, she poured the flood of her pent-up feelings in what seemed their heaven-appointed channel ; in a word, she was gone an age in love while numbering the minutes of her acquaintance with her lover. His noble and manly figure, his alert and elastic step in approaching her, and the kindly look of feeling and intelligence his features wore, a look of intense interest, which she, poor girl, little dreamed was prompted by concern for another of whom he was about to ask her ; nay, even the hurried tones of his agitated but still most musical voice, all, all were stamped upon her heart as indelibly as if their impress had been the work of years.

The water rippling along the vessel's sides first roused her from this delicious reverie, and the mate, who was a rough but kind-hearted seaman, at that moment came below to make an entry in his log. "Well, Miss," he cried, "with this breeze we'll soon bring up at the parson's door, and right glad to be rid of us I guess you'll be when we get there. Only thirty-six hours more, and you'll be home."

"This island then is not Mr. P—'s residence ?"

"This ? Oh no. There used to be a Britisher here, but they have got no missionary man upon it now."

"And does Mr. T— have to go thus from island to island in the performance of his duty ? or did he only come so far from his people to meet me ?" she concluded with some embarrassment.

"*Come* !" exclaimed the seaman, not a little puzzled ; "why, law bless your soul, Parson T— has not been here, at least that I know on."

"Surely he's now on board," cried Alice, alarmed, yet hardly knowing why — "Surely I saw him speaking to you on deck."

"To me, Missus—I never cared to exchange two words with old dead-eyes—axing your pardon—since I knowed him—speaking to me ! why that—that was—why, bloody my eyes ! you have not taken young Washington F—'s handsome figure for old Ebenenezer[182] T—'s mouldy carcase ?"

The rude but not unfriendly mate had hardly uttered the sentence, before he cursed himself to the bottom of every sea between the poles for the use he had made of his tongue. Alice fell lifeless upon the cabin floor. The seaman shouted for assistance, and then, as he and the better bred captain, who, as the father of a large and estimable family, was a more fitting nurse for the forlorn maiden, applied one restorative after another, she recovered animation at intervals. Fit succeeded to fit, however ; and then, as the wind rose and a brewing tempest called all hands on deck, the captain could only place her kindly in her berth, in the hope that the new excitement at hand might possibly be of service to his patient.

The ship was driven widely out of her course. Alice was long indifferent to every thing around ; but as the storm lasted for several days, and finally threatened to destroy the stout craft in which she sailed, the near prospect of the death for which she had but now been longing, called all her religious feelings into action. She felt that she was the child of destiny. Her gentle piety would not allow her to wish for a sudden and violent death, though the peace of the grave was what she most desired. She prayed then, not for life, but for an escape from its horrors ; alike from those which raged in the angry elements around her, and those which warred so fearfully in her own bosom.

Weeks elapsed before the vessel reached the haven of which she had once been within a few hours' sail. The missionary girl had apparently recovered from all bodily indisposition, and her features were again as calm as ever ; but it was the calmness of rigidity, and not of peace, they wore. It was a sacrifice of herself to heaven she

---

[182] A name of Hebrew origin, meaning "rock of help."

had meditated originally ; "and why," exclaimed she mentally, "why should I shrink from the offering now, when Providence has enabled me to make it richer and more abundant—to make my soul's triumph more complete as its trial is more bitter and severe ?" Still, when the isle of her destination hove in view, it was with a shudder that she first looked upon the shore, and thought of the fate that there awaited her.

Woman's heart is a strange, a wayward thing. In many a bosom its strongest chords are never touched by the hand to which it is yielded. It is often bestowed with faint consent on him who seeks it —bestowed in utter ignorance of the power of loving—the wealth of tenderness it hoards within itself ;

"Circumstance, blind contact, and the strong necessity of loving,"[183]

will afterwards mould it to its fate, and prevent repining at its choice : but when once its hidden strings have vibrated, and given out their full music ; when once its inmost treasures have been disclosed to its owner—counted over and yielded up with a full knowledge of their worth, to another ; when "the pearl of the soul" has been once lavished in the mantling cup of affections ; it revolts from all feebler preferences, and is true, even in death, to *its one only love*.

Our story is now rapidly drawing to a conclusion. The Missionary soon came on board to claim his bride. He was a plain and worthy man, with nothing to distinguish him from the numbers of his profession in our country, who, mistaking the promptings of zeal for the inspiration of a special calling, and who, without minds matured by experience or enlightened by education, leave the plough or the shop-board to become the instructors of those who, with feelings as sincere as their own, and understandings far more exercised in knowledge of good and of evil, are expected to bow to their narrow teachings : to receive them, not as humble soldiers of the cross needing guidance like themselves, but as the captains and leaders of the church militant, armed in full panoply—a living bulwark against its foes. Alice Vere had but little experience in society, but the quickening power of love had lately called all her dormant perceptions of taste and feeling into play, and a very brief interview sufficed for her

---

[183] George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818): canto IV.

to read the character of her destined husband. She felt that she could never love him. Respect him she did, as she would have done the humblest brother of her faith ; and had she never known what love was, her regard would perhaps not have been withholden in time ; for every woman loves the father of her children if he be not a creature to be abhorred. But if there be an agonizing thought to a girl of delicacy and sensibility, it is the idea of becoming a bride under such circumstances as surrounded poor Alice Vere—the thought that her heart shall beat against the bosom of a stranger when its every poise throbs for another. Still a high, imperious duty, as she believed, constrained her ; and she prepared to resign herself to her fate.

The nuptial day arrived. It had been arranged that the master of the vessel on board of which Alice, wistfully lingering, had begged to remain, should perform the ceremony ; (agreeably to the laws of the State of New-York, by which marriage is merely a civil contract requiring only a formal declaration of the parties before competent witnesses.) Mr. T**** himself commenced the ceremony by a prayer, which, as giving solemnity to the occasion, was perhaps most proper in itself ; but it was painfully long, and seemed to refer to almost every thing else but the immediate subject of interest. At length the bride, whose languid limbs refused to sustain her so long in a standing position, sunk into a seat, and the Missionary, glancing a look of reproval at her abruptly concluded his harangue. The worthy seaman was more expeditious in getting through with his share of the office. He merely asked the parties severally if they acknowledged each other as man and wife. The Missionary made his response in the affirmative with slow and grave distinctness. But Alice faltered in her reply. A tumult of feelings seemed oppressing her senses for a moment ; she looked to the untamed forest, whose boughs waved unfettered on the shore, to the broad main that spread its free waves around her, and the wild bird that sported over its bosom—

"Then she turned
To him who was to be sole shelterer now—
And placed her hand in his, and raised her eye
One moment upward whence her strength did come."

The certificates, which had been previously drawn up, being then signed and witnessed, the Missionary concluded with another

homily ; and the crew, who had been allowed to collect upon the quarter-deck during the ceremonial, replaced their tarpaulins and dispersed over the vessel.

It was now sunset, and as a heavy cloud which threatened rain brooded over the island, the captain politely insisted that Mr. T**** must not think of returning to the shore, but take possession of his own private cabin. The rain soon after beginning to fall in torrents, drove those on deck below. Here the mates claimed the privilege of having a jorum of punch to drink the health of the bride, and the captain being willing to unite with them, Alice was compelled to retire to the new quarters which had been just provided for her ; while the festive seamen insisted upon keeping their clerical guest for awhile among themselves, Their mirth soon became so uproarious as to mock the tempest without, when a sudden squall struck the vessel, carrying her over, even as she lay at anchor, under bare poles, upon her beam ends. The seamen, followed by the Missionary, rushed to the deck, where the glare of the lightning, as they looked to windward, revealed to them a female figure standing upon the taffrail with arms outstretched toward a huge wave that lifted its o'er-arching crest above her, and threatened to engulph the vessel. A cry of horror escaped the revellers, and the Missionary breathed a prayer as he clung to the rigging for safety ; and then, as the descending sea righted the vessel, a suffocating moan was heard above the surge that swept the body of Alice Vere like a drift of foam across her decks.

The morning came at last—the sun rose serenely—the bright waves rippled joyously beneath the stern of the vessel ; and their reflected light, playing through the sloping windows of the cabin, glanced upon the unpressed couch of the Missionary Bride. None could even tell how she had made her way to the deck in the midst of the tempest, yet none have ever whispered the sin of self-destruction against the lovely, the lonely, the ill-fated ALICE VERE.

C. F. H.

THE

AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

Vol. III JUNE 1831 N° III.

The Alias—or Mr. St. John.

