Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, No. 419 eBook

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THE LOST AGES.

My friends, have you read Elia? If so, follow me, walking in the shadow of his mild presence, while I recount to you my vision of the Lost Ages. I am neither single nor unblessed with offspring, yet, like Charles Lamb, I have had my 'dream-children.' Years have flown over me since I stood a bride at the altar. My eyes are dim and failing, and my hairs are silver-white. My real children of flesh and blood have become substantial men and women, carving their own fortunes, and catering for their own tastes in the matter of wives and husbands, leaving their old mother, as nature ordereth, to the stillness and repose fitted for her years. Understand, this is not meant to imply that the fosterer of their babyhood, the instructor of their childhood, the guide of their youth, is forsaken or neglected by those who have sprung up to maturity beneath her eye. No; I am blessed in my children. Living apart, I yet see them often; their joys, their cares are mine. Not a Sabbath dawns but it finds me in the midst of them; not a holiday or a festival of any kind is noted in the calendar of their lives, but Grandmamma is the first to be sent for. Still, of necessity, I pass much of my time alone; and old age is given to reverie quite as much as youth. I can remember a time—long, long ago—when in the twilight of a summer evening it was a luxury to sit apart with closed eyes; and, heedless of the talk that went on in the social circle from which I was withdrawn, indulge in all sorts of fanciful visions. Then my dream-people were all full-grown men and women. I do not recollect that I ever thought about children until I possessed some of my own. Those waking visions were very sweet—sweeter than the realities of life that followed; but they were neither half so curious nor half so wonderful as the dreams that sometimes haunt me now. The imagination of the old is not less lively than that of the young: it is only less original. A youthful fancy will create more new images; the mind of age requires materials to build with: these supplied, the combinations it is capable of forming are endless. And so were born my dream-children.

Has it never occurred to you, mothers and fathers, to wonder what has become of your children's lost ages? Look at your little boy of five years old. Is he at all, in any respect, the same breathing creature that you beheld three years back? I think not. Whither, then, has the sprite vanished? In some hidden fairy nook, in some mysterious cloud-land he must exist still. Again, in your slim-formed girl of eight years, you look in vain for the sturdy elf of five. Gone? No; that cannot be—'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' Close your eyes: you have her there! A breeze-like, sportive, buoyant thing; a thing of breathing, laughing, unmistakable life; she is mirrored on your retina as plainly as ever was dancing sunbeam on a brook. The very trick of her lip—of her eye; the mischief-smile, the sidelong saucy glance,

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’That seems to say,
I know you love me, Mr Grey;’

is it not traced there—all, every line, as clear as when it brightened the atmosphere about you in the days that are no more? To be sure it is; and being so, the thing must exist—somewhere.

I never was more fully possessed with this conviction than once during the winter of last year. It was Christmas-eve. I was sitting alone, in my old armchair, and had been looking forward to the fast-coming festival-day with many mingled thoughts—some tender, but regretful; others hopeful, yet sad; some serious, and even solemn. As I laid my head back and sat thus with closed eyes, listening to the church-clock as it struck the hour, I could not but feel that I was passing—very slowly and gently it is true—-towards a time when the closing of the grave would shut out even that sound so familiar to my ear; and when other and more precious sounds of life-human voices, dearer than all else, would cease to have any meanings for me—and even their very echoes be hushed in the silence of the one long sleep. Following the train of association, it was natural that I should recur to the hour when that same church’s bells had chimed my wedding-peal. I seemed to hear their music once again; and other music sweeter still —the music of young vows that ‘kept the word of promise to the ear, and broke it’ *not* ’to the hope.’ Next in succession came the recollection of my children. I seemed to lose sight of their present identity, and to be carried away in thought to times and scenes far back in my long-departed youth, when they were growing up around my knees—-beautiful forms of all ages, from the tender nursling of a single year springing with outstretched arms into my bosom, to the somewhat rough but ingenuous boy of ten. As my inner eye traced their different outlines, and followed them in their graceful growth from year to year, my heart was seized with a sudden and irresistible longing to hold fast these beloved but passing images of the brain. What joy, I thought, would it be to transfix the matchless beauty which had wrought itself thus into the visions of my old age! to preserve for ever, unchanging, every varied phase of that material but marvellous structure which the glorious human soul had animated and informed through all its progressive stages from the child to the man!

Scarcely was the thought framed when a dull, heavy weight seemed to press upon my closed eyelids. I now saw more clearly even than before my children’s images in the different stages of their being. But I saw these, and these alone, as they stood rooted to the ground, with a stony fixedness in their eyes: every other object grew dim before me. The living faces and full-grown forms which until now had mingled with and played their part among my younger phantoms, altogether disappeared. I had no longer any eyes, any soul, but for this my new spectre-world. Life, and the things of life, had lost their interest; and I knew of nothing, conceived of nothing, but those still, inanimate forms from which the informing soul had long since passed away.

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And now that the longing of my heart was answered, was I satisfied? For a time I gazed, and drew a deep delight from the gratification of my vain and impious craving. But at length the still, cold presence of forms no longer of this earth began to oppress me. I grew cold and numb beneath their moveless aspect; and constant gazing upon eyes lighted up by no varying expression, pressed upon my tired senses with a more than nightmare weight. I felt a sort of dull stagnation through every limb, which held me bound where I sat, pulseless and moveless as the phantoms on which I gazed.

As I wrestled with the feeling that oppressed me, striving in vain to break the bonds of that strange fascination, under the pressure of which I surely felt that I must perish—a soft voice, proceeding from whence I knew not, broke upon my ear. 'You have your desire,' it said gently; 'why, then, struggle thus? Why writhe under the magic of that joy you have yourself called up? Are they not here before you, the Lost Ages whose beauty and whose grace you would perpetuate? What would you more? O mortal!'

'But these forms have no life,' I gasped—'no pulsating, breathing soul!'

'No,' replied the same still, soft voice; 'these forms belong to the things of the past. In God's good time they breathed the breath of life; they had *then* a being and a purpose on this earth. Their day has departed—their work is done.'

So saying, the voice grew still: the leaden weight which had pressed upon my eyelids was lifted off: I awoke.

Filled with reveries of the past—my eyes closed to everything without—sleep had indeed overtaken me as I sat listening to the old church-clock. But my vision was not all a vision: my dream-children came not without their teaching. If they had been called up in folly, yet in their going did they leave behind a lesson of wisdom.

The morning dawned—the blessed Christmas-morning! With it came my good and dutiful, my real life—children. When they were all assembled round me, and when, subdued and thoughtful beneath the tender and gracious associations of the day, each in turn ministered, reverently and lovingly, to the old mother's need of body and of soul, my heart was melted within me. Blessed, indeed, was I in a lot full to overflowing of all the good gifts which a wise and merciful Maker could lavish upon his erring and craving creature. I stood reproved. I felt humbled to think that I should ever for a moment have indulged one idle or restless longing for the restoration of that past which had done its appointed work, and out of which so gracious a present had arisen. One idea impressed me strongly: I could not but feel that had the craving of my soul been answered in reality, as my dream had foreshadowed; and had the wise and beneficent order of nature been disturbed and distorted from its just relations, how fearful would have been the result! Here, in my green old age, I stood amongst a new generation,

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honoured for what I was, beloved for what I had been. What if, at some mortal wish in some freak of nature, the form which I now bore were for ever to remain before the eyes of my children! Were such a thing to befall, how would their souls ever be lifted upward to the contemplation of that higher state of being into which it is my hope soon to pass when the hand which guided me hither shall beckon me hence? At the thought my heart was chastened. Never since that night have I indulged in any one wish framed in opposition to nature's laws. *Now* I find my dream-children in the present; and to the past I yield willingly all things which are its own—among the rest, the Lost Ages.

STORY OF GASPAR MENDEZ.

By Catherine Crowe.

The extraordinary motives under which people occasionally act, and the strange things they do under the influence of these motives, frequently so far transcend the bounds of probability, that we romance-writers, with the wholesome fear of the critics before our eyes, would not dare to venture on them. Only the other day we read in the newspapers that a Frenchman who had been guilty of embezzlement, and was afraid of being found out, went into a theatre in Lyon and stabbed a young woman whom he had never seen before in his life, in order that he might die by the hands of the executioner, and so escape the inconvenience of rushing into the other world without having time to make his peace with Heaven. He desired death as a refuge from the anguish of mind he was suffering; but instead of killing himself he killed somebody else, because the law would allow him leisure for repentance before it inflicted the penalty of his crime.

It will be said the man was mad—I suppose he was; and so is everybody whilst under the influence of an absorbing passion, whether the mania be love, jealousy, fanaticism, or revenge. The following tale will illustrate one phase of such a madness.

In the year 1789, there resided in Italy, not far from Aquila in the Abruzzo, a man called Gaspar Mendez. He appears to have been a Spaniard, if not actually by birth, at least by descent, and to have possessed a small estate, which he rendered valuable by pasturing cattle. Not far from where he resided there lived with her parents a remarkably handsome girl, of the name of Bianca Venoni, and on this fair damsel Mendez fixed his affections. As he was by many degrees the best match about the neighbourhood, he never doubted that his addresses would be received with a warm welcome, and intoxicated with this security, he seems to have made his advances so abruptly that the girl felt herself entitled to give him an equally abrupt refusal. To aggravate his mortification, he discovered that a young man, called Giuseppe Ripa, had been a secret witness to the rejection, which took place in an orchard; and as he walked away with rage in his heart, he heard

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echoing behind him the merry laugh of the two thoughtless young people. Proud and revengeful by nature, this affront seems to have rankled dreadfully in the mind of Gaspar; although, in accordance with that pride, he endeavoured to conceal his feelings under a show of indifference. Those who knew the parties well, however, were not deceived; and when, after an interval, it was discovered that Giuseppe himself was the favoured lover of Bianca, the enmity, though not more open, became more intense than ever.

In the meantime old Venoni, Bianca's father, had become aware of the fine match his daughter had missed, and was extremely angry about it; more particularly as he was poor, and would have been very much pleased to have a rich son-in-law. Nor was he disposed to relinquish the chance so easily. After first trying his influence on Bianca, upon whom he expended a great deal of persuasion and cajolery in vain, he went so far as to call upon Gaspar, apologising for his daughter's ignorance and folly in refusing so desirable a proposal, and expressing a hope that Mendez would not relinquish the pursuit, but try his fortune again; when he hoped to have brought her to a better state of mind.

Gaspar received the old man with civility, but answered coldly, that any further advances on his own part were out of the question, unless he had reason to believe the young lady was inclined to retract her refusal; in which case he should be happy to wait upon her. With this response Venoni returned to make another attack upon his daughter, whom, however, fortified by her strong attachment to Ripa, he found quite immovable; and there for several months the affair seems to have rested, till the old man, urged by the embarrassment of his circumstances, renewed the persecution, coupling it with certain calumnies against Giuseppe, founded on the accidental loss of a sum of money which had been intrusted to him by a friend, who wanted it conveyed to a neighbouring village, whither the young man had occasion to go. This loss, which seems to have arisen out of some youthful imprudence, appears to have occasioned Ripa a great deal of distress; and he not only did his utmost to repair it by giving up everything he had, which was indeed very little, but he also engaged to pay regularly a portion of his weekly earnings till the whole sum was replaced.

