

A Fearful Presence.

In a lonely neighborhood on the verge of Enfield Chase stands an old house, much beaten by wind and weather. It was inhabited, when I knew it, by two elderly people, maiden sisters, with whom I had some acquaintance, and who once invited me to dine with them, and meet a circle of local guests. I well remember my walk thither. It led me up a steep ascent of oak avenue, opening out at the top in what was called the "ridge road" of the Chase. It was the close of a splendid autumn afternoon: through the mossy boles of the great oaks I saw

"... the golden autumn woodland reel
Athwart the smoke of burning flowers"
The year was lying with more than its wonted pomp, "wrapping itself in its gorgeous robes like a grander Caesar."

On reaching my destination the sun had already dipped below the horizon, and the eastern front of the house projected a black shadow at its foot. What was there in the aspect of the pile that reminded me of the corpse described by the poet—the corpse that

"Was calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret glorying!"

I crossed the threshold with repugnance.

Having some changes to make in my attire a servant led the way to an upper chamber, and left me. No sooner had he gone than I became conscious of a peculiar sound in the room—a sort of shuddering sound, as of suppressed dread. It seemed close to me. I gave little heed to it at first, setting it down for the wind in the chimney, or a draught from the half-open door; but moving about the room, I perceived that the sound moved with me. Whichever way I turned it followed me. I went to the furthest extremity of the chamber—it was there also. Beginning to feel uneasy, and being unable to account for the singularity, I completed, my toilet in haste, and descended to the drawing-room, hoping I should thus leave the uncomfortable sound behind me—but not so. It was on the landing on the stair; it went down with me—always the same sound of shuddering horror, faint, but audible, and always close at hand. Even at the dinner-table, when the conversation flagged, I heard it unmistakably several times, and so near, that if there were an entity connected with it we were two on one chair. It seemed to be noticed by nobody else, but it ended by harassing and distressing me, and I was relieved to think I had not to sleep in the house that night.

At an early hour, several of the guests having far to go, the party broke up, and it was a satisfaction to me to breathe the fresh air of the night, and feel rid at last of my shuddering incubus.

When I met my hosts again it was under another and unhaunted roof. On my telling them what had occurred to me, they smiled, and said it was perfectly true; but added, they were so used to the sound that it had ceased to perturb them. Sometimes, they said, it would be quiet for weeks; at others it followed them from room to room, from floor to floor, pertinaciously, as it had followed me. They could give me no explanation of the phenomenon. It was a sound, no more, and quite harmless.

Perhaps so; but of what strange horror, not ended with life, but perpetuated in the limbo of invisible things, was that sound the exponent?

How the Blind Dream.

All descriptions of the starry heavens at night, the golden dawn, the setting sun, the boundless sea, the arched canopy of the sky, convey to them but a dim and vague idea of distance and space—not even a faint conception of the glorious spectacle that delights their fellow-men. And, as it is with the daily life of the man born blind, so must it be with him in the land of dreams. Henderson, the witch-finder, indeed, fancied he saw the spirit of a slumbering cat pass from her in pursuit of a visionary mouse; but the cat actually saw what she pursued. Thomas Blake, the half-crazy artist, professed to see sitters for his pictures as well absent as when present. To some such imperfect degree of mental vision the blind man may possibly aspire. But to no such noble, living vision as Jacob's can he by any possibility attain. There can be for him no arched canopy of heaven, no angelic host coming and going by the ray of infinite glory which pierced the clouds, no glimpse of the Eternal One. No face can rise from the grave to smite him with terror; no image of beauty to gladden his heart with a glimpse of the lovely maiden far away; no one shape of splendor, grace, or rapture out of the cloudy past; no outline of mystery, passion, joy, pain, hope, or fear to appeal to his eager brain with the swift power of a living presence. To him can come no vision of foaming billows, nor perilous wreck, nor pearly gems scattered along the floor of the deep, nor clouds driven across the storm-vent sky. Within him, all around him, reigns night supreme and unchanging. Milton who only knew half its bitterness, calls it—

"To live half-dead a living death."

A Remarkable Mountain.

Humboldt once said that no rock 1600 feet in perpendicular height had been found in the Swiss Alps. Rorami, the top of which has just been reached by travellers, lifts above its sloping sides a solid block of red sandstone about 2000 feet high, some of the faces of which, according to Sir Robert Schomburgk, are "as perpendicular as if erected with a plumb-line." It is the highest and most wonderful of a group of table-topped mountains situated in an almost inaccessible part of British Guiana. Its flat top was believed to be about seven miles square, but Mr. Thurn's despatches say the nearly level summit is twelve miles long, and that it is covered with vegetation. The mountain's sides are sloping and wooded to a height of 7750 feet above the sea.

