

Troubles of a Mason.

Dark masses of my threatening fellow-creatures, cloaked and cowed; chosen assassins equipped with noiseless goshawks and daggers dimming to a point, wherefrom drips a gout of gore; an executioner with a half-mask and a chopper, with its edge turned towards me; vague and unknown shapes following, following, with a deadly and unswerving purpose, whithersoever I take my frightened way; a thousand strangers with uplifted arms right hands, exclaiming together, artistically, and in the pauses of slow music: 'We swear, we swear, and doing it; half-a-dozen of intimate friends striking at my breast with a curious and varied collection of weapons, from an overwhelming sense of duty, and averting their looks for pity's sake; secret conclaves settling down my name in blood, with a variety of other dismal pictures selected from the haunted chambers of imagination, had been presented to me in dreams for months. I was rendered miserable, through having been made a freemason, with the terror of carrying about with me so tremendous a secret. I felt that I was fated to be the unhappy wretch who should betray that which had been held sacred by multitudes for more than a thousand years. Nor was this idea altogether without grounds; for to so great a pitch of nervousness had I arrived, that I was continually whispering the matter confidentially to myself, and then, in the belief that I had spoken aloud, looked horror-stricken around me; or, not seldom, I would write it down on slips of paper, which I afterwards took care to tear up small, or put them into the fire, or devoured them.

Once, however, when engaged in this practice, a high wind, coming in at the open window, scattered those interesting disclosures in every direction, and drove me as a nearly mad as a sane man could go. There were as many as twenty distinct revelations of the most mysterious fact in the world's history thus set flying over space, so that any one might run and read them. Nineteen of these I recovered by means of almost superhuman exertions. Two were reclaimed, at peril of life and limb, from a neighbor's wall with *chateau de frise* at the top of it; three of them had lodged in a very lofty tapering tree, which practically demonstrated the dreaded fact of my Sybilian leaves becoming popular; five were carried into the river, and had to be rescued by boat; seven had been whirled into the kennel of a proverbially savage dog, which, however, was so impressed by my eager haste and furious vehemence, that he vacated his quarters at the first summons, and fled, howling to the utmost extent of his chain. One was brought down from a chimney pot by a very small sweep, who, luckily for me and for himself, proved to my satisfaction that he had never been taught to read; one I found the kitten at play with in the garden, which presently I put to death accordingly, without open trial, after the manner of the tribunals of Westphalia, the twentieth could nowhere be found. There was lying somewhere, patent to the first passer-by, an explicit solution of the whole art of freemasonry in my own peculiar and well-known handwriting. This thought, which was of a nature to make the most stolid anxious, excited me to frenzy. I went about demanding of my fellow-creatures whether they had seen a small piece of paper in the air lately.

'What paper? What was on it?' inquired they. 'What was on it, indeed? A question not to be answered very readily. I did not go to bed for eight and forty hours, and then I found the precious missing manuscript neatly deposited between my neckerchief and my false collar; after which I abstained from writing out the secret any more. I carried it about with me on my mind, nevertheless, and a very dreadful burden it was. Waking or sleeping, but especially sleeping, I was always picturing to myself the consequences of revealing what I know, and thereby enduring the imaginary pains of half-a-dozen opium-eaters. Methought that the Provincial Grand of our lodge, who, in private life is a most respectable grocer, was the individual selected by the society as the avenger of violated faith. He was wont to pursue me in his full official costume, which, however, seemed to attract no greater attention in the streets of the city than in the deserts (all bearing an absurd likeness to the back-garden of my private residence), whether I sometimes, in vain, betook myself for refuge. He held his masonic ladder in one hand, and his trowel and pair of compasses in the other when he had come up with me, he would describe with the compasses a magic circle, out of which I could not stir; plant his ladder against my back, as though I were a cucumber frame, and mounting upon my shoulders, trowel in hand, would mutter some cabalistic words addressed to surrounding nature, explanatory of the reason of my being sacrificed; at this period I was wont to be awakened with the chattering of my teeth. Once, I remember throwing myself upon the protection of a policeman, who happened to be patrolling the desert for the greater security of the ostrich-eggs; and he, instead of taking the Provincial Grand into custody, pointed to the collar of his own uniform, upon which, in place of a number, was emblazoned the fatal triangle which proclaimed the Peeler to be a Deputy Grand Arch himself. My state of mind became at length so unupportable, that I was obliged to take a friend into my confidence. I did not, of course, confide to him the secret, but I told him of the anxiety which was continually consuming me regarding it.

