PITCHERY-BIDGERY.

The Turning of the Long, Long Lane.

BY MONSIEUR DEMOULIN.

Brandon hall was one of the oldest and most magnificent of the great halls of England. As Brandon looked upon it it rose before him amidst the grove of six hundred years, its many gabled roof rising out from a dim sea of foliage, speaking of wealth, luxury, splendor, power, influence and all that men hope for, or struggle for, or fight for; from all of which he and his had been cast out; and the one who had done this was even now occupying the old ancestral seat of his family.

Brandon entered the gate, and walked up the long avenue till he reached the hall. Here he rang the bell, and a servant appeared. "Is Mr. Potts at home?"

"Yes," said the man, brusquely.

"I wish to see him."

"Whom shall I say?"

"Mr. Hendricks, from America."

The man showed him into the drawing room. Brandon seated himself and waited. The room was furnished in the most elegant manner, most of the furniture being old, and all familiar to him. He took a hasty glance around, and closed his eyes as if to shut it all out from sight.

In a short time a man entered.

He appeared to be between fifty and sixty years of age, medium size, broad shouldered and stout. He had a thoroughly plebian air; he was dressed in black, and had a bunch of large seals dangling from beneath his waistcoat. His face was round and fleshy, his eyes were small, and his head bald. The general expression of his face was that of good natured simplicity. As he caught sight of Brandon a frank smile of welcome arose on his broad, fat face.

Brandon arose and bowed.

"Am I addressing Mr. John Potts?"

"You are, sir. John Potts of Potts hall!"

"Potts of Potts hall!" repeated Brandon. Then, drawing a card from his pocket he handed it to Potts. He had procured some of these in London. The card read as follows:

BEAMISH & HENDRICKS,

FLOUR MERCHANTS AND PROVISION DEALERS,

88 Front Street, Cincinnati,

OHIO.

"I, sir," said Brandon, "am Mr. Hendricks, junior partner in Beamish & Hendricks, and I hope you are quite well."

"Very well, thank you," answered Potts, smiling and sitting down. "I am happy to see you."

"Do you keep your health, sir?"

"Thank you, I do," said Potts. "A touch of rheumatism at odd times, that's all."

Brandon's manner was stiff and formal, and his voice had assumed a slight nasal intonation. Potts had evidently looked on him as a perfect stranger.

"I hope, sir, that I am not taking up your valuable time. You British noblemen have your valuable time, I know, as well as we business men."

"No, sir, no, sir, not at all," said Potts, evidently greatly delighted at being considered a British nobleman.

"Well, Sir John—or is it my lord?" said Brandon, interrogatively, correcting himself, and looking inquiringly at Potts.

"Sir John'll do," said Potts.

"Well, Sir John. Being in England on business I came to ask you a few questions about a matter of some importance to us."

"Proceed, sir!" said Potts, with great dignity.

"There's a young man that came into our employ last October whom we took a fancy to, or rather my senior did, and we have an idea of promoting him. My senior thinks the world of him, has the young man at his house, and he is even making up to his daughter. He calls himself Brandon—Frank Brandon."

At this Potts started from an easy lounging attitude, in which he was trying to do the British noble, and with startling intensity of gaze looked Brandon full in the face.

"I think the young man is fairish," continues Brandon, "but nothing extraordinary. He is industrious and sober, but he ain't quick, and he never had any real business experience till he came to us. Now, my senior from the very first was infatuated with him, gave him a large salary, and in spite of my warnings that he ought to be cautious, he wants to make him head clerk, with an eye to making him partner next year. And so bent on this is he that I know he would dissolve partnership with me if I refused, take the young man, let him marry his daughter, and leave him all his money when he dies. That's no small sum, for old Mr. Beamish is worth in real estate round Cincinnati over two millions of dollars. So, you see, I have a right to feel anxious, more especially as I don't mind telling you, Sir John, who understand these matters, that I thought I had a very good chance myself with old Beamish's daughter."

Brandon spoke all this very rapidly, and with the air of one who was trying to conceal his feelings of dislike to the clerk of whom he was so jealous. Potts looked at him with an encouraging smile, and asked, as he stopped,

"And how did you happen to hear of me?"

"That's just what I was coming to, Sir John!" Brandon drew his chair nearer apparently in deep excitement, and in a more nasal tone than ever, with a confidential air, he went on:

"You see, I mistrusted this young man who was carrying everything before him with a high hand, right into my very teeth, and I watched him. I pumped him to see if I couldn't get him to tell something about himself. But the fellow was always on his guard, and always told the same story. This is what he tells: He says that his father was Ralph Brandon of Brandon hall, Devonshire, and that he got very poor—he was ruined in fact, by—I beg your pardon Sir John, but he says it was you, and that you drove the family away. Then they came over to America, and he got to Cincinnati. The old man, he says, died before they left, but he won't tell what became of the others. I confess I believed it was all a lie, and didn't think there was any such place as Brandon hall, so I determined to find out, naturally enough, Sir John, when two millions were at stake."