'I always *walk* my horse into a town or up to a Hotel door,' said Phil, as we descended the last sand bank to Saratoga village,[184] and passed leisurely the spring at Congress Hall.[185]

He sat on the *left* side, driving—a peculiarity of his own, adopted like most of his other whims, from a horror of being like other people—his eccentric palm leaf sombrero inclined at the merest possible angle to his left eye, and his rein-hand held up, as if for a graceful gesture, at about the second button.

It was just evening, and the great piazza was crowded with promenaders. I was a stranger to the gay crowd myself, but as the stanhope[186] stopped, couple after couple recognized Phil, and we were surrounded, before we could set foot upon the ground, by beaux and belles, all in that atmosphere of free manners, ready to throw off the metropolitan reserve, and give an uproarious welcome to one of the most agreeable men on the *pave*. With some difficulty we reached our rooms, at last, and were about preparing for a toilet when the bell rang for tea. I felt the summons sensitively, for Phil had refused to dine on the road because the 'Half Moon'[187] smelt of herrings, and I looked forward to the bathing, and brushing, and cravatting that was before me with a melancholy foreboding of appetite. My resolution was soon made.

'Phil !' shouted I, talking at the top of my voice through the lattice over the door, 'I think I'll go to tea before dressing.'

---

184 See *infra* note 146.

185 A fashionable hotel for the wealthy, famous for its remarkable piazza, between the 1830s and the 1860s when it was destroyed in a blaze; an ere more impressive building was then rebuilt in its place.

186 A light open horse-drawn carriage.

187 After the name of Henry Hudson's (1570-1611) vessel.

'You'll be sent to Coventry[188] if you do,' answered the dandy in a tone of deliberate conviction.

It sounded like a knell, but appetite is imperative. I knew I was sun-burnt and flushed—I knew my travelling coat was excessively unbecoming—I knew I was grimed beyond the redemption of anything but a two hours' lavation in rose water and cream, by the dust of the worst of roads—I knew I looked more like a blacksmith's 'prentice (I was never handsome—but I can *dress)* than a gentleman scholar—but in the hope of getting a seat unobserved at the bottom of the table, and coming back to pursue my toilet leisurely and philosophically, (an impossible thing, let me say, with an appetite,) I ventured.

I had come to Saratoga, by the way, with an object. One of the most admired women there, was a sister of an old college friend, who, with a brother's fondness on one side, and a friend's on the other, had praised me to his sister, and his sister to me, till between descriptions, and postscripts, and the thousand indefinite modes of mystifying one another, we were mutually curious to meet. With this explanation I go on.

The two immense tables stretched down in long and busy perspective through the hall, crowded with the five hundred fashionables and 'would-be-so's,' and the knives and spoons and women's voices, (*men* never talk till the meal is over,) were mingled in bewildering confusion. With some difficulty I found a seat—just vacated by an invalid—and hoping that I had stepped in unobserved, I sent for a cold bird, and played my knife and fork in busy silence.

Birds, berries and bread and butter gave me courage. I had finished my meal, but I sat looking up the long line of faces on the opposite side, speculating on one physiognomy and another, and selecting future acquaintances from the pretty and the piquant. All at once my eye caught upon a side face I had seen before, and a sudden turn, and a mutual recognition, left me no hope of escape. There sat my old friend, and I knew instantly, by the resemblance, that the tall, magnificent creature at his side was his sister ! I felt the blood rush into my face like a broken sluice. You never saw *me* blush !—(thank Heaven I never do except upon surprise)— it's horrible ! My eyes,

---

188 Meaning "banished" or "ostracized", a probable allusion to the banishment of Royalist prisoners to Coventry during the English Civil War.

nose, forehead were purple—I knew it—I could see every vein in my mind's spectrum ! I saw Harry speak to his sister. Her eyes were on me in an instant ; and as I turned half away, and almost burst a blood vessel in trying to look unconscious, I could see by my side eye that her glass was raised, and I felt it go down to my dress, and up to my red forehead, and my flattened hair, and about my slovenly cravat—what did I not suffer ? I had no power to move, and I had forgotten in my confusion the commonest *ruse* by which I might have avoided her. I was seen and scrutinized, and as I edged out of the hall in agony, I debated whether I had better insult my old friend, and so avoid an introduction, or drown myself in the bath—either seemed paradise to my present feelings.

Harry was in my room before I could get the door closed.

'What could tempt you to come to the table looking so like the devil?'

'Why, in the name of all the saints, did you point me out to your sister ?'

In a long four years of intimacy we had never come so near quarrelling. He told me frankly that his sister was disagreeably surprised at my appearance, and I sat down on the bed and cursed my stars till I was tired.

Well—I bathed, and dressed, and at nine o'clock Harry was in my room again.

'Gertrude will never recognize you,' said he, measuring me from head to foot. You are exquisitely dressed, and look as little like the blushing youth at the table, as I like Hyperion.'[189]

A thought struck me ! I was always impudent by candlelight, and I determined on my course instantly. I remembered that, though very tall, I was rather short-*bodied,* and looked like a small man at table, and trusting to the metamorphose of a studied toilet, I proposed to Harry to introduce me by another name. It was agreed upon as soon as mentioned.

The rooms were brilliantly lighted, and the band playing a march. The ball had not commenced. Fifty or sixty couples, however, were promenading round the room, and among them Harry with his sister upon his arm. I settled my cravat, and with an assurance that

---

189 The comparison is far from being innocent since Hyperion was a Titan who was the husband of his sister Theia: "Theia yielded to Hyperion's love and gave birth / to great Helios and bright Selene and Eos" (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 371-72).

would have astonished myself by daylight, lounged coolly and alone up the middle of the splendid hall, my head slightly inclined in a collected modesty, and my glass passing leisurely over the feet only of the gaily dressed promenaders. I felt that every eye in the room was upon me, but I was sure of my self-possession. As Harry came round, I caught once more, with a side glance, the glitter of a glass levelled full upon my figure, and my hopes sprang like Mercury[190] at the sound of the low silver toned— 'Who is he ?'

'A college acquaintance of mine, Mr. St. John,' said Harry.

'Does he talk as well as he dresses ?'

I did not hear the answer, but a moment after the manager clapped his hands for cotillons, and Harry came to present me.

I cannot, of course, speak otherwise than in general terms of my progress in my partner's favor. I had the advantage of having read her letters for four years, and I knew every trait and taste she possessed, both natural and acquired, and my knowledge of her character must have seemed like intuition. I could quote all her favorite authors, and I remembered her own quotations, and did not fail, of course, to introduce them ; and the similarity of taste seemed wonderful. We went out upon the piazza after the first dance, and paced its dim-lighted length till the ball was over—four glorious hours ! And we parted at two—very good friends, certainly.

I had my name entered upon the books as Mr. St. John. I gave Phil the cue, (he was very near betraying me twenty times a day,) and no one else knew me. The veritable Mr. R— (Harry made his regrets to his sister) was supposed to be sick in his room, overheated with travel. Gertrude said in my ear, she was not sorry—for she 'had seen him, and, spite of Harry's eulogies, he was the ugliest man she ever saw.' I pulled up my gills and hemmed instinctively at the assertion.

* * * * * * *

Some six weeks after this I was standing behind a sofa on which sat the lady of whom I have spoken. It was a fine October day, clear and of a delicious coolness, and she had stopped at the end of a canto to look out through the low long windows upon the beautiful

---

[190] A god who was the messenger to the other gods and traveled with great swiftness.

lawn—indulging apparently some unbidden thought. I stood silently looking down upon her polished forehead, and musing with a trembling pleasure on her excessive beauty and her noble mind, unwilling to break the charm either of her thoughts or my own. Harry entered with a letter, and without looking at the superscription ; she thanked him, and was quietly slipping it under her belt to be read at leisure, when he laid his finger upon her hand and begged her with an equivocal smile to attend to it immediately. I had stepped back to the extreme corner of the room as she broke the seal, and while she read it, stood pulling to pieces a splendid exotic which had just been brought out from the green house—the most valued flower she had.

'How could he presume'—

'But my dear Gertrude'—

It was, only by fragments that I caught the earnest conversation between them. For ten or fifteen minutes I stood in agony. At last they seemed to agree, and Harry called to me.

'St. John ! You shall decide ! Gertrude refers it to you. Here is my old friend Mr. R— a man whom I have known like a brother for years, and whose character and good qualities I thoroughly know. He wrote to Gertrude when we were in college together, and she to him, like brother and sister, and though they have never been *fairly* introduced, they are as well acquainted with each others' characters as she and yourself. On the strength of my interest and this acquaintance, he romantically enough offers himself to her, here, in this letter. He is rich, of a leading family, and my best friend, and yet she calls his generous offer impertinence, and will not even answer the letter unless you decide against her.'

An indignant tear stood in the dark eye that appealed to me as he stopped.