'Well,' said Levi Jones, after having listened patiently to the sad recital—he was a very well-meaning man, only rather voluble—'I have a plan which, I think, will benefit you:

for your sake—although I know the whole thing is nonsense—I am ready to become a freemason myself; then, you see, you will have a confidant—a being in whom you may repose your trouble. We will retire together for an hour or so every day into some lonely spot—down the well, or up the chimney, or into the Ontario Legislature while they are squabbling over the surplus—and there we will converse about this secret, if there be a secret, and relieve your mind.'

This project transported me with joy and gratitude. I made the necessary arrangements with the officials in our lodge for Jones's admission, without, of course mentioning my particular reason for getting it done, and he came down to my house from Markham upon the evening preceding his installation. I had been useful to Jones more than once in the way of lending him a little money when he was hard up, and I was therefore not surprised, when, as we were sitting together after dinner over our wine, he requested of me the temporary loan of forty dollars.

However, as there was a small account already between us, I moved as an amendment that the sum should be decreased by one half, to which, after a slight discussion, my friend acceded, and retired to rest, apparently satisfied, with twenty dollars of mine in his purse.

We lay in a double-bedded room, for the convenience of conversing upon my all-engrossing topic, and we fell asleep while talking of it. I was awakened in the morning by the entrance into the room of my companion, ready dressed, and with his hat on, as though he had been out for an early stroll.

'Why, I never heard you got up,' said I; 'I must have slept very soundly.'

'You did,' replied Jones in a solemn and unusual tone; 'very, very soundly; and you dreamed, I think?'

'I believe you, my boy,' cried I, chuckling with the thought of how soon such things would be all over: 'I just did dream.'

'You dreamed of the—the secret, did you?' continued he.

'Of course I did,' said I; 'I always do dream of the secret.'

'Indeed,' observed Jones, with an unpleasant dryness in his manner; 'and do you always talk in your sleep?'

I felt exactly as if a jug of ice-cold water had been poured down the nape of my neck.

We were both silent for at least a minute, and then Jones quietly remarked: 'I think you might just as well make that twenty dollars a forty do you know!'

'Make it it eighty,' exclaimed I, with eagerness: 'oblige me by accepting eighty dollars.'

'Thank you,' replied Jones coolly; 'I think I will. From what you said last night,' added he with a grim smile, 'I understood that you had not so much money in the house.'

Then I remembered having made use of that little delicate evasion, in order to get rid of his importunity upon the previous evening. By his reminding me of it thus boldly, it was evident that I must have put myself into his power indeed.

'Do you know all?' inquired I hoarsely.

'Well,' said he carelessly, 'there is no reason of my being masonified; I know all about the—the. He enunciated the awful secret, the mystery of the ages, the hidden wonder, as though he were retailing some political tit-bit. 'You see,' he continued, 'you awake me, and kept me awake by repeating it so very distinctly over and over again, that I have got it quite pat. I could not forget it even if I would. Since you seemed to be in such admirable case for it, I could not help trying that experiment—with which you are doubtless acquainted—of interrogating a sleeping person regarding the subject of his dreams, and your answers were astonishingly clear and pertinent. I never was spectator of anything more interesting and curious. It is positively a contribution to psychological science. I think, indeed, that I shall publish an account of it.'

A Modern Development.

(From the New York Tribune.)

