

Sprawling,  
Nimble, shrewd as Circe,  
Death's your only aim and calling—  
Why should you have mercy?

Strike thee?  
Not for rapine wilful.  
Man himself is too much like thee,  
Only not so skilful.

Rife in  
Thee lives our Creator;  
Thou'rt a shape to hold a life in;  
I am nothing greater.

## IN THE "STRANGER PEOPLE'S" COUNTRY.\*

BY CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK.

## XV.

THE accuracy of Felix Guthrie's oft-vaunted aim was attested by two ghastly objects that had exhaled life and found their doom in Crazy Zeb's cell. In the presence of these dumb witnesses of the struggle, lying surrounded by the charred and cold remnants of the fire, and scattered hay and corn which the vanished horses had left, and shadowed by the gloomy gray walls with their sinister resonance, the place seemed charged with the tragedies of its associations, frightful to contemplate, ill to linger about, and far removed from any possible conjunction with the idea of mirth and the festivities which a greasy thickened pack of cards strewed about the two bodies, and a flask, half broken by its fall on the rock, but still containing whiskey, might betoken. The chilly vault opened upon the serene splendors of the infinitely pellucid sunshine that glowed to midsummer warmth. Had ever the sky worn so dense, so keen, so clear a blue? It discredited the azure of the far western mountains, and marked how the material, even attenuated by distance to the guise of the veriest vapor, fails of the true ethereal tint of the ambient spaces of the air. The birds sang from the sun-flooded trees just beneath the cliff—so limpidly sweet the tones!—and within were two men dead in their sins, in this drear place that had known woe.

Death is not easily predicable of those of a common household, and in this scantily populated region the sense of commu-

nity is close. There were some involuntary exclamations from the posse upon the recognition of the malefactors, implying a sense of catastrophe and regret; especially for one of them, a young man with the down on his lips, his face and posture contorted with the agony long endured while he lay here deserted in the darkness of the night, lighted only by the mystic moon, beside the stark figure of his comrade, who had been shot through the heart, dying in the space of a second.

"Lordy massy 'pon my soul, ef hyar ain't Benjy Swasey! What a turrible time he mus' hev hed afore he tuk off!" cried old Bakewell, his pallid face aquiver, and his voice faltering as he bent over the recumbent form.

The sight and the circumstance failed to affect the official nerve of the sheriff. "Now this is plumb satisfactory," he remarked. "I never expected ter see Buck Cheever in this fix. I'lowed the devil takes too good care o' his own. It's mighty satisfactory. I hed planned," he added, as he looked about at the high roof and the inaccessible depths below, "that I'd blow up this place some with powder or sech, but I reckon I hed better let it be—it does lead the evil-doer ter sech a bad end!"

But the old man still leaned with a pitiful corrugated brow over the lifeless figure. Age had made his heart tender, and he chose to disregard the logic that spoke from the muzzles of Swasey's discharged pistols, one lying close by, and from Cheever's bloody knife still held in the stiffened clasp of the hand that had

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wielded it. "Fee," he said, tremulously, "ye shoot *too* straight."

And Guthrie, his hand meditatively laid on his chin, and his eyes staring absently forward as if they beheld more or less than was before them, replied, "That air a true word, I reckon."

The air freighted with tragedy, with all the ultimate anguish of life and sin and death, seemed to receive with a sort of shock the sheriff's gay rallying laughter as he clapped Guthrie's shoulder.

"Then, Fee, my fine young rooster, ef ye hedn't shot straight I'd be a-sendin' fur the coroner ter kem an' set on *you*!"

"'Pears ter me," said the blacksmith, who still had on his leather apron, having forgotten in the excitement to lay it aside, and gazing with dilated eyes at the blood stains on the rock floor—" 'pears ter me he'd hev a mighty oneasy seat on Fee, dead or alive."

The sheriff's jaunty jubilation, in that the law-breakers had been so smartly overtaken, attended him through the woods and down the road, as he cantered at the head of his posse, all armed and jingling with spurs—a cavalcade both imposing and awful to the few spectators which the sparsely populated country could muster, summoned out from the cabins by the sound of galloping horses and the loud-pitched talk. The elders stood and stared; tow-headed children, peeping through the lower rails of the fence, received a salutary impression, and beheld, as it were, the majesty of the law, materialized in this gallant style, riding forth to maintain its supremacy. Only the dogs were unresponsive to the subtler significance of the unwonted apparition, evidently accounting it merely a gang of men, and either accepting the fact quietly, with affably wagging tails, or plunging into the road in frenzied excitement, and with yelps and defiant barking pursuing the party out of sight of the house, then trotting home with a triumphant mien, according to the disposition of the individual. The tragedy that the posse had found in Crazy Zeb's cell lingered still in the minds of two or three of the horsemen, their silence and gloomy, downcast faces betokening its influence; but the others instinctively sought to cast it off, and the effort was aided by the sunshine, the quick pace, the briskening wind, and the cheery companionship of the officer. He seemed to

have no receptivity for the sorrowful aspects of the event; a breezy self-gratulation was attendant upon him, and his spirits showed no signs of flagging until he drew rein at the door-yard of one of the escaped robbers, with whose names Guthrie had furnished him.

" 'Ain't he got no sort'n *men* kin-folks?" he asked, his cheery, resonant voice hardly recognizable in the querulous whine with which he now spoke. "Lord have mercy on my soul! *how* am I a-goin' ter make out a-catechisin' the man's wife an' mother 'bout'n him! *Git* off'n yer horse thar, Jim. 'Light, I tell ye, an' kem along in the house with me ter help bolster me up."

In several of these doomed households the forlorn women, in their grief and despair, turned fierce and wielded a biting tongue, and as the hapless officer showed an infinite capacity for anxious deprecation, their guarded sarcasms waxed to a vindictive temerity; among them he was greatly harassed, and more than once personal violence was threatened. Indeed one old crone rose tremulously up in the chimney-corner as he sat before the fire, after searching the premises, keenly questioning the younger members of the family, and with her tremulous, aged palm she smote him twice in the face. He sat quite still, although the color mounted to the roots of his hair, while her children in frantic fear besought her to desist.

"Lord knows, Mis' Derridge," he said, looking meekly at her, "I'd be willin' fur ye ter take a hickory sprout an' gin me a reg'lar whalin' ef 'twould mend the matter enny, or make yer son Josiah a diff'ent man from what he hev turned out. I reckon ye oughter hev gin *him* a tap or two more'n ye done. But ef it eases yer feelin's ter pitch inter me, jes pitch in, an' welcome! I don't wonder at ye, nuther."

She stared at him irresolutely from out her bleared eyes, then burst into that weeping so terrible to witness in the aged, bewailing that she had ever lived to see the day, and calling futilely on Heaven to turn the time back that she might be dead ten years ago, and upbraiding the earth that so long it had grudged her a grave.

The officer found it hard after this scene to lay hold on his own bold identity again, and he had naught to say when he got on his horse and rode away. It became

possible to reassert himself and his office only when he chanced upon a household where there were men and boys. There he raged around in fine style, and frowned and swore and threatened, every creature trembling before the very sound of his voice. Thus he made restitution in some sort to the terrors of the law, defrauded by his former weakness of its wonted fierce effectiveness.

The afternoon was on the wane, and no captures had been made; the cavalcade was about turning from the door of a house—it was the last to be visited, the most distant of all—a poor place perched high up on the rugged slope of the mountain, with a vast forest below it and on either hand, from the midst of which it looked upon a splendid affluent territory seeming infinite in extent. Peak and range, valley and river, were all in the sunset tints—purple and saffron and a suffusive blood-red flush, all softened and commingled by the haze; and above, the rich yellow lucency of the crystalline skies. A lateral spur was in the immediate foreground, high, steep, and heavily wooded, the monotony of the deep, restful green of its slopes broken here and there by vertical lines of gleaming white, betokening the trunks of the beech-trees amidst the dark preponderance of walnut and pine; more than one hung, all bleached and leafless, head downward, half uprooted, for thus the wind, past this long time, left trace of its fury. A stream—a native mountaineer, wild and free and strong—took its way down the gorge between the spur and the mountain from which it shot forth. From the doorway might be had a view of a section of its course, flowing in smooth scroll-like swirls from the centre to the bank, and thence out again, the idea of a certain symmetry of the current thus suggested in linear grace—all crystal clear, now a jade-like green, and again the brownish yellow of a topaz, save where the rapids flung up a sudden commotion of white foam that seemed all alive, as if some submerged amphibian gambollings made the water joyous. The crags stood out distinct on either hand, with here and there a flower sweetly smiling in a niche, like some unexpected tenderness in a savage heart. All was very fresh, very keenly and clearly colored; the weeds, rank and high, sent up a rich aromatic odor.

The officer, for years a farmer, and

alive to all weather signs, hardly needed a second glance at the clear tint of the vigorous mould of the door-yard beneath his feet to know that it had rained here lately. "The drought in town ain't bruk yit," he said, half enviously—a mere habit, for he had now no crops to suffer from stress of weather. Here there had been copious storms, with thunder and lightning, gracious to the corn and the cotton, and not disdaining the humbler growths of the way-side, the spontaneous joyance of nature. The torrents had fallen in a decisive rhythm; the ground was beaten hard; the rails of the fence looked dark and clean; the wasp nests and the cobwebs were torn away—a lack for the patient weavings!—the roof of the little cabin was still sleek and shining. As he turned on his heel he marked how the new-built hay stacks were already weathering, all streaked with brown.