His behaviour, in short, was so satisfactory, that the person to whom the money had belonged does not seem to have borne him any ill-will on the subject; but Venoni took advantage of the circumstance to fling aspersions on the young man's character, whilst it strengthened his argument against the connection with his daughter; for how was Giuseppe to maintain a wife and family with this millstone of debt round his neck? Bianca, however, continued faithful to her lover, and for some time nothing happened to advance the suit of either party. In that interval a sister of Gaspar's had married a man called

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Alessandro Malfi, who, being a friend of Giuseppe's, endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation betwixt the rivals, or, rather, to produce a more cordial feeling, for there had never been a quarrel; and as far as Ripa was concerned, as he had no cause for jealousy, there was no reason why he should bear ill-will to the unsuccessful candidate. With Gaspar it was different: he hated Ripa; but as it hurt his pride that this enmity to one whom he considered so far beneath him should be known, he made no open demonstration of dislike, and when Malfi expressed a wish to invite his friend to supper, hoping that Mendez would not refuse to meet him, the Spaniard made no objection whatever. 'Why not?' he said: 'he knew of no reason why he should not meet Giuseppe Ripa, or any other person his brother-in-law chose to invite.'

Accordingly the party was made; and on the night appointed Giuseppe, after a private interview in the orchard with his mistress, started for Malfi's house, which was situated about three miles off, in the same direction as Gaspar's, which, indeed, he had to pass; on which account he deferred his departure to a later hour than he otherwise would have done, wishing not to come in contact with his rival till they met under Malfi's roof. Mendez had a servant called Antonio Guerra, who worked on his farm, and who appears to have been much in his confidence, and just as Ripa passed the Spaniard's door, he met Guerra coming in an opposite direction, and asked him if Mendez had gone to the supper yet; to which Guerra answered that he supposed he had, but he did not know. Guerra then took a key out of his pocket, and, unlocking the door, entered the house, whilst Ripa walked on.

In the meanwhile the little party had assembled in Malfi's parlour, all but the two principal personages, Gaspar and Giuseppe; and as time advanced without their appearing, some jests were passed amongst the men present, who wished they might not have fallen foul of each other on the way. At length, however, Ripa arrived, and the first question that was put to him was: 'What had he done with his rival?' which he answered by inquiring if the Spaniard was not come. But although he endeavoured to appear unconcerned, there was a tremor in his voice and a confusion of manner that excited general observation. He made violent efforts, however, to appear at his ease, but these efforts were too manifest to be successful; whilst the continued absence of Mendez became so unaccountable, that a cloud seems to have settled on the spirits of the company, which made the expected festivity pass very heavily off.

'Where could Mendez be? What could have detained him? It was to be hoped no harm had happened to him!' Such was the burden of the conversation till—when at about an hour before midnight the party broke up—Alessandro Malfi said, that to allay the anxiety of his wife, who was getting extremely alarmed about her brother, he would walk as far as Forni—which was the name of Gaspar's farm—to inquire what had become of him.

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As Ripa's way lay in the same direction, they naturally started together; and after what appears to have been a very silent walk—for the spirits of Giuseppe were so depressed that the other found it impossible to draw him into conversation—they reached Forni, when, having rung the bell, they were presently answered by Antonio Guerra, who put his head out of an upper window to inquire who they were, and what they wanted.

'It is I, Alessandro Malfi. I want to know where your master is, and why he has not been to my house this evening as he promised?'

'I thought he was there,' said Antonio. 'He set off from here to go soon after seven o'clock.'

'That is most extraordinary!' returned Malfi. 'What in the world can have become of him?'

'It is very strange, certainly,' answered the servant. 'He has never come home; and when you rang I thought it was he returned from the party.'

As there was no more to be learned, the two friends now parted; Malfi expressing considerable surprise and some uneasiness at the non-appearance of his brother-in-law: whilst of Giuseppe we hear nothing more till the following afternoon, when, whilst at work in his vineyard, he was accosted by two officers of justice from Aquila, and he found himself arrested, under an accusation of having waylaid Mendez in a mountain-pass on the preceding evening, and wounded him with the design of taking his life.

The first words Ripa uttered on hearing this impeachment—words that, like all the rest of his behaviour, told dreadfully against him—were: 'Isn't he dead, then?'

'No thanks to you that he's not,' replied the officer; 'but he's alive, and likely to recover to give evidence against his assassin.'

'*Dio*!' cried Giuseppe, 'I wish I'd known he wasn't dead!'

'You confess, then, that you wounded him with the intent to kill?'

'No,' answered Ripa; 'I confess no such thing. As I was going through the pass last night I observed a man's hat lying a little off the road, and on lifting it, I saw it belonged to Senor Mendez. Whilst I was wondering how it came there without the owner, and was looking about for him, I spied him lying behind a boulder. At first I thought he was asleep, but on looking again, I saw he didn't lie like a sleeping man, and I concluded he was dead. Had it been any one but he, I should have lifted him up; but it being very well known that we were no friends, I own I was afraid to do so. I thought it better not to meddle with him at all. However, if he is alive, as you say, perhaps he can tell himself who wounded him.'

‘To be sure he can,’ returned the officer: ‘he says it’s you!’

‘*Perduto son’ io!*—Then I am lost!’ exclaimed Ripa; who, on being brought before the authorities, persisted in the same story; adding, that so far from seeking Mendez, he had particularly wished to avoid him, and that that was the reason he had started so late; for he had been warned that the Spaniard was his enemy, and he apprehended that if they met alone some collision might ensue.

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It appeared, however, that he had consumed much more time on the road than could be fairly accounted for; for two or three people had met him on the way before he reached Forni; and then Antonio Guerra could speak as to the exact hour of his passing. This discrepancy he attempted to explain by saying, that after seeing Mendez on the ground, dead—as he believed—he had been so agitated and alarmed that he did not like to present himself at Malfi's house, lest he should excite observation. He had also spent some time in deliberating whether or not he should mention what he had seen; and he had made up his mind to do so on his arrival, but was deterred by everybody's asking him, when he entered the room, what he had done with Mendez—a question that seemed to imply a suspicion against himself.

This tale, of course, was not believed: indeed his whole demeanour on the night in question tended strongly to his condemnation; added to which, Malfi, who had been his friend, testified that not only had Ripa betrayed all the confusion of guilt during the walk from his house to Forni, but that having hold of his arm, he had distinctly felt him tremble as they passed the spot where Mendez was subsequently discovered.

With regard to Mendez himself, it appeared that when found he was in a state of insensibility, and he was still too weak to give evidence or enter into any particulars; but when, under proper remedies, he had recovered his senses, Faustina Malfi, his sister—to whose house he had been carried—asked him if Giuseppe Ripa was not the assassin; and he answered in the affirmative.

Giuseppe was thrown into prison to await his trial; and having public opinion, as well as that of the authorities against him, he was universally considered a dead man. The only person that adhered to him was Bianca, who visited him in the jail, and refused to believe him guilty. But if he was innocent, who was the criminal? It appeared afterwards that Ripa himself had his own suspicions on that subject, but as they were founded only on two slight indications, he felt it was useless to advance them.

In the meantime Gaspar Mendez was slowly recovering the injuries he had received, and was of course expected to give a more explanatory account of what had happened to him after he left Forni on his way to Alessandro Malfi's. That he had been robbed as well as wounded was already known—his brother and sister having found his pockets empty and his watch gone. The explanation he could give, however, proved to be very scanty. Indeed, he seemed to know very little about the matter, but he still adhered to his first assertion, that Ripa was the assassin. With regard to the money he had lost, there was necessarily less mystery, since it consisted of a sum that he was carrying to his sister, and was indeed her property, being the half share of some rents which he had received on that morning, the produce of two houses in the

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town of Aquila which had been bequeathed to them conjointly by their mother. The money was in a canvas bag, and the other half which belonged to himself he had left locked in his strong box at home, where, on searching for it, it was found. As Ripa was known to be poor, and very much straitened by his endeavours to make good the sum he had lost, that he should add robbery to assassination was not to be wondered at. On the contrary, it strengthened the conviction of his guilt, by supplying an additional motive for the crime.

The injuries having been severe, it was some time before Mendez recovered sufficiently to return home; and when he was well enough to move, instead of going to Forni, he discharged his servant Antonio Guerra, and went himself to Florence, where he remained several months.

All this time Giuseppe Ripa was in prison, condemned to die, but not executed; because after his trial and sentence, a letter had been received by the chief person in authority, warning him against shedding the blood of the innocent. 'Senor Mendez is mistaken,' the letter said: 'he did not see the assassin, who attacked him from behind, and Giuseppe Ripa is not guilty.'

This judge, whose name was Marino, appears to have been a just man, and to have felt some dissatisfaction with the evidence against Ripa; inasmuch as Mendez, who, when first questioned, had spoken confidently as to his identity, had since faltered when he came to give his evidence in public, and seemed unable to afford any positive testimony on the subject. The presumption against the prisoner, without the evidence of the Spaniard, was considered by the other judges strong enough to convict him; but Marino had objected that since the attack was made by daylight—for it was in the summer, and the evenings were quite light—it seemed extraordinary that Mendez could give no more certain indications of his assailant. Added to this, although every means had been used to obtain a confession—such means as are permitted on the continent, but illegal in this country—Giuseppe persisted in his innocence. Moreover, as no money had been found about him, and Faustina Malfi was exceedingly desirous of recovering what had been lost, she exerted herself to obtain mercy to at least the extent that hopes of a commutation of his sentence should be held out to the prisoner, provided he would reveal where he had concealed the bagful of silver he had taken from her brother. But in vain. Ripa was either guiltless or obstinate, for nothing could be extracted from him but repeated declarations of his innocence.

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In the meantime Bianca had been undergoing a terrible persecution from her father on the subject of Mendez, who had returned from Florence and taken up his abode, as formerly, at Forni. Her former lover was a condemned man, and altogether *hors de combat*: she might regret him as she would, and lament his fate to her heart's content, but he could never be her husband; and there was the Spaniard, rich and ready; whilst the increasing age and poverty of her parent rendered a good match of the greatest importance. In short, under the circumstances of the case, it was urged upon her on all hands, that she was bound both by her duty to her father and to evince her abhorrence of Ripa's crime—which otherwise it might be supposed she had instigated—to marry Mendez without delay.

Persuaded of Giuseppe's innocence, and half believing that the accusation was prompted by jealousy, it may be imagined how unwelcome these importunities were, and for a considerable time she resisted them; indeed she seems only to have been overcome at last by a ruse. A rumour being set afloat that the day was about to be appointed for Ripa's execution, a hint was thrown out that it lay in her power to save his life: she had only to become the wife of Mendez, and her lover's sentence should be commuted from death to banishment. This last argument prevailed, and poor Bianca, with a heavy heart, consented to become the mistress of Forni. The Malfis, however, do not seem to have been amongst those who desired the match; and it would appear that they even made some attempts to prevent its taking place, by circulating a report that she had been privy to the assault and robbery. Perhaps they hoped, if Gaspar remained unmarried, to inherit his property themselves; but however that may be, their opposition was of no avail, and an early period was fixed for the wedding.

The year had now come round to the summer season again, and it happened, by mere accident, that the day appointed for the marriage was the anniversary of that on which Mendez had been robbed and wounded. Nobody, however, appears to have thought of this coincidence, till Mendez himself, observing the day of the month, requested that the ceremony might be postponed till the day after: 'Because,' said he, 'I have business which will take me to Aquila on the 7th, so the marriage had better take place on the 8th.' And thus it was arranged.

This alteration was made about ten days before the appointed period, and nothing seems to have occurred in the interval worth recording, except that as the hour of sacrifice drew nigh, the unwillingness of the victim became more evident. We must conclude, however, that Mendez, whose object in marrying her appears to have been fully as much the soothing of his pride as the gratification of his love, was not influenced by her disinclination, for when he started for Aquila on the 7th, every preparation had been made for the wedding on the following day.

