THE EXAMINER:

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"This is true Liberty, when Freeborn Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free."—Euripides.

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LITERATURE.

THE WITNESS.

IN THREE PARTS.—PART III.

Grace had no doubt remained to sleep that night in the dressing-closet. I understood it all in an instant. She had been roused, and had crept out, and knew what had been done. She saw the dead man—she saw me—those eyes so full of dread and terror were fixed upon me. I made an involuntary movement towards the foot of the bed, to go round to her, but before I could reach it, I heard a heavy fall, and I found her totally insensible. What was to be done? I lifted her up, and stood with her light weight upon my arm, gazing around, as if the large silent chamber, or the bed with its ghastly burden, could give me counsel. Suddenly the secret chambers occurred to me; they were of easy access, along a wholly unfrequented part of the abbey. I scarcely know how I bore her thither; and I remember some difficulty in carrying a light, and unfastening the secret modes of approach; but I was naturally very strong, and I suppose the fearful necessities of the moment gave me more than ordinary power. At length, I reached the room. The child was still insensible. I laid her on the floor, and dragging out a mattress and blankets, I placed her there, with her head raised on a pillow, and hurried back to fetch her clothes and some restoratives. I sprinkled her face with water: and after I had returned to her a few moments, she began to recover, and moaned and murmured some words. I placed wine and water by her side, and a light in a carefully safe position, with some of the store of wax-candles by its stand, and waited in the entrance till I saw she was evidently reviving. Then I crept softly from the chamber, and closing it securely, hurried back to Sir Thomas's room.

I remade Grace's bed, and removed every sign of her having slept there; and leaving all things in their customary places, I went into my own chamber, put my light on a table, and sat down, and tried to realise the events of the last half hour. Certainly, my first calmer feelings were those of triumph and exultation. I was free! My daily and hourly curse was gone for ever. It was not then, nor indeed for a considerable time afterwards, that I began to learn that a new, daily, nightly, hourly curse was to be for ever present with me. I glossed over in my thoughts the existence of little Grace. I told myself repeatedly how easy it would be to account for her absence, to frighten and bribe her into silence. I would not suffer myself to see the difficulties, the impossibilities before me; I thrust them aside, to be thought over and cleared away hereafter. Nevertheless, I went back again to the chamber, and put some biscuits through the door, by means of the machine contrived for that purpose. I heard her utter a faint exclamation, and I came away so far satisfied. She was alive, she had food and clothing; and I told myself that I would think no more of her for the present. I went to bed, and lay awaiting the news of the morning.

It came, and surprised no one. The servants had sent for the doctor before they came to me, and he arrived by the time I was dressed. He told me the event had occurred exactly as he had always expected, and took every trouble and arrangement off my hands. There was a magnificent funeral; and I mocked at myself when the mirrors showed me my widow's cap and mourning weeds. In the ordinances of this strange world of ours, I suppose the most perfect freedom a woman can enjoy is that of a rich widow like myself, without father, brother, or a single creature in existence who had a right to utter even a comment, much less a remonstrance, on any part of my conduct. All would have been the brightest sunshine around me but for that unhappy child. I had hoped by bribes, threats, and persuasions, to silence her, and remove her to some distant place; perhaps another country. I scarcely knew what I intended to do; I had no settled plan, but a vague sort of impression that it was impossible that poor young girl could be dangerous to me in all my wealth and importance. I heard little about her disappearance. I had carefully removed every trace of her having slept at the abbey that night: and in the course of a few days, I heard casually from my maid that she had run away, and was believed to have gone off with some gipsies she had been seen with several days before. She had a good voice, and had been heard singing to them. The old grandmother with whom she lived was of a dreadful temper; and her own mother having been portioned off by Sir Thomas to a respectable tradesman in a neighbouring town, had almost wholly cast her off since her marriage. It was generally believed that when she heard her only friend was dead, she had preferred the wandering gipsy-life to the miserable prospect before her. Both mother and grandmother appeared well content to be rid of her. Their annuities were secured to them by Sir Thomas's will, and that was all they cared about.