He had searched the little barn whose roof showed behind the hay stacks, but as he looked toward it in the mere relapse of bucolic sentiment, he became vaguely aware of an intent watchfulness in the lantern-jawed and haggard woman of the house, who had followed him and his party to the fence, in hospitality it might seem, or to see them safely off the place. The reflection of her look—it was but a look, and he did not realize it then; he remembered it afterward—was in the eyes of a tallow-faced, shock-headed girl of ten. His own eyes paused in disparagement upon her; the hem of her cotton dress was tattered out and hung down about her bare ankles, all stained with red clay mud. There were straws clinging to her dress, and here and there in her tousled red hair. He was no precisian, to be sure, but her unkempt aspect grated upon him; these were truly shiftless folks, and had a full measure of his contempt, which he felt they richly merited; and so he turned once more to the fence, facing the great yellow sky, and the purple and amber and red flushed world stretching so far below. A little clatter at the bars where the posse prepared to mount and ride away was pronounced in the deep evening stillness; the cry of a homeward-bound hawk drifted down as with the sunset on his swift wings he swept above the abysses of the valley; and then the sheriff, stepping over the lower rail, the others lying on the ground, paused suddenly, his hand upon the fence, his face lifted. A strange

new sound was on the air, a raucous voice muttering incoherently—muttering a few words, uncomprehended, then sinking to silence.

Carew looked quickly at the woman; her face had stiffened; it hardly seemed alive; it was as inanimate as a mask, some doleful caricature of humanity and sorrow, forlornly unmoving, with no trace of beauty or intelligence to hallow it; she might seem to have no trait in common with others of her kind, save the capacity to suffer. The child's face reflected hers as in a mirror. The same feeble, pitiable affectation of surprise was on each when the sheriff exclaimed, suddenly, "What's that?"

The men outside of the fence paused in the instant as if a sudden petrification had fallen upon the group—one was arrested in the moment of tightening a saddle-girth; another was poised midway, one foot in the stirrup, the other on the ground; two or three, already mounted, sat like equestrian statues, their figures in high relief against the broad fields of the western sky above the mountain-tops. Once a horse bent down his head and tossed it aloft and pawed the ground; and again the silence was unbroken, till there arose anew that strangely keyed incoherent babbling. There was an abrupt rush in the direction whence the sound came, for it was distinct this time. The forlorn woman and girl were soon distanced, as they followed upon the strides of the stalwart sheriff. He ran fast and lightly, with an agility which his wonted pompous strut hardly promised. He was at the barn door and half-way up the ladder leading into the loft before his slower comrades could dismount. When they reached the barn the woman was standing in the space below the loft, her face set, her eyes restless and dilated; her self-control gave way at last to a sudden trivial irritation, incongruous with the despair and grief in her fixed lineaments.

"Quit taggin' arter me!" she cried out, huskily, to the tattered little girl, who, in tears and trembling with wild fright, hung upon her skirts.

The sheriff at the head of the ladder seemed, impossibly enough, to be tearing down the wall of the building. He had a hatchet in one hand; he used the handle of his pistol for a wedge, and presently the men peering up into the dusky shadow understood that he was plucking

down the boards of a partition that, flimsy as it was, had seemed to them the outer wall when they had searched the place. Within was a space only two feet wide perhaps, but as long as the gable end. Upon a heap of straw lay a man, wounded, fevered, wild with delirium. He had no sense of danger; he could realize no calamity of capture; his hot, rolling, bloodshot eyes conveyed no correlative impression to his disordered brain of the figures he beheld before him. He talked on, unnoting the cluster of men as they pressed about him in the dust that rose from the riven boards, and gazed down wide-eyed at him. The only light came in through the crevices of roof and wall, but these were many. It served amply for his recognition, if more evidence had been needed than the fact of his home and the careful concealment; it showed the burly figures of his captors as they looked around the thrice-searched place, at the hay that they had tossed about, the piles of corn they had rolled down, the odds and ends of plough gear and broken household utensils in one corner that they had ransacked. More than one commented with a sort of extorted admiration upon the craft that had so nearly foiled them. The triumphant figure of the sheriff was the focus of the shadowy group, easily differentiated by his air of arrogantly pluming himself; one might hardly have noticed the frowzy shock of hair and the pale face of the little girl protruding through the aperture in the floor, for she had climbed the ladder, and with a decapitated effect gazed around from the level of the punchcoons.

It was a forlorn illustration of the universal affections of our common human nature that this apparition should be potent to annul the mists of a wavering mind, and to summon right reason in delirium. The thick-tongued, inarticulate muttering ceased for a moment; a dazed smile of recognition was on the unkempt, bearded face of the wounded man.

"Bet on Maggie!" he said, quite plainly. "She kin climb like a cat. She kin drive a nail like a man! Takes a heap ter git ahead o' Maggie!"

And then his head began to loll from shoulder to shoulder, and the look of recognition was gone from his face. He was now and again lifting his hands as if in argument or entreaty, and once more muttering with a thick inarticulate tongue.

The sheriff looked at a twisted nail in

his hand, then down at the decapitated Maggie.

"Did you holp do this hyar job?" he asked.

The child hesitated: the law seemed on her track. "I druv the top nails," she piped out at last. Then, with a whimper, "Mam couldn't climb along the beam fur head-swimmin', so I clomb the beam an' druv the top nails," she ended, with a weak, quavering whine.

He looked down with a tolerant eye at the unprepossessing countenance. "Smart gal!" he exclaimed, unexpectedly; "a mighty smart gal! An' a good one too, I'll be bound! Ye jes run down yander ter the house, sissy, an' fix the bed fur yer dad, fur we air goin' ter fetch him down right now."

She stared at him with dumb amazement for a moment, then turning her little body about with agility, her tousled shock of hair and her pallid little face vanished from the opening in the floor.

The appearance there of an armed party of rescuers could hardly have been more unwelcome, and the sheriff breathed freely at last when she was gone.

He lifted his head presently, looking questioningly about the place, all darkening and of sober tints—the irregular spaces of the crevices gave now only a dull fragmentary glimmer. He turned, as if with a sudden thought, took his way down the quaking ladder and stood in the door, a hand upon either hip, looking out with a lowering, disaffected eye. In that short interval within the barn all the world had changed; the flaring sky had faded, and was of a dull gray tint, too pallid to furnish relief to the coming of the stars, which were only visible here and there in a vague scintillation, colorless too. The gloom of the darkling mountains oppressed the spirit, something so immeasurably mournful was in their sombre, silent, brooding immensity. The indubitable night lay on the undistinguishable valley as if the darkness rose from the earth, rather than came from the sky; only about the summits the day seemed to tarry. Many a vibrant note was tuning in the woods, for the nocturnal insects and the frogs by the water-side and vague, sibilant, indiscriminated sounds joined in a twanging, melancholy chorus that seemed somehow to accent the silence and the loneliness.

"Waal, night hev overtook us," the

sheriff remarked to Felix Guthrie, who had joined him at the door. Then, with gathering acerbity, "'Pears like ter me ef Providence lays ez much work on a man ez I hev got ter do, he ought ter hev daylight enough left him ter git through with it, or else hev a moon allowed him ter work by."

Guthrie said nothing, but stood solemnly watching the darkening face of the landscape.

"We air roosted up hyar fur all night, Fee," he continued, in a tone that was a querulous demand for sympathy. "We could sca'ceely make out ter git up that thar outdacious, steep, rocky road in the daytime; ef we war ter try it in the pitch-dark with a bedridden prisoner, the whole posse, prisoner an' all, would bodaciously roll over the rocks into some o' them gorges ez look ter be deep ez hell!" He paused for a moment, his light gray eyes narrowing. "I could spare the posse toler'ble well, but I could in no wise git along 'thout the prisoner." A secret twinkling that lighted his eyes, seemed communicated in some sort to his lips, which twitched suddenly, as if suppressing a laugh.

Fee Guthrie's face wore no responsive gleam. He stood gruffly silent for a moment, his eyes fixed uncomprehendingly upon the sheriff. "Air thar ennything ter hender yer stayin' all night?" he asked at last.

The officer hesitated, then moved nearer, and laid his hand confidentially upon his companion's shoulder, among the ends of his flaunting tawny curls.

"Fee," he said, lowering his voice, and with a very definite accession of gravity and anxiety, "I hev made a mistake—a large-sized one—about the build o' that man Shattuck."

Guthrie's immobile, unfriendly face changed suddenly. There was a slight quiver upon it, which passed in an instant, leaving it softened and wistful and anxious. He knew naught of the officer's suspicions; he only knew that this man had lingered without the window to hear Letitia sing, while he waited for the moon to rise in the great rocky gorge of the river. It seemed to Guthrie that her very name would have a power over him, that it would stir him if he were dead, if he shared the long death in which the Little People lay and waited for their summons to rise again. And somehow the thought



of them, silent, motionless, undisturbed in their long, long abeyance, brought a qualm of remorse. "I ought not ter hev gin my consent ter open one of thar coffins," he said to himself, his lips moving unconsciously with the unspoken words. "My head won't rest no easier in the grave fur hevin' stirred *his'n*, an' jes fur Shattuck's cur'osity, ef the truth war knowed; 'the hist'ry o' the kentry'"--he quoted the words with a sneer--"air nowhar." "This hyar Shattuck air a mighty takin' man," he said aloud, suddenly. The sheriff cocked his head with keen attention. "Nowise good-lookin', special, but saaft-spoken. Folks like him mighty well; he pulls the wool over everybody's eyes."

He remembered his threat for the man who should come between him and Letitia; he had unwittingly spoken it to Shattuck himself, but it was well that he was warned.

"Waal, Fee, I ain't wantin' ter arrest him too suddint--unless I hed more grounds for suspicion agin him; but this hyar thing is murder, man, *murder!* An' 'twon't do fur ennybody ez hed enny part in sech ter get away. He sent Stephen Yates on a fool pretensified yerrand the night the man war waylaid an' kilt, an' ye seen Steve 'mongst the gang in Crazy Zeb's cell."

"How d'ye know ez the gang hed ennything ter do with that job? Mought hev been other folks," Guthrie demanded, the cause of justice urgently constraining him.

"Don't know it; that's jes the reason I oughter keep an eye, a sorter watch, on Shattuck, an' not arrest him 'thout he war tryin' ter clear the kentry. I oughter hev lef' a man ter look arter him."

Guthrie said nothing. He seemed to silently revolve this view.