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The object of his journey was to receive the rents before named, which became due at this period, and also to purchase a wedding-present for his bride. On this occasion Alessandro Malfi was to have accompanied him; but when Mendez stopped at his door to inquire if he was ready, Malfi came down stairs half-dressed, saying that he had been up all night with his wife, who was ill, and that as she had now fallen asleep, he was going to lie down himself, and try to get a little rest. This occurred early in the morning; and Mendez rode on, saying that he should call as he came back in the evening, to inquire how his sister was. Upon this Malfi went to bed, where he remained some hours —indeed till he received a message from his wife, begging him to go to her. When he entered the room, the first question she asked was whether Gaspar was gone to Aquila; and on being told that he was, she said she was very sorry for it, for that she had dreamed she saw a man with a mask lying in wait to rob him.

'I saw the man as distinctly as possible,' she said, 'but I could not see his face for the mask; and I saw the place, so that I'm sure if I were taken there I should recognise it.'

Her husband told her not to mind her dreams, and that this one was doubtless suggested by the circumstance that had occurred the year before. 'But,' said he, 'Ripa's safely locked up in jail now, and there's no danger.'

Nevertheless the dream appears to have made so deep an impression on the sick woman's fancy, that she never let her husband rest till he promised to go with his own farm-servant to meet her brother—a compliance which was at length won from him by her saying that she had seen the man crouching behind a low wall that surrounded a half-built church; 'and close by,' she added, 'there was a direction-post with something written on it, but I could not read what it was.'

Now it happened that on the horse-road to Aquila, which Faustina herself had never travelled, there was exactly such a spot as that she described. Malfi knew it well. Struck by the circumstance, he desired to have his dinner immediately, and then, accompanied by his hind, he set off to meet Gaspar.

In the meanwhile the Spaniard had got his money and made his purchases in good time, not wishing to be late on the road, so that they had scarcely got a mile beyond the church when they met him; and in answer to his inquiries what had brought them there, Malfi related his wife's dream, adding that he might have spared himself the ride, for he had looked over the wall, and saw nobody there. 'I told her it was nonsense,' he said, 'whilst we know your enemy's under such good keeping at Aquila; but she wouldn't be satisfied till I came.'

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Mendez, however, appeared exceedingly struck with the dream, inquired the particulars more in detail, and asked if they were sure there was nobody concealed in the place Faustina indicated. Malfi answered that he did not alight, but he looked over the wall and saw nobody. During the course of this conversation they had turned their horses' heads, and were riding back towards the church, Malfi talking about Ripa's affair, remarking on the impropriety of deferring his execution so long; Mendez more than usually silent and serious, and the servant riding beside them, when, as they approached the spot, they saw coming towards them on foot a man, whom they all three recognised as Antonio Guerra, the Spaniard's late servant. As this person was supposed to have gone to another part of the country after quitting Gaspar's service, Malfi expressed some surprise at seeing him; whilst Mendez turned very pale, making at the same time some exclamation that attracted the attention of his brother-in-law, who, however, drew up his horse to ask Guerra what had brought him back, and if he was out of a situation, adding that a neighbour of his, whom he named, was in want of a servant. Guerra, who looked poorly dressed, and by no means in such good case as formerly, answered that he should be very glad if Malfi would recommend him.

'You had better turn about, then, and come on with us,' said Malfi, as he rode forward. During this conversation Mendez had sat by saying nothing; and if he was grave and silent before, he was still more so now, insomuch that his behaviour drew the attention of his brother-in-law, who asked him if there was anything wrong with him.

'Surely it's not Faustina's dream you are thinking of?' he said; adding, 'that the meeting with Guerra had put it out of his head, or he would have examined the place more narrowly.'

Mendez entered into no explanation; and as the servant, who was acquainted with Guerra, took him up behind him, they all arrived at their journey's end nearly together: Mendez, instead of proceeding homewards, turning off with the others to Malfi's house, where the first thing he did after his arrival was to visit his sister, whom he found better; whilst she, on the contrary, was struck with the pallor of his features and the agitation of his manner—a disorder which, like her husband, she attributed to the shock of her dream, acting upon a mind prepared by the affair of the preceding year to take alarm. In order to remove the impression, she laughed at the fright she had been in; but it was evident he could not share her merriment, and he quickly left her, saying he had a message to send to Rocca, which was the village where Bianca and her father resided, and that he must go below and write a note, which he did, giving it to Malfi's servant to take.

It appeared afterwards that this man, having other work in hand, gave the note to Guerra, who willingly undertook the commission, and who, to satisfy his own curiosity, broke the seal on the way, and possessed himself of its contents before he delivered it. These were, however, only a request that Bianca and her father would come over to

Malfi's house that evening and bring the notary of the village with them, he (Mendez) being too tired to go to Rocca to sign the contract, as had been arranged.

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It being between six and seven o'clock when this dispatch arrived, Bianca, who was very little inclined to sign the contract at all, objected to going; but her father insisting on her compliance, they set off in company with Guerra and the notary, who, according to appointment, was already in waiting. They had nearly three miles to go, and as Venoni had no horse, the notary gave Bianca a seat on his, and the old man rode double with Guerra.

When they arrived, Mendez was standing at the door waiting for them, accompanied by Malfi, his servant, a priest, and two or three other persons of the neighbourhood; some of whom advanced to assist Bianca and her father to alight, whilst the others surrounded Guerra as he set his foot on the ground, pinioning his arms and plunging their hands into his pockets, from whence they drew two small pistols and a black mask, such as was worn at the carnivals; besides these weapons, he carried a stiletto in his bosom.

Whilst the last comers were gaping with amazement at this unexpected scene, the new-made prisoner was led away to a place of security, and the company proceeded into the house, where the notary produced the contract and laid it on the table, inquiring at the same time what Guerra had done to be so treated.

Then Mendez rose, and taking hold of the contract, he tore it in two and flung it on the ground; at which sight Venoni started up with a cry, or rather a howl—an expression of rage and disappointment truly Italian, and of which no Englishman who has not heard it can have an idea.

'*Peccato!* I have sinned!' said the Spaniard haughtily; 'but I have made my confession to the padre; and why I have torn that paper my brother-in-law, Alessandro, will presently tell you!' He then offered his hand to Bianca, who, no less pleased than astonished to see the contract destroyed, willingly responded to this token of good-will by giving him hers, which he kissed, asking her pardon for any pain he had occasioned her; after which, bowing to the company, he quitted the room, mounted his horse, and rode off to Forni.

When the sound of the animal's feet had died away, and the parties concerned were sufficiently composed to listen to him, Malfi proceeded to make the communication he had been charged with; whereby it appeared that Ripa had been unjustly accused, and that Antonio Guerra was the real criminal. Mendez knew this very well, and would not have thought of accusing his rival had not his brother and sister, and indeed everybody else, assumed Ripa's guilt as an unquestionable fact. The temptation was too strong for him, and after he had once admitted it, pride would not allow him to retract. At the same time he declared that he would never have permitted the execution to take place, and that after the marriage with Bianca he intended to use every effort to procure the innocent man's liberation, on the condition of his quitting that part of the country. Of course it was he who wrote the letter to Marino, and he had used the precaution of

placing a sealed packet, containing a confession of the truth, in the hands of a notary at Aquila, with strict directions to deliver it to Ripa if the authorities should appear disposed to carry his sentence into execution.

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He had nevertheless suffered considerable qualms of conscience about the whole affair; and the moment he saw Guerra on the road that night, he felt certain that he had come with the intention of waylaying him as before—the man being well aware that it was on that day he usually received his rents. He perceived that he should never be safe as long as this villain was free, and that he must either henceforth live in continual terror of assassination, or confront the mortification of a confession whilst the fellow was in his power.

With respect to Guerra himself, he made but feeble resistance when he was seized. He had, in the first instance, left Mendez for dead; and he would have immediately fled when he heard he was alive, had not the news been accompanied with the further information that the Spaniard had pointed out Ripa as his assailant. He was exceedingly surprised, for he could scarcely believe that he had not been recognised. Nevertheless it was possible; and whether it were so or not, he did not doubt that what Mendez had once asserted he would adhere to. On receiving his dismissal, he had gone to some distance from the scene of his crime; but having, whilst the money lasted, acquired habits of idleness and dissipation that could not be maintained without a further supply, these necessities had provoked this last enterprise.

He had really been concealed behind the wall when Malfi and his servant passed; but concluding that they were going to meet Mendez, and that his scheme was defeated, he had thought it both useless and dangerous to remain, and was intending to make off in another direction, when their sudden return surprised him.

A few hours more saw Antonio Guerra in Giuseppe Ripa's cell; and whilst the first paid the penalty of his crimes, the latter was rewarded for his sufferings by the hand of Bianca, to whom the Spaniard gave a small marriage-portion before finally quitting the country, which he did immediately after Antonio's trial.

Ripa said he had always had a strong persuasion that Guerra was the real criminal from two circumstances: the first was the hurried manner in which he was walking on the evening he met him at the gate of Forni, and some strange expression of countenance which he had afterwards recalled. The second was his answering them from the window when he and Malfi went to inquire for Mendez. If he thought it was his master, as he said, why had he not come down at once to admit him?

It is remarkable that the enmity of the Spaniard was not directed against the man that had aimed at his life, but against him who had wounded his pride.

INFLUENCES OF THE RAILWAY SYSTEM.

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While there are many machines which contribute much more directly to the rapid accumulation of wealth in the persons of individuals, than does the railway locomotive, there is probably none which tends more to enrich a community. Unlike most other mechanical contrivances for the abridgment of labour, the railway locomotive unites in the effects which it produces the elements of social as well as commercial improvement. Like the steamship, the railway is cosmopolitan in its character. The range of its operations may be as extensive as the globe itself; and throughout that sphere of activity, be it what it may, the locomotive engine is scattering thickly the seeds of civilisation, as well as of wealth.

By the application of steam as a motive agent an immense saving has been effected in the outlay required to be made in producing a given result in locomotion. This is the combined product of two causes. Such perfection has been attained in the construction of machinery, that by the aid of steam there can thence be obtained a continuity, combined with a rapidity of motion, which far exceeds what can be produced by any other means at present known to us. The fleetest racer equipped for speed alone, cannot equal, even for a single mile, the rate at which the locomotive engine, dragging after it a load of eighty tons, can, for hours together, be driven with ease and safety along its iron path. And this twofold result can be secured at a comparatively small cost. Coal, iron, wood—substances all to be easily obtained in nearly every quarter of the globe—can be, and daily are, fashioned into working agents not merely fleeter, stronger, and more docile than any endowed with animal life, but agents likewise which it is far less costly to sustain in active usefulness. The food, medicines, and attention which animal life demands, form very serious items of expense in the case of beasts of burden, and so very materially impair their utility. It is otherwise with the locomotive engine. Money, ingenuity, and toil require undoubtedly to be expended in its original construction, attention and care must be given to avert or repair accident, and food of its own peculiar kind it does unquestionably consume; yet when all the original and working expenses of a locomotive are summed up, it is found that, compared with the income it produces, it is the cheapest of all motive agents.

No doubt the items of railway expenditure now mentioned do not nearly exhaust the amount of money required in their construction. In addition to expensive engines, there require carriages to be supplied for the transport of goods and passengers, houses and sheds to be built for their temporary accommodation, salaries to be paid for management and service; and in addition to all this, there must further be expended in the construction of the line itself sums far greater in amount than those spent in the formation and repair of roads and highways. All this is true; but

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in estimating the comparative costliness of the old and new methods of land-locomotion, regard must be had to the amount of their produce as well as of their outlay; and an opinion regarding their respective merits, in an economical point of view, must be formed by striking a balance between these two sides of the account. The result of such a comparison proves that in point of economy, not less than of speed and endurance, railways take precedence over all other known means of locomotion. This combined result of rapidity and cheapness of transit produces a double effect upon a mercantile community: it at once enables merchants to realise the fruits of a given speculation more quickly, which is nothing else than transacting more business in a shorter period than before; and it also enables them to do this increased amount of business with a smaller amount of actual outlay—that is, to extend with safety and profit the field of their operations beyond those boundaries which prudence formerly marked out as the proper limits of speculation.