One day last week, in Salisbury, Md., a lad belonging to a respectable family waylaid a little girl of fourteen, on her way to school, and shot her through the heart. "Cause," as the local papers gravely inform us, "disappointed affection;" and they proceeded to draw one pitiful picture of the fair child lying dead in the road, her hair dabbled in blood, and another of the boy murderer, "a lad of great courage and spirit, who is supposed to be the person who on the day following ran out from the woods near Christfield and threw himself under a passing train, by which he was instantly killed." The story is terrible enough; but the worst pity of it all lies in the fact that that nobody is surprised by it; nobody seems to see any reason why this lad, fresh from his school-books and play, should not act like an adult man mad from passion; and the little girl became an object of curiosity and envy to other children as having been able to inspire such an uncontrollable affection. Our grandfathers would say that in their days George and Amelia would have been reared on different diet, physical and mental. And such indications of precocity as the "love-letters, despairing appeals, and threats to kill" with which this boy, we are told, prefaced the murder, would in all probability have been held in check by a sound whipping at the hands of his father; and a further course of fasting and double allowance of Greek verbs to crack have "repressed his noble rage and chilled the genial current of his soul." When boys studied the Pilgrim's Progress and Robinson Crusoe in lieu of newspapers, these graybeards tell us, and girls worked samplers instead of poring over, at the best, religious novels in Sunday Schools, there was no talk of passion in pinafores, or child-murderers and suicides.

Now, we have no wish to go back to the old horsewhip and bread-and-water discipline; and we believe, furthermore, that the narrower education, which then limited a boy's range of research to the often impure classics, and a girl's to "music, dancing and the use of the globes," was far more apt to engender idleness of mind and abnormal passions than the present system, by which the earth and air, the very food they eat, are made vocal to them with life facts. The difference lies here: that then George would have submissively taken whip or discipline from his father as an exercise of rightful authority; now, from the age of ten he meets him as man to man. Once out of his long clothes, he becomes an American citizen. The old treatment of children had this aim—to impress on them the fact of their childishness, their inferior, insignificant place in society. Now such a thing as a little wholesome neglect is unattainable for any of them. The very care with which we plan and carry out their education, the numberless theories and systems for their behalf, commendable as they are, exaggerates a child's importance to himself. Besides this in our home training, in their religious teaching, in the books and magazines for their use, the fact of their childishness is absolutely ignored. There is or ought to be an ignorance, an incompleteness, a lack if you will, in a child's nature which we ought to keep untotally out of sight, talking, writing and preaching to them as to miniature men and women. The loves of babies just out of their cradle fill the dust-covered nursery papers; instead of turning girls of nine or ten out to jump the rope and romp by daylight for amusement, we trick them in ball dresses and set them to waiting and flirting in a hot room at the hour when the should be going to bed. No wonder that at fourteen pistols and death end the miserable play. Every faculty of their brains or power of their animal nature, is over-stimulated, over-heated, urged to undue growth and development in the whole course of their training, from birth and during non-age.

What may have been the case in this particular instance we do not know; but that the fault we complain of is universal is proved by the apathy with which such tales are received by the public ear. The infant Hercules, did he live now-days, might strangle serpents to his heart's content in his cradle and would be regarded as no prodigy among the legion of adult babies with which the land is plagued.

The original Ravel is all alive, but the youngest is over sixty. When, not long ago, the troupe was last in the United States, two young ladies, one a well-known belle of Ohio, were riding in a car, and wished to open the window near them. They failed, and one of them suggested asking the aid of an old gentleman sitting in the next seat behind them. "Oh, no," responded the other, "don't trouble the old man." To their astonishment, this aged individual rose, stepped in the aisle, made a low bow to the young ladies, and turned a somersault forward, and then one backward. After this he made another bow, and then threw up the window. This was Gabriel Ravel, aged seventy.

ate regard. I love you, Jones; you know it was only in fun all along.'

'Thank ye,' said my volatile friend, as he pocket the money; 'so was I too. I have been playing a trick upon you from the very beginning.'

And then—according to the orthodox manner, so often practiced by me in secret—he made, to my astonishment, the freemason's sign.

'You must know, my dear fellow,' added he, 'that I have been a mason myself these ten years; and as for your revelations during sleep, they consisted of nothing beyond snoring.'

Overworked.