'Is it left to me,' I asked—'quite—and will you abide by my decision ?'

Harry left the room abruptly. As the door closed, I walked round the sofa, and with a trembling voice and a doubting heart plead my own cause against the presuming stranger—offering my poverty and my love instead of the wealth and consequence of my rival. I presume I was eloquent. I *know* I was earnest.

Harry's voice in the entry raised me from my knee, and in a moment he came laughing in, and called for the decision.

'You promise,' said I, rising and looking at the beautiful girl as she quelled her emotion, 'you promise solemnly to marry your brother's friend, Mr. R——, if I say it is my wish.'

She looked playfully into my face—'I do !' She little expected my reply :—

'Then marry him !' said I, solemnly, 'and may God bless you !'

For an instant she fixed her eyes upon me as if she doubted whether she had heard rightly. The color fled from her cheek, and her hands dropped at her side, and for a moment I repented bitterly the idle trick I had practised. It was explained as soon as she recovered sufficiently, and my repentance vanished with my pardon, for I had won her when she believed me poor, with a dazzling rival and a pleading brother against me ; and the 'ugliest man she ever saw' is Mr. R—— (alias Mr. St. John) and her husband.

THE

AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY, 1837 (VOL. IX.)

MARRIED BY MISTAKE.

THE steam was furiously whizzing from the safety-valves of two fine boats that lay beside the wharf at Providence, crowded with passengers, and every moment taking more on board. The Spitfire and Rasp, (Captains Chace and Charcoal,) seemed like two huge monsters, impatient to display their fiery speed upon the race-course of the Sound.[191] The tongue of the bell had rung its last alarm, when a hot and hasty traveller, encumbered by a cloak and carpet-bag, sprang from the wharf to the deck of the Spitfire, and in so doing blundered against a gentleman who was standing near the gangway. The new comer, recoiling from the immoveable form of the other, trod on the gouty toe of an unhappy bulldog, who uttered a low growl, and rasped his muzzle against an adjacent trunk, signifying thereby that he had the will, if not the power, to avenge an insult. The unlucky assailant sneaked blushingly away to deposit his burthen and secure a berth, while the proprietor of the bull-dog drew himself up to his proudest height, toyed with a pink shirt collar, and muttered something like an imprecation, which was lost, however, in the folds of his cravat The gentlemen who had thus come in contact both belonged to the genus cockney, as was evident from their dress and personal appearance. They both wore square-cut green coats, garnished with brass buttons, and white felt hats with very yellow gloves and waistcoats, and there was a certain spruce grubness in their noses and a carroty tinge in their cropped locks that plainly told their origin. The principal differences between them consisted in the thin sandy moustache which twinkled on the upper lip of the owner of the bull-dog and in his superior stature. This gentleman had been travelling in the Canadas, and making the grand tour of the lakes,

191 See note 173.

whence he diverged to the City of Notions.[192] He was now on his way to a town on the Hudson, there to sign and seal ; in short, to wed a lovely damsel, the child of a distant relative, whom he had never seen, but whom the miniature in his possession assured him was a "lovely crittchure." The second cockney was travelling "for hinformation."

When the boat began to move, the passengers on board the Spitfire crowded to the starboard side of the vessel to watch the progress of the Rasp. Frequently did Captain Chace descend to the "inferno" in the centre of his craft, and as often, on his re-appearance, did the volumes of smoke that issued from the funnels grew denser and blacker, spreading like the wings of some vast bird above the water. At length a loud hurrah proclaimed that the Rasp had given up the contest, and away flew the victorious Spitfire, justifying her name by the trail of sparks she left behind, and cleaving the waves of the Sound with a devilish velocity. The excitement of the race soon died away. Some of the passengers descended to the cabin, others lay at length upon settees ; while not a few, with an air of determined activity, strode back and forward on the upper deck. Among the latter were our cockney friends. As often as they crossed each other in their countermarches, he of the moustache gave vent to some fragmentary ejaculations, such as—"Ven a gentleman hinsults another gentleman," and "heven if the hinsult was hunhintentional," and the like ; all of which mutterings ended with a smart swing of his switch cane, which was very awful to behold. Whereupon the lesser cockney would look fluttered, but would essay the air of "Money musk,"[193] which invariably died away in a demi-semi-quaver.

The conduct of these travellers afforded much amusement to a couple of American gentlemen who had noted their proceedings from the first. These last were Frank Harris, a midshipman, and his companion Dr. Scalpel, both of the United States' navy, if the young middy was in the highest spirits, the man of science was by no means indisposed to join in his mirth. He was a bluff and portly gentleman of the sect of laughing philosophers. To a whispered scheme of the mischief-loving middy, Dr. Scalpel gave assent and countenance. In pursuance of the plan, the friends separated, and soon after entered

---

[192] *Alias* Boston.

[193] A traditional Scottish and Irish tune and dance, which became popular in New England by the end of the 18th century.

into conversation with the cockneys ; the midshipman making up to the lesser Briton, and the surgeon accosting the owner of the bull-dog.

"My dear sir," said Harris, "you must excuse my interference in your affairs, but really I take such an interest in you, though a stranger, that I cannot help assisting you. You ran against the gentleman with the switch cane and mustachios."

"It was hentirely hunhintentionally," replied the little cockney. "I ham so wolatile and 'eedless."

"But the man's irascible, and his insolence is apparent to all our fellow-passengers."

" Vel, vat shall I do ? Hapologize ?"

"Apologize ! Pooh ! that would only encourage him. No—stand your ground, and I'm the man that will uphold you. Assume a firm demeanour."

"Pray 'ow can hi ! I'm so wolatile."

"Its easy enough. You must, I say, take a determined attitude."

"As 'ow ?" asked the cockney.

"Knit your brows and look big." The little cockney stood on tiptoe. "And if he should challenge you"——

"I'd lodge a hinformation," said the cockney quickly. "If you did so pusillanimous a thing," replied his Mentor, "I would be the first to forsake you. I would abandon you to the rage of your ferocious adversary."

At that terrible voice and those terrible words the heart of the little cockney died away within him. Meanwhile a different conversation had taken place between the larger cockney and the doctor. The former did not wait for the latter's advances, but commenced with :—'Ow d'ye do, sir ? 'Ow d'ye do, sir. Fine day, air, fine boat, sir. Nice gentlemanly captain, I vish I could say as much for *hall* the passengers." And he cast a very blood-thirsty and significant glance at his timid countryman.

"I take your meaning," said the doctor. "You have been grossly insulted."

"Me and my dog."

"Twas too provoking."

"An apology, or 'is 'art's blood !"

"My dear sir, I like your spirit. With your consent I'll wait on the gentleman, receive his apology, or insist on a meeting."

"You're too good, sir"

"And may I ask your name ?"

"'Tis of no consequence. At present I'm travelling *incog.* like my werry good friend, the *Juke* of St. James. It vill be a condescension to meet this man, but, as the Juke says, we can't alvays valk on stilts like the French shepherds that ve saw in 'Ungary."

The pugnacity of one of the parties favoured the designs of the schemers. A duel was agreed upon, and since the doctor had promised to act as the second of the man with mustachios, the midshipman could do no less than render a similar service to his timid antagonist. It was determined, on their arrival at New-York, that they should all ascend the Hudson in a steamer, and be set ashore at a landing-place well known to the middy, who promised to take them to a most secluded spot.

"I'm fond of seclusion," said he to the little cockney with an air of sentiment, "it's so convenient for fighting. I'm accustomed to these things. I was once at a tavern, with some of my friends, when we got into a confounded squabble. There was Jack Travers, my most particular friend, Ned Halyard, his crony Thompson, and myself. We were so hazy at the time, that the next morning none of us could tell how the quarrel began, or who enacted the parts of it ; but it was agreed that the lie had been given, that one gentleman kicked another, and that somebody threw a decanter at somebody else's head. It was necessary to have a duel, and we drew lots for sides. Principals and seconds fought at the same time. I shot at my friend, and Ned Halyard lodged a bullet in his crony. But there was no great harm done, and we shook hands and breakfasted together. We bore no malice to each other—it was all done for the honour of the service. There was a necessity for fighting, as there is in your case."

The little cockney would fain have disputed the proposition, but his courage failed when he heard Frank Harris talk so dashingly about a duel.

Arrived at the fatal battle-field, the combatants were placed in their respective stations, and furnished with pistols by their friendly seconds. The little cockney was pale as a sheet, and even the upper lip of the mustachioed hero twitched convulsively. "Fire !"

cried Frank Harris in a voice of thunder. Bang ! Bang ! went the pistols. "Are you hurt ?" cried each second to his principal. The replies were in the negative. "Try it again," said Frank Harris fiercely, and fresh pistols were presented. This time the hero of the mustachios took a deliberate aim—and missed. The little cockney pulled the trigger, and down went his great antagonist. The seconds and the successful duelist rushed to the spot where the dying man lay kicking convulsively with a deep red stain upon his marble forehead.