"Would *you-uns* undertake ter keep him under watch till I git back ter-morrow?" Carew moved his hand caressingly on Guthrie's shoulder amongst his long, wind-stirred hair. "I couldn't git down the mountain in the dark, specially lumbered up with that man, ez 'pears ter be dyin'--ye shoot mighty straight, Fee!--an' I 'lowed ye be 'feared o' nuthin', an' air a mighty fine rider, an' yer horse air surefooted. Ye mought walk ef ye warn't willin' ter try it mounted. Wouldn't ye obleege me, Fee?"

Guthrie's dark eyes, with their suggestions of implacability, were turned reflectively upon him.

The dying light did not so much as suggest their color, but their lustre was vaguely visible in the dusk, and their expression was unannulled.

"I hain't got no nose fur game," he replied at last. "Ye can't hunt folks down with me."

The sheriff's hand suddenly weighed heavily on his shoulder. "What be ye a-talkin' 'bout, boy?" he said, imperiously. "I *require* yer assistance in the name o' the law! I war jes a-perlitin' aroun', and axin' like a favor, fur the name o' the thing. I hev got a *right* ter yer help."

"Make yer right good"--Felix Guthrie had faced round, his indomitable eye bright and clear in the dusk, where all else was blurred--"*ef ye kin*. Thar's no law ever made ez kin turn *me* inter a spy ter lead a man ter the gallus or shet a prison door on him. Make yer right good, why don't ye?"

The strong vitality of the sheriff's self-confidence, the belligerent faith in his own prowess--an essential concomitant of his physique and bold spirit--tempted him sorely. The occasion was propitious, for a collision on such a scale was a rare opportunity to his bridled pugnacity, and with his posse at his back the consequences of defeat were infinitely reduced. The realization that Guthrie defied his power even thus supported cried aloud for due recognition, but gentler counsels prevailed in that stormy half-second while his broad chest heaved and his eyes flashed. His prospects as a candidate hampered him. Mutiny in the forces of so popular a man as he affected to be was an incongruity of insistent significance to the returns of the midsummer election.

"No, no, Fee; suit yerse'f," he said, smothering his feelings with a very pretty show of geniality, which, however it might fail to impose on Guthrie, ostensibly filled the breach. "I ain't a-goin' ter make my right good by requirin' a man ter resk his life 'mongst them slippery gorges on a night ez dark ez the grave itself. Naw; ef ye don't want ter go, ye don't need ter, though ye mought be some perliter-spoken 'bout'n it. Some o' the t'others mought take a notion ter volunteer, even though they ain't so well used ter the mountings ez you-uns be, through livin' up on the side o' the mounting; an' that horse o' Cheever's air plumb used ter sech roads through travellin' on 'em every day

or so. But jes ez ye choose—I ain't keer-in'."

He strode forward to a group of men collected in the door-yard, and standing with an arm about the shoulders of two of them, engaged in a low-voiced colloquy. The subject was presumably the despatching of an envoy to keep Shattuck under surveillance, and with his reasons for the keenest interest in aught that touched this stranger, Guthrie with intent eyes gazed at them. Naught could be divined from their inexpressive attitudes; their low voices baffled his hungry ears. The excitements of the day had in a measure withdrawn his mind from his own antagonisms to Shattuck, his fear of supplantal, his sense of injury because of the silence that had received his confidence, making no sign. Shattuck would, however, soon enough be dealt with, he reflected. And then he found, in a sort of dull surprise, that he could take no pleasure in the thought of the calamities impending for Shattuck, because, he reasoned, they were not in direct retribution for his own wrongs.

"I'd hev liked ter hev talked ter him one more time fust," he said, mentally revolving words bitterly eloquent with anger.

Pleasure? Nay, he deprecated the coming events. "Tawm C'rew air a mighty smart man—in his own opinion," he said, still scornfully gazing at the friendly pose of the important sheriff, which had all the values of the infrequent unbending of a very great man. "He oughter know ez Shattuck never hed no hand in sech ez murder an' thievery, an'"—with a sudden after-thought—"he *would know it, too*, ef he hed ever seen him."

There was a sudden strange stir at his heart. He had felt it once before, when the reproachful praise of shooting too straight had first fallen upon his ear. On a rude litter four men were bearing out from the barn door and carrying across the yard the recumbent figure of Bob Millroy, looking in the drear light of the dusk like death itself, so still it lay, suggestively stark, but with a ceaseless monotonous mutter, as if he had conveyed beyond death some feeble distraught capacity of speech. The uncomprehended words had a weird effect, and the groups of men grew silent as the litter was borne past. The sheriff followed it into the house, where with his own hands he kindled a fire on the hearth, that forthwith

gave light and cheer, and converted the poor place from the aspect of a hovel to that of a home; he recommended that the patient—for thus he called him, rather than the prisoner—should be fed with chicken broth, and suggested that as all the poultry had gone to roost, Maggie would find a fat young pullet an easy capture. He saw that Millroy was comfortably ensconced in bed, and his wounds newly dressed, at which Carew presided with *ex cathedra* utterances and a dignity bespeaking the experience of a medical expert. The restless head soon ceased to roll, the thick tongue grew silent, and the prisoner sank into slumber that seemed deep and restful.

Maggie had deftly seconded the officer's efforts, and was as helpful as a woman. But the wife held back, sullen and suspicious, speaking only when she was spoken to, and moving reluctantly in obedience to a direct command. More than once she fixed a surly mutinous gaze upon the sheriff; and when the babble of delirium was still at last, and the room seemed full of homely comfort, the fire-light flickering on wall and ceiling, she could hold her peace no longer.

"Ye air a faithful servant of the devil," she said. "Look ter him fur yer thanks—ye'll git none from me. I know ye air a-doin' all this jes ter git Bob well enough ter jail or hang him. He's yer sheep ter lead ter slarter."

"Lawdy mighty, Mis' Millroy!" exclaimed the officer, "what air ye a-talk-in' 'bout? Ye dun'no' whether Bob hev done ennything ter be jailed or hung fur. Ef ye *do*, ye know more'n I do. All I know is that Fee Guthrie reported gittin' in a fight with a gang o' fellers, an' he shot sev'ral an' the res' run. I 'lowed I hed better look 'em up an' see what sorter account they could give o' tharse'fs, ez thar hev been crimes commit in the county. Naw'm; ye hev got ter git through with a jury, an' witnesses, an' a jedge, an' a pack o' lawyers, an' a deal o' palaver, fore I take the trouble ter make up *my* mind. Law's mighty scientific nowadays. Ye hev got ter prove a thing on a man fore I'll go lookin' inter the hemp market. An' Bob hain't proved nuthin' 'ceptin' that Fee Guthrie shoots straight, ez he hev hed the name o' doin' from a boy."

He looked anxiously at his interlocutor, whom he had more bestirred himself to

disarm than if she could have wielded a ballot in his behalf. She gave no overt sign of being placated, but there was something in her face which reassured him, and he observed that when the child came and leaned against her knee, she did not irritably repulse her as heretofore.

"She's a good child, Maggie air," he observed, contemplating her, remembering the little creature's eager help.

The child's small friendly gray eyes were fixed intently upon him as he sat resting a moment on the opposite side of the hearth; the flickering fire-light showed her shock of tousled red hair and threw her magnified shadow on the wall. The shutters of the low broad window stood open to the fresh balsamic mountain wind, revealing the myriad of scintillating stars in the dark moonless concave above the western ranges; the greenish-white clusters of an elder blossom growing close outside in a clump of weeds looked in and nodded in the wind, as if in greeting to those within.

"An' she's a mighty smart leetle gal too," he added.

"Yes," her mother drawled, disparagingly, "but so turrible ugly. I hain't never tuk no comfort in her. But Bob, he 'lows he kin put up with her looks mighty easy."

"Waal, the bes'-lookin' gals ain't always pritty whens't little," said the sheriff, optimistically.

His plastic countenance took on a sudden absorption in graver matters, and he arose and strode to the middle of the room, stooping to glance out of the window, as if to exert some slight surveillance upon the members of his posse without.

The door-yard was all illumined. A fire of pine knots and hickory logs flared in its midst. Around it were grouped the figures of the night-bound posse, making what cheer they could for themselves. Spurred and booted and armed, they had a reminiscent suggestion for the sheriff, who had been a soldier and could look down the vistas of memory, where many a bivouac fire was still ablaze. The familiar features of the place seemed now and again to advance, then to shrink away askance amongst the shadows, as the yellow and red flames rose and fell with a genial crackling sound pleasant to hear. The rail fence showed with a parallel line of zigzag shadows; the ash-hopper, the beehives all awry, the hay stack, were

distinct; and the roof of the barn looked over them all, its window shutter flaring above, revealing the stores of hay whereon the visitors were to sleep; through the open door below their horses were visible, some stalled and at the mangers, but one or two lying on the straw. Quite outside stood another—a sleek, clay-bank creature—so still that, with the copperish hue and the lustre of the fire, he looked like some gigantic bronze. Around all the dark forest gloomed. Sometimes the flames were tossed so high, with a flickering radiance so bright, that the outline of a mountain would show against that dark, cloudless, starlit sky; and once were discovered mists in the valley—silent, white, secret, swift—journeying on their unimagined ways under cover of the night. The firelit figures sprawling about the logs wore merry, bearded faces, and jests and stories were afoot. Amongst the men were certain canine shapes, seeming to listen and to share the mirth; a trifle ill at ease, they now and again made a sniffing circuit of the guests, wondering, doubtless, where poor Bob Millroy was, and that upon them alone should devolve the entertainment of so many strangers.

The sheriff had a keen eye; one glance at the group and he went forward to the window, leaning his palms on the sill. The rank weeds below glowed in the fire-light; the elder bloom breathed dew and fragrance in his face. He gave a low whistle, which a dog heard first, and turned his head, its ears cocked alertly, but nevertheless sat still, loath to leave the merry company. A second summons and one of the men sprang up, and approached the window.

"Whar's Felix Guthrie?" demanded the officer.

The firelight showed a surprised glance from under the brim of his interlocutor's old slouched hat. "Why, I think ye sent him on some yerrand. He saddled his beastis an' put out long ago fur down the mounting. An' I axed him ef he warn't afeard o' the gorges. An' he 'lowed he war 'bleeged ter go."