Potts winked.

"Well I suddenly found my health giving way, and had to come to Europe. You see what a delicate creature I am!"

Potts laughed with intense glee.

"And I came here after wandering about, trying to find it. I heard at last that there was a place that used to be Brandon hall, though most people call it Potts hall. Now, I thought, my fine young man, I'll catch you; for I'll call on Sir John himself and ask him."

"You did right, sir," said Potts, who had taken an intense interest in this narrative. "I'm the very man you ought to have come to. I can tell you all you want. This Brandon is a miserable swindler."

"Good! I thought so. You'll give me that, Sir John, over your own name, will you?" Brandon, in great apparent excitement.

"Of course I will," said Potts, "and a good deal more. But tell me, first, what that young devil said as to how he got to Cincinnati? How did he find his way there?"

"He would never tell."

"What became of his mother and sister?"

"He wouldn't say."

"All I know," said Potts, "is this, I got official information that they all died at Quebec."

Brandon looked suddenly at the floor and gasped. In a moment he had recovered.

"Curse him! then this fellow is an impostor?"

"No," said Potts, "he must have escaped. It's possible. There was some confusion at Quebec about names."

"Then his name may really be Frank Brandon?"

"It must be," said Potts, "Anyhow, the others are all right."

"Are what?"

"All right; dead you know. That's why he don't like to tell you about them."

"Well, now, Sir John, could you tell me what you know about this young man, since you think he must be the same one?"

"I know he must be, and I'll tell you all about him and the whole cursed lot. In the first place," continued Potts, clearing his throat, "old Brandon was one of the cursedest old fools that ever lived. He was very well off but wanted to get richer, and so he speculated in a tin mine in Cornwall. I was acquainted with him at the time and used to respect him. He persuaded me—I was always off-handed about money, and a careless, easy fellow—he persuaded me to invest in it also. I did so, but at the end of a few years I found out that the tin mine was a rotten concern, and sold out. I sold at a very high price, for people believed it was a splendid property. After this I found another mine and made money hand over fist. I warned old Brandon, and so did everybody, but he didn't care a fig for what we said, and finally, one fine morning, he waked up and found himself ruined.

"He was more utterly ruined than any man I ever knew of, and all his estates were sold. I had made some money, few others in the country had any ready cash, and the sale was forced, and I bought the whole establishment at a remarkably low figure. I got old Brandy—Brandy was a nickname I gave the old fellow—I got him a house in the village, and supported him for a while with his wife and daughter and his great lubberly boy. I soon found out what vipers they were. The all turned against their benefactor, and dared to say that I had ruined their father. In fact, my only fault was in buying the place, and that was an advantage to old Brandy rather than an injury. It shows, though, what human nature is.

"They all got sick at last, and as they had no one to nurse them, I very considerately sent them all to the almshouse, where they got good beds, good attendance, and plenty to eat and drink. No matter what I did for them, they abused me. They reviled me for sending them to a comfortable home, and old Brandy was the worst of all. I used to go and visit them two or three times a day, and he always cursed me. Old Brandy did get awfully profane, that's a fact. The reason was his infernal pride. Look at me, now! I'm not proud. Put me in the almshouse, and would I curse you? I hope not."

"At last old Brandy died, and of course I had to look out for the family. They seemed thrown on my hands, you know, and I was too good natured to let them suffer, although they treated me so abominably. The best thing I could think of was to ship them all off to America, where they could all get rich. So I took them to Liverpool."

"Did they want to go?"

"They didn't seem to have an idea in their heads. They looked and acted just like three born fools."

"Strange!"

"I let a friend of mine see about them, as I had considerable to do, and he got them a passage."

"I suppose you paid their way out."

"I did, sir," said Potts, with an air of munificence; "but, between you and me, it didn't cost much."

"I should think it must have cost a considerable sum."

"Oh no! Clark saw to that. Clark got them places as steerage passengers."

"Young Brandon told me once that he came out as cabin passenger."

"That's his cursed pride. He went out in the steerage, and a devilish hard time he had too."

"Why?"

"Oh, he was a little crowded, I think! There were six hundred emigrants on board the Tecumseh—"

"The what?"

"The Tecumseh. Clark did that business neatly. Each passenger had to take his own provisions, so he supplied them with a lot. Now what do you think he gave them?"

"I can't imagine."

"He bought them some damaged bread at one quarter the usual price. It was all mouldy, you know," said Potts, trying to make Brandon see the joke. "I declare Clark and I roared over it for a couple of months thinking how surprised they must have been when they sat down to eat their first dinner."

"That was very neat," rejoined Brandon.

"They were all sick when they left," said Potts; "but before they got to Quebec they were sicker, I'll bet."

"Why so?"

"Did you ever hear of ship-fever?" said Potts, in a low voice which sent a sharp thrill through every fibre of Brandon's being. He could only nod his head.