Like Byron's hero, he exclaimed—"I've got my gruel,"[194] and, like Byron's hero, too, his thought was of his lady-love. "I enjoin it on you," said he to the victor, "to go to the 'ouse of Villiam Viggins, which can't be far from 'ere. Take this 'ere letter, which vas my credentials, and show it to 'im. Tell Miss Sarah Viggins I hexpired vith a vound in my 'ed and von in my 'art—she'll understand the compliment. Tell 'em I died game—and 'ark ye, I forgives you 'artily. It van all my hown fault." Having wrung the hand of the repentant homicide, he closed his eyes and lay back upon the sward.

"'Eaven knows," exclaimed the poor little cockney, "that I didn't seek his life. I shut my heyes ven I fired, and I thought the bullet vould go over 'is 'ead."

"You have killed your brother traveller," said the surgeon, in a deep sepulchral voice.

"My brother traveller !" shrieked the poor little cockney. "Yes, and that makes me a fratricide."

"This is is no time for lamentation," said Frank Harris. "Rouse yourself. If you resolve to comply with the dying man's injunction, you must procure a conveyance at the inn, where they can direct you to the house of Wiggins. As for me, I will soon meet you again. Tell the story of your victim's death, but conceal your agency in the affair. Adieu."

The disconsolate duelist shook the proffered hand of the midshipman, and after one sorrowful glance at the body of his victim, took his departure from the fatal spot. At the inn he was informed that Mr. William Wiggins lived in the immediate neighbourhood and

---

194 "The dying man cried, 'Hold! I've got my gruel! / Oh! for a glass of max! We've miss'd our booty / Let me die where I am!'" Lord Byron (1788-1824), *Don Juan* (1819-1824): canto XI.

thither he proceeded on foot, musing, "under the shade of melancholy boughs,"[195] upon the late disaster.

"He from the world had cut off a great man ;"[196]

And what was to be his reception at the house of the bereaved bride. How would her lovely bosom heave, and her beauteous eyes be filled with tears, at the melancholy intelligence which widowed her ere she had been wedded. And the heart-broken father too ! It would bring down his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. In the event of their discovering that he had been the destroyer of their bliss, what would his penitence and tears avail ? Into such a state of agitation was the poor little cockney thrown, that upon arriving at the Wiggins' house, he had hardly strength enough to pull the door bell. The house stood on the outskirts of a thriving village, and was a trim little box of a place, all overgrown with vines, and embosomed in foliage and flowers, looking out upon a pleasant lawn. But the little cockney had no eyes for the beauties of nature, and no time to observe them ; for at the sound of the bell, an aged domestic appeared at the door, and ushered the tremulous visiter into the best room of the house. Mr. Wiggins immediately entered, a portly little gentleman in a snuff-coloured suit, with the brightest pair of eyes that ever looked a person through. He bowed, and waited for the visiter to speak.

"Mr. Villiam Viggins, I presume."

"The same, sir."

"I come, sir, to hinform you of an unappy, a werry unappy event—your son-hin-law —that vas to be'.—hoh lord ! hoh dear ! I never can get through vith it. This letter"—

"—Is directed to me ? Hey ? Speak fast, Let's have it." And as the trembling youth yielded up the letter, the piercing little eyes of Mr. Wiggins ran over the lines in a minute. No sooner had he finished the perusal of the letter, than his face lighted up, and springing forward, he grasped the hand of the little cockney with warmth.

"So, you are Mr. John Smith—hey ?"

---

195 "That in this desert inaccessible, / Under the shade of melancholy boughs, / Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time" William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *As You Like it* (Act 2, Scene VII, The forest).

196 "He from the world had cut off a great man, / Who in his time had made heroic bustle." Byron, op. cit.

"That certainly is my name. I vonder vere he found it out," was the exclamation of the cockney.

"My dear Mr. Smith, I'm so delighted to see you—we've been long expecting you—made all the preparation, my dear fellow—and Sarah feels as brides expectant ought to feel, and Mrs. Wiggins is in the fidgets—but I'll present you at once."

"Mr. Viggins, you mistake hentirely."

"No mistake at all in the matter,"

"I didn't come to marry your daughter, but to say that her marriage can never take place."

"What d'ye mean, John Smith ?" cried the irascible old gentleman, his little eyes twinkling with sudden passion. "D'ye know to whom you speak ? Adsblud ! I'll make you marry her. Why, you're mad as a March hare."[197]

Several times did the unhappy bearer of a too common name attempt an explanation, but as often as he essayed to speak, the singular little eyes of the old gentleman would sparkle and light up, and he would overwhelm the wretched Londoner with a torrent of high words. So the latter submitted, at last, with forced resignation to his fate, which in this instance seemed to hurry him into the arms of a very pretty girl. Both mother and daughter welcomed their guest with delight, and he soon found himself at ease in their company ; but as often as he began to speak on the subject that lay heavy on his heart, the eye of the old man kindled up, and he made a menacing gesture, which brought back all the fears of the unhappy Smith. Thus beset, he began to think it would not be so very wrong to accept of the wife thus singularly forced upon him. He was in good circumstances, no obstacle stood in his path, and it was very unlikely the affair would ever be cleared up. On the contrary, should his full confession be heard, should the knowledge of the unhappy rencontre transpire, what had he not to fear from the severity of unknown laws in an unknown land ! He could not run away, for the bright-eyed old gentleman kept a vigilant watch over him, and he found he could not pass the limits of the lawn in a morning walk without being pursued by the aged domestic with some message that invariably brought him

---

[197] The phrase, popularized by Lewis Carroll's (1832-1898) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), has been used since the 16th century. It is based on the female hare's peculiar way to repel unwanted males during the mating season by using her forelegs, hence Wiggins' ironical remark.

back. Therefore we should not wonder that when the wedding-day was fixed, Mr. John Smith was a passive bridegroom—that he pronounced all the vows required by love, law, and religion ; Squire 'Cobus Everlink kissed the bride-maids and the bride, and was as gay as a man in such unhappy circumstances could be.

On the morning after his marriage, to his horror and surprise he was confronted, in the little parlour which had witnessed the sacred ceremony, with his ancient antagonist, who, accompanied by Harris and the Surgeon, appeared to beard the bridegroom in his den. The resuscitation of the largest Mr. Smith is easily accounted for. The mischievous midshipman had superadded a little red paint to the charge of powder in the pistols, and the appearance of this on the forehead of the cockney so alarmed him that he gave himself up for dead. He had now arrived too late in the day, What an *éclaircissement* ![198] And the bride trembled and fainted, doubtless ? She did no such thing. But when she found that one Mr. John Smith was quite as respectable and wealthy as the other, she clung to the arm of her husband, declared that he was the man of her choice, that she never could have looked twice upon the other ; and was as happy as possible, though MARRIED BY MISTAKE.

---

[198] A French word for "explication."

THE

AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

NOVEMBER, 1837 (VOL.X.)

THE GOLD-HUNTER ; A TALE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

"————————What is here ?
Gold ? Yellow, glittering, precious gold ?"

Timon of Athens[199]

CHAPTER I.

IF you would enjoy the country in perfection, you should leave the city at the precise time when the fashionable tourists are flitting homeward from their summer jaunts. When Saratoga is no longer populous, Nahant[200] deserted, and Rockaway[201] forsaken, then plunge yourself into the heart of rural life. Do this towards the latter part of September. Are you a sportsman ? At that time partridges are rife. Are you a pedestrian? Then the air is cool and bracing, and a march of fourteen miles before breakfast is a "circumstance." Ride you ? In September the roads are in excellent condition. If you are a poet or a painter, choose this season for your ramblings. What glorious tints are on the rich, misty hills, so blue and undefined, their summits mingling with the soft autumnal sky. The hazy river winds along, filling its channel with melody and beauty ; and the woods, where here and there a yellow leaf appears, now sombre but not melancholy, exert a gentle influence upon the soul. As the day steals on, the landscape brightens apace. The mist-wreaths curl up from the

---

199 An unfinished play written by William Shakespeare (1564-1616) in 1607 in which Timon, ruined by his creditors and abandoned by his friends, discovers an underground treasure.