The officer in his turn stared. "That's all right. I didn't know whether he hed gone," he said at last, with a debonair wave of the hand. He turned within, smiling. "Fee air like the man in the Bible ez say, 'I go not,' an' goes," he muttered to himself, in triumphant satisfaction.



The sheriff found it a long night. The voices gradually dwindled until only a fragmentary, low-toned colloquy could be heard beside the fire outside, so had the number of renegades to the loft of the barn increased; and when at last the drowsy converse was hushed, the impetuous flare had died away; no fluctuating glimpses of the landscape embellished the darkness; the fire had sunk to a mere mass of vermillion embers amidst the utter gloom which it did not illumine. A wind after a time arose, and hearing it astir in the valley, the sheriff, in his frequent stridings to and fro in the little cabin, be-thought himself of the menace of scattered coals to the masses of hay, and once and again looked out of the window to see how the gray ash was overlapping this smouldering mass, for the fire had spent its energies in those wild, upspringing, impetuous flames, and had burned out to the ground. More than once he mended the fire on the hearth-stone within, merely that he might have the company of the flicker on the wall; but it too was drowsy, and often sent up sluggish columns of smoke in lieu of flame, and he seemed to himself the only creature alive and awake in all the spread of mountain and valley. He had contrived to keep his vigil alone. He had given a special promise that he would call the prisoner's wife at twelve o'clock to watch the latter half of the night; by no means reluctant, exhausted with the excitements of the evening superimposed upon the work and cares of the day, she and Maggie had climbed the ladder to the roof-room, and had left the officer in undisturbed possession below.

Once he lighted a tallow dip, and surveyed the haggard face of the patient, as he chose euphemistically to call him. The feeble glimmer illumined the room in pallid and melancholy guise, instead of with the hilarity and glow and bright good-will which the sulking fire had shown earlier in the evening. A great, distorted silhouette of his own head appeared upon the wall, leaning ogreishly over the pillow. He noted these things in the midnight. His hand on the round knob of the bedpost seemed to grasp a club or weapon. The forlorn face of the recumbent man added its significance to the shadow. A more sinister and threatening picture it was hardly possible to imagine, and after gazing at it with gruff

disfavor, Carew shifted his position, and once more looked anxiously at the haggard face on the pillow. It bore certain tokens which in his ignorance he fancied were characteristic of the *facies hippocratica*; from time to time as he lighted the candle anew he noted them again, and his own face seemed to reflect them in a sort of dismay and terror. Once, as he struck the candle sharply downward to extinguish the flame, he apostrophized the patient out of the sudden darkness:

"Ef ye don't git sensible enough ter talk sorter straight afore ye take off from hyar fur good an' all, I dun'no' how in kingdom come I be a-goin' ter find out whar it war ez ye hid that plunder—ef ever ye did hide it."

He walked back to the hearth, where the gray smoke, itself barely visible, rose in a strong steady column, now and then darting out a tiny scintillating tongue of white flame, and threw himself again into the rickety chair, his anxious eyes on the fire. A black cat, crouched upon the hearth, commented hospitably upon his proximity by a loud purring as she alternately opened and shut her witch-like yellow eyes. She recalled to his mind many a homely fireside fable that held the terrors of his childhood in permanent solution, which his manhood might vainly strive to precipitate and repudiate. He looked at her askance while she peacefully slept, and the wind went heavily by the window as with the tread of a thousand men. He himself was never so consciously vigilant. It seemed as if he had never slept. He could hardly realize the fatigue, the drowsiness, with which he had struggled in the earlier portion of the night. Not a stir escaped his attention from the bed where the wounded man lay, whether in the soft recuperation of slumber, or the heavy stupors that so nearly simulate death itself, his ignorance could not determine. Once as the flame flared white from out the gray smoke he looked to see if the hands were plucking at the coverlet, the one sign familiar to him of the approaching doom. And then, as the dull, dense, unillumined column of vapor benighted the room, he heard, with his keen senses all tense, the howl of a wolf on a far-away summit.

"So durned onlucky!" a thick voice said, suddenly, as it were in his ear.

Carew gave a galvanic start that jarred

his whole frame, and he had a momentary impression that he had been dreaming. As he turned his head he heard the wind surging in the infinite leafage of the vast mountain wilderness. But within all was still save the slowly ascending column of gray smoke, and all was silent—not the chirping of a cricket, not the gnawing of a mouse—till abruptly, from out the semi-obscurity of the room, the thick, unnatural voice came again, came from the pillow where the restless head was rolling once more.

The sheriff drew a long breath of relief, raucously cleared his throat, and stretched out his stalwart, booted legs comfortably upon the hearth. Then he once more turned his face toward the bed, for whether because of the pervasive quiet, or the absence of other distractions, the utterances of delirium that had hitherto seemed incoherent and mere mouthings were now comprehensible, and albeit the words were but half formed and thickly spoken, they had become articulate.

"Durned onlucky," the voice said, over and over again, with falling inflections infinitely disconsolate.

A smile was on the officer's face. In the absence of other entertainment these queer unauthorized gyrations of the powers of speech, all astir without the concurrence of the brain, promised to relieve somewhat the tedium.

"Onlucky! I b'lieve ye!" he commented, with a laugh. "Onlucky fur true—fur you!"

"So durned onlucky," the weird voice rose louder.

Then it fell to silence which was so long continued that the officer relapsed into a reverie, and once more eyed the veiled fire.

"Dun'no' nuthin' 'bout them Leetle People," the voice droned.

Once more Tom Carew lifted his head with a renewed interest; he felt as if long ago, in some previous state of existence, he had heard of those strange extinct folk; and then he recalled their more immediate mention—and for the first time that he could remember—at the blacksmith's shop to-day, and their connection with the name of Shattuck. He sat with a half-scornful, half-doubting smile upon his face, that bespoke, nevertheless, an intent attention, and that reluctant fascination which the supernatural exerts; his hands were in his pockets, his

hat on the back of his head, his long legs stretched out, his whole relaxed attitude implying a burly comfort.

"Buried jes two feet deep; shows how small they actially war," said the thick voice, "them Stranger People."

The face of the sheriff, revealed in one of the lashing thongs of flame, had a breathless wonder upon it. "Durned ef it don't!" he muttered, in the accents of amazed conviction. And again he lent his ear to the disjointed exclamations as the fevered brain retraced some scene present once more to its distortions.

"Naw, Buck, naw," Millroy cried out, with sudden vehemence. "'Twarn't me ez told. An' Steve Yates couldn't hev gin the word ter Shattuck. Nobody knowed but ye an' me. Ye oughtn't ter hev shot at Shattuck. It air so durned onlucky ter shoot nigh a graveyard. Ah! ah! ah-h!" The voice rose suddenly to a hoarse scream, and he tossed uneasily from side to side.

The sheriff sat motionless, and albeit he had assumed the functions of nurse as well as watcher, offered no assistance or alleviation to the sufferer, but with a puzzled face meditated for a time on this unexpected collocation of names; then scratched his head with an air of final and perplexed defeat as he listened to the groans of the wounded man gradually dying away to silence.

He waited expectantly, but naught broke the stillness save the wind outside in the immensity of the night and the wilderness. "I wish ter God ye'd talk sense," he adjured the patient, disconsolately.

Then he fell to thoughtfully eying the fire, the simple elements of his interest in the disconnected monologue merged into anxiety and perplexity and baffled speculation. The veiled flame still tended sluggishly upward; he heard the sobbing of the sap oozing out at the ends of the logs. "This wood is mighty green," he observed, disparagingly, "an' post oak, too, I b'lieve. 'Tain't fitten ter make a fire out'n."

A vague stir was on the roof—pattering drops; slow, discontinued presently, and discursively falling again. The little cabin was on the very verge of a rain cloud. In the valley the rhythmic beat of the downfall upon the tree-tops came muffled to his ears, and he noted the intermittent sound of the wind dying

away and rising fitfully and further off. All at once his attention was deflected from the outer world.

"The Leetle People revealed the secret, Buck. Lay it at thar door," cried the weird voice of delirium.

Carew drew his sprawling members into a tense attitude, a hand on either knee, his head thrust forward, his eyes distended, staring into the gloom, his lower jaw falling, and his lips apart.

"Thar warn't room enough fur the bones an' the jug an' the plunder too. An' that thar one o' the Leetle People's harnts hev sot out ter walk, ez sure ez ye air born—no room sca'cely bein' lef' in his grave. So durned onlucky ter meddle with the Leetle People's graves! So durned onlucky, to be sure!"

The officer sat as if turned to stone, breathless, motionless, staring dully into the dusky room, and seeing nothing that was before him—only the goal which he had sought—while the fevered head still rolled back and forth on the pillow, the delirious voice repeating, with every inflection of dull despair: "So durned onlucky! So onlucky, to be sure!"

How long the sheriff sat there unconsciously striving to realize the situation, the significance of this strange discovery, he did not know. It was with a distinct effort of the mind at last that he sought to pull himself together and turn to the consequent step. He felt as if he were dreaming even after he was on his feet, and he paused irresolutely in the midst of the floor, and looked expectantly toward the bed, where the wounded man's head still restlessly rolled as he muttered: "So durned onlucky! So onlucky, to be sure!" But if Bob Millroy should talk all night he could add naught of importance to what the sheriff already knew.

"No use a-listening ter him jabber now," he said.

A sudden look of thought smote his face; his eyes narrowed, his teeth closed firmly, as he revolved the idea in his mind, and he turned abruptly to the window. The blast had closed the batten shutter fast, and he shook it smartly before it would open in his hand. The slow wheeling of its edges against the sky revealed a change since last he had looked out. The stars still scintillated above in the clear spaces of the zenith, but a rain cloud hung in the south, bulging low over the ranges, its blackness differing vastly in tone from

the limpid darkness where the night was clear and serene. One summit below it was distinctly defined; there it had betaken a dusky brown color, and all about its lower verges a fringe of fine straight lines of rain was suggested; a moon—a belated waning moon—was rising in the melancholy dead hour of the night, its distorted, mist-barred disk showing between the bare eastern peaks, which were all silvered and clearly outlined above the massive wooded slopes darkling below. It shone full in the officer's eyes as for a moment he steadfastly gazed upon it. Then he laid his hand upon the window sill and lightly sprang upon the ground below. The next moment he was standing in the door of the barn, and his stentorian halloo had roused all the slumbering mountaineers amongst the hay, and hailed the echoes in many a rocky gorge far away.