Immediately after the death of Sir Thomas, I removed from the apartment which communicated with his room. This was a very obvious and natural step; but my choice of my new chambers surprised every one. They were those which had been appropriated to the abbots in former days, and were gloomy and inconvenient, and far away from the later and inhabited parts of the abbey. I had easy access from them, however, to the abbot's gallery in the chapel, in which lay the initiating secret of the intricate approach to the concealed apartments; and I could go thither at night, and even by day, taking proper precautions, without the slightest probability of interruption or discovery. It was nearly midnight of the day on which I took possession of these rooms, being, as I have said, that immediately after the death of Sir Thomas, when, taking with me some food and wine, I attempted my first interview with my prisoner; but I could gain no admittance. She had fastened all the bolts and bars withinside, and the strength of twenty men could not have forced an entrance. After trying for some time in vain, and hearing no sound, I put the provisions I had prepared for her through the machine, and was satisfied that she was living, and able to move about, by the rapid disappearance of the basket. It was impossible to see into the apartment through the opening, and I know not if a voice could be heard, but I spoke several times, and received no answer, nor heard any kind of sound. I may as well now say, to shorten my painful story, that she has obstinately persevered in thus excluding me; and that from the moment in which I left her little form upon the mattrass, I have never seen her, or received from her any sort of communication. I made many attempts; I wrote to her repeatedly in the most urgent terms, but without producing the slightest effect; and I knew that she continued to exist only by the regular removal of the food, and by her compliance with my directions to put out her linen for the laundress. I could, of course, only supply her with my own wearing apparel, in which, notwithstanding the great difference in height and size, she was obliged to contrive to clothe herself. I constantly supplied her with materials for writing, and various kinds of work, and useful and amusing books, which were changed from time to time as she required them. I gave her stores of biscuits, almonds, and raisins, and any sort of food that would keep for a long time, besides the daily meals which I contrived to provide for her by taking my breakfast, luncheon, and supper in my own apartments; and from the first day of her confinement, I began to draw up details describing the means of access to her prison, and placed them where, though secure during my life, they would be certain to be speedily found if I were to die suddenly.

For a long time I bore up well under this bewildering charge, this crushing burden. At first, it was light in comparison with the misery I had endured with Sir Thomas; and till some months had elapsed after my second marriage, I continued to be able to indulge vague hopes that I should gradually become more and more accustomed and indifferent to my office of jailer, and tried to accustom myself to the idea of quitting Greyfriars sometimes for short periods, during which she could live on the food that I should leave with her. I often reasoned with myself, and tried to bring the sort of arguments which I had heard in my younger days to bear on my present position. Here was a poor girl who had literally no creature belonging to her who cared whether she were living or dead. Only two beings could claim kindred with her; and of these, her mother would think her reappearance a misfortune; and her grandmother, in her intense selfishness, would feel anything but pleasure in the idea of being again troubled with her, and obliged to clothe and feed her. How many in her station of life passed their days in toil and misery, ill-used, half-starved, oppressed, and neglected. If she was deprived of some advantages, she was at least freed from all the evils of poverty and the sufferings of a laborious life—well fed and clothed, and provided with much to amuse and gratify her. These specious reasonings, however, utterly failed. My burden increased instead of diminishing. Oh, what months and years of misery I can now look back upon! What various, what endless schemes and plans I projected to break or lighten my heavy self-wrought chains! Spirits, health, strength, all gradually yielded to the insatiable enemy that preyed upon my heart. Sometimes I even contemplated the possibility of quitting my home and husband for some remote solitude, leaving behind me the details of the means of access to the secret chambers, and letting Grace tell her own story. I confidently believe that no selfish motive has deterred me from putting the idea into practice. I had little happiness to sacrifice, but I foresaw the heavy affliction I should bring upon the only being I had ever loved. Shame, disgrace, and unspeakable grief and horror would be his portion, and he and his children would be reduced to absolute penury. All he possessed was his small Indian pension, and I knew too well his noble nature to entertain a hope that he would ever soil his hands with a touch of the wealth I had secured to him. So I went on in my slow and secret torture, suffering more and more, and apparently becoming more and more strange and self-willed. I took all my meals in my own apartments, and could thus easily supply my prisoner; and it must have been supposed that I was always eating biscuits, sweetmeats, and food of a like nature, for I was never satisfied if I did not go on increasing the stores I supplied her with.

