

(From the Ladies' Companion.)

THE HAUNTED HOMESTEAD.

By the Author of 'the Brothers,' 'Cromwell,' &c.

There are few wilder spots on earth than the deep wooded gorge through which the waters of the mad Ashuelot rush northward from the pellucid lakelets, embosomed in the eastern spurs of the great Alleghany chain, whence it starts rash and rapid—meet emblem of ambitious man—upon its brief career of foam and fury. The hills—mountains, in bold abruptness, if not by actual height entitled to the name—sinking precipitous and sheer to the bed of the chafing river, which, in the course of ages, has escaped and channelled their rude sides and cleft the living granite a hundred fathom down, have left scant space below for a wild road, here hewn or blasted through strata of the eternal rock, there reared upon abutments of rough logs, and traversing some five times in each mile of distance, the devious torrent, as it wheels off in arrowy angles from side to side of its stern channel. Above, so perpendicularly do the cliffs ascend, that the huge pines, which shoot out from each cliff and crevice of their seamed flanks, far overhang the path, dropping their scaly cones into the boiling cauldrons of the stream, and almost interlacing their black boughs; so that midsummer's noon scarce pours a wintry twilight into the deep and cavernous ravine, while a November's eve lowers darker than a starless midnight. Even now, when the hand of enterprise has dotted the whole circumjacent region with prosperous farms and thriving villages, it is a desolate and gloomy pass; but in the years immediately succeeding the war of the independence—when, for unnumbered miles, the land around was clothed in its primeval garniture of forest—when but two tiny hamlets, Keene and Fitzwilliam, had been lately founded on the mountain track, at that time the sole thoroughfare between the young states of New Hampshire and Vermont, with scarce a human habitation in all the dreary miles that intervened between those infant settlements, it was indeed as fearful, ay, and as perilous a route as ever struck dismay into the bosom of a lone traveller. Those were rude days but stern! those were days, that, in truth, and in more modes than one, tried—shrewdly tried—men's souls! War had, indeed, passed over,—but many of its worst attributes and adjuncts still harassed the unsettled land. Traffic had been well nigh abolished—the culture of the earth had been neglected—want, bitter want, pervaded the whole country—the minds of men, long-used to violence, strife, and rapine, slowly regained their calm and governed tenor—disbanded soldiers, the outcasts of the patriot forces, broken and desperate characters, roamed singly or in bands, without resources or employment, through every state of the new union; nor had the Indian, undismayed by the weak government of the scarce-reformed republic, ceased from his late indulged career of massacre and havoc. Such was the period—such the nature of the times—when on a lowering and fitful evening towards the last days of October, a mounted traveller was seen to pass the sandhills, which form the jaws of the gorge on the southern side, on his way northward, to Vermont; wherein large tracts of fertile land were offered by the government for sale, at rates which tempted many to become purchasers and settlers in that romantic district. The sun had set already when he rode past the door of the one lowly tavern which then, as for the most part is the case in all new settlements, was the chief building of Fitzwilliam. A heavy mass of dark grey clouds, surging up slowly from the west, had occupied, at least one-half of the fast-darkening firmament; broad pouts of rain fell one by one at distant intervals; and the deep melancholy sigh of the west wind wailed through the dismal gorge of the Ashuelot in sure foreboding of the near tempest. The landlord of that humble hostelry stood in his lonely doorway, and warned the belated wayfarer to light down for the night, and take the morning with him for his guide through the wild pass that lay before him; but he who was thus timely warned, shook his head only in reply, and asking, in his turn, the distance to Hartley's Hawknest tavern, learned that six miles, of dangerous wild road, yet intervened between him and his desired harbor. For half a minute he seemed as though he doubted, for he drew in his rein and gazed with an inquiring glance toward the threatening heavens; at all events, his hesitation, if such it were, soon ended, he doubled the cape of his short horseman's cloak closer about his neck, touched his horse lightly with the spur, and cantered moderately onward. He was a tall and slight, though sinewy figure, with something in his air, and in the practised grace wherewith he sat and wheeled his horse, that spoke of military service—nor did his dress, although not strictly martial, belie the supposition; the square-topped cap of otter-skin, the braided loops and frogs on his hussar-like cloak, and leathern breeches, and high boots, equipped with long brass spurs, were by no means dissimilar to the accoutrements of sundry among the regiments, of continental horse, disbanded at the termination of the war, although divested of the lace and colored facings, which would have made them strictly uniform. The animal, moreover, which he rode, having evidently been subjected to the menage, for he was well upon his haunches, with the arched neck and light mouth champing on the bit, that speaks to a certainty that he was a charger—his saddle, too, equipped with holsters at the bow, and a small valise at the cantle, was covered with a handsome bear-skin; while the bridle, with its nose-bag, its cavesson, and brass-scaled frontlet, had yet more certainly been decorated so for no pacific purpose. Darker, and darker yet, frowned the dim skies above him, as threading the black pass, with no guide save the chafing roar of the vexed waters, and the white glistening of their tortured spray, he hastened onward; and now the wind, which had long sob-