When we consider the amount of travelling within the island which is requisite for carrying on the mercantile and general business of the country, and the double saving, therefore, of time on the one hand, and of money on the other, which is effected by means of railways, we cannot fail to perceive that even did this new system of locomotion economise time and labour in no other way than this alone, its effects upon commercial transactions and on business generally would be immense. But when we reflect that this system is exerting the very same influence upon trade—and in a much higher degree, so far as the outlay of money is concerned—in reference to the carriage of goods, as in regard to that of passengers, we then come to comprehend in some measure how fertile the railway locomotive is in the production of the fruits of industry.

Another commercial effect of the railway system has been to equalise the value of land, and promote the cultivation of those districts of a country which lie considerably removed from large towns. Every one knows that distance from market forms, as regards the cultivation of many vegetable and animal productions, a very serious drawback. Hence it arises that lands lying immediately around large cities bring a far larger price than portions of ground of equal extent and fertility would do situated at a greater distance. This is peculiarly the case with kitchen-gardens, and pasture-land suited for the purposes of fattening cattle, or feeding such as are required for the dairy. In all these cases, and others which might be mentioned, the performance of a long journey affects very injuriously the quality and value of the several articles, and hence the demand for farms and fields not exposed to this drawback has naturally raised their value. Now railways, as they abridge space by means of speed, have had a tendency to increase the value of pasture and garden ground lying at, comparatively speaking, a very great distance around cities. It is now no unusual thing for the inhabitants of cities such as London, Liverpool, and Manchester, to use at breakfast milk or cream which has travelled thirty or forty miles the very morning it is consumed, and at dinner to

partake of vegetables whose place of growth was more than a hundred miles removed from the stall at which they were sold.

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The railway system has had a marked effect upon the state of the money-market of the commercial world in general, and of this country in particular. From the successful experiment made in 1830 in steam locomotion between Liverpool and Manchester, this new method of transit has been developing itself with a rapidity to which no parallel is to be found in the history of mercantile enterprise. Keeping out of view entirely the large sums which were recklessly squandered during the railway mania in mere gambling transactions and bubble schemes, there has been actually sunk in the construction and working of lines up to the present time more than L.200,000,000 sterling. Before railways were called into existence, by far the larger portion of this enormous capital was divided into a great number of comparatively small sums, invested in a corresponding number of different speculations. From causes which it would be easy, but foreign to our present purpose, to explain, the profits arising from these various speculations were not only in the aggregate larger than those hitherto derived from railways, but the former speculations or investments being more temporary and convertible in their nature, secured to the parties engaging in them a far greater command over the capital employed in them. By diverting, as the railway system has done, so much money from the ordinary channels of mercantile enterprise, in which large profits were made, and—what is of more importance to the present remarks—-when that money was well within the command and subject to the recall of its owners; and by taking, so to speak, and locking it up in a repository which could not be opened, the circulating medium of exchange soon became a scarce commodity to those who but lately had possessed it in abundance.

But it would be very false to infer because extensive bankruptcies, and periods of severe pecuniary embarrassment, have accompanied, if not indeed been caused by the development of the railway system, that therefore that system must be an unsound and unremunerative one. These monetary difficulties were in a great measure the consequence of over-speculation, and therefore form no sounder evidence against the utility of railways, than does over-speculation in tea condemn the prudent employment of capital in the tea-trade. Besides which, it must ever be remembered that the judiciousness of an undertaking is not always to be judged of by its immediate results. All investments of capital which are from their nature permanent, require time for the development of their effects, and may, as regards many of their immediate results, prove rather injurious than beneficial. To this class of speculations railways belong. Introduced for the purpose of facilitating locomotion, and thus improving the industry of the country, this new system of transit was calculated to produce rather an eventual and permanent, than an immediate benefit to the empire. So long as Great Britain retains and cultivates the resources

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of trade and manufactures now at her disposal, and provided no new method of locomotion be invented which shall supersede railways, there is every reason to believe that railways will continue to form an ever-increasing source of wealth to the nation. That this is an opinion very generally entertained is proved from the vast sums of money which are now lent out on the faith that this result will be realised. The railway system has not only created a new field for speculation, but likewise a new security for monetary investments. At the close of 1848, upwards of L.43,000,000 was lent upon railways. There is every reason to believe that debenture-holding is much greater now than it was then; but as no official report of its amount, so far as we know, has been published since 1848, we, for accuracy's sake, quote the return made in that year.

If railways have produced very important effects upon commercial affairs, they have exercised an influence not less important in a social and intellectual point of view. They have been greatly instrumental in removing prejudices, in cementing old and forming new friendships, in extending information, and in sharpening ingenuity.

Prejudice has been one of the most formidable obstacles to the spread of civilisation. It has for ages kept separate and at enmity nations born to bless and benefit each other; propped up systems whose graver errors or weaker absurdities now form subjects of regret and ridicule; and fomented among the members of smaller societies and sects discords, strifes, and recriminations, which have been based on no other foundation than wilful or accidental ignorance. By bringing those in contact who otherwise would never have met, and improving the acquaintance of those who have, railways have spread individual opinions, tastes, and information more equally than before; and out of this mixture of the social and moral elements have collected and more widely distributed just conclusions regarding men, manners, politics, and religion. By being thus more frequently brought together, individuals have increased the number of their acquaintances, and become to a greater extent than before 'citizens of the world.' A mutual discharge of the good offices of life has augmented those feelings of interest in our fellow-creatures, and kindness towards them, which are not less in accordance with the spirit of Christianity than conducive to the social wellbeing of communities.

The knowledge which one acquires by personal experience and observation is, generally speaking, much more valuable than that obtained from the written experience or observation of others. By the former method we obtain knowledge in a more rapid, accurate, and impressive manner; and, as a consequence of this, retain it longer in our memories, and possess a greater and more constant command over it. Books always convey a faint and imperfect, and often a very erroneous impression of things; and to the extent that railways have superseded or assisted book-teaching, have they conferred upon society an improved means of acquiring knowledge.

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Through the instrumentality of railways also, an impetus has been imparted to the inventive and constructive faculties of the human mind. By being brought into more frequent contact with one another, individuals whose tastes and occupations are more or less similar are naturally led to form comparisons regarding the relative merits of their respective productions. This comparison has necessarily sharpened invention, improved taste, and suggested improvement. It is not too much to affirm, that there is not a single branch of industry now pursued within this country which has not, directly or indirectly, been benefited to an immense degree by the introduction of railways. Having served to bring into one market far more articles of commerce than before were exposed in it, this new mode of locomotion has to a great extent increased throughout our different trades and callings that element of a generous and wholesome competition which is the most effective agent in eliciting a high degree of skill in the cultivation of an art, or the improvement of an invention.

To railways we are also indebted for a new application to practical usefulness of one of the most powerful elements in nature's laboratory: we refer to the employment of electricity in the transmission of thought. Although the wondrous powers and properties of the electric telegraph were known long before the introduction of the railway system, they were not till then made to minister, as they now do, to the information of man. By providing facilities towards laying and protecting the delicate machinery along which electricity was to perform its marvellous exploits, railways have directly contributed to apply and develop the resources of one of the most useful and wonderful of inventions, which even in its first stage of infancy has wrought a perfect revolution in the mode of transmitting intelligence; and which promises at no very distant day to play the same part among the continents and islands of the globe that it now does between the provinces of an empire.

THE LAST OF THE PALAEOLOGI.

It would be a curious historical problem to trace the families of emperors and kings, of heroes and conquerors, from the era of their decline and fall to their ultimate extinction. Some 'Old Mortality' might find as congenial employment in this field of sepulchral research as did the original in clearing up the decayed and moss-grown tombs of the Covenanters. The genealogist makes it his business rather to flatter the great by blazoning the antiquity of their pedigrees, than to teach the world a moral lesson on the instability of earthly grandeur, by chronicling their reverses. Yet the churchyard has its heraldry, from whose records wisdom might be extracted for the benefit of the living.

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What dynasty in ancient times held a prouder or wider sway than the illustrious masters of the Roman world? The solid fabric of their power was the growth of nearly a thousand years, and it cost about thirteen centuries of revolutions and barbaric invasions before it was undermined and finally extinguished. If its earlier annals were disgraced by the crimes of a Tiberius, a Nero, and a Domitian, they could boast of the virtues and abilities of a Titus, a Trajan, a Nerva, a Hadrian, the two Antonini, &c.; though it must be admitted that latterly the balance sadly preponderated on the side of vice and corruption. If a Justinian or a Constantine appeared, his reign was but a sunbeam in the midst of the universal degeneracy; or if a ray of splendour was shed on the empire by his virtues or his victories, the transient glory was speedily dispelled by irruptions from without, or intrigue and revolt within. Gradually the work of decay proceeded, until the vast expanse of the imperial conquests was contracted to a few provinces, whose capital had been transferred to the shores of the Bosphorus. A languishing existence of about six centuries and a half—that is, from the revival of the western empire in 800 by Charlemagne, to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453—was brought to a close by the death of Constantine Palaeologus, the last of a race who had continued, says Gibbon, 'to assume the titles of Caesar and Augustus after their dominions were circumscribed to the limits of a single city, in which the language as well as manners of the ancient Romans had been long since forgotten!'

The family of Palaeologus was of Greek origin, illustrious in birth and merit. 'As early,' says Gibbon, 'as the middle of the eleventh century, the noble race of the Palaeologi stands high and conspicuous in Byzantine history. It was the valiant George Palaeologus who placed the father of the Comneni on the throne; and his kinsmen or descendants continued in each generation to lead the armies and councils of the state.' The first that wore the imperial purple was Michael, who was elevated to the throne in 1260. Already he had distinguished himself as a soldier and a statesman, and had been promoted in his early youth to the office of 'constable,' or commander of the French mercenaries. His ambition excited jealousy, and some acts of imprudence involved him in dangers from which he thrice escaped. One of those perils was the usual appeal which was made in the middle ages to the 'judgment of God' to vindicate injured innocence. To this ordeal Michael submitted, in presence of the emperor and the archbishop of Philadelphia. 'Three days before the trial, the patient's arm was enclosed in a bag, and secured by the royal signet; and it was incumbent on him to bear a redhot bolt of iron three times from the altar to the rails of the sanctuary, without artifice and without injury. Palaeologus eluded the dangerous experiment with sense and pleasantry.

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"I am a soldier," said he, "and will boldly enter the list with my accusers; but a layman, a sinner like myself, is not endowed with the gift of miracles. Your piety, most holy prelate, may deserve the interposition of Heaven, and from your hands I will receive the fiery globe, the pledge of my innocence." The archbishop started, the emperor smiled, and the absolution or pardon of Michael was approved by rewards and new services.' The voice of the people and the favour of the army placed the crown on his head, in recompense for his military exploits and his public merits. With his accession terminated the reign of the last of the Latin emperors at Constantinople (Baldwin *ii*.), and Michael became the founder of the Grecian dynasty.

The labours of the new monarch to retrieve the calamities of war, by encouraging industry, planting colonies, and extending trade, were deserving of all praise. His ambition raised up against him many enemies, spiritual and temporal; but if his policy was not always judicious, he increased his power and his fame by greatly enlarging his dominions. It was by his intrigues that the revolt of Sicily was instigated. A rude insult to a noble damsel by a Frank soldier, during a procession on the vigil of Easter (1282), spread the flame of insurrection over the whole island, and 8000 Franks were exterminated in a promiscuous massacre, which has obtained the name of the 'Sicilian Vespers.' His son and successor, Andronicus, was reckoned a learned and virtuous prince; but his long reign is chiefly memorable for the disputes of the Greek church, the invasion of the Catalans, and the rise of the Ottoman power. He associated with him in the administration his son Michael, at the age of eighteen; and upon the premature death of the latter, his son Andronicus, the emperor's favourite, became the colleague of his grandfather. The reign of the elder Andronicus was consumed in civil discord and disputes with his family, the young princes having raised the standard of revolt in order to get possession of the throne. He was at length compelled to abdicate; and assuming the monastic habit, he spent the last few years of his life in a cell, blind and wretched, his only consolation being the promise of a more splendid crown in heaven than he had enjoyed on earth.