In course of time, the contrast between the quantity of food which I appeared to consume, and the increasing haggardness of my person, and reluctance to exert myself, attracted more and more attention, and I was obliged to submit to the farce of an interview with the family physician. I could have grimly smiled at his watchfulness of my pulse, inspection of my tongue, and inquiries into my symptoms and feelings. Blundering as he was in the dark, he nevertheless persuaded himself that he had ascertained the nature of my complaint, and he gave it some name of much sound and little meaning, connected of course with the nerves, and chiefly characterized by a craving appetite for food, which supplied no nutriment, accompanied by a gradual wasting away of flesh and strength, and a consequent depression of spirits. All this was plausible enough; but the change of air and scene, and the amusements and recreations prescribed for me, were both harrassing and perplexing. At length, I was tormented into making a painful effort, and partly with a blind hope that I might really be enabled occasionally to lighten my miseries in some little degree, I consented to go for a few weeks (intending them to be days) to a neighbouring watering-place. We went thither accordingly. The first night, I took some opium, and I remember falling asleep, after which I know nothing till I found myself in the carriage returning home again. It seems I had aroused the house by my outcries in the night. They found me in a heavy sleep, yet apparently suffering from some dreadful dream. I kept uttering wild and broken exclamations, of which they could only distinguish entreaties to be taken home, and the words, "She is screaming! she is screaming!" They at length succeeded in partly rousing and quieting me by the assurance that I should return home; but of all this, as I have said, I knew nothing till I had nearly arrived there.

No further attempt was made to oppose my wishes, and I remained afterwards in my own apartments without attempting a change. Of course I could not permit a servant to sleep in my bedroom, and I was nearly as solitary by day as by night. I shrunk from all familiar intercourse. The only persons I saw besides my husband and his children were the governesses, who one after another tried to endure the gloomy seclusion of Greyfriars. All were wearied out sooner or later; I believed I helped to frighten them away. No doubt, they thought me more than half insane. The present governess seems likely to stay. She is a gentlewoman, sensible and agreeable, and I have sometimes felt that it might be possible for me to make a friend of her, so far as my unhappy lot can permit; but she is full of prejudices; and I can see that although she pities me, she is shocked by many of my opinions.

Well, I have done: there is no more to tell. I am still dragging on, year after year, a life, every breath of which is poisoned. My victim in her silent prison is happier far than I—most happy in never hearing human voice, or seeing human face. Gladly would I change with her. Everything brings pain to me. It is pain to see the innocent children whose love I ought to win, wearying through the half-hours they are sometimes obliged to pass with me, and escaping the first possible moment. It is agony to feel more and more certain that he, for whom I have sacrificed all here and hereafter—if there be a hereafter—has never — no, never — loved me, and that even his kind and gentle nature is troubled and perplexed when duty and custom compel him to endure my presence. He little knows that my life is an unceasing sacrifice to him. Nothing keeps me here but the knowledge of the horror, disgrace, and wretchedness which my death would cause to fall so heavily upon him. I have means always about me that would rid me of life's agony in a moment, and should any almost impossible casuality reveal the truth to him, I will not live a single hour—not one more long, miserable day, not one more long terrible night. Often I ask what withholds me from ridding myself of this crushing burden? A few drops in her food, and I am free. I have freed myself once; why not again? I can only answer that I cannot. I have a kind of frantic conviction that if I were once to pass such food into her prison, I should surely lose my senses; I should be mad. The impossibility of saving her would be distracting. I believe I should betray everything; I cannot trust myself. I drive the thought from me, yet it will come.

There are times when I yearn for the superstitions I have been taught to despise, when I long to say: "God help me!" But I forget myself. I know that sin has no real existence, and never could what is called in pious jargon a sinful act be more justifiable than mine. Its miserable consequence was a chance, a mere accident; but for that wretched, little, unwilling witness, I should now be a happy and prosperous woman. I know this life is all: death is simply annihilation, a mingling with the elements, a dispersion into atoms insensible to the past, the present, and the future. Oh, feeble wretch that I am! I still long to say God help me! God help me!