Then rise the vertical walls of the vast sandstone formation. Cascades pour over the edge, the water falling 2000 feet to the forest below, forming the sources of rivers that, starting from the same place, separate widely and flow to the Orinoco, the Essequibo, and the Amazon.

Cut Off From the World.

Far on the way to Smith Sound dwell a white family who are considerably nearer the north pole than any other whites have ever lived. Explorers have spent some months or years much further north, but Mr. Jensen's little home is the most northern habitation occupied by a family of whites in the world. Jensen and his wife and four or five children have lived for about twenty years at Tessuisak, in 73° 24' north latitude, some forty miles north of Upernavik. This is the most northern post of the Danish Government, and Jensen is in charge of the station. It is his business to buy furs, oil, walrus ivory, and dried fish from the Esquimaux of his district. Once a year the Government vessel calls to take on his collections of merchandise. It leaves for the little family a year's supply of food, clothing, books and newspapers and a package of letters from their relations in Denmark, and then steams away, and Jensen's home is cut off for another year from communication with the world outside of his little harbor.

The family have grown accustomed to their constant isolation, and say they have no wish to return to Denmark. For months at a time during the long winter night they are entirely alone, not even an Esquimaux coming within miles of Tessuisak. Then the family school has daily sessions, and the younger children are taught to read about the busy world they have never seen. Mrs. Jensen told Dr. Hayes she was too busy with her household duties and the education of her children to indulge in any longing for her old home in Denmark. They live in a thick-walled frame house that was brought out from Denmark for them, and, with an overflowing larder and plenty of books and papers, they are probably a great deal more comfortable and happy than many thousands of poor people in the large cities. Jensen is a great hunter, and the few yachting parties that have entered Melville Bay have thought their fortunes made if they could induce him to go along with them. He went up Smith's Sound with Dr. Hayes, but no later explorers succeeded in inducing him to leave his home, though most of them made him tempting offers.

Most of the Danes in Greenland have passed many years there, and some of them have become so attached to their adopted home that nothing could induce them to permanently return to Europe. A while ago the hundred or so people who live in Upernavik had a joyous and festive time over the return of Dr. E. N. Rudolph, who had passed the greater part of his life in this most northern town in the world. When quite an old man he decided to return to Denmark to end his days in his native land. He failed, however, to find in civilized life the contentment he looked for, and the first thing the Upernavikers saw as the Government vessel steamed into the harbor a year later was Dr. Rudolph's happy face. The land where there are only one day and one night in the year was good enough for him, and he had come back to stay.

A Dreaded Plague.

Few persons are aware that leprosy still prevails to a considerable extent in various parts of the world. The Chinese are popularly believed to be the only people especially subject to it. Medical writings show, however, that it is not only widely distributed in India, China, some portions of Europe, the Sandwich Islands, and the west Indies, but that in this country there are several centers where cases have been observed.

One of these leprous centres is Louisiana, where the disease has existed for over a century. It was at one time so prevalent that in 1785 a leper hospital was erected in New Orleans. Within a few years past quite a number of cases have been reported in lower Louisiana, and five or six years ago an official investigation was ordered by the legislature of that state.

On the Bay of Chaleurs, in New Brunswick, there has been a leper hospital for many years. The disease has been considerably restricted by governmental supervision, and seems in a fair way of soon disappearing there altogether.

The disease has been imported into Minnesota by Norwegian emigrants, but it is said to be on the decline in that state. In California it is reported to be frequently among the Chinese.

No reliable statistics of its prevalence there are, however, available.

In Boston several cases of the disease have developed within the last ten years. Cases have been reported in the medical journals by two of our physicians, who have made a careful investigation into the subject. One of the cases had never been away from the city, showing that the disease was acquired here.

Whether leprosy is contagious or not is a mooted question. The physicians disagree upon this point, as they do upon so many others. The weight of evidence is to the effect that there is great danger from contagion. Leprosy is absolutely incurable by any method of treatment known to the medical faculty and it is fortunate that it is as rare as it is.

The worst insult to a Russian maiden is to spread tar on the front gate of her residence. She wants a kiss, not a cold ta-ta.

Girls smitten with brass band players wear bandoline bangs over their eyes.

Young ladies always seem to feel happy when they get in an armory. So many arms there, of course.

Panthers.