200 A town located in Essex County, Massachusetts.

201 Originally called "Reckowacky," which meant "the place of our own people" by the Canarsie Indians who occupied it, this narrow peninsula of Long Island was sold to the Dutch by the Mohegans in 1639. In 1833, the Marine Hotel was built which became rapidly fashionable among New York's rich and famous, notably Washington Irving.

valleys, climb the mountains, and catching golden hues in the lofty vault of heaven, pass away like the gossamer dreams of hope and love. The winding river reflects the deep azure of the sky, save where its ripples sparkle in the sun like shivered glass. The noon is sultry ; but a grateful breeze tempers the heat as it sweeps from the depth of the cool woodlands, dimples lake and stream, and plays with the mimic billows of the grain-fields. The reaper stays his sickle for a moment, as he welcomes the freshening wind ; and away speeds the viewless messenger, rustling the ears of maize, and brushing its golden tassels as they flicker in the sun. Your loud step in the stubble rouses the quail with her numerous family, and away they whizz to some secluded spot. The pumpkin-fields display their orange-colored hoards ; and association brings to mind the pleasures of Thanksgiving—its hearty hospitality and earth, and rustic pleasantry. Prize this glorious season ; for it is, alas ! but transitory. Soon—too soon—Destruction will revel in field and forest. The maple will glow in its hectic beauty at the flint kiss of the forest ; the broad crown of the oak will become sore and rusty ; the birch tree will turn yellow, and the graceful elm fade day by day. The fields will be deserted by the laborers, the sportsman will steal through rustling leaves, and the whole landscape assume a threadbare and forlorn appearance. Enjoy, then, the brief hour of glory and beauty ; drink from the cup of bliss while its bubbles dance upon the brink.

Reader, did you never go to Hollywood ? 'Tis some fifty miles from Boston, in the heart of a hilly country ; but oh ! in the bosom of those stern hills there is many a spot of such luxuriant beauty, that the heart would dance in your bosom to behold them. The view of Hollywood, through the Green Gap, is worth five hundred miles of travel. Its amphitheatre of purple hills, its assemblage of grey crags and feathered knolls, its white buildings gleaming among the trees and reflected in the waters, its trim gardens and its winding brooks I —were I an artist, I might hope to paint them.

Many a happy hour have I passed at Hollywood beneath the roof of Farmer Bolton, a jolly agriculturalist, who owns his hundred acres, and has a shrewish wife, a fine intelligent daughter, and a host of sturdy sons. The Farmer lives there yet. He is a Yorkshireman, and a good specimen of a rough, bluff, hospitable, hard-handed, hard-riding son of the North Countries, He came to Hollywood many

a long year ago, with what he termed a "power of money ;" and well might he conceive it so, for it procured him noble farm. Having made himself "comfortable loike," he purchased twenty heads of cattle from a neighbor, and while concluding a bargain with the old gentleman, struck one with his daughter, a tall, keen-eyed, peak-nosed young lady of thirty. "Canny Yorkshire" was a bit deceived when he thought Miss Tabitha Persimmon the most amiable of women. However, she "kept his gear thegither," and annually presented him with a pledge of her affection. As every addition to a farmer's family is a source of revenue, jolly Joe Bolton hailed with joy the appearance of each new claimant on paternal affection ; and he looked forward to the time when, retiring to the repose of his huge arm-chair, he should entrust the labors of his farm to the abler hands of a dozen sturdy sons.

Jolly Joe Bolton rose at five and worked till dark. Constant exercise and hearty feeding made him almost as broad as he was long. His occasional recreations were a day's fishing in a neighboring pond, or a gallop of a few miles to a shooting-match. He had but one bad habit, and that was a propensity to lounge of evenings in a pet chair in the bar-room of the Banner of Liberty, the only public-house in Hollywood. Here he met the squire[202] and the schoolmaster, and two or three dissipated hangers-on—men out at elbows and down at heel, who were topers by profession. These latter were true sons of New England—I mean New England rum. As they accomplished no labor, they considered themselves the *élite* of Hollywood, and kept up a kind of spurious gentility, with their faded green and black garments, their rusty stocks and superannuated beavers. One, *par eminence*, had acquired the fame of a storyteller, in consequence of which, he was "treated" at the tavern, and dropped elsewhere. He had once held a commission in the militia, where he formed those evil habits which had reduced him to his present state of degradation. Captain Josiah Sandford, or Sy, as he was popularly termed, was the Sir Walter of the village.[203]

---

202 The local judge.

203 Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), a novelist and a poet advocating 18th century enlightenment; he popularized the historical novel and had a prominent influence on literary circles in the 19th century. He encouraged Washington Irving to study German literature, which incited him to adapt German tales to the American context.

It was a sultry evening in September. Not a breath was abroad to wave the dusty foliage, and lift the muslin curtains of the Banner of Liberty. The bunch of asparagus tops that filled the chimney-place was parched and withered. The tallow candles on the bar burned with unwavering brilliancy. The mosquitoes hummed hoarsely through the room, as if they stood in need of something to drink ; and the great house-dog lay upon the floor, with his tongue lolling out of his mouth. Colonel Hateful Bemie stood within his bar, alternately dispensing beverage to his customers, and wiping the drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"Blasted hot !" said Captain Sy, polishing his purple, perspiring visage with the remnant of a cotton pocket-handkerchief, which must have been the very one that caused the murder of the "gentle lady wedded to the Moor."[204]

The remark was addressed to jolly Joe Bolton, who entered the bar-room at that moment.

"Ees it be, zure enough," replied the jolly Yorkshireman. "Come, Captain, give it a name."

And jolly Joe winked twice, chuckled, laid his fore-finger to his nose and walked up to the bar. Nothing loth, the bulwark of the Massachusetts militia followed.

"What'll you have, *gentlemen* ?" asked Colonel Hateful, with a satirical emphasis on the last word, as he glanced at the forlorn and threadbare equipments of Captain Sy.

"I'll take a glass of yale ;" said the Yorkshireman. "And the Captain"—

"I'll have a leetle sperrit, I believe—jest to keep the heat out."

In winter the Captain drunk to keep the cold out, in wet weather to keep the damp from striking in, and in dry weather "jest to a kinder ile his works."

"Here's to you, Mister," said the Captain, as be decanted a glass of flaming liquor, which sent a twinkle to his dull gray eyes, and deepened the paly purple of his nose.

"Now, Captain," cried Joe, as, lighting his pipe, he sat down with the representative of the chivalry of Hollywood. "Can't you find summat to talk about ?"

---

[204] After William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) *Othello* (1604, printed 1622), the handkerchief which turned Othello's murderous jealousy against Desdemona.

"Wa-al, I don't know. I forget eenymost every thing now-a-days. My memory's amost chawed up. But, by the way, I've been a wantin' to come acrost you for a long while. Want to ax you if you've found any thing on your farm ?"

"Found what ?" inquired jolly Joe.

"Gold and silver ;" replied the Captain in a whisper, winking with an air of mystery.

"Nonsense !" cried the Yorkshireman.

"Wa-al," said the son of the sword, "it ain't no matter."

"Yees, but it be though—domned if it beant !" said the Yorkshireman. "What made thee ax't, man ?—Do tell us now—coom !"

"Oh ! it ain't no matter," said the hero of sham-fights, proudly, indifferently. "It ain't no matter. Jest thought you might like to know —most folks like to make a leetl sutthin, jest to whelp 'em along when they're past labor. Hain't been able to do it myself—that's no reason why I shouldn't gin another fellar a helpin' hand. But 'taint no matter."

"Well, mon," said Canny Yorkshire, assuming an air of indifference—" If ye donna loike to tell it, e'en keep it to yourself."

Captain Sy fidgeted in his chair. "Hain't no objection to tellin' on it, if you've a mint to bear on it. If it wasn't so darned hot, and my mouth as dry as sole-leather, I mought let out a leetle sutthin."

"Take a drop o' something to refresh your memory."

"Wa-al, I don't keer if I do," said the delighted toper. "Kurnil you may mix me a glass of punch—a real snorter ; and while you're a mixin'on it, tell your boy to dror a mug of cider ; and while he's a drorin' on it, I'll jest take a pitcher of beer."

It was certainly a very dignified thing in the leader of platoons to snap his fingers after having imbibed stimulants enough to destroy a less valiant man ; but heroes bare their failings.