"Well, the Tecumseh, with her six hundred passengers, afforded an uncommon fine field for ship-fever. That's what I was going to observe. They had a great time at Quebec last summer; but it was unanimously voted that the Tecumseh was the worst ship of the lot. I sent out an agent to see what had become of my three friends, and he came back and told me all. He said that about four hundred of the Tecumseh's passengers died during the voyage, and ever so many after landing. He obtained a list of the dead from the quarantine records, and among them were those of these three youthful Brandons. Yes, they joined old Cognac pretty soon, lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death not divided. But this young devil that you speak of must have escaped. I dare say he did, for the confusion was awful."

"But couldn't there have been another son?"

"Oh no. There was another son, the eldest, the worst of the whole lot, so infernally bad that even old Brandy himself couldn't stand it, but packed him off to Botany Bay. It's well he went on his own accord, for if he hadn't the law would have sent him there at last, transported for life."

"Perhaps this man is the same one."

"Oh no. The eldest Brandy is dead."

"Are you sure?"

"Certain best authority. A business friend of mine was in the same ship with him. Brandy was coming home to see his friends. He fell overboard and my friend saw him drown. It was in the Indian Ocean."

"When was that?"

"Last September."

"Oh, then this one must be the other of course!"

"No doubt of that, I think," said Potts, cheerfully.

Brandon rose. "I feel much obliged, Sir John," said he, stiffly, and with his usual nasal tone, "for your kindness. This is just what I want. I'll put a stop to my young man's game. It's worth coming to England to find out this."

"Well, when you walk him out of your office, give him my respects and tell him I'm be very happy to see him. For I would, you know. I really would."

"I'll tell him so," said Brandon, "and if he is alive, perhaps he'll come here."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Potts.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Brandon, and pretending not to see Potts's outstretched hand, he bowed and left. He walked rapidly down the avenue. He felt stifled. The horrors that had been revealed to him had been but in part anticipated. Could there be anything worse?

He left the gates and walked quickly away, he knew not where. Turning into a by path he went up a hill and finally sat down. Brandon Hall lay not far away. In front was village and the sea beyond it. All the time there was but one train of thoughts in his mind. His words took shape and framed themselves into a few sharply defined ideas. He muttered to himself over and over the things that were in his mind: 'Myself disinherited and exiled! My father ruined and broken hearted! My father killed! My mother, brother and sister banished, starved and murdered!"

He, too, as far as Potts's will was concerned, had been slain. He was alone and had no hope that any of his family could survive. No, as he sat there alone, he needed to make his plans for the future. One thing stood out prominently before him, which was that he must go immediately to Quebec to find out finally and absolutely the fate of the family.

Then could anything else be done in England? He thought over the names of those who had been the most intimate friends of his father—Thornton, Langhetti, Despard. Thornton had neglected his father in his hour of need. He had merely sent a clerk to make inquiries after all was over. The elder Langhetti, Brandon knew, was dead. Where were the others? None of them, at any rate, had interfered.

There remained the family of Despard. Brandon was aware that the Colonel had a brother in the army but where he was he knew not nor did he care. If he chose to look in the army register he might very easily find out; but way should he? He had never known or heard much of him in any way.

There remained Courtenay Despard, the son of Lionel, he to whom the MS of the lead might be considered after all as chiefly devolving. Of him Brandon knew absolutely nothing, nor even whether he was alive or dead.

For a time he discussed the question in his mind whether it might not be well to seek him out so as to show him his father's fate and gain his co-operation. But after a few moments' consideration he dismissed this thought. Why should he seek his help? Courtenay Despard, if alive, might be very useful for the purpose. He might be timid, or indifferent, or dull, or indolent. Why make any advances to one whom he did not know? Afterward it might be well to find him, and see what might be done with or through him; but as yet there could be no reason whatever why he should take up his time in searching for him or in winning his confidence.

The end of all was that he concluded whatever he did to do it by himself, with no human being as his confidant.

Only one or two persons in all the world knew that he was alive, and they were not capable, under any circumstances, of betraying him. And where now was Beatrice? In the power of this man whom Brandon had just left. Had she seen him as he came and went? Had she heard his voice as he spoke in that assumed tone? But Brandon found it necessary to crush down all thoughts of her.

One thing gave him profound satisfaction, and this was that Potts did not suspect him for an instant. And now how could he deal with Potts? The man had become wealthy and powerful. To cope with him needed wealth and power. How could Brandon obtain these? At the utmost he could only count upon the fifteen thousand pounds which Compton would remit. This would be as nothing to help him against the enemy. He had written to Compton that he had fallen overboard and been picked up, and had told the same to the London agents under the strictest secrecy, so as to be able to get the money which he needed. Yet after he got it all, what would be the benefit? First of all, wealth was necessary.

Now more than ever there came to his mind the ancestral letter which his father had inclosed to him—the message from old Ralph Brandon in the treasure ship. It was a wild, mad hope; but was it unattainable? This he felt was now the one object that lay before him; this must first be sought after, and nothing else could be attempted or even thought of till it had been tried. If he failed, then other things might be considered.