They ascend the immense trees near the mouth of the Columbia, which are frequently 300 feet high, and sixty, eighty, or even a hundred feet to the first limb, precisely as a cat would climb them, and, when wounded, will sometimes go to the very top. In one instance, I found a small glade in the forest, where, from the sign, it was evident that two or more of them had been gambling, and like kittens scurrying around in the grass, and then bounding against the trunk of a tree at a point at least ten feet from the ground, they had ascended apparently on the run, tearing off great pieces of bark, and leaving claw marks a foot long on each side. Although they may in some localities spend the day in lying upon the limb of a tree, I think they always prefer rocky ledges and caverns for that purpose, where such are accessible. In San Diego, near the Arizona line, the rugged, rocky ranges furnish admirable retreats for panthers, there usually called mountain lions; and although not so abundant, they are, I think, more frequently shot than they are further north, for reasons that will soon be explained. Like all of the cat tribe they are partial to warmth, and upon days when it is rather cold in the shade, they frequently come out of their lairs in the middle of the day and lie upon the rocks near by to bask and drowse in the warm sun, and as the ranges there are generally very sparsely timbered, they are occasionally discovered by hunters, when the chances of getting within shot are better than under almost any other circumstances. But for all that, they are animals that are seldom shot, no matter how abundant they may be and their disappearing so rapidly before the march of civilization is a mystery that I can only solve by the conclusion that being such a large and entirely carnivorous animal, they are immediately affected by the least thinning out of the large game and are driven by hunger to seek places where the rifle had not begun its deadly work; unless, as they seem to have done on the McCloud river, they turn their attention to the stock of the settler. Many of them are poisoned by the sheep and cattlemen of the southern counties, when their visits to the flock and herds become too frequent. I have often seen their hides nailed to the walls of the lonely cabins of the stockmen there, and, upon enquiry, have found that they were poisoned in at least three cases out of four. I am quite settled in the belief that a panther would be no match for a grizzly. It is quite possible that their superior agility might sometimes make them more than a match for a black bear, but I can only conceive of their being able to kill a grizzly by fastening upon him in a position where the bear was unable to inflict any injury upon them, as a single well-directed blow from the paw of a full-grown grizzly will crush in the ribs of an ox, and would, I fancy, leave but little fight in any panther.

Admiral Hornby's Squadron.

The decision of the Admiralty to form a large squadron of evolution on the coast of Ireland is certainly a wise one. A force of this description under the command of an officer of the ability of Admiral Hornby will be able to bring much of the speculation of recent years to a practical test. It is particularly good news that efforts are to be made to try the value of torpedoes in a thoroughgoing fashion as far as that is possible under the circumstances. These weapons have been, comparatively speaking, so little used, and have been so inordinately talked about, that it is time some attempts were being made to see what can be done with them in war. As yet the experiments made have not done much more than prove that a very powerful explosive put just where it can exert its greatest force will destroy even the most powerfully constructed ironclad. It has yet to be seen whether the explosive could be put in that position during a naval engagement with any degree of precision, which is at least doubtful. Up to the present the torpedo has enjoyed all the glories of a new invention and has—after the fashion of such things—been going to alter the whole conditions of naval warfare. People who recollect how many discoveries in this and other fields have been going to have the same wonderful effect, and have, after all, left things very much as they found them, have entertained in a modest way certain doubts as to the great future of the torpedo. Perhaps Admiral Hornby's manoeuvres will do something to throw light on the point.

The Buoyant Power of Water.

The human body weighs a pound in the water, and a chair will carry two grown persons—that is it will keep the head above water, which is all that is necessary when it is a question of life or death. One finger placed upon a stool or chair, or a small box, or a piece of board, will easily keep the head above water, while the two feet and the other hand may be used as paddles to propel towards the shore. It is not necessary to know how to swim to be able to keep from drowning in this way. A little experience of the buoyant power of water, and faith in it, is all that is required. We have seen a small boy, who could not swim a stroke, propel himself back and forth across a deep, wide pond by means of a board that would not sustain five pounds weight. Children and all others should have practice in the sustaining power of water. In nine cases out of ten the knowledge that what will sustain a pound weight is all that is necessary to keep one's head above water, will serve better in emergencies than the greatest expertness as a swimmer.

It is computed that it cost the U. S. Government \$1,848,000 to support 2,200 Dakota Indians during seven years of their savage life; after they were Christianized, it cost \$120,000 for the same length of time.

Individual Isolation.

There are many instances of men who have found life in Europe intolerably irksome after spending the best parts of their lives in wild or savage regions. Senhor Conzalmo, a Portuguese trader, settled some forty years ago among the natives of Bihe, far in the interior of Africa. After lying there for thirty years he decided to return to Lisbon to enjoy the competence he had acquired in the ivory trade. Three years later he was back again, growing vegetables and wheat on his plantations in Bihe. He told the explorer Cameron that he never felt comfortable for a day in Portugal. He was too old, he said, to get used again to the ways of civilized life. His black friends had always been faithful, and he would never leave them again.