#### XVI.

In the deep obscurity of those dark hours before the moonrise, in the effacements of all the visible expressions of material nature, save the glitter of the stars and the glooming of the shadows, Felix Guthrie had been alone, as it were, with his own soul. He had never known, native of the wilderness though he was, so intense a sense of solitude. It was as if his spirit had gone forth from the familiar world into the vast voids of the uncreate. He took no heed of the dangerous way down the steep, but gave the horse the rein, and trusted to the keener nocturnal sight of the animal. His dog ran on ahead pincerwise, retracing his way from time to time and gumbolling about his master's stirrup irons, his presence only made known by a vague panting which Guthrie neither heard nor heeded. Even to the voice of the mountain torrent he was oblivious, albeit seeming louder far by night than by day, assertive, unafraid, congener of the solitude, the darkness, and the melancholy isolations of the mountain woods. The rhododendron blooming all unseen by the way touched his cheek with a gauzy petal and a freshness of dew; now and again a brier clutched at his sleeve; sometimes a stone rolled beneath his horse's hoof, and fell into the abyss at the side of the road, sonorously echoing and echoing as it smote upon the rocky sides of the chasm, the decisive final thud so long delayed that to judge thus of the unseen depths that lurked

at either hand might have daunted him had he listened. The horse would hesitate at times, and send forth a whinnying plaint of doubt or fear when the rushing torrent crossed the way, plunging in presently, however, and if need were swimming gallantly, with the swimming dog in his wake.

Guthrie's thoughts made all the way heavy; deeper than the glooms of the night they shadowed his spirit.

"Though she may sing an' he may listen, I ain't a-goin' ter spy him out fur no sher'ff ez ever rid with spurs. I ain't a-goin' ter hound him an' track him, fur I ain't no dog; though I 'ain't got nuthin' agin dogs, nuther. But"—with a hardening of the face—"I'll hold him ter account ter me. I'll bring him ter a jedg'mint. He'll 'low the law o' the lan' hev got a toler'ble feeble grip compared with the way I'll take holt o' him. He war warned. I told him ez I hed it in my heart ter kill the man ez kem atwixt Litt an' me."

When he reached the levels of the Cove the springy turf served to add speed to the long swinging steady pace. He had hardly expected so soon to see before him the steep gables of the old Rhodes homestead. These were cut sharply against the sky, for the house stood in an open space among its fields. The only foliage about it was a few trees that bent above its roof, and the great overgrown bushes—lilac and snowball and syringa—that crowded the yard. A garden, overgrown too, extended down the slope at the side, and here as well were masses of herbage blackly visible in contrast with the open spaces.

Guthrie was a stranger here. He had never before seen so great a house as the rambling old brick dwelling. When he had dismounted at the fence he was for a moment at a loss how to enter. A porch was at the front and another at the side, and while he hesitated a vague glimmer of yellow light came through the masses of the foliage that clustered about one of the windows. He opened the gate; his foot fell noiselessly upon the weed-grown path. A great white lily was waving in the gloom close by—he saw it glimmer—another, and another, and as the file stood close in the border, the heavy rich perfume seemed to make the air dense. The window glared forth suddenly—the light in every tiny pane—when he had passed a great arbor-vitæ

that stood near it trailing its branches on the ground. Within, unconscious, at ease, unperceptive, a man sat by a lamp, a book in his hand, his chair tilted back, a pipe between his teeth. Save the light vaporous curling of the smoke above his head, there was no motion. The fire dwindled in the chimney-place; the clock had stopped as if it fell a-drowsing on the midnight hour. The wind had ceased even its vague stir, and the leaves that hung about the panes were still. Guthrie stood for a moment as if the inertia of the scene had fallen upon him, staring at the face that he had learned to know rather in meditating upon it in its absence than in the study of its traits. It was softer than he had thought, younger, but he recognized anew with an infinite change of sentiment that indefinable quality of expression, to which glance, contour, pose, all contributed, which made it so likable. And if this had been patent to him, why not to others—to Letitia? A new stand-point had wrought a radical difference. The vague fascination that had once commended Shattuck kindled Guthrie's hatred now. His eyes glowed like a panther's from out the darkness, and when Shattuck abruptly put up his hand with the quick decisive motion of keen interest and turned a page of the volume, it broke the lethargic spell that seemed to have fallen upon the mountaineer. Guthrie moved up suddenly close to the window, his very touch upon the pane. There was an imperious look upon his face. It seemed to hail the unconscious reader within, who with his quick deft gesture presently turned another leaf. Guthrie could see his intent eyes, full of light, shifting from side to side of the page as they scanned the lines. He made no effort to attract Shattuck's attention beyond that long steady glowering look, albeit he wondered that its effect should be so belated. He had noted often that strange mesmeric influence of the eye; a wild beast in the woods would not remain oblivious of the presence of his natural enemy were a human being's gaze steadily fixed for some space upon him. Shattuck suddenly put up his hand with a vaguely impatient air of interruption and passed it over his cheek; then he rose abruptly to his feet, crossed the hearth with his quick sure step, and reached up to the high mantel-piece, dusky in the shadow.



There was a sharp metallic click outside amongst the honeysuckle vines—Guthrie had cocked his pistol.

But it was no weapon which Shattuck had grasped from the mantel-piece. His train of thought was evidently still unbroken, for he came slowly back into the circumference of the light of the lamp, as it stood on the table, turning in his careful deft hands a curiously decorated jar. Then, still standing, with the other hand he whirled over the leaves of the book, and seemed to compare the jar which he held to an engraving upon the page. That serene light of a purely intellectual pleasure was upon his face; its peculiar charm, its alertness, its mobility, its sympathetic intimations, its clear candor, its courage, had never been more individual, more marked. The man outside, with his pistol cocked in his hand, keenly alive to all impressions that mutually concerned them, sought to see him as once he had seemed. Jealousy had tampered with his vision, and Guthrie could no longer read these patent characters; they were like a language that one has half forgotten—a vague suggestion here and there, a broken association, a dull misconception. The next moment their eyes met.

For one instant the sudden sight of that white cheek pressed close to the glass drove the blood from Shattuck's face. He stood, the jar still in his hand, his head bent down, his questioning, searching eye intent. Then, still without recognizing the features of the man outside, he placed the jar on the table, and walked slowly to the window, unarmed as he was. He laid both hands on the sash to lift it; it was thrown creakingly up, and the light fell full on the face without, its square contour, its austere, sullen expression, its long yellow ringlets, all framed by the big brim of the broad hat thrust far back.

"Is that you, Fee?" Shattuck said, in surprise. "You nearly scared me to death. Why don't you come in?"

His tone was untroubled and casual. It implied a conscience void of offence.

"He thinks I hain't fund him out," Guthrie commented to himself. Aloud he replied, grimly: "'Tain't wuth while ter kem in. I kin say what I hev got ter say right hyar."

Shattuck, all unnoting the pistol in his interlocutor's hand, sat down upon the window-sill, leaning almost against its muzzle. He held one of the cables of the

many-stranded honeysuckle vine in his hand, by way of assisting his equilibrium, as he looked down at his guest. There was no more serious thought in his mind at the moment than the wish that he could paint, or even sketch. It seemed a pity that so massive and impressive an embodiment of the idea of manhood, of force, as that which Felix Guthrie's face and figure presented should be known only to his few and unappreciative neighbors as a "tarrifyin' critter, full o' grudges, who shot mighty straight."

Guthrie was a trifle thrown off his balance by this serene unconsciousness. He hesitated, expecting that Shattuck would ask him what had brought him hither, unaware that the etiquette in which the townsman was reared forbade him to inquire or to manifest curiosity concerning the mission of even an untimely visitor. As Guthrie said nothing, Shattuck essayed to break the pause.

"See my prehistoric jug?" he smilingly asked, pointing with the stem of his empty pipe toward the quaint jar upon the table. "I dug that out of Mr. Rhodes's mound. It's mightily like the cut of a Malay water-cooler I came across in that book on the table—surprisingly."

Before the unsuspecting suavity of his face and manner Guthrie felt a vague faltering, such as no ferocity or danger could have induced. So conscious of this was he that he sought, with a sort of indignant protest, to throw it off. He seized upon the first pretext to express his enmity, albeit his judgment failed to approve it. He felt it all inadequate to the passion which shook him, and far from what he had intended to say.

"Content yerse'f with that," he exclaimed; "fur ye shall hev nuthin' from the Leetle People. They hev tuk up thar rest on my lan', an' thar shell they sleep in peace till the last trump sounds."

The hand that trifled with the heavily twisted vine was still for a moment, and Shattuck looked down seriously into Guthrie's eyes—seriously, but without anger.

"It shall be just as you say," he replied. "I don't wonder you feel strongly about it. At first I was furious at being shot at in a way that I can't resent, by a woman,"—his eyes flashed, and his lips trembled—"and I declared I would try it again. But afterward I felt we were fortunate indeed that no one was killed except the colt. It might have been your



brother or Mr. Rhodes as well as myself. You see?" He turned his head toward the light. Where the hair had been clipped to the skin a red line showed that the rifle ball had grazed the flesh. "Pretty good aim in the twilight. And perhaps since there is so strong a feeling against disturbing the 'pygmies,' so called"—his second nature of scientific exactitude unconsciously qualified the phrase—"I ought to let them alone. Still, I am sorry about the little colt, and as the disaster happened in my errand, I should like to offer some indemnity." He made a motion toward his pocket.