Sitting there on his lonely height, in sight of his ancestral home, he took out his father's last letter and read it again, after which he once more read the old message from the treasure ship:

"One league due north of a smalle islet northe of ye Islet of Santa Cruz northe of San Salvador——I Ralphe Brandon in my shippe Phœnix am becalmed and surrounded by a Spanish fleete——My shippe is fild with spoyle the Plunder of III galleons——wealthe wh myghte purchasse a kyngdom—tresure equalle to a Emperyr's revenue——Gold and jeweles in countless store——and God forbydde that itt shuld falle into ye hands of ye Enemye——I therefore Ralphe Brandon cut I mine owne good wyl and intente and that of all my men sink this shippe rather than be taken alyve——I send this by my trusty seaman Peter Legg, in whom IX others folde off by lot will trye to escape in ye Boate by nighte——If this cometh hayly into ye hands of my sonne Philip let him herebye knowe that in his place is all this tresure—whaply may yette be gathered from ye sea——ye Islet is knowne by III rockes that be pushed up like III needles from ye sande.

"Ralphe Brandon"

Five days afterward Brandon, with his Hindu servant, was sailing out of the Mersey river on his way to Quebec.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

It was early in the month of August when Brandon visited the quarantine station at Grosse Island, Quebec. A low, wooden building stood near the landing, with a sign over the door containing only the word "OFFICE." To this building Brandon directed his steps. On entering he saw only one clerk there.

"Are you the superintendent?" he asked, bowing courteously.

"No," said the clerk. "He is in Quebec just now."

"Perhaps you can give me the information that I want."

"What is it?"

"I have been sent to inquire after some passengers that came out here last year."

"Oh, yes, I can tell all that can be told," said the clerk, readily. "We have the registration books here, and you are at liberty to look up any names you wish. Step this way, please." And he led the way to an inner office.

"What year did they come out in?" asked the clerk.

"Last year."

"Last year—an awful year to look up. 1847—yes, here is the book for that year, a year which you are aware was an unparalleled one."

"I have heard so."

"Do you know the name of the ship?"

"The Tecumseh."

"The Tecumseh!" exclaimed the clerk, with a startled look. "That's an awful name in our records. I am sorry you have not another name to examine, for the Tecumseh was the worst of all."

Brandon bowed.

"The Tecumseh," continued the clerk, turning over the leaves of the book as it lay on the desk. "The Tecumseh, from Liverpool, sailed June 2, arrived August 16. Here you see the names of those who died at sea, copied from the ship's books, and those who died on shore. It is a frightful mortality. Would you like to look over the list?"

Brandon bowed and advanced to the desk.

"The deaths on board ship show whether they were seamen or passengers, and the passengers are marked as cabin and steerage. But after landing it was impossible to keep an account of classes."

Brandon carefully ran his eye down the long list, and read each name. Those for which he looked did not appear. At last he came to the list of those who died on shore. After reading a few minutes his eye was arrested by one—

"Brandon, Elizabeth."

It was his mother. He read on. He soon came to another—

"Brandon, Edith." It was his sister.

"Do you find any of the names?" asked the clerk, seeing Brandon turn his head.

"Yes," said Brandon; "this is one," and he pointed to the last name. "But I see a mark opposite that name. What is it? B and A. What is the meaning?"

"Is that party a relative of yours?"

"No," said Brandon.

"You don't mind hearing something horrible, then?"

"No."

The clerk drew a long breath.

"Well, sir, those letters were written by the late superintendent. The poor man is now a lunatic. He was here last year."

"You see, this is how it was: The ship fever broke out. The number of sick was awful, and there were no preparations for them here. The disease in some respects was worse than cholera, and there was nothing but confusion. Very many died from lack of nursing. But the worst feature of the whole thing was the hurried burials.

"I was not here last year, and all who were here then have left. But I've heard enough to make me sick with horror. You perhaps are aware that in this ship fever there sometimes occurs a total loss of sense, which is apt to be mistaken for death?"

The clerk paused. Brandon regarded him steadily for a moment. Then he turned and looked earnestly at the book.

"The burials were very hastily made."

"Well?"

"And it is now believed that some were buried in a state of trance."

"Buried alive?"

"Buried alive!"

There was a long silence. Brandon's eyes were fixed on the book. At last he pointed to the name of Edith Brandon.

"Then, I suppose," he said, in a steady voice, which, however, was in a changed key, "these letters B and A are intended to mean something of that description?"

"Something of that sort," replied the clerk.

Brandon drew a long breath.

"But there is no certainty about it in this particular case. I will tell you how these marks happened to be made. The clerk that was here last told me.

"One morning, according to him, the superintendent came in, looking very much excited and altered. He went to this book, where the entries of burials had been made on the preceding evening. This name was third from the last. Twelve had been buried. He pencilled these letters there and left. People did not notice him; everybody was sick or busy. At last in the evening of the next day, when they were to bury a new lot, they found the superintendent digging at the third from the last. They tried to stop him, but he shouted and moaned 'Buried alive!' 'Buried alive!' In fact they saw that he was crazy, and had to confine him at once."