After a series of inglorious struggles among the princes of the imperial house, the crown settled, in 1391, on Manuel, whose reign, however, was little else than a train of disasters. His capital was besieged by Amurath, and the Turks were masters of nearly the whole of his dominions, which had now shrunk into a small corner of Thrace, between the Propontis and the Black Sea, about fifty miles in length and thirty in breadth. To retrieve his fortunes, Manuel resolved on a journey to foreign countries, believing that the sight of a distressed monarch would draw tears and supplies from the sternest barbarians. From Italy he proceeded to the coast of France, where

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he was received with the characteristic politeness of the nation. Two thousand of the richest citizens of Paris, armed and on horseback, came forth to meet him; and at the gates he was welcomed as a brother by Charles VI., who saluted him with a cordial embrace. He was clothed in a robe of white silk, and mounted on a milk-white steed—a circumstance of great importance in the French ceremonial, white being considered as the emblem of sovereignty. He was lodged in the Louvre, and a succession of feasts and balls, varied by the pleasures of the chase, was got up for his amusement. Having satisfied his curiosity, but without any prospect of assistance, he resolved to visit England. In his progress from Dover, he was entertained at Canterbury by the prior and monks of St Austin; and on Blackheath Henry IV. saluted the Greek hero, who for several days was honoured and treated in London as Emperor of the East. Having failed in the object of his journey, he returned to Constantinople (1402), and was allowed to finish his reign in prosperity and peace in 1425.

In his declining age, he had appointed as his associate his eldest son John, the second of the name. The corruptions of the church, divided between two popes, and the disputes of the clergy, afforded him ample scope for the exercise of his religious zeal, and it was to heal these ecclesiastical schisms that he undertook a voyage to Italy. But the downfall of his race and of the Grecian dynasty was approaching. At his decease (1448), there were five princes of the imperial house; but the death of Andronicus, and the monastic profession of Isidore, had reduced them to three—Constantine, Demetrius, and Thomas. Constantine ascended the vacant throne, the factious opposition of his brothers having been appeased by the interposition of the empress-mother, the senate, the soldiers, and the clergy, who allowed them the possession of the Morea.

The first act of the new emperor was to despatch an embassy to Georgia to bring home a princess whom he had chosen for his royal consort. His next care was to inquire into the state of public affairs, which had been completely neglected by the weakness or absence of his predecessor. But the imperial drama had reached its last act. The danger which had long brooded over the doomed house of the Palaeologi was ready to burst in resistless fury upon the city of the Caesars. Mohammed *ii*. had vowed to become master of Constantinople, and vast were the preparations and the implements of war which he had provided for its capture or its destruction. The story of the siege need not here be told; nowhere has it been recorded with more picturesque and energetic brevity than in the glowing pages of Gibbon. Operations were carried on with unprecedented vigour and effect, rendered more terrible by the lavish use of gunpowder and artillery, then almost new elements in the art of war. Constantine did all that a Christian prince and a brave general could do. By his example

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he animated the courage of his soldiers, and revived the hearts of the citizens, sinking in despair. The scene on the day before the assault is thus described by an eye-witness:—'The emperor and some faithful companions entered the dome of St Sophia, which in a few hours was to be converted into a mosque, and devoutly received with tears and prayers the sacrament of the holy communion. He reposed some moments in the palace, which resounded with cries and lamentations; solicited the pardon of all he might have injured; and mounted on horseback to visit the guards and explore the motions of the enemy.' But the dreaded 29th of May had come; the last hour of the city and the empire had struck. After a siege of fifty-three days, Constantinople, to use the words of Gibbon, 'which had defied the power of Chosroes, the chazan, and the caliphs, was irretrievably subdued by the arms of Mohammed *ii*. Her empire only had been subverted by the Latins; her religion was trampled in the dust by the Moslem conquerors.'

Constantine had nobly done his duty. Amidst the swarms of the enemy who had climbed the walls and were pursuing the flying Greeks through the streets, he was long seen with his bravest officers fighting round his person, and finally lost. His only fear was that of falling alive into the hands of the Infidels, and this fate he sought to avert by prudently casting away the purple. Amidst the tumult he was pierced by an unknown hand, and his body was buried under a mountain of the slain. The last words he was heard to utter was the mournful exclamation: 'Cannot there be found a Christian to cut off my head?' His death put an end to resistance and order, and left the capital to be sacked and pillaged by the victorious Turks. Truly has it been said, that the distress and fall of the last Constantine are more glorious than the long prosperity of the Byzantine Caesars.

The difficulties and dying moments of the emperor have been faithfully and pathetically dramatised by Miss Joanna Baillie in her tragedy of *Constantine Palaeologus*. She adheres closely to history, only she makes her hero receive his deathblow from the sword of a relenting Turk, who admires his bravery, and pronounces over him a farewell eulogy. All writers agree that the last of the imperial Palaeologi was the best of his race; and had he not been so ill supported by his worthless subjects, and deserted by every Christian prince in Europe, he might have repelled the tide of Turkish invasion, though he would never have restored the glory of the empire. Yet gallantly did he front the storm, and perish as became the successor of a long line of kings—the last of the Romans.

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The fall of Constantine was the signal for the degradation and dispersion of his whole race. His two surviving brothers, Demetrius and Thomas, reigned as despots of the Morea in Greece; but the ruin of the empire was the gloomy prelude to their own misfortunes. Demetrius became the pensioner of the new Turkish emperor Mohammed, and received a city of Thrace and some adjacent islands for his own maintenance and that of his followers. In this state of humiliating dependence he remained until death released him from his ignominious servitude. Thomas, the other brother, was driven into exile by the invasion of his dominions. He fled to Corfu, and from thence to Italy—-according to Gibbon's account—'with some naked adherents; his name, his sufferings, and the head of the apostle St Andrew, entitled him to the hospitality of the Vatican, and his misery was prolonged by a pension of 6000 ducats from the pope and cardinals.' He left two sons (he must have had a third, as will afterwards appear), Andrew and Manuel, who were educated in Italy. The eldest degraded himself by the looseness of his life and marriage, and died the inheritor of an empty title. Manuel was tempted to revisit his native country; and after spending the remainder of his life in safety and ease at Constantinople, he was gathered to his fathers, 'an honourable train of Christians and Moslems attending him to the grave.'

From this date—early in the sixteenth century—little is known of the name and lineage of the Palaeologi. The crescent waved over the royal city of Constantine; and, as an old Byzantine annalist remarks, the last heir of the last spark of the Roman Empire seemed to be extinct. History had forgotten them, and the restless tide of human vicissitudes rolled onwards, unconscious of their existence. Italy was understood to be the asylum of the imperial outcasts; and there they might have vegetated in oblivion, or dropped into unhonoured graves without leaving a single representative, had not a monumental inscription revealed the fact, that a descendant of the Caesars had found a retreat and a tomb in an obscure parish in England. In the small church of Landulph, in Cornwall, the following inscription upon a small metal tablet, fixed in the wall, removes all doubt as to the identity and royal pedigree of the person whose memory it records. In its original spelling it runs thus:—'Here lyeth the body of Theodoro Paleologvs of Pesaro in Italye, descended from ye Imperiall lyne of ye last Christian Emperors of Greece, being the sonne of Prosper, the sonne of Theodoro, the sonne of John, the sonne of Thomas, second brother to Constantine Paleologvs, the eighth of that name, and last of ye lyne yt raygned in Constantinople vntill svbdeued by the Turkes; who married with Mary ye davghter of William Balls of Hadlye in Sorffolke Gent., and had issu five children, Theodoro, John, Ferdinando, Maria, and Dorothy, and departed this life at Clyfton ye 21st of Janvary 1636.'[1]

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It appears, then, that Theodore, who married and died in Cornwall, was the fourth in direct descent from Thomas, younger brother of the Emperor Constantine, and who fled 'with some naked adherents to Italy,' where his children were educated.[2] The truth of the story related in the inscription was corroborated by a circumstance which happened upwards of twenty years ago. The vault in which Palaeologus was interred having been accidently opened, curiosity prompted the lifting of the lid. The coffin, which was made of oak, was in an entire state, and the body sufficiently perfect to shew that the dead man exceeded the common stature. The head was a long oval, and the nose believed to have been aquiline; a long white beard reached down the breast—another symbol of his Greek extraction.

Of his family little is known: Theodore, the eldest son, was a sailor, and died on board the *Charles II.*, as is proved by his will, dated 1693. He appears to have possessed landed property, and to have left a widow named Martha, but no issue. The younger daughter, Dorothy, was married at Landulph to William Arundell in 1636, and died in 1681.[3] Maria died unmarried, and was buried in the same church in 1674. Of John and Ferdinando, the other sons, no memorial seems to have been preserved in this country; and it was believed as highly probable that the church of Landulph contained the remains of the last survivors of the Grecian dynasty, once the illustrious sovereigns of Byzantium.

Time, however, the great revealer of secrets, brought to light facts which proved that one of the sons of Theodore of Pesaro in Italy had removed to the West Indies, where he lived for some years, and died in 1678. It is mentioned by the historian Oldmixon[4] as a tradition, that a descendant of the former imperial Greek family of Constantinople resided in Barbadoes; but he doubts the fact, without giving any reason for his scepticism. The tradition, however, proves to have been quite current, and the circumstance that led to its confirmation, and to the discovery of the body of Ferdinando Palaeologus, and other relics testifying to his connection with the Greek emperors, are narrated by Sir Robert Schomburgk in his recent history of Barbadoes. During the terrible hurricane of 1831, which nearly destroyed the island, among the other public buildings that yielded to the violence of the storm, was the parish church of St John, which stood in a romantic situation near the 'Cliff,' at an elevation of 824 feet. When the ruins were removed, and in clearing out the rubbish, 'the coffin of Ferdinando Palaeologus (we quote Sir Robert's account) was discovered under the organ-loft, in the vault of Sir Peter Callotin. The circumstance that the coffin stood in a direction opposite to the others deposited in the vault, drew attention to it; the head was lying to the west, the feet pointing to the east, according to the Greek custom. These accounts raised the curiosity of the rector of the

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parish; and in order to ascertain how much truth was connected with the tradition, he resolved to examine the supposed coffin of Palaeologus; it was consequently opened on the 3d of May 1844, in presence of Mr R. Reici, jun.; Mr. J.G. Young; and Mr J. Hinkson. The coffin was of lead, and in it was found a skeleton of an extraordinary size, imbedded in quicklime, which is another proof of the Greek origin of Palaeologus, as it is the custom in Greece to surround the body with quicklime. The coffin was carefully deposited in the vault now in possession of Josiah Heath, Esq., of Quintyer's and Redland.'

In the above discovery and examination, the coincidences are so numerous and so remarkable as to leave no doubt whatever that the Ferdinando Palaeologus, whose body lies interred in St John's church, was the same individual mentioned in the Landulph inscription as a son of Theodore. The size of the skeleton, the envelope of quicklime, the position of the body, are corroborative of an Eastern descent. The name of the mother, Mary Balls, is an additional presumption, as among the earliest proprietors in the island several of that name occur; and three estates are given in Oldmixon's list as belonging to the family of the Balls. It has been assumed, therefore, with good reason, that a relationship may have existed between the mother of Ferdinando and the Balls in Barbadoes, which—at a period when so many families emigrated from England, chiefly from Kent and the southern and western counties—-might have induced young Palaeologus to seek his fortunes in the New World, after his father's death in 1636.