bed and moaned among the giant pines, that lent a heavier gloom to the dark twilight road, raved out in savage gusts, whirling away the smaller branches like straws, in their mad dalliance; the rain at every lull, plashing upon the slippery rocks—the thunder crashing and roaring at the zenith, and the pale fires of heaven flashing in ghostly sheets across the narrow stripe of sky, which alone showed between the wood-fringed cliffs glooming on either hand, five hundred feet aloft. Yet not for rain or storm did the good charger flinch, or the bold rider curb him.

With his head bowed upon his breast, his rein relaxed and free, and his foot firm in the stirrup, as confident in the high qualities of his generous steed, fleetly and fearlessly he galloped forward; turn after turn of the stern glen he doubled—bridge after bridge clattered beneath his thundering stride—mile after mile was won, and now, as he wheeled round the base of a huge rocky buttress—from which the stream, rubbed by its massy weight, swept off in a wide reach to the right hand, while on the left the hills receded somewhat from its brink, leaving a sylvan amphitheatre of a few acres circuit—the lights of the small wayside inn, known in those days to all who traversed the frontiers of the neighboring states, as Hartley's Hawknest, glanced cheerfully upon the traveller's eyes. It was a long, low, log-built tenement, with several latticed windows looking towards the river which it faced, the upper story projecting so far as to constitute a rugged sort of galleried piazza. A glorious weeping elm, that loveliest of forest trees, stood at the southern end; its drooping foliage, serene now, and changed from its rich verdure, overshadowing many a yard of ground, and its gigantic trunk, garnished with rings and staples whereto were fastened, as the stranger galloped up two, or three sorry-looking, ill-conditioned horses, meanly caparisoned with straw-stuffed pads and hempen halters, waiting the leisure of their masters, who were employed—as many a snatch of vulgar song, and many a burst of dissonant harsh language pealing into the bosom of the night, betokened—in rude debauchery within. A rudely-fashioned spout of timber discharged a stream of limpid water into a huge stone cistern, whence it leaped with a merry murmur, and ran gurgling down a pebbled channel to join the river in the bottom—and beyond this, a long range of sheds and stabling stood out at a right angle to the tavern.