"Did they examine the grave?"

"Yes. The woman told my predecessor that she and her husband—who did the burying—had examined it, and found the body not only dead but corrupt. So there's no doubt of it. That party must have been dead at any rate."

"Who was the woman?"

"An old woman that laid them out. She and her husband buried them."

"Where is she now?"

"I don't know."

"Does she stay here yet?"

"No. She left last year."

"What became of the superintendent?"

"He was taken home, but grew no better. At last he had to be sent to an asylum. Some examination was made by the authorities, but nothing ever came of it. The papers made no mention of the affair, and it was hushed up."

Brandon read on. At last he came to another name. It was simply this: "Brandon." There was a slight movement on the clerk's part as Brandon came to this name. "There is no Christian name here," said Brandon. "I suppose they do not know it."

"Well," said the clerk, "there's something peculiar about that. The former clerk never mentioned it to anybody but me. That man didn't die at all."

"What do you mean?" said Brandon, who could scarcely speak for the tremendous struggle between hope and despair that was going on within him.

"It's a false entry."

"How?"

"The superintendent wrote that. See the handwriting is different from the others. One is that of the clerk who made all these entries; the other is the superintendent's."

Brandon looked and saw that this was the case.

"What was the cause of that?"

"The clerk told me that after making these next fifteen entries of buried parties—buried the evening after these last twelve—he went away to see about something. When he came back the next morning this name was written in the superintendent's hand. He did not know what to think of it, so he concluded to ask the superintendent; but in the course of the day he heard that he was mad and in confinement, as I have told you."

"Then you mean that this is not an entry of a death at all."

"Yes. The fact is, the superintendent for some reason got it into his head that this Brandon" and he pointed to Edith's name—"had been buried alive. He brooded over the name, and among other things wrote it down here at the end of the list for the day. That's the way in which my predecessor accounted for it."

"It is a very natural one," said Brandon.

"Quite so. The clerk let it stand. You see, if he had erased it, he might have been overhauled, and there would have been a committee. He was afraid of that; so he thought it better to say nothing about it. He wouldn't have told me, only he said that a party came here once for a list of all the dead of the Tecumseh, and he copied all out, including this doubtful one. He thought that he had done wrong, and therefore told me, so that if any particular inquiries were made I might know what to say."

"Are there many mistakes in these records?"

"I dare say there are a good many in the list for 1846. There was so much confusion that the names got changed, and people died whose names could only be conjectured by knowing who had recovered. As some of those that recovered or that had not been sick slipped away secretly, of course there was inaccuracy."

Brandon had nothing more to ask. He thanked the clerk and departed.

There was a faint hope, then, that Frank might yet be alive. On his way up to Quebec he decided what to do. As soon as he arrived he inserted an advertisement in the chief papers to the following effect:

NOTICE.

INFORMATION of any one of the name of "Brandon," who came out in the ship Tecumseh in 1846 from Liverpool to Quebec, is earnestly desired by friends of the family. A liberal reward will be given to any one who can give the above information. Apply to

HENRY PETERS, 22 Place d'Armes.

Brandon waited in Quebec six weeks without any result. He then went to Montreal and inserted the same notice in the papers there, and in other towns in Canada, giving his Montreal address. After waiting five or six weeks in Montreal he went to Toronto, and advertised again, giving his new address. He waited there for some time, till at length the month of November began to draw to a close. Not yet despondent, he began to form a plan for advertising in every city of the United States.

Meanwhile he had received many communications, all of which, however, were made with the vague hope of getting a reward. None were at all reliable. At length he thought that it was useless to wait any longer in Canada, and concluded to go to New York as a center of action.

He arrived in New York at the end of December, and immediately began to insert his notices in all parts of the country, giving his address at the Astor House.

One day, as he came in from the street, he was informed that there was some one in his room who wished to see him. He went up calmly, thinking that it was some new person with intelligence.

On entering the room he saw a man standing by the window, in shirt sleeves, dressed in coarse clothes. The man was very tall, broad-shouldered, with large, Roman features, and heavy beard and mustache. His face was marked by profound dejection, he looked like one whose whole life had been one long misfortune. Louis Brandon had never seen any face which bore so deep an impress of suffering.

The stranger turned as he came in and looked at him with his sad eyes earnestly.

"Sir," said he, in a voice which thrilled through Brandon, "are you Henry Peters?"

A strange feeling passed over Brandon. He stepped forward.

"Frank?" he cried, in a broken voice.

"Merciful Heavens!" cried the other. "Have you too come up from the dead? Louis!"

In this meeting between the two brothers, after so many eventful years of separation, each had much to tell. Each had a story so marvelous that the other might have doubted it, had not the marvels of his own experience been equally great. Frank's story, however, is the only one that the reader will care to hear, and that must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XX.

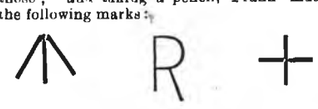
FRANK'S STORY.