"Wa-al," said he, "now I've *wooded up*, I can go a-head like lightning." Drawing his chair close to that of his companion, Captain Sy laid his band upon his arm to bespeak his attention, and began as follows :—

"Great while ago, when this here toun was all timber and swamp-land—huckleberry-bushes and skunk cabbages—when the first settler come to fell and build, he found the hull country in the

hand of one Squotterkin, a Pequot chief.[205] He was a snorter of a fellar— as big as a bull—and only had one failin—hem !—he was fond of rum. Wa-al, that warn't much agin' him. But what was sing'lar. —instead of wearin' glass beads and bits of tin, like the other redskins, he had rale goold bracelets, and a rattler of a bit of goold as big as a hunk of gingerbread about his neck. The first settler, an ancestor of mine, axed the old chief whar, the name of thunder, he got that specie. The tarnal critter shook his head, and wouldn't. Then the settler—may as well call him my grandfather—treated Squotterkin, gin' him rum. That onlocked the riptyle's heart—so he up and told him, that he found the ore on his land ; but he said the devil showed it to him ; that the ore belonged to the devil, and it could only be got at midnight, in the till of the moon. Whether that was all talk and no cider, I don't know. Wa-al, my grandfather give old Squotterkin a barrel of rum and a hatchet for the biggest half of this 'ere toun ; and the old chief went west, and was carried off by a fit of the horrors. Some say Old Nick flew away with him. However, it was a pretty good speculation, though my grandfather never mined, nor found any goold there. Somehow or other it passed out of the hands of the family ; and as for me, I hain't got land enough to bury a musquitto in. But I raally advise you to be sharp. More things than potatoes may be dug out of that 'era land, though there's no kind er question but what Old Nick must be consulted first—'cause he's your lawful landlord, arter all. But I say, I must shet up—'cause here's Lawyer Facias lookin' this way and listenin'. Wouldn't halve him know the secret, 'cause he'd find a flaw in your title-deeds, whip you out of the Forest Farm, and himself into it, in the snapping of an ox-chain."

It was now late, and Joe Bolton thought it time to retire. The lamps were getting dim, and Colonel Bemis was nodding in his chair. Four men were leaning up against the wall, shaking hands and swearing to stand by each other, although evidently unable to stand by themselves. Two or three professed tipplers were asleep in chairs, and even the squire was singing through his nose. So the farmer shook hands with his military acquaintance, and went home. Once or twice, as he crossed a lonely stile, he thought he saw a tall black figure stealing over the grass, but it was only the lengthened shadows of

---

[205] A Native American people of Connecticut; the Pequot broke away from the Mohegan in the early 17th century.

the swaying birch-trees. That night he dreamed of discovering mines of wealth. Piles of ducats, rupees, ingots, louis d'ors, and eagles, seemed to solicit his attention, and woo him to appropriate them ; while hundreds of little fiends were busily sweeping away the gold-dust from beneath his feet, as if that was not worth the gathering.

CHAPTER II.

Shrill chanticleer aroused the yeoman from his slumbers the ensuing morning, and he donned his garments with his customary promptness. Already were his sons afield, and the forms of the brindled cattle were speckling the distant meadows. How delicious was the balmy air of the cool gray morning, breathing as it did of briery hedges, and bloomy fields, and new-mown hay ! The little birds shot upwards from the copse with shrilly twitterings, and the rabbit stole across the path as Joe Bolton trudged along on his way to a distant field of corn it was his purpose to inspect. Before he reached it, he had to thread one of those dark, deep swamps so common in New England. Although partially drained, the footing was in many places insecure, pines and hemlocks shot upwards from its unctuous soil to a vast and appalling height ; while the brilliant and odorous swamp-honeysuckle, the blueberry, and dwarf birch clustered at their bases. The shining mock-orange trailed its green and thorny festoons from tree to tree, threatening the yeoman with a rough salute. All throughout this damp and dismal region a grey mysterious twilight reigned, and it struck a melancholy even to the soul of jolly Joe Bolton. However, he trudged sturdily along, whistling a merry tune with unfaltering breath. Once or twice he made a mis-step, and tumbled in a bog ; and as often as he met with this mishap, he thought he detected, mingling with a dry, suppressed chuckle, the cries of "Bolton ! Joe Bolton ! Joe ! Joe ! Joe !" But it was only the croak of the bell-frogs and the crackling of girdled trees. At length he emerged from the swamp. At this moment he could have sworn he saw a black figure hovering over a green-mantled pool, which vanished as son as he observed it. But this may have been all fancy. He had no sooner quitted the confines of the swamp than he again stumbled. This time he fairly fell. As he groped about with his hands preparatory to rising, he encountered a stone. He was about to fling

aside, but a hasty glance showed something shining in the rough heap ; and the honest Yorkshireman uttered almost a yell of delight, for he recognized a glittering mass of gold.

"I'm domned if it ain't pure gold !" cried the honest fellow. "My fortin's made, zure as the devil's in Lunnon."

" Gold ? Hey ? Is it !" cried Lawyer Facias, suddenly appearing. "Then I give you joy, Mr. Bolton." "Thankyee," replied the farmer, discontentedly. "Dang it !" he muttered to himself. "I'd rather Facias had been at whoam—bug he's putting his nose into every body's mess."

"Let me look at the soil," said Facias. "Why, farmer, there's every indication of a vein. 'Egad, you're a lucky man. But harkee ! I'll give you one piece of counsel."

"Gratis ?" asked the farmer,

"Free, gratis, for nothing at all," said Facias, smiling. "Don't make much talk about this. I'll tell you why I'm not so sure of the soundness of the title by which you hold this estate. The man of whom you bought it was a very great knave."

"Yees—he were a lawyer ;" said the Yorkshireman, winking.

"The Squire has his legal doubts," said Facias. "So mind you say nothing of this windfall. I'll keep your secret. More good luck will follow."

"And what must I give ye, mun, for keeping the secret ?" asked the farmer. "They say you lawyers doant do nothing for nothing."

"Pooh ! Pooh !" cried Facias. "I only wish to be neighbourly."

"You're deady koind," said jolly Joe. "Come, man, sit thee doun wi' me on this bit of a rock, and tell I how I mun goa to work to get more gold ; for, zounds, I'm in a desput hurry to get rich."

"Aye—there's the nib," said Facias. "It is not enough simply to dig in the ground. I have no doubt that precious metals and stones are scattered freely over the whole surface of God's earth, and it was originally intended that the husbandman should turn them as freely with his share as clods of marl. But they are under the guardianship of an evil power."

"You mean Ould Nick," said the Yorkshireman.

"Assuredly."

"Wall, Maister Facias," said the honest yeoman. "I wont try to deceive ye—I do believe in that. My good mild mother—rest her bones !—taught that and the Bible to me at the same time— and domn it ! I believe in both."

"You talk like a sensible man !" cried Facias. "Well, sir, we must propitiate this Evil Spirit."

"Jockey him a bit, mun, hey ?" exclaimed the Yorkshireman. "'Ecod ! then, you're the very chap to do it, Maister Facias— you're acquainted with his ways."

"Nonsense," said the lawyer, peevishly, "I know nothing of the art of finding metals, but I know a man in New-York state, the hither side of Albany,[206] an old Dutch scholar, Dr. Nicholas Vanbrunner, a graduate of Leyden, who can manage this affair to perfection. 'Tis but a hundred and thirty miles to his place of residence. If you choose, I will send for him, and he will soon put you in possession of the treasures beneath your bet. He, however, must receive a large percentage for his trouble. What say you ? Have you a mind to send for him ?"

"Ecod ! I will," cried the Yorkshireman. "Your Dutch Doctor is the very chap. I've heard of him. He'll do it, nice as ninepence. I shall be so rich, and—Maister Facias come and breakfast wi' me."

CHAPTER III.

It was late one stormy evening when a knock was heard at the front door of Farmer Bolton's house. Jolly Joe himself opened it, and standing on the threshold, beheld Lawyer Facias wrapped in an old plaid cloak, and holding an umbrella.

"Come," said he, "Dr. Nicholas Vanbrunner has arrived, and will see you to-night in a room at the Banner of Liberty. He has unpacked his apparatus, and will show you a proof of his skill."

Jolly Joe Bolton snatched his hat, and accompanied the lawyer to the tavern, where, without pausing in the bar-room, they went directly to the apartment of the low Dutch necromancer. He was a little withered old gentleman, dressed in a suit of rusty black, with a sharp, twinkling eye, and a cynical twist about the mouth. He was comfortably seated in a mahogany arm-chair, smoking a very venerable

---

206 A town on the Hudson river, and the capital of New York State since 1797.

meerschaum.[207] He did not rise from his chair, or withdraw the pipe from his mouth, on the entrance of his visiter, and merely nodded his head when Facias introduced the farmer.

"This is Mr. Bolton," said the lawyer.

"Yaw—yaw," replied the doctor.

"Who owns the farm I described to you," continued Facias.

"Yaw," said the doctor.

"You understand ?" said Facias.

"Naw," replied the doctor.

Facias addressed him in Latin.

"Coom, now," said the farmer. "I'll make ye a fair offer, doctor. Ye shall have a half of all ye find. Do ye understand ?"

"Naw," replied the doctor, briskly.