"I hev a mind ter take ye by the nape o' yer neck an' break it across the winder-sill!" cried Guthrie, his eyes blazing. "Ye think I keer 'bout the wuth o' the leetle critter!" He snapped his fingers scornfully in the air, holding his arm aloft with a fine free gesture. "I be sorry he is dead, 'kase he hev got no hereafter, an' he war a frisky beastis, an' loved ter live, an' we-uns will miss seein' him so gayly prancin' in the pastur'. Ye think I kem hyar ter git a leetle pay fur him?" He would not wait for Shattuck's protest that both eyes and gesture precluded. "Naw!" he thundered. "I kem hyar ter-night ter take yer life"—for the first time Shattuck marked the burnished glimmer on the barrel of the pistol that he held in his hand—"an' ter do what I hev never demeaned myself ter do afore—ter take back my promise."

"What promise?" Shattuck interjected.

"Ah, ye know! Ye know full well!" Guthrie shook his head, and in his voice was a quaver of poignant reproach. "The promise ye got by talkin' round me, 'kase ye 'lowed I war a ignorant cuss, and not able ter see through yer deceit with all yer school l'arnin'—by praisin' her looks, an' tellin' me ter keep up my courage, an' how I mought make out ter git her ter marry me, arter all. 'Twon't make no difference takin' back the promise, fur I mean ter take yer life with it. Ye surely remember the word I said ter you-uns, ez 'twar in my heart ter kill the man ez kem betwixt me an' Litt, an', by God! it is."

A sudden comprehension was dawning in Shattuck's eyes. He leaned forward, and laid his hand on Guthrie's shoulder. "Now go slow, Fee," he said, soothingly. "Who is this man? Not I, and this I swear!"

The impassive face, its pallor distinct in the lamp-light falling upon it from within, the rest of the figure shadowy in the black darkness without, looked up at him with a scathing contempt wrought in every feature.

"An' so I swear that I'd be justified ef I war ter put a bullet through yer heart, an' let yer soul go down ter hell with that word ter damn ye ter all eternity!"

Shattuck withdrew his hand, frowning heavily. "Look here, my fine fellow, this is strong language. If I didn't believe you are under some strange mistake, I'd make you eat your words syllable by syllable. What do you mean?"

"But I don't want ter murder ye," Guthrie went on, as if Shattuck had not spoken. "I can't shoot ye down without a weepin' in yer han', like Mis' Yates done, though ye richly desave it. Git yer shootin'-iron an' come out—come out an' stan' up fur yersef." He waved his hand with the pistol in it toward the more open spaces beyond the shrubbery. "Come out, or I'll shoot ye ez ye set thar."

"Not one step will I stir until you tell me why you say that I have come between you and Letitia."

"Bekase *she* told me so."

Shattuck's unconscious reliance upon his mental supremacy, his equipment of delicate tact, his assurance of a pleasing personality, which was half his courage, began to give way. He had yet that physical self-respect which would enable him to meet his enemy without a pusillanimous shrinking, but he could command no longer the adroitness to evade the event. Still he strove to be calm.

"Impossible! Now, what did she say?" he demanded, in a reasonable voice. Somehow, he had the key to Guthrie's confidence. Even now it opened to him.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in a voice of despair, throwing up the arm that still grasped the weapon. "I knowed it ez much from what she *didn't* say ez what she *did*. I seen it in her face. I hearn it in her voice. I ain't blind! I ain't deef! An' then"—every line in his face hardened—"she tole me how ye kem an' stood outside the winder ter listen whilst she sung, an' seein' yer face suddint lookin' in through the batten shutter she didn't know ye a-fust—not till arterward, whenst hearin' yer pickaxe in the Leetle People's graveyard, did she know 'twar you-uns. An' ye war

waitin' fur the moon ter rise. An', damn ye! what d'ye want ter hear her sing fur?"

Shattuck's face, with a startled comprehension upon it, had grown more deeply grave. Every intimation of anger had fallen from his manner. "Guthrie," he said, in a tone so coercive, so serious, that the other looked up, newly intent, "is there no way to convince you? I never heard her sing. I never was in the pygmy burying ground but the one time with your brother. Now, think! Is there no one else who might loiter about that house; who might venture—I should never take such a liberty—to look through the crevices of a closed window?"

Perhaps it was Shattuck's influence over Guthrie; perhaps the anxiety of a lover to believe his despair unfounded, to hope against hope—his long reflective pause indicated a change of mental attitude.

"Mrs. Yates's husband," suggested Shattuck, plying his advantage; "has nothing been heard about him lately?"

"Lord, yes!" exclaimed Guthrie, his mind reverting to the sensation of the day. "I seen him myself yesteddy 'mongst a gang o' horse-thieves a-hidin' out in the woods. I hed ter run fur my life, ez they set on me, six ter one. An' the sher'ff overhauled thar den jes ter-day."

His voice faltered a trifle. He looked shamefaced and downcast. The sheriff's suspicion concerning Shattuck had recurred to him, and he could not meet the man's eyes with this thought in his mind.

"Now don't you see, Fee," argued Shattuck, "how likely a thing it is that Steve Yates should hang around his own cabin, and peer through the window to take a look at his own wife and child, whom he probably will never see again, unless in some such way?"

Guthrie nodded, more than half convinced. Still, with his hidden consciousness of that insult to Shattuck which he carried in his recollection of the sheriff's menace, of the mission of espionage which he had refused, he could not look up.

In some vague subtle way he knew that when Shattuck next spoke it was not to him alone that he addressed the information, but that the fact might be made manifest.

"Now I am going to give you still another reason why I do not stand between

you and Letitia." At the name Guthrie lifted a listening face. "I am engaged to be married to a lady in my own city. So Letitia may sing like an oread and look like a flower, but she is nothing to me."

He said the words with a clear conscience, for if she had fixed her affection upon him—somehow the idea roused a vague sweet thrill in that mortgaged heart of his—it had been unsought.

Guthrie, eager for his own peace of mind to believe him, drew a long sigh of relief. "I reckon I take up sech notions jes 'kase I am so all-fired jealous," he said. Then, with a half laugh, "Litt never actually said nuthin' nohow—though she air ekal ter sayin' anything jes ter make me mo' jealous 'n I naterally be."

A mental mutiny possessed Shattuck. Was not this the conclusion that he had labored in all good faith to precipitate? Where, then, was his satisfaction in the logical result? Why should he cling in tenacious triumph to another inference drawn from her fancy that it was he who had lingered outside her window to hear her sing? His pulses quickened with the thought that the very fallacy wore the reflected hues of her hope. There were other recollections pressing fast upon him—that she had remembered his words, had recounted his strange stories, the look in her eyes when she had caught down from the rack the rifle which she believed had endangered his life. Her dream had in some sort fulfilled itself. He had long appreciated the charm of her unique beauty, her sprite-like individuality. His feeling suddenly expanded, glowed like a bud into the rose at the first warm touch of the sun.

He looked down at Guthrie all oblivious of him, save that he had grown weary of the importunity of his threats, his constancy of woe, his confidences. He was absorbed for the moment in his own emotion, and the world had fallen from him.

Abstractions befitted the hour. One might hardly think to see it again—that sordid, dusty, daylight world, full of commerce and hard bargains, and rigorous conventions of wealth and standing, prosaic requisites of well-equipped happiness. It had rolled far away out of consciousness. Upon the low summits of the thick growths of the orchard gleamed the lustre of the dew and the yellow suffusions of the rising moon. The shadows had grown into

dense symmetries, sharply outlined. The lilies, their chalices all pearl and gold, were so white and stately and tall as they stood where the moon-beams conjured them from out the darkness of the old-fashioned borders. The light drifted through the fringes of the pines, dark themselves as ever; and between their boughs, looking to the east, one could see a field of millet, glistening with all the charmed illusions of a silver lake. And how the mocking-bird loves the light! From out the midnight his jubilant song went up to meet it.

Shattuck remembered the moment, the scene, many a year afterward, the absorption that mulcted Guthrie's words of half their meaning, and more than half their weight.

"I hev got suthin' else ter say," he began, uneasily. "I dun'no' how ter tell it ter ye, nor whether I oughter tell it at all. Ef the sher'ff hed ever seen ye he'd know he war a fool; but thar war a man kilt on the road that night whenst Steve Yates vamosed, an' folks b'lieve he done it."

The superficial attention with which Shattuck hearkened to this deepened the next moment.

"An' ez Steve Yates hed no idee o' goin' till ye sent him, the sher'ff thinks ye might hev sent him on that yerrand."

An inarticulate exclamation of amazement, of indignation, broke from Shattuck's lips. It was not Guthrie's intention to assuage his fears, but he felt constrained to be the apologist of the suspicion.

"Ef he hed ever seen ye wunst," he observed, "he'd know better. Of course he 'ain't never seen ye."

"Of course not," Shattuck assented, shortly, his confidence renewed. The suspicion touching himself was not the kind of thing that a man would willingly consider, even in its most hypothetical and tenuous guise. That it should be seriously entertained was too terrifying, too odious an idea to be gratuitously harbored. It was the instinct of self-respect, of self-preservation, to seek to throw it off. His nerves were still sensible of the shock, but his effort was to make light of it, to treat it as the coarse pleasantry, doubtless, of the officer, perpetrated concerning the only stranger within the vast circuit of mountainous country. He felt no gratitude to Guthrie for his warning, as the mountaineer had expected his revelation to be construed. He looked down

at him with repugnance and indignation in his eyes, and albeit Guthrie was not skilled in deciphering these subtle facial indications, he understood the sentiment and deprecated it. He did not pursue the subject further. He cast about in his clumsy way to make amends for his offence, for thus it seemed to him now, of repeating the obnoxious suggestion.

"I be powerful sorry I kem a-devilin' ye hyar this time o' night fur nuthin'," he said. "I reckon ye think I'm plumb gone distracted 'bout Litt," with a pathetic uplifting of his long-lashed eyes to his interlocutor, who was still sitting in the window. "Ye know a feller like me is mighty forlorn, especially ez I oughter know ez Litt ain't one o' them ez kin be hed fur the askin'. I reckon it 'll all come right arter a while?" wistfully interrogative.

"I reckon so," Shattuck was constrained to reply.