"After you left," said Frank, "all went to confusion. Potts lorded it with a higher hand than ever, and my father was more than ever infatuated, and seemed to feel that it was necessary to justify his harshness toward you by publicly exhibiting a greater confidence in Potts. Like a thoroughly vulgar and base nature, this man could not be content with having the power, but loved to exhibit that power to us. Life to me for years became one long death; a hundred times I would have turned upon the scoundrel and taken vengeance for our wrongs, but the tears of mother forced me to use self control. You had been driven off: I alone was left, and she implored me by my love for her to stand by her. I wished her to take my own little property and go with me and Edith where we might all live in seclusion together; but this she would not do for fear of staining the proud Brandon name.

"Potts grew worse and worse every year. There was a loathsome son of his whom he used to bring with him, and my father was infatuated enough to treat the younger devil with the same civility which he showed to the elder one. Poor father! he really believed, as he afterwards told me, that these men were putting millions of money into his hands, and that he would be the Beckford of his generation.

"After a while another scoundrel, called Clark, appeared, who was simply the counterpart of Potts. Of this man something very singular was soon made known to me.

"One day I was strolling through the grounds when suddenly, as I passed through a grove which stood by a fish pond, I heard voices and saw the two men I hated most of all on earth standing near me. They were both naked. They had the audacity to go bathing in the fish pond. Clark had his back turned toward me, and I saw on it, below the neck, three marks fiery red, as though they had been made by a brand. 'They were these;' and taking a pencil, Frank made the following marks:



Louis looked at this with intense excitement.

"You have been in New South Wales," said Faank, "and perhaps know whether it is true or not that these are brands on convicts?"

"It is true, and on convicts of the very worst kind."

"Do you know what they mean?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Only the worst are branded with a single mark, so you may imagine what a triple mark indicates. But I will tell you the meaning of each. The first is the king's mark put on those who are totally irreclaimable and insubordinate. The second means runaway, and is put on those who have a tempted to escape. The third indicates a murderous attack on the guards. When they are not hung, they are branded with this mark; and those who are not branded in this way are condemned to hard work, in chains, for life."

"That's about what I supposed," said Frank, quietly, "only of course you are more particular. After seeing this I told my father. He refused to believe me. I determined to bring matters to a crisis, and charged Potts, in my father's presence, with associating with a branded felon. Potts at once turned upon me and appealed to my father's sense of justice. He accused me of being so far carried away by prejudice as not to hesitate to invent a foul slander against an honest man. He said that Clark would be willing to be put to any test; he could not, however, ask him to expose himself it was too outrageous, but would simply assert that my charge was false.

"My father as usual believed every word and gave me a stern reprimand. Louis, in the presence of my mother and sister I cursed my father on that day. Poor man! the blow soon fell. It was in 1845 that the crash came. I have not the heart to go into details now. I will tell you from time to time hereafter. It is enough to say that every penny was lost. We had to leave the hall and took a little cottage in the village.

"All our friends and acquaintances stood aloof. My father's oldest friends never came near him. Old Langhetti was dead. His son knew nothing about this. I will tell you more of him presently.

"Colonel Lionel Despard was dead. His son Courtenay was ignorant of all this, and was away in the north of England. There was Thornton, and I can't account for his inaction. He married Langhetti's daughter, too. That is a mystery."

"They are all false, Frank."

Frank looked up with something like a smile.

"No, not all; wait till you hear me through."

Frank drew a long breath. "We got sick there, and Potts had us taken to the almshouse. There we all prayed for death, but only my father's prayer was heard. He died of a broken heart. The rest of us lived on.

"Scarcely had my father been buried when Potts came to take us away. He insisted that we should leave the country, and offered to pay our way to America. We were all indifferent; we were paralyzed by grief. The almshouse was not a place that we could cling to, so we let ourselves drift, and allowed Potts to send us wherever he wished. We did not even hope for anything better. We only hoped that somewhere or other we might all die. What else could we do? What else could I do? There was no friend to whom I could look; and if I ever thought of anything, it was that America might possibly afford us a chance to get a living till death came.

"So we allowed ourselves to be sent where ever Potts chose, since it could not possibly make things worse than they were. He availed himself of our stolid indifference, put us as passengers in the steerage on board of a crowded emigrant ship, the Tecumseh, and gave us for our provisions some mouldy bread.

"We simply lived and suffered, and were all waiting for death, till one day an angel appeared who gave us a short respite, and saved us for a while from misery. This angel, Louis, was Paolo, the son of Langhetti.

"You look amazed. It was certainly an amazing thing that he should be on board the same ship with us. He was in the cabin. He noticed our misery without knowing who we were. He came to give us his pity and help us. When at last he found out our names he fell on our necks, and kissed us, and wept aloud.

"He gave up his room in the cabin to my mother and sister, and slept and lived with me. Most of all he cheered us by the lofty, spiritual words with which he bade us look with contempt upon the troubles of life and aspire after immortal happiness. Yes, Louis; Langhetti gave us peace.