"'Ecod ! he understands that fast enough," said the Yorkshireman. "I think gold, mun, ha' been the original language."

Dr. Vanbrunner now rose with much reluctance and opening a little chest, produced a small black bottle which might have held perhaps a pint. A pleasant perfume diffused itself throughout the apartment as if a hundred roses had suddenly blossomed, and cut their fragrance on the air. "It is the magical Elixir," whispered Facias.

Dr. Vanbrunner drew the cork from the bottle, and holding the orifice to his nose, appeared to inhale the aroma with peculiar delight ; for his little bright eye twinkled, a strange smile writhed his sarcastic lips, and his nostrils expanded like the stag's in Marmion.[208]

"It is goot !" said the Dutchman, as he handed it to Joe.

"None of your devil's drink for me, mon," said the Yorkshireman, putting it away.

"Nonsense, man," cried Facias, "I'll be your taster." And he drank a little to show Bolton "

" Now den," said the doctor, "for do magic glass."

He drew a small box from his chest, in the top of which a polished lens was inserted, and having wiped the glass with great care, he placed it on the table before Farmer Bolton.

"Look ! Look ! Mynheer !"[209] said the Dutch doctor. "Put fatever you sees, I pray you do not say von vort."

---

[207] A pipe with a bowl made of clay.

[208] "The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell, / Spread his broad nostril to the wind." Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion; A Tale of Flodden Field* (1808).

[209] "Sir" in Dutch.

Farmer Bolton gazed and gazed. At first his vision could detect no distinct image, but presently a strange light flashed upon his eyes, and he beheld an exact representation of the house in which he lived. Every thing was life-like. Smoke issued from the chimneys, and the confused babble of fowls sounded from the poultry-yard. The trees and flowers waved as if agitated by a gentle breeze, and he heard the lowing of cattle from the watery meadows. Alarmed, aghast, he would have turned away but for a change in the scene before him. He beheld the dark and dismal swamp, with its perilous quagmires, its green pools, and its flowering honeysuckles. That, in turn, departed ; and he gazed upon the memorable spot on which he had discovered the golden ore. As he looked steadfastly upon the surface of the earth, it opened, and gazing into a yawning cavern, he beheld a greater store of wealth than his imagination ever conjured up. Heaps of rubies and emeralds adorned the rocky sides of the cavern, and far down were huge piles of shining ore. Seated on a rock, however, near the entrance, was a figure of forbidding aspect, a tall black man, grasping a pitchfork, with a pair of horns upon his head. The legs terminated in two cloven hoofs, and a graceful tail twisted into many a spiral curl, lay before the demon on the rocky floor.

"'Ecod !" cried Joe, raising his eyes to Vanbrunner : "I ha' seen the old 'un."

The doctor hastily seized the box—a wild strain of music issued from the interior, but he returned it to the chest.

"To-morrow, mine frient," said the doctor; "to-morrow, mine very goot frient—we will make de grant experiment."

He then explained, by the help of Facias, that it was necessary for the farmer to deposit in the earth a goodly sum of gold, which, by its chemical affinity, would draw all the loose metal to its neighborhood, and indicate the region of the vein. As for the guardian demon, Doctor Vanbrunner promised to subdue him. So the parties separated for the night. But 'ere he went to bed, Joe Bolton committed one hundred guineas to the bosom of the earth.

CHAPTER IV

For one brief night Farmer Bolton enjoyed all the feelings of a millionaire. I once heard of a man, who was informed by a bill stuck

in an office window that his lottery ticket had drawn the highest prize. He took a short turn to recover from the shock of his good fortune, but when he returned to the window, he found the number of the fortunate ticket had been changed. So fared it with honest Joe Bolton ; he had no sooner formed his plans for the disposal of his fortune, than it vanished like the mirage of the desert. But I am anticipating.

The night which followed the interview with he doctor was gloomy as the preceding one, and the gold-hunting trio arrived at the spot, drenched and dispirited. The doctor placed the leathers on a stone, and produced a bottle of the magical elixir. It revived the spirits of the party, and they went to work. The clouds at midnight broke away from the face of heaven, and the moon came shining out like a silver lamp, bailed as a welcome omen by the doctor and the farmer. The clink of pick-axe and spade announced an important discovery, and the united strength of the party was requisite to bring to light a huge iron pot of ponderous weight. This was an unexpected piece of good fortune, for it was filled to the brim with Spanish gold coins of a very ancient date. A little deeper they came to an old mouldering oaken chest, crammed, like the iron pot, with ancient coins. Then pile after pile of shining ore was rescued from the earth. Among other things Dr. Vanbrunner turned up Bolton's box of guineas. As the grey light of the morning began to streak the distant east, the exhausted triumvirate sat down to a division of the spoils.

"To you, doctor," said the joyous farmer, belongs half."

"No—no—" said the disinterested Dutchman. "Dis hundret guineas is enough for me."

"Not so," replied honest Bolton. "At least, let me add a handful of these coins."

"Enough! Enough !" cried the Dutchman "Py Gott ! I vill take no more, mein frient."

"As for you, Maister Facias," said Bolton, "your share is a fair third."

"Not a doit ! not a stiver !" cried the generous Facias. "All I ask is this, friend Bolton. In future, think better of attorneys for my sake."

The Dutchman and Facias then shook hands with Bolton and departed. The farmer went home, harnessed his horse to his waggon,

returned and carried off the spoil. Overcome with fatigue and excitement, he threw himself upon his bed and slept. When he awoke again it was high noon. The family had breakfasted, and his wife met him with reproaches as he descended to the parlor.

"Ah ! Wife ! wife !" cried the honest man. "If you knew what'd been about, you wouldn't look so desput cross this morning."

The mystery was soon explained—The iron pot, the oaken chest, and the waggon-load of ore produced. Alas ! poor Bolton ! All thy imaginary wealth was brass and copper. The deception was but too apparent. He rushed to the Banner of Liberty. Colonel Hateful Bemis and Captain Sy were there, but where was the great Dutch doctor ? From hence the infuriated yeoman went in search of Facias. His sign hung by one nail : the door was locked—the shutters were unclosed. The lawyer, who was deeply in debt, had doubtless eloped. The whole truth flashed upon the mind of Bolton. Facias and the doctor were in league together, and had shared the hundred guineas between them. They were never seen in Hollywood again. As for Farmer Bolton, he looked rather gloomy for a time, but by and by good cheer and heavy crops restored his spirits, Jolly Joe became himself again, and though he now relates his story with good humor, yet he never fails to add—ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.[210]

---

[210] The literary origin of the proverb dates back to Aesop's fables (born *circa* 620 BC) and is found in a very similar form in William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1598) "All that glisters is not gold" (Act II, Scene 4).

THE

AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

JANUARY, 1836. (VOL. VII)

A LEGEND OF MONT ST. MICHEL.

A SKETCH FROM HISTORY

IT was on a sultry day in the summer of the year 1620,[211] that two individuals toiled wearily up the landward side of one of that range of mountains that separates the town of Avranches,[212] on the coast of Normandy, from the inland. The erect form and firm step of the elder of the two, showed that his old age was as a "lusty winter, frosty but kindly."[213] And in every motion of his companion was manifested the light heart and untiring spirit of youth. The ascent was steep, and the path winding and rough ; so that by the time the summit was attained, the hardy sinews of the old man, and the lusty limbs of the youth, were equally fatigued. But the scene that there met their eyes was well calculated to make them forget their weariness. Beneath them lay the town of Avranches, at such a distance that the mud and filth of the place were invisible ; while its picturesque cottages and busy peasantry presented only an appearance of neatness and industry more amiable to "la belle France." On either side, for miles along the coast, villages, forests, cultivated fields, and winding streams met the eye in endless succession while in front, looking over Avranches was seen the singular fortress of St. Michel,

211 Louis XIII (1610-1643) was reigning over France. All the major European powers were confronting one another in the Thirty Year's War (1618-1648), notably for religious reasons. That same year, the Pilgrim Fathers signed the Mayflower Compact and founded the Plymouth Colony near Cape Cod.

212 A town in Normandy (France), on the English Channel, near the island of Mont Saint Michel. It was devastated during the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598), the conflict during which the facts related supposedly occurred.

213 "My age is as a lusty winter, / Frosty, but kindly" William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *As You Like It* (Act II, Scene 3).

surrounded by the still more singular sands of the same name. As these last two objects are immediately connected with our tale, it will be necessary to say a few words in description of them as they appear to our travellers.