Guthrie was never before in so deprecatory or gentle a state of mind. "I feel plumb outdone whenst I remember how I hev talked ter you-uns, ez be so powerful perlite an' saaft-spoken ter all, an' considerin' of feelin's"—Shattuck winced a trifle—"an' how I hev gone on 'bout takin' back promises an' sech. Ye know I don't mean it. Ye air welcome ter dig enny-whar ye wanter on my lan', an' I'll help ye enny time; now, ef ye like ter," with the effort at reparation strong upon him. "I dun'no' but what it's ez good a time ez enny. Thar's light enough now, an' Mis' Yates mus' be off her gyard; she mus' sleep o' nights—leastwise take cat-naps." He looked up with a propitiatory laugh on his face. "An' I ain't 'feard o' Baker Anderson, nor Litt, nor even Moses."

Shattuck hesitated. He had been more shaken than he would have acknowledged even to himself by the crude suggestion that his name was for a moment connected with one of the brutal and bloody mountain crimes—a mere æsthetic horror, for his mind could not compass the atrocity against probability that the suspicion should be seriously harbored by an officer of the law. He foresaw a night of sleepless irritability, revolving the idea, should he let Guthrie go, although he felt that it should fairly be considered only a fit subject of flout, of ridicule, of inextinguishable laughter. It was rather in the spirit of defending himself against his own capacities for self-torment that

he readily turned toward the prospect of diverting his mind, occupying himself with alien interests.

"The spade an' the pick mus' be right thar now," Guthrie observed, by way of urgency. "Eph say he war so frustrated by Mis' Yates's shootin' that he forgot ter fetch 'em back home."

Shattuck looked out at the sober solid shadow of the old brick house, gable and chimney and porch, projected upon the thick herbage of the yard; the silver green sea of millet glimpsed between the dark branches of the pines; the winding road that led the loitering way to the mountains. "I'll get my hat," he said.

There was no light in the hall save that which the moon cast through the high window on the landing of the stairs. It seemed fibrous, skein-like, pendulous, as far as the balusters; then it fell upon the hall floor below in a distinct, motionless image of the sash and pane, all white and lustrous. By its radiance one could distinguish a hall sofa, long and hard, covered with tattered black hair-cloth, and above it, hanging on the wall, the optimistic old barometer that once, perhaps, had been weatherwise, but now insisted that all signs "set fair"; the hall tree, whereon Rhodes's hat swung in its place, while its owner lay unconscious in the room above, the door of which Shattuck need pass with no solicitous tread, for, bating continuance, the pygmies themselves slept not more soundly. The door of his own room stood ajar, the moonlight, the dew, and the sweet perfumes of the night in its open windows. It had a sort of inhabited look, full of comfortable suggestions; perhaps it was only the fatigue of the day beginning to hang somewhat heavily on his senses, but as he entered, he stood for a moment irresolute.

In the midst of the dusky uncertainty of sheen and shadow he was abruptly startled to see a dim figure suddenly moving at the opposite side of the room. He advanced a step, and recognized his own image in the indistinguishable mirror. It had a strange weird effect, this half-seen simulacrum of himself, a skulking, uneasy, secret air that belied its principal, and seemed its own independent attitude, rather than reflected. It was coercive in some sort. He caught up his hat from the table, strode down the hall to Rhodes's door, and thus took those first steps destined never to be retraced. He knocked with-

out response, then opened the door, creaking raspingly upon its uncoiled hinges, rusty with long disuse; and Guthrie, waiting at the window below, amongst the silent pensive lustres of the moon, heard the ringing round voice of Rhodes break forth in drowsy protest, incongruous, prosaic, insistently utilitarian. The interval was short before Shattuck ran down the stair, sprang through the window, drawing the sash down behind him, and then the two set forth together.

The lilies bloomed at the gate, their chalices full of dew. The mocking-bird sang to the silent moon. Far, far away some watercourse had lifted loud a sylvan song it was not wont to sing by day.

"How still it is—hear Wild-Duck Creek on the rocks!" Shattuck said as he buckled his saddle girth and put his foot in the stirrup. The eastern windows were all aflame with a white, opaque radiance in broadened, vitreous, distorted reduplications of the moon. The deep, elongated shadows of the old house lay amongst the orchard boughs. He looked around at it, when once in the saddle, to see its gables and its chimneys rise anew against the clear sky and the vague outlines of the mountains, only because it pleased him—its solid decency, even dignity, in its honest, unornamented validity, touched his receptive æsthetic sense—not because he divined that he was looking his last upon it. How finite a creature is man, how little he knows his way along these earthly paths, whither soon or late he goes to meet his fate, never aware how near its approach, one might realize, thinking on a time like this, when these two, all unprejudiced, rode together to the burial-ground of the "Leetle People." The wind was in their faces—how fresh, how free! The dew glittered in the air; the moon, although yellow, and waning with a melancholy presage in her lessening splendors, made the night like some pensive, softly illuminated day of dream-tides. Their escort of mounted shadows galloped at their sides; the turf stretched out into long miles behind their horses' hoofs. They met naught save a fox scudding over a stretch of sward with stealthy speed, and a bundle of feathers between his jaws. The Yates cabin, that Guthrie was first to see, a dimly glimmering gray, was as silent and still as if it housed no life within its walls—as silent and as still as that long slope, with the shadows of the

great trees, and the intervenient sheen of the moon all adown it, where the Little People had slept this many a day, knowing no waking.

Shattuck led the way. He had turned once more to the tall isolated laurel bush, almost of tree-like proportions, where he had begun his labors before. He did not at once throw himself from his horse; he was taking note of a strange thing, something he had not marked heretofore. That mass of bloom and foliage rose between the grave whose stone coffin his pickaxe had struck and any possible surveillance from the Yates cabin. A doubt for the first time stirred in his mind whether it were indeed Adelaide who had fired that murderous rifle ball. The next moment the absorptions of his intentions, his opportunity, usurped all else. He flung himself to the ground, breathless, elated, with an electrical energy in his muscles, as he seized the pick on which Guthrie leaned irresolute, and struck the first blow.

The mountaineer turned his softened moonlit face upon him with a slow smile in his eyes. "I be glad ye hed the grit ter begin; I hain't." The dew had bereft his long curls of their wonted crispness; they hung in lengthened tendrils and dishevelled on his broad shoulders. He pushed his hat far back on his head. His heavy spurred boots were deeply sunken in the long grass. He slowly placed one upon the spade as he drove it down into the mould. "I can't help bein' sorry fur the Stranger People, ez they air leetle, an' air dead, an' hev been waitin' so long in the dark fur the las' day an' thar summons ter rise."

That sharp smiting of metal upon stone jarred the moonlit quietude, and Guthrie looked up with dilated eyes, his hand quivering on the spade. "This ain't no common grave," he cried; "the ground is loose!"

He was not given to logical deductions; he did not speculate; he only stood staring with wonder; while Shattuck, all unaccustomed to the practical phenomena of digging, apprehended only cause of gratulation that the investigation was to be the less hindered. He made no reply, briskly shovelling out the earth. Presently, with a silent sign to Guthrie, he reached the topmost slab of the strange small sarcophagus. How long since it had seen the light that now fell upon the clay-incrust-

ed stone! When it was first laid here, in what quarter was the moon? How often had it waxed and waned afterward, unmindful? The vibrations of the cataract filled the air with the full pulsings of nature's heart. The wind—wanderer!—came and went, as it did in the days of the pygmies. A flower from the laurel—a mere tissue of a bloom, so fine, so fragile of texture—was wafted down, and fell upon the slab, as transitory, as futile, as unheeded, as ye, O forgotten Little People!

Then the slab was lightly lifted, albeit with trembling hands. With averted eyes Guthrie shrank back, and as his shadow withdrew, the moon shone straight into the tiny crypt, and Shattuck leaned forward to look. An exclamation, not of triumph, of horror, smote the air sharply. The mountaineer, with all his pulses aquiver, looked down into his coadjutor's white, startled face. Shattuck was kneeling beside the open grave, holding the coveted jug in his hand, full of silver currency. The slow mountaineer, hardly mastering the idea, turned to the coffin. If it still held bones, they lay beneath a pair of folded saddle-bags that filled the narrow space.

In the confusion that beset his senses he did not discriminate the thunderous sound that rose upon the air—the flimsy bridge was vibrating under the reckless gallop of a score of horsemen. He only knew, as in a dream, that the moonlight was presently full of swift mounted shadows bearing down upon them, Shattuck still with the jar in his hand, albeit starting to his feet, and he himself leaning upon the spade. The air reverberated with a savage cheer of triumph. The sheriff had thrown himself to the ground, and with a smile of scornful elation held his pistol at Guthrie's head.

"Ye air no spy, air ye, Fee?" he cried out, with ringing sarcasm. "Got a mighty good reason not ter be. An' I reckon, my pretty Mister Townman," turning to Shattuck, "ye air no spy nuther. But I'll gin in, Fee, I never war so fooled ez I hev been in you-uns. I never thunk ter set a thief ter ketch a thief this-a-way."

Upon the word, Guthrie, into whose stunned consciousness the truth had gradually sifted, turned with a flaring color and a fiery eye, and smote the officer in the face a terrible blow with his whole force. The next moment the two men, their arms interlocked, were swaying to



and fro on the brink of the open grave, so nearly matched in strength that it was hard to say which might have prevailed, had not a swift flash of red light sprung out in the pallid moonlight, and a sharp report rung upon the air. They fell apart, the officer staggering backward, but Guthrie sinking prone upon the ground, whence he would rise no more.

A mingled clamor, terrible, full of fierce meaning, was suddenly loud upon the night. The shifting temper of the populace was never more aptly illustrated. In an instant the officer was as a prisoner in the hands of his posse, and his posse was an infuriated mob. The hoarse cry, "String him up! string him up!" arose more than once. And others, who spoke calmly, and with reason and argument, were equally formidable as they called upon the officer to justify his deed.

"Air this the law? No trial! no jury! Not a minute gin him to explain! Call him thief, an' shoot him down, unarmed, in cold blood!"