Pausing before the open shed, the stranger saw with no small feelings of annoyance, that the whole length of its unplanned and sordid manger was occupied by a large drove of horses; while, by the stamp of hoofs within, and muzzling sounds as of beasts busy with their provender, he readily guessed that the stables, also, were completely crowded. Linking his panting charger, therefore, to one of the hooks in the elm-tree, and throwing his own cloak across his croupe, he stepped across the threshold into the thronged and smoky bar room. The inn, as he had but too surely augured, was crowded to the utmost—a drove of horses, on their way southward from Vermont, had come in that same evening, their drivers had engaged every bed and pallet in the house—a dozen farmers of the neighbourhood, scared from proceeding on their homeward routes by the terrific aspect of the night, had occupied the little parlor—the very bar room floor was strewn with buffalos and blankets, whereupon reposed a dozen sturdy forms, seemingly undisturbed by the obscene and stormy revelling of their comrades, who had preferred a night-long drinking bout to a hard couch and uncertain slumbers. There needed scarce a question to ascertain that not a spot remained where he could spread his cloak; nor, which weighed most with him, a shed, however lowly, wherein to stable his good horse. Nothing remained, then, but to procure a feed of oats for the worn animal, some slight refreshment for himself, and to proceed, as best he might, to Keene, still twelve miles distant, with the worst portions of the road yet to be overcome.

No long space did it take the youth, for he was young and eminently handsome; and, as the lights displayed his blythe and active symmetry, set off by a close frock of forest green, edged in accordance with the fashion of the day, by a thin cord of gold, none who looked on him could fail to discover the gentleman of birth and breeding in every feature of his face, in every gesture of his active frame. And eagerly and keenly did many an eye of those who revelled round him, and of those who seemed to slumber, scan his whole form, and dress, and bearing. Several gaunt, wolfish looking men, muffled in belted blanket coats, bearded and grim and hideous, proffered him their revolting hospitality, and would fain, as it seemed, have entered into converse with him; but while offending none by any thing of haughtiness or direct avoidance, he yet withdrew himself from their company, and sat wrapped in his own meditations until the voice of the landlord summoned him to the scanty meal, which he discussed in haste, and standing; this ended he drew forth his purse to pay his reckoning; nor was it till he noted the quick and fiery glances which shot from many an eye, dwelt gloatingly upon the silken network, through which gleamed many a golden coin, that he became aware of his imprudence in drawing out so large a sum, as he had thus unwittingly displayed before so doubtful an assemblage. Nor did the consequences of his error fail to stand visibly before him, when sundry of the bystanders offered to yield their places to the stranger, should he prefer to tarry; and one, a tall, dark-visaged, gloomy-looking man, wearing a long, formidable butcher-knife in his buff belt, and holding a long rifle in his hand, announced his attention to ride some three miles on the way toward Keene, forthwith, to the spot where his own homeward path branched off from the main road, tendered his services and company as a guide well acquainted with the pass; and even offered him a night's lodging in his own cabin. While thus addressed, the stranger was well aware of a shrewd meaning

look which the landlord cast toward him as he handed him his change; but seeing no mode whereby to avoid the man's society, and feeling that he should more easily be able to defend himself if assailed, against a person by his side, than against one who might, unseen, waylay him, he was contented with declining the night's lodging, and courteously accepted his assistance as a guide. The wind had quite sunk as he again mounted his recruited charger, and the storm had swept over; yet was the road as dark as a wolf's mouth through the ravine, which narrowed more and more, as they proceeded farther, and was even more obscured by the precipitous hills, and overhanging foliage. Slowly they journeyed on, compelled to spare their speed by the deep channels and huge stones which broke the surface of the path, and close and various were the questionings to which the traveller was subjected by his acute, although untutored guide. Acute, however, as he was, he met in the stranger, his full match; for, seemingly responding to each query with perfect and accommodating frankness, he yet contrived to say no word which should give any clue to his intentions or his destination; so that when they had reached the spot where their paths separated, the countryman knew nothing more than when they had set forth, of his companion's views or business.

"Well, sir, he said, speaking in better language than might have been expected from his appearance and demeanour, 'well, sir, since you will not accept my humble hospitality, I wish you a good night. We shall most likely never meet again—if so, I wish you well, sir. I, too, have been a soldier—mind, when you reach the next bridge, directly you have passed it, you take the right hand path; a little brook you'll have to ford, and it may be a thought high from this rain, but you will find it safe and a good bottom. No! no!' he added, as the traveller would have slipped a guinea into the hand he had extended—"no! no! I have done you no service; I will take no reward! Good night!"