The rays of the declining sun streamed lull upon the vast plain that lay between the ocean and the main land, partaking of the character of each, yet widely differing from either. From the outer verge of this plain, three or four miles from the main land, arose a tall conical rock, on the summit and sales of which were built a fortress and a town. This plain was the famous sands, and this rock the famous fort of St. Michel.[214] Were the latter less fortified by art than it is, it would still, from its situation, be well-nigh impregnable. Surrounded by a desert of sand, which at the coming in of the tide becomes one vast quicksand, covered entirely with water, it rears itself above the waste, too lonely and exposed to be approached unseen ; while if it were attacked in the broad light of day, the assailants would be engulphed in the devouring sand long before they could obtain a footing on the firm rock.

The younger traveller gazed upon the scene with ever-increasing wonder and delight ; now pointing out to his companion some shady nook in the dark forest, and now directing his attention to the glittering of the rivers as they lost themselves in the sands. "Ay," said the old man, "it is a glorious scene — all France can boast no fairer. I too, when the blood danced as merrily through my veins as it now does through yours, ere the exposure of seventeen summers had darkened the down upon my lip, I too beheld it from the same spot on which you now stand, and with the same feelings of wonder. Little did I then think that on yon sands I should one day narrowly escape a horrid death ; little did I then think that within the gloomy walls of that castle my nearest and dearest friends would one day find a grave. Let us sit beneath the shade of this tree, and while the cool sea-breeze fans our brow, I will tell you a tale of 'the Fortress of the Genii.'"[215]

---

[214] Mont Saint Michel is a fortified monastery built in the 8th century on a rocky islet at the border between Brittany and Normandy. A one mile causeway was built by the end of the 19th century connecting the island to the mainland from which it is separated by flat sands at low tide and waters at high tide. The rising tide is reputed to reach the speed of a galloping horse.

[215] A *genius* was a tutelary deity or the guardian spirit of a person or of a place, here obviously Saint Michael himself.

You may thank a benign Providence, my son, that your youth has been passed in better days than those which, in your father's boyhood, were burthened with gloom and danger, with civil war for our beloved country, and family discord for her oppressed children. The Wars of the League[216] have indeed gone by ; but like the dread tornado we hear of in that new world beyond the sea, they have left behind a wide path of desolation, strewed with the blasted hopes and ruined fortunes of the best and bravest of our land. The hand of war, which was laid so heavily upon others, did not spare my kindred ; and we are now gazing upon the place in which each of my brethren, nearest in affection as well as in blood, were, in quick succession, ruthlessly murdered.

We were all, as you know, the dependents of the Count de Montgomeri, whose noble nature would not suffer him to behold the wrongs of an oppressed people without attempting redress, and whose arm was nerved by the thought, that his father's murder was yet unrevenged.[217] His energetic spirit and undoubted courage made him one of the most active and successful leaders of the Huegonots ; and when therefore he announced to his brave companions his determination to attempt the capture of the celebrated fortress of St. Michel—the impregnable fortress[218]—the declaration was received with no surprise, though all doubted whether even Montgomeri was equal to the task. But his hopes of success were well-grounded — no thought of fear entered the bosom of him or his companions, and he had every possible motive to urge him onward

On the wall of the castle, on the north side, there is erected a small tower, which at this distance you can scarcely perceive, whose base projects a little over the bare steep rock, which at that place

---

216 The Catholic League, an ultra-Catholic party founded by Henry of Guise in 1576, during the French Wars of Religion, aimed at radically exterminating Protestantism in France.

217 Gabriel, Count of Montgomery (ca 1530 – 1574), who accidentally killed King Henry II in a tilt, was the leader of the Protestants of Normandy during the Wars of Religion. In 1563 and 1574, he vainly tried to take over the town of Cherbourg, was arrested, sentenced to death by Catherine of Medici and decapitated in Paris. His son took over his fight in Normandy. In 1591, he vainly tried to capture the fortress of Mont Saint Michel. The legend refers to that episode of the French Civil War.

218 No onslaught on the Mont Saint Michel was ever successful and the place was consequently considered as protected by Archangel Saint Michael.

goes down, almost perpendicularly, to the sands beneath. In the floor of the tower there is a trap-door provided with tackle, through which it is said the monks, who in days of yore possessed the place, were accustomed to draw up those goods they were ashamed to carry in through the open gate, and in the broad light of day. Though this is the weakest point in the fortification, yet it was supposed to be so secure that but one soldier was stationed there to guard it. This man was bound by the strongest ties, of what nature I know not, of gratitude to our noble master ; and though fortune had thrown him into the ranks of our opponents, it was believed that he had not forgotten his former faith, and was still eager to serve his former friends. It would be of little use for me to tell of the difficulties that were met, and the dangers that were overcome, before an agreement was made with our friend within the walls. It was at length, however determined, that on the appointed night, the Count, with a brave band of an hundred associates, should steal up to the rock, and one by one be drawn up by the tackle of the monks.

The day came ; how wearily it passed ! The sun went down— oh ! how different from that on which we are now gazing— amid a mass of low black clouds that settled down and enveloped the gloomy fortress, as if its guardian genii had summoned their black battalions to come in mist and darkness, and protect their drear abodes. This night advanced, and though the wind and the rain were raging, though we had to grope our way, through thick darkness, over lands, which even in mid-day are dangerous, yet calmly and determinately we gradually approached the rock, and at length stood close at its foot. Would to God we had never reached it, that we had all perished together in the quicksand ere we saw the beacon-light of the faithless sentry ; would that his lying lips had become dumb ere he spoke the words that led so many of my friends and kinsmen to a bloody grave. But anger is now in vain ; it becomes rather to wait patiently for a death, how different from theirs !

I have said we stood beneath the trap-door, and you may imagine with what anxiety we gazed at the twinkling light above, and with what joy we heard the creaking of the blocks and the crank of the irons at the end of the ropes as they struck the ground. Then for the first time we breathed freely ; for we heard in the sound a confirmation of the good faith of our ally. Our joy, however, was short-

lived ; for as we surrounded, by the light of dim lantern, the iron cleets by which one of our number was to ascend alone, and with no friendly hand to aid him, to unknown dangers, our hearts again sank within us. Even the bold spirit of our leader was subdued at the thought of the fearful risk which he who first ascended was to run. At length my youngest brother, young in years but the bravest of the brave, stepped forward, and without a parting embrace, without a farewell word, with scarce a farewell look, placed his foot in the iron and grasped the cord. Gradually he rose from the earth, gradually he disappeared ; and oh ! how eagerly did each streaming eyeball gaze after his lessening form ; yet breathless silence chained every lip, and almost stopped the beating of every heart. But when the creak of the descending rope reached our ears, when the clank of the iron was once more heard, a smothered cry of joy arose ; confidence was restored to every bosom, and each man pressed forward with eagerness to join his companions in the tower above.

In this manner did I behold my five brethren disappear ; in this manner, in quick succession, did fifty gallant soldiers unhesitatingly ascend. We listened eagerly to hear when the work of death began ; we expected every moment to hear the shout of victory ; we panted to peal forth the war-cry of the Montgomeri ; but all was silent as the tomb. No clashing of steel or hurrying of feet told of the fierce encounter or the sudden surprise ; the light above still shone feebly through the thick mist ; the rope was still constantly and regularly lowered. Whispers and horrid surmises ran through the group. We looked eagerly around for some mode of solving the mystery. A large piece of timber, some forty feet in length, lay near at hand ; and as the eightieth man was beginning to ascend, I proposed that, having fastened myself at one end, I should be raised in the air until I might be able to see over the ramparts. It was soon done. I was slowly and cautiously raised ; I reached the top of the ramparts—I gazed eagerly. Oh, God in Heaven ! what a sight of horror I beheld ! In an open place, below, by the light of half a dozen torches, stood a grim and bloodstained executioner, grasping a long two-handed sword ; from the point of which the reeking gore fell drop by drop. By his side was piled a horrid heap of ghastly heads ; and even while I

gazed, the same man, from whom but a minute before I had parted, the eightieth of our number, was led in ; his head bowed upon the block, and I could distinctly hear the heavy blow of the sword, and see the gush of the warm blood from the headless trunk. I could endure no more. I closed my eyes, and gave one long loud cry of agony and fear. My startled comrades quickly lowered me. I recollect not how I told the hideous tale ; but I well remember—oh ! I shall ever remember — the taunting devilish laugh that broke from those accursed battlements. It came upon us as the cry of the bird of night comes upon the ear of the murderer. It was echoed back from tower to tower. I fancied that from every lowering cloud that swept by on the wings of the wind, I could see mishapen forms leaning, and pealing forth that demoniac laugh. We paused not, we tarried for one another ; but clasping our trembling hands to our affrighted ears, we rushed wildly, madly across the plain. How I reached the shore I know not. The hand of the Almighty alone led me away from the quicksand, and preserved me from the treacherous waters.

J. H. H.