Cooking, scouring and working, becomes chronic with many housekeepers; domestic concerns occupy their minds to the complete exclusion of all other subjects. Each day brings to them its real and trumped-up cares; the former being sufficient to tax both mind and body, without the addition of unnecessary duties. Trot, trot, go the feet of the patient, or impatient woman, who fancies the world must instantly become chaos, if just so many pies are not on hand, and the usual number of shakings given to the dust-cloth. She must keep going from cellar to garret, no matter if she walks on blisters. "Who will do it if I don't," says she, when remonstrated with by a husband, who wishes that he might occasionally see a smiling face and hear a cheerful voice, even if a few specks of dust rest here and there, and there are no pies in the larder. His rather gruff response, "let the work go," meets with impatient accusations—"that he never did appreciate his wife," etc., etc., the scene generally ending with tears on her part and frowns on his. Yet there are two sides to every story. When men complain that their wives do more work than is necessary, and beg them to let it go, would they not likewise complain if things were not served up in order and neatness? Would they be willing to go to the pantry and "take a bite," instead of sitting down to partake of the savory dishes set before them at dinner? Would they like to eat hasty pudding instead of bread, because so much time and strength are required in kneading? When they wanted a clean knife, spoon or plate, would they quietly go and wash it, because the wife let "the work go" to rest? "Ah, but making beds, kneading bread, washing dishes and getting dinner, are the simplest and most necessary duties. A woman can attend to these without being always drudging," respond the discomfited grumblers. Yes, yes, but to find out how many steps are required to perform those duties properly, you should try them yourselves for a few weeks. Then you would learn to be patient when she is weary, and prone to look on the dark side of life.

Food for Infants.

Since the celebrated Hospital for Foundlings in Paris has adopted the system of placing infants in the country to board, each in the home of a peasant who has weaned her own child at the age of nine months, and is now wet-nurse or rather foster-mother to the little foundling—since the adoption of this system, less than ten per cent of the founding children die. These facts conclusively prove that the milk of the mother is the indispensable food of an infant. And since it is acknowledged by all who have investigated the subject, that the risk of substituting any other food for the mother's milk during the first year of life, is very great—why should not this natural sustenance be continued for a much longer period than is generally advised?

The majority of American children are so "delicate," that is, of such extremely active, nervous temperament, not sufficiently balanced by vital and muscular power, that three-fourths of them will die if not suckled at all. Now, if the mother's milk keeps an infant alive for nine or ten months, and gives it tolerable strength and size and health, why not continue the same diet for a longer time, with other food, until the child is safely past the period of teething, and infantile febrile disorders? It would then be fairly started in life, able to digest any plain simple food, and to keep up good health by running about freely in the air.

It is true that many American women are of a constitution so fragile and unrecuperative that they cannot suckle long without evidently declining in health; and in some instances have been known to fall into consumption or dyspepsia from this cause. I believe, however, that the chief reason of this, is that they give too much milk at first, allowing the babe to depend wholly on that for its sustenance. Another cause of the mother's debility is, that she does not herself use suitable diet and regimen. And the mental excitement and worry in which most American ladies live, greatly impairs and dries their bodily juices. A dairy-man who wants a good cow that is a "good milker," chooses one of a placid and gentle disposition.—From Science and Health.

A Slave of the Register.

I am sorry to say that Dora, when left alone, straightway proceeded to demean herself in a manner that was the reverse of respectful to her absent cousin. She made a mad dash at the register, which she shut with a vindictive slam, then she darted to the windows, which she opened wide enough to allow a life-giving breath of heaven to enter the room, which was more of the temperature of Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego's furnace than an apartment intended for occupancy. Then she took up the long fleecy abominations, into which Annie had crocheted what little feeble vitality she had left, during the two weeks that she had not been out of doors, and slily hid it under the sofa pillows. Then she sat down to the piano, and was warbling in her own blithe bird-like fashion, when Annie returned to the room an hour later.

Marvel bounteousness, she is really a showy, stylish girl.