"Good night, and thanks!" returned the other—and they parted; the traveller, in half repentant thought, blaming himself with generous self-reproach for the suspicious fears he had half entertained of his guide's good faith, and for the moment, well nigh regretting that he had not accompanied the other to his hospitable home. But thoughts like these were soon absorbed in the necessity of looking to the guidance of his horse among the various difficulties of darkness and an unknown road—and now he reached the first bridge, and the cross track by which he was directed to proceed. Yet, though he had forgot no syllable of his instructions, he hesitated; for the left hand was evidently the most travelled route, and that by which he had been told to journey seemed but a narrow and occasional bye path. He hesitated, and while he stood there, a wild whooping cry rang on his ear; a melancholy, long-protracted wail, followed by the quick flapping of wide wings. As the first sound burst upon his ear, the horseman started and half turned in his saddle, thrusting his hand, meantime, into his ready holsters—but as the final notes were followed by the heavy rush of pinions on the night wind—"Why, what a timorous fool am I," he muttered, 'to be thus scared by the chance clamour of a silly fowl! Well! 'tis of a piece with my late doubts,' and setting spurs to his reluctant horse—reluctant to turn into that bye path—he trotted forward. A few steps brought him to a small gloomy hollow—the bed of the brooklet mentioned by the farmer—now swollen by the late storm into the semblance of a wintry torrent, brawling among loose stones, and at a few yards distance over a rocky ridge into the fierce Ashuelot. The trees grew close down to the brink on either hand, o'er canopied the dismal ford—the water was as black as Achéron! The traveller drew in his rein, and steered his charger cautiously down the steep bank, when, as his fore feet touched the merge, a heavy blow was dealt him from behind with a huge bludgeon, bowing him to the horse's neck. Before he could recover, a second blow followed which aimed at the juncture of the spine and skull, a flash of myriad sparks streamed through his reeling eyes—his brain spun round and round—and with a heavy sullen splash he fell into the shallow pool—a strong hand wheeled the charger round, and a smart blow upon the quarters, sent him in full career over the self-same road which he had lately traversed under the guidance of a master's hand. The freshness of the water laving his forehead, lent, for a moment, a new life to the wounded traveller—he sprang to his feet and grappled at the throat of his unseen assailant! Just at that point of time, a single sheeted flash, the last faint glimmering of the retreating storm, played for a moment on the sky—he recognized by that faint glimmer the dark visage and the gloomy scowl—he marked the glitter of the long butcher-knife, too late to parry its home thrust. One cry on God for mercy! one long sick thrilling grasp! one fluttering shudder of the convulsed and lifeless limbs! and his heart's blood was mingled with the turbulent stream—and he lay at the feet of his destroyer, a mere clod of the valley.

THE TEMPERANCE CAUSE IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

Extract from a letter, dated London June 30th, from the Secretary of the New British and Foreign Temperance Society, to the chairman of the American Temperance Union.

"You have already heard of the doings of Father Matthew in Ireland, but the reality is said, by eye witnesses, to be beyond any description which has yet been given of them. The change for the better is so extraordinary as to have excited the attention of the whole country, and to have obtained for our principles, the commendation of thousands who are not yet prepared to renounce entirely the intoxicating cup. A thousand beer and spirit sellers are reported to have abandoned the traffic, in Ireland alone.

"Next Monday, Daniel O'Connell comes out in a great meeting in Exeter hall, as a Temperance advocate. Our society has engaged him for the occasion, and expect an overflowing house. It is said he signed the total abstinence pledge last Saturday. In Scotland, the number of pledged members have doubled within the past year, and the Welsh have also been advancing in the great cause. We think in Great Britain and Ireland, there cannot be less than three millions, two hundred thousand abstainers from all that can intoxicate. Our society is now supporting nine agents, and we hope before long, that every town and village will have a society. The only government measure which has taken place in our favour since you were here, is the closing all beer and spirit shops on the Sabbath, until one o'clock. This has produced a change for the better, and we must be thankful for it. Our last annual meeting was a splendid affair; the delegate meeting passed off well, but the procession on Whitsunday, astonished even the tee-totalers themselves."