I know not how to describe the state of mind in which I was left when I had finished this manuscript. It now appears very strange to me that I was not more shocked by the dreadful crime it narrated, by the miseries described by the unhappy lady, and by the almost supernatural detection of her guilt. All was fearful, harrowing, overwhelming. Yet these thoughts came to me only by fits and starts. It was the living witness of her crime, the young creature who had passed seven or eight years, from childhood to womanhood, without sight or speech of human kind: alone in those remote chambers night and day, summer and winter, the long years passing on without change and without hope! separated, by her own singular determination, from the only being she could have looked upon or spoken to—"She is here! she is under this very roof," I repeated to myself. "She is now at this instant, perhaps, within a few yards of me, dragging through one of her many hundred long and weary nights; a few hours, and I shall see her, speak to her. What will she be like? Have her senses failed? Will she understand our words? Will she believe us, and admit us?" I remembered the little thin pale child in that picture at the cottage; I portrayed to myself such a face and figure, only taller and older-looking—looking, perhaps, prematurely old — a worn, withered woman of nineteen!

Sleep was impossible that night; I did not even go to bed, but only refreshed myself by washing and a change of dress, before I was joined by Mr. Davis very early in the morning. He looked as if he had as little rest as myself. At first, we only shook hands, and were silent. The unfolded papers lay on the table. We turned our eyes involuntary towards them, and at length I said, in a kind of whisper: "What can be done? What shall we do?"

"Sit down my dear Miss Vernon," said he; and he drew a chair and seated himself beside: "we must talk this terrible business quietly over. Captain Sinclair has left the whole management to us. To release the poor victim of that wretched woman's guilt, must of course be our first object; but it needs much consideration. How to effect it, without exposing the truth, seems almost impracticable; yet poor Sinclair's last words to me, wringing my hand in his, were an entreaty to prevent exposure if possible. What would you propose? Can you suggest anything? M'Ilvar, who is now perfectly composed and clear in mind, thinks we had better confide in the Dalton's."

"That is just what I was going to propose," said I. "It seems to me that we can scarcely, unaided, remove this poor girl, and provide for her even a temporary refuge without some help. The rector and his wife are excellent and thoroughly trustworthy people, warm-hearted and sensible. I am sure that they are kind, and they are safe; they will harbour no idea of bringing that wretched woman to justice." As I spoke, I saw a strange and peculiar expression pass over Mr. Davis's countenance, and I paused.

"That wretched woman," said he, "is safe from every evil of this world."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "she had poison with her; she implies it in her story."

"Yes," he said, "she was taken dead out of the carriage. An express arrived late last night with this note;" and he put a letter into my hand. It was scarcely legible, but with some difficulty I read as follows:

"DEAR DAVIS—My wife is dead; she sat in total silence till we were near L——, then she put her hand into mine. I could not reject it; she pressed it, and clasped it closely for a few minutes, when I felt the fingers relaxing from their hold, and I withdrew mine just as we stopped at the hotel. I got out first, and the people came round. There was some confusion and exclamations that I was too bewildered to understand, till I saw her lifted out—dead, quite dead. There was a small phial in her other hand. I remain here; the people are very civil. Do what you can for me; spare her if you can. Consult Miss Vernon. I scarcely know what I am writing. God bless you. C. S."

I returned the letter to Mr. Davis in silence, for I could not speak. He then gave me the following account of what had happened after he left us at the cottage:

When I arrived at Greyfriars, I met Captain Sinclair in the hall, looking the picture of amazement and terror. He had a roll of papers in his hand, and seizing my arm, he dragged me into the nearest parlour, where he sat down, saying: "Read this with me."

I took a seat by his side, scarcely knowing what I did, and we looked together through those details of Lady Dighton's life which I left for you last night. His hands shook so that I was obliged to assist him in holding the papers. His anxiety seemed to be to get towards the end, and he passed over many pages, till his eye caught the name of Greyfriars; then he seemed to nerve himself, and he read with comparative composure. I read with him as I sat by his side. As we approached the dreadful termination, he trembled all over, but he mastered his feelings with more resolution than might have been expected from him. When we had finished, he was so still, that I believed, and I still think, he was nearly fainting.