Of the residence of Ferdinando in the island for thirty years, ample evidence exists in various documents. Sir Robert Schomburgk was shewn by the rector of the parish, the Rev. J.H. Gittens, an old vestry-book of St John's, in which various entries occur of the name of Ferdinando Palaeologus, from 1649 till 1669, as vestryman, churchwarden, trustee, surveyor of the highway, sidesman to the churchwarden, and lieutenant, &c. The last entry is that of his burial, 'October 3d 1678.' His name also appears in a legal document respecting the sale of some land, executed in 1658. But the most important evidence of his identity with the Cornwall family is his will, in which the names of his sisters, Maria and Dorothy, occur. It was entered in the Registrar's Office, the 20th of March 1678, and proved before the deputy-governor, Colonel Christopher Codrington. The widow became the sole survivor and heiress of the property, Theodorious having died in his youth, so that the last of the Palaeologi reposes in the parish church of St John, in the island of Barbadoes; and the estate which once belonged to the descendant of the Greek emperors now forms part of Clifton Hall and the Plantation Ashford. Laying these circumstances together, and considering how completely the will of Ferdinando corroborates the Landulph inscription, of which he probably knew nothing,

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the genealogical problem, we think, is fairly wrought out, and the last of the descendants of the Roman Caesars traced to his final resting-place beyond the Atlantic. A curious anecdote is mentioned by Sir Robert Schomburgk as to the revival of the tradition of one of the Palaeologi being in Barbadoes. He says, but without vouching for its truth, that during the last conflict for Grecian independence and deliverance from the Turkish yoke, a letter was received from the provisional government at Athens, addressed to the authorities in Barbadoes, inquiring whether a male branch of the Palaeologi was still existing in the island, and conveying the request that if such were the case he should be provided with the means of returning to Greece, and the government would, if required, pay all the expenses of the voyage. This story was not current in Europe, at all events; and we on this side the water never dreamed that among the competitors of King Leopold for the throne was a veritable scion of the old imperial sovereigns of Constantinople.

The events detailed in the preceding narrative are fitted to suggest various interesting reflections and amusing speculations. The fate of the Palaeologi—one day on a throne, the next in a dungeon, passing from regal state to wretched exile—may have been the bitter lot of other imperial families. If we find the descendants of the Greek emperors in the humble occupation of sailors and churchwardens, and vestrymen and road-trustees, there is nothing extravagant in the supposition, that we may have royal porters and scavengers on our streets, the sceptre having degenerated into the besom, and the truck taken the place of the chariot of state. The family of Nimrod may still exist, and retain their ancestral propensities in the craft of sportsmen and deer-stalkers, or in the lower grade of Jehus and jockeys. Who knows but the posterity of Solomon may be retailing old clothes, and the heirs of the Nebuchadnezzar dynasty still exist somewhere—perhaps among our graziers or cattle-dealers, our keepers of dairies or secretaries of agricultural associations. The line of Tamerlane may have ended in a grave-digger, and that of Frederick Barbarossa in a hair-dresser. The ideal transmigration of Pythagoras was not more improbable or more wonderful than the strange metamorphoses through which, in the course of centuries, the living representatives of kings and emperors are sometimes doomed to pass.

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[Footnote 1: There is a slight error in the date of the inscription, as the entry of his burial is October 20th 1636.]

[Footnote 2: Only two sons of Thomas are mentioned by Gibbon—Andrew and Manuel; but the evidence of the Landulph tablet shews that he must have had a third, John.]

[Footnote 3: Her name is entered in the register as 'Dorothea Paleologus de Stirpe Imperatorious.']

[Footnote 4: *British Empire in America*, vol. ii. p. 111.]

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A CHAPTER ON CATS.

The newspapers have recently been chronicling, as a fact provocative of especial wonder, the enterprise of some speculative merchant of New York, who has just been despatching a cargo of one hundred cats to the republic of New Granada, in which it would appear the race, owing, as we may believe, to the frequently disturbed state of the country, has become almost extinct.

Your cat is a domestic animal, and naturally conservative in its tastes—averse therefore to uproar, and to all those given to change. Its propensities are to meditation and contemplative tranquillity, for which reason it has ever been held in reverence by nations of a similar staid and composed disposition, and has been the favourite companion and constant friend of grave philosophers and thoughtful students. By the ancient Egyptians cats were held in the highest esteem; and we learn from Diodorus Siculus, their 'lives and safeties' were tendered more dearly than those of any other animal, whether biped or quadruped. 'He who has voluntarily killed a consecrated animal,' says this writer, 'is punished with death; but if any one has even involuntarily killed a cat or an ibis, it is impossible for him to escape death: the mob drags him to it, treating him with every cruelty, and sometimes without waiting for judgment to be passed. This treatment inspires such terror, that, if any person happen to find one of these animals dead, he goes to a distance from it, and by his cries and groans indicates that he has found the animal dead. This superstition is so deeply rooted in the minds of the Egyptians, and the respect they bear these animals is so profound, that at the time when their king, Ptolemy, was not yet declared the friend of the Roman people—when they were paying all possible court to travellers from Italy, and their fears made them avoid every ground of accusation and every pretext for making war upon them—yet a Roman having killed a cat, the people rushed to his house, and neither the entreaties of the grandees, whom the king sent for the purpose, nor the terror of the Roman name, could protect this man from punishment, although the act was involuntary. I do not relate this anecdote,' adds the historian, 'on the authority of another, for I was an eye-witness of it during my stay in Egypt.'[5]

During their lives, the consecrated cats were fed upon fish, kept for the purpose in tanks; and 'when one of them happened to die,' says the veracious writer just cited, 'it was wrapped in linen, and after the bystanders had beaten themselves on the breast, it was carried to the Tarichoea, where it was embalmed with coedria and other substances which have the virtue of embalming bodies, after which it was interred in the sacred monument.' It has puzzled not a little the learned archaeologists, who have endeavoured to discover a profound philosophy figured and symbolised in the singular mythology of

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the Egyptians, to explain how it is that in Thebes, where the sacred character of the cat was held in the highest reverence, and cherished with the greatest devotion, not only embalmed cats have been found, but also the bodies of rats and mice, which had been subjected to the same anti-putrescent process. If, however, Herodotus is to be credited, the Egyptians owed a deep debt of gratitude to the mice; for the venerable historian assures us, and on the unquestionable authority of the Egyptian priests, that when Sennacherib and his army lay at Pelusium, a mighty corps of field-mice entered the camp by night, and eating up the quivers, bowstrings, and buckler-leathers of the Assyrian troops, in this summary fashion liberated Egypt from the terror of the threatened invasion. Probably the existence of mice-mummies may be accounted for in this way, and if—resorting to no violent supposition—we presume in the good work which the tiny patriots so sagaciously accomplished that their cousins-german the rats were assistant, the whole matter receives a satisfactory explication. The hypothesis, it is submitted, is not without plausible recommendations on its behalf. There is extant a fragment of a comedy, entitled 'The Cities,' written by the Rhodian poet Anaxandrides, in which the Egyptian worship of animals is amusingly enough quizzed. A translation will be found in Dr Prichard's *Analysis of Egyptian Mythology*. The lines referring to cat-worship are as follow:—

'You cry and wail whene'er ye spy a cat,
Starving or sick; I count it not a sin
To hang it up, and flay it for its skin;'

from which it appears this gay free-thinker was not only somewhat sceptical in his religious notions, but, moreover, a hard-hearted, good-for-nothing fellow—one who, had he lived in our times, would unquestionably have brought himself within the sweep of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Duke of Beaufort's Humanity Act.

We learn from Herodotus that in his days it was customary, whenever a cat died, for the whole household at once to go into mourning, and this although the lamented decease might have been the result of old age, or other causes purely natural. In the case of a cat's death, however, the eyebrows only were required to be shaved off; but when a dog, a beast of more distinguished reputation, departed this life, every inmate of the house was expected to shave his head and whole body all over. Both cats and dogs are watched and attended to with the greatest solicitude during illness. Indeed, by the ancient Egyptians the cat was treated much in the same way as are dogs amongst us: we find them even accompanying their masters on their aquatic shooting-excursions; and, if the testimony of ancient monuments is to be relied on, often catching the game for them, although it may be permitted to doubt whether they ever actually took to the water for this purpose.

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In modern Egypt the cat, although more docile and companionable than its European sister, has much degenerated; but still, on account of its usefulness in destroying scorpions and other reptiles, it is treated with some consideration—suffered to eat out of the same dish with the children, to join with them in their sports, and to be their constant companion and daily friend. A modern Egyptian would esteem it a heinous sin indeed, to destroy, or even maltreat a cat; and we are told by Sir Gardner Wilkinson, that benevolent individuals have bequeathed funds by which a certain number of these animals are daily fed at Cairo at the Cadi's court, and the bazaar of Khan Khaleel.

But a tender regard for the inferior animals is a prevailing characteristic of the Oriental races, and is inculcated as a duty by their various religions. At Fez there was, and perhaps is at this day, a wealthily-endowed hospital, the greater part of the funds of which was devoted to the support and medical treatment of invalid cranes and storks, and procuring them a decent sepulture whenever they chanced to die. The founders are said to have entertained the poetical notion that these birds are, in truth, human beings, natives of distant islands, who at certain periods assume a foreign shape, and after they have satisfied their curiosity with visiting other lands, return to their own, and resume their original form.

To return, however, not to our sheep, but our cats, we must remark that, in modern times, in spite of the kindness the cat habitually receives in Egypt, his *morale* is not in that country rated very high—the universal impression being that, although, like Snug the joiner's lion, he is by nature 'a very gentle beast,' still he is by no means 'of a good conscience;' that he is, in short, a most ungrateful beast; and that when, in a future state, it is asked of him how he has been treated by man in this, he will obstinately deny all the benefits he has received at his hand, and give him such a character for cruelty and hardness of heart as is shocking to think of. The dog, however, it is understood, will conduct himself more discreetly, and readily acknowledge the good offices for which he is indebted to the family of mankind.

Singular anecdotes have been related of the intense repugnance persons have been found to entertain to these, at worst, harmless animals. One shall be given in the very words of the Rev. Nicholas Wanley, who, in his authentic *Wonders of the Little World*, has recorded a number of other facts quite as marvellous, and sustained by testimony not one whit more exceptionable:—'Mathiolus tells of a German, who coming in winter-time into an inn to sup with him and some other of his friends, the woman of the house being acquainted with his temper (lest he should depart at the sight of a young cat which she kept to breed up), had beforehand hid her kitling in a chest in the same room where we sat at

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supper. But though he had neither seen nor heard it, yet after some time that he had sucked in the air infected by the cat's breath, that quality of his temperament that had antipathy to that creature being provoked, he sweat, and, of a sudden, paleness came over his face, and, to the wonder of us all that were present, he cried out that in some corner of the room there was a cat that lay hid.' Not long after the battle of Wagram and the second occupation of Vienna by the French, an aide-de-camp of Napoleon, who at the time occupied, together with his suite, the Palace of Schoenbrunn, was proceeding to bed at an unusually late hour, when, on passing the door of Napoleon's bedroom, he was surprised by a most singular noise, and repeated calls from the Emperor for assistance. Opening the door hastily, and rushing into the room, a singular spectacle presented itself—the great soldier of the age, half undressed, his countenance agitated, the beaded drops of perspiration standing on his brow, in his hand his victorious sword, with which he was making frequent and convulsive lunges at some invisible enemy through the tapestry that lined the walls. It was a cat that had secreted herself in this place; and Napoleon held cats not so much in abhorrence as in terror. 'A feather,' says the poet, 'daunts the brave;' and a greater poet, through the mouth of his Shylock, remarks that 'there are some that are mad if they behold a cat—a harmless, necessary cat.' Count Bertram would seem to have shared in this unaccountable aversion. When 'Monsieur Parolles, the gallant militarist, that had the whole theory of war in the knot of his scarf, and the practice in the chape of his dagger,' was convicted of mendacity and cowardice, Bertram exclaimed, 'I could endure anything before this but a cat, and now he's a cat to me.' The force of censure could no further go.