It consisted of 20,000 members of the society, marching in an orderly manner, through various parts of the city, surrounded by hundreds of thousands of lookers on.

HOW TO MAKE GOOD BREAD.—In large towns good bread can be had from the baker. In the country, in farmers' houses, where the wife and her daughters are operatives, the bread is generally excellent; but in how many families is heavy and sour bread not an unfrequent curse! If the mothers realized that every batch of sour, heavy, or unbacked bread was impairing the health of their families, pimply the fair skins of their daughters, and irritating the tempers of their children, would they not feel that making good bread was a moral obligation—I had almost said a religious duty? There is a law among the Arabs, that permits a man to divorce any of the four wives allowed him, who does not make good bread. It is so simple, that we have heard many a housewife, in answer to the question, "What is necessary to secure good bread?" reply, "Nothing but attention." Ah, attention! that secret of success in every art and every science—attention, which has produced the masterpieces of sculpture and paintings, and reveals the law of gravity, makes our good bread, and cooks in perfection our mutton chops.—*Means and Ends.*

LABOR.—It would be a blessing to society and to our country, if the press would unite in condemning the pernicious idea, that labor and true respectability are foreign to each other, that they cannot exist together, and that in order to merit the smiles of the fair, and the respectful considerations of the worthy, one must display a soft and untanned hand, and decorate it with a silken glove. Then would the effeminate creatures who call themselves men, and who disgrace that once honoured title, decrease in number; then would our workshops be filled with industrious mechanics, and our farms be cultivated and rendered fruitful by a hardy and independent yeomanry. Then would knavery, bankruptcy, gambling, indolence, servility and hypocrisy in a great measure cease, and as one of the surest means of securing honourable consideration, a man would wish the world to know him to be—what God intended he should be—A LABORER.—*Pawtucket Gazette.*

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.—An English authority states that the grand total of capital represented by all property in Great Britain and Ireland is estimated at £3,629,000,000. The value of all sorts of public property is £103,000,000.—The value of lands, houses, railroads, mines, animals, timber, crops, &c. is estimated at £2,945,000,000. The value of all sorts of furniture, apparel, plate, specie, money in Chancery, Savings Banks, &c., is estimated at £580,000,000.

SHREWD REPLY.—A prisoner in England, when called upon by the Alderman for his defence, said, "I've ordered a lawyer for to-morrow, and I hope your lordship will be so good as to put it off till he comes." "Why, what can the lawyer say about it?" asked his worship. "That's what I want to know, please your worship," replied the prisoner.

A young lady going into a barrack room at Fort George, saw an officer toasting a slice of bread on the point of his sword, on which she exclaimed, "I think, Sir, you have got the staff of life on the point of death."

"There's a chiel among ye takin Notes, as the pickpocket said when he was mingling in the crowd at the Rail Road Depot."

POETRY.

(From the Limerick Chronicle.)

THE SONG OF THE RIVER.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO THE VERY REV. THEOBALD MATTHEW.

I spring from the rock, from the mountain side,
Sparkling pure and bright;
And I gather strength, as I rapidly glide
From my birth-place into light.

Richness I bear to land and tree,
Beauty to hill and dale;
Beast and bird delight in me,
Drink and are strong and hale.

Fresh are the flowers that deck my banks,
The sod is greenest there;
And the warbling wing'd ones sing their thanks,
As they drink of me ev'ry where.

The traveller on burning sands,
The wanderer on the sea,
Gasp for water, clasp their hands,
And wildly pray for me.

I am the only drink was given
To man when pure and free:
Return then to the streams of Heaven,
You're safe when you drink of me.

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