To eye that sees only in the glass, darkly, of fashion, Dora would now seem to suffer by comparison with her elegant cousin. Her plain brown Tibetan, spotlessly pure, yet without a peacock's tail of a train, made her stature seem insignificant beside Annie's regal mien. Her brown hair was so plainly dressed that, even though it was as becoming as gleaming gold could be on a white brow, it seemed, perhaps, even a little prim, contrasted with Annie's lavish decorations. But no art could ever simulate the sparkle of those scintillating eyes, no art could ever imitate, even at most respectful distance, the stainless whiteness of her skin, the clear radiance of the tint which made her rounded cheek rival a glowing rose.

Dora made a profound obeisance as Annie entered the room; and then with a playful mockery, as if dazzled, shaded her eyes with her hand, as she took observations.

'Let her alone; she is joined to her idols, wedded to corsets, riveted to trains! Ah, Annie, I can't coax, bribe, or threaten you into keeping a hobby like mine. But you do improve vastly with your perpetual make-up; and, were it not that you pay a fearful price for it, I don't think I should so much condemn you. Yes,' she continued, walking around Annie's train, 'you look elegantly, if an observer doesn't come too near—all but that waist. Annie, I don't believe the man lives who, with any knowledge at all of the human mechanism, admires such a waist, or respects the woman who owns it.'

'John does,' said Annie, in a tone which was the perfection of indifference as to whether John did or not; but as if some reply must be made to Dora's protest.

'John did,' perhaps in his callow days, before his mind had developed the reflective faculty, and while his taste was corrupted by the false models that fashion worships. But if John does, then do I have shame, not honor, in my brother,' answered Dora.

Annie made no reply, but, sitting down to the piano, after a pretty interlude, gasped out in a thin, tremulous voice the very same ballad that Dora had given such flute-like music to a few moments before.

'Pshaw!' she said impatiently, 'I can't even sing I used to; my voice grows more husky and of narrower compass every. What do you take to keep your voice so clear?'

'Breath!' replied Dora, sententiously.—From Science of Health.

Origin of the Plague in Persia.

The origin of the plague in the plague-stricken district of Persia has been clearly traced, and the story thereof would be incredible if not avouched by physicians of skill and undoubted character. A native of Akhivan had been engaged in digging a cavern for harbouring his sheep during the winter. In so doing he turned up some human bones. Five hours after he was down with the plague. Another native found human bones in another cavern where he was preparing to shelter his sheep he removed the remains, and soon after the plague seized him. It spread through the little village with frightful rapidity, attacking 130 persons, and killing off 100 out of a population of only 150 families. The commissioners found out by careful enquiry that the bones were undoubtedly those of persons who died in the famous visitation of the plague in 1829-32. So that during the long period of forty years it appears that the poison of the disease remained in the bones, losing none of its terrible power. From Akhivan it passed to villages. In Armeni Boalak 145 persons were attacked and 125 died; in Uch-tepe 200 died out of 250 attacking; the families in the place numbered but 200; of the 25 families in Arbanos 60 persons died out of 77 attacked. And these were about the proportions of fatal cases in the vicinity.—N. Y. Journal of Commerce.

A Romance of West Virginia.—Sarah J. Winemillier, a girl of about seventeen summers, who was convicted of and sent to the penitentiary for burring a small log church in one of the smaller counties of the State, has been pardoned by Governor Jacobs and released. The manner in which this girl got into the penitentiary is peculiar. She was enamored of a young man who unfortunately was charged with stealing a horse, and was put in jail to await a trial thereof. With a confidence in the charge against her inamorata, and a devotion to him that was remarkable, she proceeded to commit the act for which she was sent up, that she might be with him in the penitentiary. But, alas! the man was acquitted last fall when his trial came off, and he has ever since, up to the time of the pardon, been engaged in securing his faithful though rash sweetheart's release. The facts of this notable romance are set forth in the petition.

Sir Anthony Rothschild handed to his son-in-law £2,000 on the wedding-day for "travelling expenses."

The French census has just been declared, and the population of the whole country is fixed at 32,102,821.

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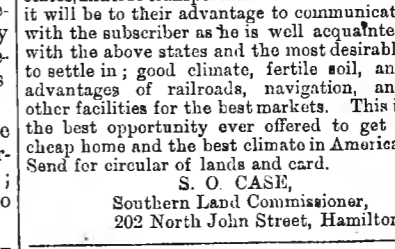
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