"There were six hundred passengers. The plague broke out among us. The deaths every day increased, and all were filled with despair. At last the sailors themselves began to die.

"I believe there was only one in all that ship who preserved calm reason and stood without fear during those awful weeks. That one was Langhetti. He found the officers of the ship panic stricken, so he took charge of the steerage, organized nurses, watched over everything, encouraged everybody, and labored night and day. In the midst of all I fell sick, and he nursed me back to life. Most of all, that man inspired fortitude by the hope that beamed in his eyes, and by the radiancy of his smile. 'Never mind, Brandon,' said he as I lay, 'I thought doomed. Death is nothing. Life goes on. You will leave the pestship for a realm of light. Keep up your heart, my brother immortal, and praise God with your latest breath.'

"I recovered, and then stood by his side as he fell sick. I found that he had never told my mother of my sickness. At last my mother and sister in the cabin fell sick. I heard of it some days after, and was prostrated again. I grew better; but just as we reached quarantine, Langhetti, who had kept himself up thus far, gave out completely, and fell before the plague."

"Did he die?" asked Louis in a faltering voice.

"Not on ship board. He was carried ashore senseless. My mother and sister were very low, and were also carried on shore. I, though weak, was able to nurse them all. My mother died first."

There was a long pause. At last Frank resumed:

"My sister gradually recovered; and then, through grief and fatigue, I fell sick for the third time. I felt it coming on. My sister nursed me; for a time I thought I was going to die. 'O, Edith,' I said, when I die, devote your life while it lasts to Langhetti, whom God sent to us in our despair. Save his life even if you give up your own.'

"After that I became delirious, and remained so for a long time. Weeks passed; and when at last I revived the plague was stayed, and but few sick were on the island. My case was a lingering one, for this was the third attack of the fever. Why I didn't die I can't understand. There was no attendance. All was confusion, horror and death.

"When I revived the first question was after Langhetti and Edith. No one knew any thing about them. In the confusion we had been separated, and Edith had died alone."

"Who told you that she died?" asked Louis, with a troubled look.

Frank looked at him with a face of horror.

"Can you bear what I am going to say?"

"Yes."

"When I was able to move about I went to see if any one could tell me about Edith and Langhetti. I heard an awful story; that the superintendent had gone mad and had been found trying to dig open a grave, saying that some one was buried alive. Who do you think? oh, my brother!"

"Speak!"

"Edith Brandon was the name he named."

"Be calm, Frank; I made inquiries myself at the island registry office. The clerk told me this story, but said that the woman who had charge of the dead asserted that the grave was opened, and it was ascertained that absolute death had taken place."

"Alas!" said Frank, in a voice of despair. "I saw that woman—the keeper of the dead-house—the grave-digger's wife. She told me this story, but it was with a troubled eye. I swore vengeance on her unless she told me the truth. She was alarmed, and said she would reveal all she knew if I swore to keep it to myself. I swore it. Can you bear to hear it, Louis?"

"Speak!"

"She only said this: 'When the grave was opened it was found that Edith Brandon had not been dead when she was buried.'"

Louis groaned, and, falling forward, buried his head in both his hands.

It was a long time before either of them spoke. At last Louis, without lifting his head, said:

"Go on."

"When I left the island I went to Quebec, but could not stay there. It was too near the place of horror. I went up the river, working my way as a laborer, to Montreal. I then sought for work, and obtained employment as a porter in a warehouse. What mattered it? What was rank or station to me? I only wanted to keep myself from starvation and get a bed to sleep on at night.

"I had no hope or thought of anything. The horrors though which we passed were enough to fill my mind. Yet above them all one horror was predominant, and never through the days and nights that have since elapsed has my soul ceased to quiver at the echo of two terrible words which have never ceased to ring through my brain—'Buried alive!'

"I lived on in Montreal, under an assumed named, as a common porter, and might have been living there yet; but one day as I came in I heard the name of 'Brandon.' Two of the clerks who were discussing the news in the morning paper happened to speak of an advertisement which had long been before the public. It was for information about the Brandon family.

"I read the notice. It seemed to me at first that Potts was still trying to get control of us, but a moment's reflection showed that to be improbable. Then the mention of 'the friends of the family' made me think of Langhetti. I concluded that he had escaped death and was trying to find me out.

"I went to Toronto, and found that you had gone to New York. I had saved much of my wages, and was able to come here. I expected Langhetti, but found you."

"Why did you not think that it might be me?"

"Because I heard a threat of Potts about you, and took it for granted that he would succeed in carrying it out."

"What was the threat?"

"He found out somehow that my father had written a letter to you. I suppose they told him so at the village post office. One day when he was in the room he said, with a laugh alluding to the letter, 'I'll uncork that young Brandyflask before long.'"

"Well—the notice of my death appeared in the English papers."

Frank looked earnestly at him.

"And I accept it, and go under the assumed name."

"So do I. It is better."

"You thought Langhetti alive. Do you think he is?"

"I do not think so now."

"Why not?"