Last year commander Gising of the British navy, while travelling in East Africa, came to Mount Ndara, a great granite mass rising steeply out of the plain 4,800 feet above the sea. The mountain, which is above fifty miles from Kilimanjaro, is ten miles long, and its top is the home of the Wateita, a wild tribe of hill robbers who cultivate the land at the foot of Ndara, and plunder the caravans that pass along the plain. On this mountain ridge, dotted with the villages of the Wateita, Commander Gising found a solitary white man who had lived among these savages for nearly three years. He was Mr. Wray of the Church Missionary Society, and he is one of the few missionaries in Africa who have no white companions, and who are entirely cut off from regular communication with civilization. The only white men he had seen for many months were Messrs. Thomson and Johnston, the explorers. Many hundreds of savages swarm around his mountain home, where his work of instructing the natives and raising his own food supplies leaves him little time to indulge in the blues. He had taught the women better methods of tilling soil, but the lazy men disdained to work, and handled no implements except their bows and arrows. He had had only one misunderstanding with the natives. When he tried to convince the men that it was their duty to work, the women took up the cudgel for their masters, said it was woman's place to do all the hard labor and that they wouldn't let the men soil their hands raising beans and sweet potatoes.

The Oasis of Penjeh.

Penjeh is in the shape of a triangle, formed by the Murghab, which waters the Merv oasis, and by its affluent, the Kushk. To the south and southwest the frontier of Penjeh—a district traversed by the nomad tribe of the Sarik Turcomans—is easily confounded with the hills of the once flourishing territory of Badghis. According to the investigations of European travellers, we should understand by this name the region bounded on the north by the sands of Merv, on the west by the Heri Rud, on the east by the Murghab, and on the south by the chain of the Paropamisus. The most fertile portion of Badghis at the present time is the eastern part, between the Murghab and the Kushk. The sands of Merv extend into this region to the east of Penjeh, while on the south they touch the well-cultivated region once belonging to the Usoega, but now to Afghanistan, and in which are the towns Maimana, Arapul, Shiberghan, Andkoi, and Akcha.

The oasis of Penjeh, truly capable of careful cultivation on the one condition that a good system of irrigation shall be introduced, forms, as it were, a sort of turning point between the deserts of the north and the fertile regions of the south, which a walt colonization. History proves the flourishing state of the ancient Badghis, which is still testified to by immense ruins. With regard to the oasis itself, Penjeh is still peopled by about 8,000 Sariks, who occupy themselves chiefly in raising flocks. Their encampments skirt the banks of the Murghab from the site marked by the ruins of old Penjeh. The greatest breadth of the oasis from west to east is about twenty miles; the greatest length from northwest to southeast—that is, from Ak Tapa to Meruchek—is about twenty-seven miles. The area is rather more than 300 square miles.

The Penjeh Sariks are rich. They live in kibitkas or felt tents. Some among them possess as many as from 1,500 to 2,000 sheep and between seventy and eighty camels. They raise there, but in small quantities, crops of rice, wheat, sorghum, &c. They weave carpets which rival those of Persia, and fine cloths of camel hair for khilats and women's veils, famous throughout the whole of the East, but which are exceedingly dear. The Sariks of Penjeh have commercial relations with Bokhara, Merv, and Herat above all other places. The irrigation of this region is quite insufficient. Its agricultural future depends upon the improvement of this essential. The culminating point of the oasis is Ak Tana. Ruins are to be found there of a town and a citadel. There is a road from this place to Herat by following the left bank of the Kushk, which is crossed by the half-ruined bridge of Pul-i-Khisti or Dash Kepri. At the southeast extremity of the oasis are the ruins of Meruchek, and a little to the north of them begins the canal which issues from the Murghab and irrigates the fields of the Sariks.

Suicide Through Grief.

Marie Kerchner of Erie, Pa., suicided recently, closing a chapter of fatalities which are the talk of the city. First her husband was crushed on the railroad. On the day of his funeral their only child was struck by the hearse which bore its father's remains and was killed. On Friday a letter informed Mrs. Kerchner that her father in Bavaria had been drowned. Unable to endure such a run of fatalities, she ended her sorrow with landanum.

A Terrible Confession.