They pressed about him with eyes hardly less luminous than the eyes of wolves, hardly so gentle, while the officer protested first self-defence.

"With twenty men at yer back?" "An' Guthrie's pistols over yander in the holsters on his saddle?" the refutation rang out. Then, on the repetition of the terrible cry, "String him up!" the effort at exculpation shifted to a claim of the accidental discharge of the weapon. And still the fierce clamor rose anew.

Meantime Felix Guthrie lay very still in the pale moonlight, heedless of vengeance. His long hair stretched backward on the dank grass; his face, upturned to the moon-beams, was calm and untroubled; his hands were listless and limp, and one of the younger men mechanically chafed them as he now and again bent over to seek some sign of life in the fixed eyes.

Shattuck stood bewildered, looking with a sort of numb stupefaction at the prone figure upon the grass, and then at the agitated and furious group about the sheriff. The catastrophe, the very scene before him, he could not realize. He felt as in a horrible dream, when the consciousness of fantasy opens before the oppressed senses. More than once a touch upon his arm failed to rouse him. When he turned his head at last he saw, half hidden by the boughs of the blooming laurel, Letitia

crouching tremulously in the shadow. He did not wonder how she came there now, nor note that the door of the little log cabin was open, and its inmates, roused by the tumult, were standing in the doorway. He only saw her pale elfin face looking out from among the blooms as if she were native to the laurels. Her voice, though it was but a whisper, vibrated with urgency.

"Mount an' ride—*ride* for yer life!" she said: she held his horse by the bridle. "Thar'll be lynchin' 'fore day." Her tones grew steadier. "Nobody knows who, nor how it 'll tech 'em."

"I'm not afraid of the law," he said, indignantly.

"This ain't law! Gin yerself up in town ef ye want law. But ride now—ride off in the shadder! Ride fur yer life!"

From the leafy screen she stepped forth, throwing the reins over the head of the horse, which was frightened and restive, and held the stirrup for Shattuck. The clamorous voices of those angered men rose to a hoarse scream, and the agitated tones of the officer, pleading, arguing, justifying himself, were overborne. Shattuck put his foot in the stirrup. The next moment he was in the saddle. As he looked down, he saw Letitia's face distinctly in the moonlight that trickled through a bough; something of that love of hers, which Guthrie had at once divined and denied and revealed, was expressed in it.

"Ye'll kem back again—some day—some day?" she said.

He clasped her hand as she lifted it.

"Come back? I'd come back if it were from the ends of the earth!" he protested.

A little thing to say, wrung out of the impassioned moment, when, in good sooth, there was no time to measure phrases or take heed of the cadences of the voice. It changed the world for her. He never forgot that radiant face in its sprite-like beauty amongst the moonlit flowers. If there were other eyes in the world so tender, so pathetic, so exquisite, he never saw them before or after. No other creature of the earth so looked like one of the air. Even after he had ridden silently through the shadows, the dull sound of his horse's hoofs making scant impression in the midst of the pawing of the posse's steeds, he caught through the trees a flitting glimpse of her light dress, her volant

attitude, as she sped silently and secretly back to the waiting group on the porch. Then he rode away—rode for his life, as she bade him.

And he had good need of speed. How the distorted idea gained credence amongst the infuriated mountaineers it would be difficult to say. It might have been colored by the circumstance that Guthrie could logically be presumed to have had no connivance with the robbers whom he had slain, and no knowledge of where they had hidden their booty; it might have been suggested by the crafty sheriff as a diversion of their attention; but the suspicion presently permeated the group that Guthrie had surprised Shattuck in the act of securing the plunder hidden in the pygmy grave. The discovery of the stranger's flight added the semblance of confirmation, and lent energy to the pursuit, which, leading in diverse directions, served to disperse the posse, and thus annul that formidable engine of the law which the strange happenings of the night had turned against the sheriff, who had himself summoned it into existence. It was doubtless with a view to his own safety that he selected for his share of the search the road back to the county town, and with no expectation of the result that awaited him there. The imputation of flight, and of seeking to elude the responsibility of his act, which might otherwise have attached to this precipitate return, was in a measure eliminated by the fact that the fugitive had arrived before him, and had already surrendered to the authorities.

It was a time to which Shattuck could never look back without a wincing loathing for the part he was constrained to play, although, in truth, he fared much better than he could have hoped. It so chanced that the justice of the peace, an old, gentle, friendly man, whom in those early morning hours he had roused, had himself the spirit of an antiquarian; his conversation was replete with the ancient and fading traditions of the Great Smoky Mountains, and he could well appreciate the strength of the archaeological interest which had led Shattuck to open the pygmy grave. It seemed in the magistrate's estimation an ample justification for many risks. They were talking of these things quietly in the justice's office when the sheriff joined them. To his prosaic amaze, instead of details of

the operation of the law indigenous to the office—points of examining trials and subpoenings of witnesses, of arrest and commitment—he heard legends of the old Cherokee settlement Chota, the “beloved town,” city of refuge, where even the shedder of blood was safe from vengeance; of the mysterious Ark before which sacrifices were offered; of Hebraic words in their ritual of worship; of the great chieftain Oconostota, and his wonderful visit to King George in London; of the bravery of Atta-Culla-Culla; of the Indian sibyl known as the Evening Cloud, and the strange fulfilment of her many strange prophecies.

Thus submitting his motives to no uncomprehending utilitarian arbitrament, all the rigors of the misunderstanding that Shattuck feared were averted, and he doubtless owed the bail to which he was admitted to this fortuitous circumstance. That he never came to trial he was indebted to a chance as friendly, for Millroy, before his death, so far recovered as to make a sworn statement which inculpated only Cheever and the horse-thief's gang, thus relieving Yates as well as Shattuck of all suspicion of complicity in the murder and the robbery.

The mere passing remembrance that his name had ever been mentioned in connection with these crimes was like the thrust of a knife in Shattuck's heart for years thereafter, most of all as his enthusiasms abated, and the more serious interests of life were asserted, and his worldly consequence increased. Sometimes amidst the wreaths of a post-prandial cigar a sprite-like face that seemed even in his unwilling and disaffected recollection supremely fair was present to him again, and left him with a sigh half pleasure, half pain. Further than this his words were naught, and easily forgotten.

Easily forgotten! Every day that dawned to Letitia's expectant faith held an hour that would bring him. Never a sunset came that was not bright with his promise for the morrow. Down any curve in the road, as it turned, she might look to see him. For did he not say he would come? and so surely he would! The years of watching wore out her life, but not her faith. And she died in the belief that her doom fell all too soon, and that he would come to find her gone. And she clung futilely to earth for his fancied sorrow.



"EVERY DAY THAT DAWNED."

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Since those days the Little People's burying-ground is doubly deserted. But few pass, and they eye it askance. And by many a fireside is told the story of the heavy doom that fell on all who carried their schemes therein and sought to know its secrets. But the birds nest in its deep shades. Every year the laurel blooms anew. And Adelaide, looking with pen-

sive eyes upon it from her home, happy once more, can still forecast the coming of that fair spring when the morning stars shall sing together in the vernal dawn of a new heaven and a new earth, and this mortality shall put on immortality.

Meantime the Little People sleep well.

THE END.

## THE ROYAL CHÂTEAUX OF THE LOIRE.

BY LOUIS FRECHETTE.

AS a general thing Americans are very little acquainted with the interior of France. Every year they troop in numbers to Paris, and after spending a few weeks in the wonderful capital, they proceed to Italy, hardly noticing Lyons and Marseilles on their way. They visit Rome, Florence, Naples, Venice; and returning through Berlin, Cologne, the Rhineland, they reach France again by the way of Belgium or Switzerland, and invariably take up their quarters once more in Paris.

Paris possesses an irresistible attraction for the American. The movement, the feverish animation, the torrential activity, which so highly characterize the French metropolis, and make every visitor on his arrival there imagine himself in the rapture of a grand public festival, captivate him to the utmost degree, and it is often with a heavy heart, when the hour of departure comes, that he tears himself away from this life of fascination and enchantment.

Paris is the great centre of the world. And yet, perhaps precisely on account of this universal popularity, Paris is not, at least in a relative sense of the word, the most interesting point in France. In fact, every one knows Paris more or less. Its monuments, its palaces, its theatres, its museums, its boulevards, its public squares, and even the marvels of its art galleries, have been popularized by the engraver and the photographer. No French book can be opened, from the great classics to the cheap novels written for Madame Pipelet, that does not describe Paris, past and present, in all the details of its unrivalled splendor. Every one is acquainted with the Bois de Boulogne, Notre Dame, La Madeleine, the Invalides, the Tuileries; and from having been so often and so minutely described, all the rest,

though it may still interest us, has lost the charm of surprise.

But such is not the case with certain portions of the interior, certain nooks of what is called La Province. There we tread over places just as attractive by their historical reminiscences, we meet with monuments just as remarkable by their architectural merit; and, on the other hand, we find there the attraction of a nature ten times more picturesque, of a people whose costumes, habits, and manners have a characteristic stamp. In a word, we discover there beautiful and interesting spots which guide-books and idle tourists have not yet entirely vulgarized. Among these none deserves more special mention than that part of the Loire country where stand the three great royal châteaux of Blois, Chambord, and Amboise.

### I.—BLOIS.

The ancient capital of this region of France, called the Blésois, stands on a steep hill overlooking the Loire, which is here spanned by a stately stone bridge built by Napoleon the First. It is the native place of Louis the Twelfth; of Papin, the true discoverer of steam; and of the two celebrated historians Augustin and Amedée Thierry. There is pointed out a small château where General Hugo, father of the great poet, took his last quarters after the imperial campaigns, and where he sank to rest.

We wended our way through narrow, winding, and precipitous streets, which recalled to my mind the old thoroughfares of Quebec, stopping a moment at the church of St. Nicholas, the most imposing ecclesiastical edifice in Blois. This temple, which dates from the year 1138, and which was nearly one hundred years in building, is of a half Roman and half Gothic architecture. The apsis, the choir, and the transept