If Napoleon, however, held cats, as has been averred, in positive fear, there have been others, and some of them illustrious captains, that have regarded them with other feelings. Marshal Turenne could amuse himself for hours in playing with his kittens; and the great general, Lord Heathfield, would often appear on the walls of Gibraltar, at the time of the famous siege, attended by his favourite cats. Cardinal Richelieu was also fond of cats; and when we have enumerated the names of Cowper and Dr Johnson, of Thomas Gray and Isaac Newton, and, above all, of the tender-hearted and meditative Montaigne, the list is far from complete of those who have bestowed on the feline race some portion of their affections.

Butler, in his *Hudibras*, observes, in an oft-quoted passage, that

'Montaigne, playing with his cat,
Complains she thought him but an ass.'

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And the annotator on this passage, in explanation, adds, that 'Montaigne in his Essays supposes his cat thought him a fool for losing his time in playing with her;' but, under favour, this is a misinterpretation of the essayist's sentiment, and something like a libel on the capacity of both himself and cat. Montaigne's words are: 'When I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me? We mutually divert each other with our play. If I have my hour to begin or refuse, so also has she hers.' Nobody who has read the striking essay in which these words appear could for a moment misconceive their author's meaning. He is vindicating natural theology from the objections of some of its opponents, and in the course of his argument he takes occasion to dwell on the wonderful instincts, and almost rational sagacity of the inferior animals. We must, however, lament that, although he does full justice to the 'half-reasoning elephant,' to the aptitude and fidelity of the dog, to the marvellous economical arrangements of the bees, and even to the imitative capacity of the magpie, he pays no higher tribute to the merits of the cat than that she is as capable of being amused as himself, and like himself, too, has her periods of gravity when recreative sports are distasteful. Her social qualities he does not allude to, though he, so eminently social himself, could scarcely have failed to appreciate them.

In this country, at this time, cats have superseded parlour favourites decidedly less agreeable in their appearance, and infinitely more mischievous in their habits. Writing in the seventeenth century, Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, remarks that 'Turkey gentlewomen, that are perpetual prisoners, still mewed up according to the custom of the place, have little else, beside their household business or to play with their children, to drive away time but to dally with their cats, which they have *in delitiis*, as many of our ladies and gentlewomen use monkeys and little dogs.' It is not the least merit of the cat that it has banished from our sitting-rooms those frightful mimicries of humanity—the monkey tribe; and as to the little dogs Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, although we are not insensible to their many virtues and utilities, we care not to see them sleeping on our hearth-rug, or reposing beside our work-tables.

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[Footnote 5: In the matter of fanaticism, the modern Egyptians, or rather the inhabitants of Alexandria, seem hardly to have degenerated from their ethnic 'forbears,' as we read in Mr J.A. St John's travels the account of a serious insurrection which broke out some years ago in that city, in consequence of certain Jews having taken up the butcher's trade, and having slain the meat with a knife having *three* instead of *five nails* in the handle!]

BEGGARS IN THE FAR EAST.

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Bengal is blessed with a mild climate and a fertile soil. Provisions are consequently cheap; and as neither substantial houses nor expensive clothing is there essential to comfort, we might naturally expect to see less of misery and destitution than in this country. Such, however, is not the case. Our severe winter engenders habits of industry and forethought, which are unknown in India. The ease with which in most cases their few wants are supplied, renders the inhabitants of that country in the highest degree improvident; and nowhere do we see a greater number of beggars, and misery and destitution paraded through the streets in more revolting forms.

There are no poor-laws in any part of India. Relief, however, is not withheld, nor indeed sparingly bestowed. Many can afford to give a little; and where nothing is exacted, many give willingly. Little charity is bestowed by Europeans in the streets, as they generally ride in palanquins or carriages, and as, besides, they feel the weight even of a purse too much on a hot day. However, let it not be supposed that they, like Dives, wallow in wealth, and close their ears to the importunities of the heathen. The Baboo or Sircar gives weekly or monthly pensions to some patronised beggars; and on a Saturday in some large towns, the blind, lame, and halt come to the gates of the grandees, and receive from the trusty *durwan* or doorkeeper a handful of cowries and coarse rice, of which one, two, or three rupees' worth are mixed up, according to the circumstances of the master. But it is not to ordinary beggars I now propose to draw the attention of the reader—the infirm or the lazy, with whom we are all tolerably familiar. But in India there is another class of beggars—*religious* and *professional* beggars—who are proud of their calling. I do not mean that there are no religious mendicants to be found at home; but although the object to be attained in both countries may be similar, the agents employed in the East are so different, that a description of them will to many European readers have all the gloss of novelty.

The two principal sects in Bengal are known as *Soneeassees* and *Byragees*. The former *exclusively* worship Mahado. 'They are not to inhabit houses or temples,' say their scriptures; 'but to live in woods and forests, under the wide expanse of heaven, *there* to meditate upon the greatness of the Creator, and contemplate his beautiful works.' An infant who is to become a Soneeassee has from his birth the badge of Sheva upon him: no razor ever touches his hair, and his locks are matted and dishevelled, when other children's are neatly combed and anointed. When he approaches manhood, he takes the vow of celibacy, he receives from the hand of the Brahmin the *muntra* or mystical creed, the dried skin of an antelope, and a piece of coarse, unbleached cotton, stained yellow with ochre, which he can use as a plaid, it being seven feet long; upon

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the skin he is supposed to sit and sleep, and the cloth overshadows the shoulders of the young enthusiast. Even after these are worn out, as it is supposed that the devotee is pretty well broken in to the hardships of his situation, they on no account may be renewed. These Soneeassees seldom adhere to the letter of their religion in the present day, although it is said that in times gone by some of their class have sat absorbed and abstracted until their spirit held communion with the great god—their bodies wasting away from neglect, and their nails growing like claws. In the present day, prayer and meditation are given to the winds, and they may be seen fat and sleek, perambulating the streets of the towns and villages, smeared over with ashes and ochre, and great coils of matted hair, which some tastefully wind like a turban round their head. They take care also to display, in glaring red and white paint, upon their foreheads and arms, the various insignia or marks of Sheva, such as the trident. Occasionally one also flourishes about a *steel* trident, which the figure of Mahado always wields in his hand, and which is also placed on the summit of his temple. The Soneeassees are the most impudent and importunate of beggars. There came under my notice a band of three, who used regularly to visit the town twice a week. These men had made a vow to collect a certain number of rupees to build a temple, and for this purpose infested the doors of the wealthiest of the Hindoo community, and followed and persecuted them even in their drives with continued cries. It is astonishing how soon superstition enabled them to fulfil their vow, and how the extortioners were allowed to escape the punishment their impudence deserved.

The Byragees are not so intrusive a sect. They frequently live in the open air, though not prohibited from seeking other shelter. Their heads are differently treated from those of the Soneeassees, for both men and women have the crown shaved quite smooth. Both sexes wear a piece of cloth checked like shepherd's plaid. They have great strings of wooden beads, or *malahs*, turned out of the stalks of the holy toolsie, round their necks; and they generally collect their rice and cowries in a dried gourd-shell. Persons of this sect at their death are placed in an upright position in a deep grave, and so consumed with fire. In former times, the widows used to burn themselves with their lords. The Byragees, when they attain years of discretion, may choose their wives from any caste they please. Some of the Byragins, therefore, are said to be far cleverer than the everyday Hindoo women, having been selected from a class which are looked down upon by the others, but who are taught high accomplishments, and are devoted to the temples of the gods. In his begging excursions the Byragee carries a pair of cymbals or a small gong; and singing the songs of Krishna, and his courtships among the milkmaids, he delights the hearts of his Hindoo hearers, and makes them lavish of their gifts.

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The English reader perhaps has never heard of a beggar such as I shall now depict. One may happen to be in a reflective mood, and aroused from his meditations by what he supposes to be a cow lowing close to his ear. He starts up and goes to the window, but instead of that quadruped he finds a man standing with a rope round his neck, and a woful countenance, holding out his palms, indicating that he wants charity. This man has had the misfortune to lose his cow; and as it died tethered, his religion imposes on him the penalty of begging from door to door without speaking, but imitating the cow, till he has realised enough to purchase one of these sacred animals, and to give something besides in charity to the Brahmins. This provision was perhaps made by the religion of the country in favour of the cow, to preserve so useful an animal from ill-treatment; and it is astonishing to see how implicitly the Hindoo submits himself to a mere convention, which he might easily evade.

A LATE PRISON REPORT.

In the Sixteenth Report on the state of the Prisons, by Mr Frederic Hill, lately laid before parliament, will be found some passages worthy of general attention. While speaking favourably of the system of discipline now ordinarily pursued towards prisoners, Mr Hill is obliged to admit that certain prisons are rendered much too attractive; in fact, that they create crime. It is important that this condition of affairs should be known. Good food and medical attendance are, it seems, the attractions. The following are Mr Hill's words, with the quotations he makes from the statements of prison officials:—

'Several of the prisons continue to be attractive, to certain classes of persons, instead of repulsive; owing, apparently in some instances, to the better dietary of the prison as compared with that of the workhouse; in others, to the good medical treatment generally provided in prisons; and in others, to a practice of giving prisoners clothing on their liberation, a practice which, did the law permit, might be replaced by a rule enabling prisoners to earn clothing by extra labour.

'The governor of the borough prison at Cambridge stated that many persons were reckless about committing offences, because they preferred being sent to the prison to going to the workhouse, owing chiefly (according to their statements) to their getting better food at the prison.

'The chaplain of the prison at Spilsby stated as follows:—"I am sorry to observe that the present system of discipline here does not deter people from the commission of crime. Several have said that they would rather come here than go to the Union workhouse." ...

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’Mr Dunn, one of the surgeons of the prison at Wakefield, states—“I am convinced that many persons, especially females, get committed to the prison on purpose to be cured of attacks of disease. Many of them have admitted to me that it was so. A man from Bradford, who went out last week, told me that he had been here before, and that he had got committed again in consequence of his having a return of his disease, and that he came to be cured.... One man who was here for a month last autumn, and who came in a very diseased state, but who left cured, required, during nearly the whole time, a pint of wine per day, besides malt liquor. It was a case in which a very liberal diet is necessary to preserve life; and it was requisite to have a prisoner, acting as nurse, to sit up with him through the night. The cost to the West Riding of this single case, counting expenses of all kinds, could not have been less than L.6.”

’The governor of the city prison at York said—“By the acknowledgments of the prisoners themselves, I know that the practice still continues of committing offences on purpose to get committed to this prison. Four prisoners were liberated this morning who had broken a street-lamp with the evident intention of being sent to this prison. They were sentenced to seven days’ imprisonment, and on their liberation each prisoner was supplied with a coat, waistcoat, pair of trousers, and a pair of shoes, and one of them had a shirt also! Many times last winter gas-lamps and the windows of the police-office and vagrant-office were broken, in order to get admission to the prison. Out of eighteen male prisoners who were brought to trial at the last Quarter-Sessions, twelve in my opinion committed their offences for the direct purpose of being sent to prison. Most of the vagrants committed to the prison still pass their time in idleness; no prisoners except those sentenced to hard labour being set to work.”

‘The following is an extract from the visiting justices’ minute-book at the same prison:—

“*Dec. 12th, 1849.*—The number of prisoners who commit offences with the object of being maintained during the winter increases yearly, and is deserving of serious consideration, as a serious expense is entailed thereby on the city. The imprisonment inflicted is not looked on as a punishment, but a reward."’