"The efforts which he made were enough to kill any man without the plague. He must have died."

After hearing Frank's story Louis gave a full account of his own adventures, omitting, however, all mention of Beatrice. That was something for his own heart, and not for another's ear.

"Have you the letter and MS?"

"Yes."

"Let me read them."

Louis took the treasures and handed them to Frank. He read them in silence.

"Is Cato with you yet?"

"Yes."

"It is well."

"And now, Frank," said Louis, "you have something at last to live for."

"What is that?"

"Vengeance!" cried Louis, with burning eyes.

"Vengeance!" repeated Frank, without emotion—"Vengeance! What is that to me? Do you hope to give peace to your own heart by inflicting suffering on your enemies? What can they possibly suffer that can atone for what they have inflicted? All that they can feel is as nothing compared with what we have felt. Vengeance!" he repeated, musingly; "and what sort of vengeance? Would you kill them? What would that effect? Would he be more miserable than he is? Or would you feel any greater happiness? Or do you mean something more far reaching than death?"

"Death," said Louis, "is nothing for such crimes as his."

"You want to inflict suffering, then, and you ask me. Well, after all, do I want him to suffer? Do I care for this man's sufferings? What are they or what can they be to me? He stands on his own plane, far beneath me; he is a coarse animal, who can, perhaps, suffer from nothing but physical pain. Should I inflict that on him, what good would it be to me? And yet there is none other that I can inflict."

"Langhetti must have transformed you," said Louis, "with his spiritual ideas."

"Langhetti; or perhaps the fact that I three times gazed upon the face of death and stood upon the threshold of that place where dwells the Infinite Mystery. So when you speak of mere vengeance my heart does not respond. But there is still something which may make a purpose as strong as vengeance."

"Name it."

"The sense of intolerable wrong!" cried Frank, in vehement tones; "the presence of that foul pair in the home of our ancestors, our own exile and all the sufferings of the past! Do you think I can endure this?"

"No we must have vengeance."

"No; not vengeance."

"What then?"

"Justice!" cried Frank, starting to his feet. "Justice—strict, stern, merciless; and that justice means to me all that you mean by vengeance. Let us make war against him from this time forth while life lasts; let us cast him out and get back our own; let us put him into the power of the law, and let that take satisfaction on him for his crimes; let us cast him out and fling him from us to that power which can fittingly condemn. I despise him, and despise his sufferings. His agony will give me no gratification. The anguish that a base nature can suffer is only disgusting to me—he suffers only out of his baseness. To me, and with a thing like that, vengeance is impossible, and justice is enough.'

"At any rate you will have a purpose, and your purpose points to the same result as mine."

"But how is this possible?" said Frank. "He is strong, and we are weak. What can we do?"

"We can try," said Louis. "You are ready to undertake anything. You do not value your life. There is one thing which is before us. It is desperate—it is almost hopeless; but we are both ready to try it."

"What is that?"

"The message from the dead," said Louis, spreading before Frank the letter from the treasure-ship which he himself had so often read.

"And are you going to try this?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I don't know. I must first find out the resources of science."

"Have you Cato yet?"

"Yes."

"Can he dive?"

"He was brought up on the Malabar coast, among the pearl fishers, and can remain under water for an incredible space of time. But I hope to find means which will enable me myself to go down under the ocean depths. This will be our object now. If it succeeds, then we can gain our purpose; if not, we must think of something else."

A FLUCTUATING CHURCH MEMBER.

One day in the years agone a stranger, arrived at Dearborn, in this county, and inquired for a citizen commonly known as Uncle Ike. The old man was soon found in a grocery, and after the usual "how-de-do," the stranger said:

"Do I address Uncle Ike Barlow?"

"You dew," was the reply.

"Well, my name is Thornburn, from Ann Arbor.

"Jess so."

"They tell me that you are a great horse trader."

"Wall, I dew make a trade now and then. What ye got?"

"I've got a horse I brought along on purpose to trade with you. Let us first understand each other. You are a member of the church?"

"Yes; I expect I be."

"Then of course I shall expect you to be honest with me. I've been looking at your old nag over there by the post. How old is he?"

"That 'ere hoss, slowly replied Uncle Ike, as he puckered his lips and squinted his left eye, "let's see—let's see! Wall, now, I quite forgit whether he's nine or ten years old, but we'll say ten."

"Uncle Ike, isn't that horse all of twenty years old? Come, now, as a member of the church, give me an honest answer."

"Look a here mister," said the old man, after a long gaze at the stranger "I never trade hosses but one way."

"How's that?"

"When I'm buying of a hoss I'm a purty good member of the church. When I'm selling of a hoss I reckon on skipping about two prayer meetings. When I'm a trading hosses then I calculate on backsliding altogether for a full month, or until I know the victim won't begin no lawsuit. Now, stranger, that's me, and if you come to trade hosses don't reckon that Matthew, Mark, Luke or John ever writ a line advising a church member to come right down and give away the ring bones on his own animile!"—Detroit Free Press