At that moment, however, Lady Dighton's maid came suddenly in, saying, very abruptly; "Oh, you are here, sir; I have been all over the house after you. What are we to do? My lady is ordering things to be packed, and the chaise to be got ready. Are we going away, sir? What is to be done?"

"Yes," said he in a low voice to me—"yes, that will be best. I must go with her; you will remain and act for me."

I told him I would go and endeavour to ascertain Lady Dighton's wishes: he assented feebly, and signed for me to go. You may guess with what strange and bewildered feelings I went towards her apartments; but M'Ilvar met me on my way. He was perfectly calm and collected.

"Have you been with Captain Sinclair? Do you know all?" he said.

I answered, "Yes."

"You know they are preparing to leave this place?"

"Yes," said I again.

"It is well," he answered; "it is her doing, and I think she has decided wisely."

I entered his chamber with him as he spoke, and he shut the door and continued. "When I reached the house, I went straight up to her apartments, and walked into the sitting-room without knocking, or in any way announcing myself. Sinclair happened to be with her. I was acting under an irresistible impulse: hereafter, I may be better able to recall the particulars. My impression is that I accused her in plain terms of her twofold crime. I know I spoke of the murder of Sir Thomas, and of Grace Wilson's concealment. I believe there never was such a woman before, and never will be again. I was fairly roused from my own trance-like sensations by her coldness and resolution. She looked at me with an unmoved countenance—cold, haughty, and determined; then rising from her seat, she lifted up the lid of a writing-box on the table before her, and taking thence a large packet, gave it to Sinclair, saying very quietly: 'Read the two or three last sheets of these papers; and take me away.'

"She then passed, with a slow and steady step, into the adjoining room. Sinclair left the room with the papers in his hand, like a man in a dream. I waited for some time, thinking that she might perhaps return or send for me. In truth, I was glad to be alone, and sit down, and endeavour to collect my thoughts, and consider what it would be best to do. Soon, however, a maid-servant came from the inner chamber in haste and disturbance. She started at seeing me, but appeared too much occupied with her own troubles to think much about it, and seeming glad to pour them out to anybody, she begun telling me that she believed her lady had gone out of her mind. She had suddenly ordered horses to be put to the carriages, and preparations to be made for an immediate departure from the abbey. I asked if her lady was ill.

"'Not a bit of it,' she answered in an angry tone; 'there is nothing in the world the matter with her that I can see. Of all her strange whims, this is the strangest; but I shall go to the captain, and hear what he says to it.'

"She then left the room, and I soon followed her, intending to seek for poor unhappy Sinclair, when I met you."—I told him that the servant had been to her master, and I believed he was actually going to take Lady Dighton from the abbey. We then went to the parlour in which I had left Sinclair, and found him again reading the manuscript. He was manifestly overpowered, and unable to think or even to speak collectedly. We made him take some wine, and reasoned with and tried to console him, but it was some time before he could comprehend what we said, or speak rationally himself; and when at length he was calmer, and could listen to us, he acquiesced in everything that we proposed with the helplessness of a child.

Mr. Davis here paused, and taking up Captain Sinclair's letter, he showed me a postscript, in which he implored him and Mr. M'Ilvar and myself to act for him in every particular, and on the opposite page was an order to a large amount on his banker's in London. "This agrees," he continued, "with the terms on which we parted; we were to undertake the painful and perplexing business here, and he to remain for the present with Lady Dighton at the hotel at L——."

Mr. Davis stopped with a visible shudder. "It is terrible to think of her," he said, "either living or dead; but it is impossible not to feel that her death removes one great difficulty. That which remains seems almost insurmountable. What is to be done with that unfortunate child?"

"Child!" I interrupted; "she must be nearly twenty."

"Yes," said he thoughtfully; "true—too true. We must act quickly, Miss Vernon, for the measure we had recourse to in order to relieve our late perplexities is no small addition to those of the present moment; M'Ilvar's brother may be here the day after to-morrow."

"Oh, he may indeed," said I; "I had never thought of that."

"I think," said Mr. Davis, after a pause of some few moments, "that we cannot do better than adopt your first suggestion. We must have some help from without to assist in the secret removal of our poor prisoner, and to secure her some asylum for the present; and you think so highly of the Dalton's, that we may surely venture to confide in them."