If such really be the case, it is evident that a wrong course has been pursued in making the prisons so comfortable. Some years ago, when society was seized with a paroxysm of humanity, prisons were got up in a style of palatial splendour, and criminals, the most worthless of the population, were treated with a degree of tenderness which was opposed to every principle of justice. Possibly the method of reclaiming by kindness was not bad in the abstract, and in numerous instances it was perhaps effective; but in the main it was unsuitable to a complicated condition of ignorance, poverty, vice, and wretchedness. It should have been borne in mind that there is a distinct class of persons to whom any kind of provision is desirable, and who, being sunk below all sentiments of self-respect, shame, and regret, would very willingly sell themselves into slavery for the sake of a momentary gratification. To think of a warm, comfortable prison being an object of dread to this utterly-abandoned class!

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Another philosophical crotchet did no small mischief. It was alleged that hard labour on the tread-mill would do harm: knowing that the labour tended to no useful purpose but merely the turning of a wheel, prisoners would feel degraded, and this feeling would prevent their reclamation! The error here consisted in imagining that the criminal class possessed the feelings of gentlemen; whereas the real thing to be thought of, was to give them labour so excessively toilsome and irksome as to be remembered with salutary horror all the days of their life. For example, no kind of punishment, we believe, has proved so sure a terror as that of the shot-drill in the military prisons. This consists in lifting a cannon-ball of perhaps twenty pounds' weight; marching with it for a dozen yards; then laying it down; and so on, repeating the same thing for an hour. Now this is clearly a useless and most degrading species of labour; yet it is a terrible infliction, and we are told seldom fails in its effect—that is to say, it deters from the commission of crime.

The experience of the last few years would shew that much is still to be learned in the art of criminal discipline; and indeed the whole question of what is to be done with our criminal population is becoming daily more perplexing. Mere confinement is found to be of small avail. Transportation is exploded; for it improves the circumstances of criminals instead of making them worse. Capital punishment has also had its day, and, excepting for a very few offences, is abandoned as useless, independently of being revolting to humanity. One writer proposes to work convicts in gangs at out-door labour, such as mining, and making railways; but the public would never tolerate the spectacle of this worst species of slave-labour; and besides, the employment of honest workers would be ruined. We are inclined to think that imprisonment, in a severe form, is after all the only practicable means of dealing with criminals. If anything be urgently wanted, it is a plan for preventing the growth of the criminal class; and this probably is not so difficult as it may appear. Of course, till there be a far broader system of public education than now prevails, the criminal population will never want recruits. Nevertheless, even with our present imperfect educational arrangements, something might be done. The criminal class is discovered to be on the whole a narrow class. The practice of living by depredation runs in families, and clings to individuals. The police of any given town could put their hand on almost every person who lives by fraud, theft, and robbery. They could at a day's notice secure nearly every one of them. A knowledge of this fact has suggested to Mr Matthew Hill a plan for capturing the whole criminal class, and obliging them to give security for their good behaviour; failing which, they should suffer incarceration as notoriously dangerous and troublesome to society. A fear

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of trenching on the liberty of the subject may prevent this ingenious scheme of the Recorder of Birmingham from being carried into effect; but to something or other of the kind he proposes, society must come at last, if it wish to save itself from being everlastingly worried and plundered by a habitually predatory class. In the Prison Report to which we have above referred, mention is made of a single family of thieves, consisting of fifteen individuals, who cost the country L.26,000 before they were got rid of. Is not such a fact quite monstrous!

FRENCH BATTLE-PICTURES.

In an American work—*Glances at Europe*, by Mr H. Greeley—the following sound observations occur on the battle-pictures in the palace of Versailles: 'These battle-pieces have scarcely more historic than artistic value, since the names of at least half of them might be transposed, and the change be undetected by ninety-nine out of every hundred who see them. If *all* the French battles were thus displayed, it might be urged with plausibility that these galleries were historical in their character; but a full half of the story—that which tells of French disaster and discomfiture—is utterly suppressed. The battles of Ptolemais, of Ivry, of Fontenoy, of Rivoli, of Austerlitz, &c. are here as imposing as paint can make them; but never a whisper of Agincourt, Cressy, Poitiers, Blenheim, or Ramillies; nor yet of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Leipsic, or Waterloo. Even the wretched succession of forays which the French have for the last twenty years been prosecuting in Algerine Africa, here shine resplendent; for Vernet has painted, by Louis-Philippe's order, and at France's cost, a succession of battle-pieces, wherein French numbers and science are seen prevailing over Arab barbarism and irregular valour, in combats whereof the very names have been wisely forgotten by mankind, though they occurred but yesterday. One of these is much the largest painting I ever saw, and is probably the largest in the world, and it seems to have been got up merely to exhibit one of Louis-Philippe's sons in the thickest of the fray. Last of all, we have the Capture of Abd-el-Kader, as imposing as Vernet could make it, but no whisper of the persistent perfidy wherewith he has been retained for several years in bondage, in violation of the express agreement of his captors. The whole collection is, in its general effect, delusive and mischievous—the purpose being to exhibit war as always glorious, and France as uniformly triumphant. It is by means like these that the business of shattering knee-joints and multiplying orphans is kept in countenance.'

NEW APPLICATIONS OF MANGEL-WURZEL.

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A patent has been taken out for the following applications of mangel-wurzel:—*1st*, To prepare a substance which may be combined with, or employed in place of coffee, the mangel-wurzel roots are well washed, cut into pieces; about the size of peas or beans, and then dried and roasted in the same manner as coffee-berries. The product is ground after being roasted, and it is then ready for use. *2d*, A substitute for tea is produced by cutting the leaves of mangel-wurzel into small strips or shreds, drying the same, and then placing them upon a hot plate, which is kept at a temperature sufficiently high to slightly char the leaves. The charred mangel-wurzel leaves are to be used in precisely the same way as tea. *3d*, To manufacture a fermented liquor, the mangel-wurzel roots are well washed, cut into small pieces, and put into a vat, wherein they are permitted to ferment for two or three days, at a temperature of about 70 degrees, and water is added thereto. A fermented liquor is thus obtained similar to perry or cider. *4th*, When the mangel-wurzel roots are to be employed in the preparation of wort, they are washed, and cut into small pieces, which are dried, or slightly charred, by the action of kilns or ovens, of the kind used for drying malt; and wort is prepared from this produce in the same manner as from malt.

THE MARTYRDOM OF FAITHFUL IN VANITY FAIR.[6]

I.

The great human whirlpool!—’tis seething and seething:
On! No time for shrieking out, no time for breathing;
All toiling and moiling—some feebler, some bolder,
But each sees a fiend-face grin over his shoulder:

Thus merrily live they in Vanity Fair!The great human caldron—it boils ever higher;
Some drowning, some sinking; while some, creeping nigher,
Come thirsting to lean o’er its outermost verges,
Or touch—as a child’s feet touch trembling the surges:

One plunge—Ho! more souls swamped in Vanity Fair!

’Let’s live while we live, for to-morrow all’s over.
Drink deep, drunkard bold! and kiss close, thou mad lover!
Smile, hypocrite, smile! it is no such hard labour,
While each with red hand tears the heart of his neighbour
All slyly.—We’re strange folk in Vanity Fair!

’Hist!—each for himself, or *herself*, which sounds smoother,
Though man’s no upholder, and woman no soother,
Both struggle alike here.—What, weeping?—what, raving?

Pah!—fight out the battle all! No time for saving!
    Ha! ha! ‘tis a wondrous place, Vanity Fair!’

The mad crowd divides, and then closes swift after;
Afar, towers the pyre, lit with shouting and laughter;
‘What new sport is this?’ lisps a reveller, half turning;—
’One Faithful, poor wretch! who is led to the burning:
    He cumbered us sorely in Vanity Fair!

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’A dreamer—who held every man for a brother;
A coward—who, emit on one cheek, gave the other:
A fool—whose blind truth aye believed all knaves’ lying;
Too simple to live, so most fitted for dying.

Ha! such are best swept out of Vanity Fair.’

II.

Silence! though the flame-drifts wave and flutter;
Silence! though the crowd their curses mutter;
Silence! through this fiery purgatory
God is leading up a soul to glory.See, the white lips with no moans are trembling, Hate of foes, or plaint of friends’ dissembling; If sighs come—most patient prayers outlive them: *’Lord, these know not what they do. Forgive them!’*

Thirstier still the roaring flames are glowing,
Fainter in his ear the laughters growing;
Brief endures the fierce and fiery trial—
Angel-welcomes drown the earth-denial.

Now the amorous death-fires, gleaming ruddy,
Clasp him close. Down sinks the quivering body,
While through harmless flames immortal flying
Shoots the beauteous soul. This—this is *dying*!

Lo! the opening heavens with splendours rifted;
Lo! the palms that wait those hands uplifted;
And the fiery chariot cloud-descending,
And the legioned angels close attending!

Let his poor dust mingle with the embers,
While the crowd sweeps on, and none remembers;
Saints and angels through the Infinite glory,
Praising God, recount the martyr’s story.

Thou, who through the trial-fires bewildering
Of this cruel world, dost lead Thy children,
With the purifying give the balm;
Grant to martyr-pangs the martyr’s palm!

* * * * *

[Footnote 6: Suggested partly by a sketch in David Scott's illustrations of the *Pilgrim's Progress*.]

VARIETY OF AMBER.

There is a variety of amber, of the opacity of white wax, with a very slight yellowish tinge. It is found intermixed with yellow amber, in thin bands of some breadth. When the magnificent pile of buildings called Fonthill Abbey was exhibited to the public, before the sale of its curious and costly furniture, it contained an amber cabinet, as beautiful in workmanship as material. It was quadrangular, and about fifteen inches by twelve at the base, standing on four legs, that raised it about half an inch from its pedestal. It was pyramidal in form, about fourteen inches high, and divided into eleven stages. These were separated by a ledge of yellow amber, about one-eighth of an inch in thickness, projecting a little over the under stage, like a cornice. The front of each stage was ornamented with recumbent figures in white amber, in relief. Some parts were at least one-eighth of an inch in thickness. The effect was much like that of the white figures on the purple ground of the well-known Portland Vase. Each stage had the appearance of opening as a drawer. The top was flat, and the whole of the yellow amber beautifully transparent.

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HAVE SERPENTS TASTE?

Some naturalists have surmised that serpents have no sense of taste, because the boa-constrictor in the Zoological Gardens swallowed his blanket. Chemistry may, however, assist us in solving the mystery, and induce us to draw quite an opposite conclusion from the curious circumstance alluded to. May not the mistake of the serpent be attributed to the marvellous acuteness of his taste? Take this reason: All vegetable substances contain starch, all animal substances contain ammonia; now it is most probable that the snake detected the animal quality—the ammonia—in the wool of the blanket, and he therefore naturally enough inferred that his bed was something suitable to his digestive organs. It is certain that he committed an error of judgment, but that error may be traceable to the subtilty of his taste rather than to its obtuseness. We throw out this suggestion as a specimen, if nothing better, of what contradictory inferences may be drawn from a single fact, and as a hint of how much caution is necessary in arriving at absolute opinions, even when the evidence is apparently most unmistakable.

AN AMERICAN EDITOR.

He is a dangerous man to be trifled with. The grand hickory-stick he twirls in his hand would be enough, with his dare-devil look, to frighten most persons; but when we state that in the depth of the pocket of the remarkable check-coat that he wears he conceals one of the most beautiful ‘persuaders’ ever manufactured by Colt, we are satisfied he will be a terror to all evil-doers. We should also state that generally he is occupied doing out-door business, but that on every Saturday until one o’clock P.M. he is always at the office, perfectly ready and willing to give any and every satisfaction for the articles he publishes.—*Boston Rouge Gazette.*

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