One of the most heartless and cold-blooded confessions ever recorded has just been made by Frederick Groteguth, of Indiana, the aged German who butchered his wife on the 4th inst. The confession is as follows: "I was born in Germany. I am between 65 and 66 years of age. I have been a resident of the United States for thirty-seven years. I lived in St. Louis about a year and a half after my arrival in this country, and then moved to Windsor township, Knox county, Indiana, where I have since resided. On Thursday morning, June 4, 1885, I was replanting corn. About 12 o'clock I went to my house to get my dinner. My wife was knitting. She was sitting in a chair under an apple tree near the summer-kitchen, and my wife followed me in there. When we were in the summer-kitchen my wife told me not to touch the bread that was on the table. Before I went to the summer-kitchen, while I was in the yard, my wife began to fuss at me for letting a pig and some chickens into the yard. I then went into the summer kitchen and began to eat the bread that was on the table, when my wife followed me in there and began to quarrel with me again. She told me to drive the pig and chickens out of the yard, but I told her I wouldn't do it; that she ought to keep the gate shut. She came in the kitchen and told me to let the bread alone. She took hold of me and I took hold of her. She fell out of the door and I fell out with her. She fell out on her head and we both fell out together, and lay on the ground together, but she still lay there where she had fallen. I thought I had my razor in my pocket, but I did not have it. I then went over into the kitchen in the new part of the house and got my razor out of my razor box. I then went back to where my wife lay. I had my razor in my hand. My wife still lay where she had fallen out of the summer-kitchen. I went up to where my wife lay with my razor in my hand to cut her throat. I placed the razor on the side of her throat. She then placed her head on my hand which held the razor. While her hand was on my hand which held the razor, her throat was cut. I did not go to get my razor to cut my wife's throat, but to cut my own throat. When I got back to where my wife was lying, and seeing her suffering as she was, I thought I would finish her. I think when we both fell out of the summer-kitchen together I partially choked her, as my hand was on her throat. I held her tightly by the throat, and she couldn't do much. I came home and found my dinner was not ready, and my wife fussed so it made me mad, and that was what caused me to choke her and cut her throat. My wife had been quarreling with me for many years. After I cut my wife's throat I cut my own throat a little before I carried my wife's body into the house. In the same room where I carried my wife I cut myself four or five times more on my throat. On Tuesday, June 2, 1885, my wife and myself had a quarrel, when I told her if she didn't stop quarreling with me I would kill her and myself, too. When I went up to my wife with the razor, I thought she had enough to kill her, but when I placed my hand with the razor in it on her throat she reached up and placed her hand on mine, and the razor cut her throat. I think I pushed the razor hard enough to cut her throat, even if she had not placed her hand on mine. On account of the ill-treatment received at the hands of my wife for a week previous to her death I had made up my mind to kill her if she didn't stop quarreling with me. The above statement is the truth concerning the affair as near as I can remember. They can cut off my head if they want to."

Rome Sixteen Years Ago.

It seems like recalling the events of a past century when I look back upon the Rome of sixteen years ago. Everything was so different and so much more picturesque, so very unlike this prosaic, positive nineteenth century. The papal court was in all its splendor, and a splendor of pomp and ceremony that qualified the time of Raphael and Leo X. Collected about the Vatican was a group of royalties—*les rois en exil*—which gave the city quite a seventeenth century air. There were the ex-king and queen of Naples, and all the princes and princesses of that royal house; the ex-grand duke and duchess of Tuscany, the ex-grand duke and duchess of Parma, etc. Cardinals in long scarlet silken robes walked with leisurely, stately steps under the pines and through the broad avenues, of the Villa Borghese—that beautiful Borghese promenade, one of the loveliest in the whole world. Its owner, Prince Borghese, has lately sold it to the building company for 11,000,000 francs. When it is cut up into building lots and crowded with common tenement houses for the laboring class that will assemble there, Rome will find that no money can ever make again for the enjoyment of her people such a lovely place, with its memories of Raphael, its pine plantations its artistically-grouped trees and broad avenues, and tinkling fountains. What a picture the cardinals used to make there with their little courts about them, talking their rich, sonorous Italian in subdued tones discussing, not arguing, important questions with a grace that is gone. Gayly-decorated carriages, black horses with long manes and tails plaited in with rich red silken cords and tassels, powdered footmen and dashing *battistrade* or outrider, were seen in the streets, so common a sight as to attract only the attention of tourists. The pope, too, that gracious pontiff, Pius IX., often walked through the Pinco alleys, and over the broad space of the Piazza di Spagna, blessing the kneeling crowd. That was, indeed, a stately picture! Ah, as the market-women of Paris—*les dames du Halle*—said in 1794 "Nous avons changes tout cela!"—we have changed all that! And every day the Roman world is becoming more and more prosaic.