I repeated my conviction of their worth and good feelings; and Mr. Davis soon after left me to go to the rectory, where he had an interview with Mr. Dalton. Great, as may well be imagined, was his horror and astonishment; and so soon as he was able, after listening to so fearful a secret, he revealed it as cautiously as he could to his wife. She was a person of great good sense, warm-hearted and energetic, and was better able to collect her thoughts and arrange our plans than her husband. They both remembered the disappearance of poor Grace Wilson, and had several times seen her; but owing to the repulsive character of her grandmother, they had not much personal knowledge of her. Mrs. Dalton's first suggestions removed several of our greatest difficulties. She said that it was a common practice with her husband, when they expected guests at the rectory, to go to meet the London coaches at a spot about three miles from the village, in his own four-wheeled chaise, built purposely to suit the ruts and obstacles in the narrow lanes which led to the high London road. The last coach passed the junction with the lane between eleven and twelve at night; and she proposed that he should leave home at the proper time, announcing that he should bring back a lady-visitor, for whom due preparations would be made at the rectory. Meanwhile, we were to prepare our prisoner for her release, and bring her to the place at which Mr. Dalton would be awaiting her in his carriage.

Mrs. Dalton had done little more than sketch this plan, when Mr. Davis proposed that she should accompany him to Greyfriars to talk it over with me. During his absence, I had taken a hasty breakfast with my pupils, and had broken to them as well as I could the sudden death of their stepmother. They were naturally startled and awe-struck by the news, but they were too young and too honest to affect a sorrow they did not feel. The servants had heard of the event from the man who brought Captain Sinclair's letter; they assumed grave faces very dutifully, and nothing more could be expected of them. That unhappy woman had won neither love nor reverence from any one.

I was still giving directions as to the mourning and other matters, when I was informed of the arrival of the Daltons. I found Mr. Davis and M'Ilvar with them, and scarcely greeting each other, we entered at once upon the consideration of Mrs. Dalton's proposal. I suggested some slight additions to it—namely, that the expected visitor at the rectory should lose her luggage by some means or other on the road, and consequently be obliged to be supplied with linen and other necessaries by Mrs. Dalton, and also that the servants should be prepared for the arrival of an invalid lady, who would probably go immediately to bed. During all our projects and arrangement, I could not help thinking how wholly in the dark we were talking and deciding. "In what state shall we find this poor creature? How shall we communicate with her? Will she admit us? Shall we be able to remove her?" These and a thousand other anxious and doubtful questions were continually forcing themselves upon my mind. It seemed to be tacitly accepted as a matter of course that Mr. Davis and I were to be left to adopt whatever means of imparting to the prisoner the great change impending over her should appear best to us, and it was equally obvious to all that the communication by letter in the first instance would be most advisable and considerate.

After the Daltons had left us, therefore, I wrote in as kind terms as I could devise, preparing her for good and wonderful news. I then informed her of Lady Dighton's death, and enclosed one of the papers she had left behind her, with a minute description of the access to the secret chambers, and a confession that there was a person imprisoned there. I told her who I was, and how deeply I felt for her, and that she would for the present have a refuge with Mr. and Mrs. Dalton, whom she could no doubt remember, at the rectory; that there was not a thought of taking her to her grandmother, but that she would be entirely provided for in future by friends who would treat her with the tenderest care, and urge nothing upon her contrary to her wishes. I explained to her the plan for her removal that night, and implored her in the most earnest and affectionate terms to remove the inner fastenings of her chamber at the appointed time. I said her friends would return in an hour for her answer, and that no attempt would be made to see her at that time, nor till after the family were in bed.

When we were sure that all the servants were at dinner, a very important and lengthened business at Greyfriars, Mr. Davis and I, guided by the clear and minute directions of Lady Dighton, threaded the curious labyrinth leading to the secret chambers, and arrived at the apparent solid wall which communicated with them. He soon discovered the spring which revealed the turning-machine, and put the letter within it. In breathless silence, we awaited the event. I trembled so much, that I was obliged to sit down on the floor of the passage, and he leaned against the wall with clenched hands and eyes nailed upon the outer door of the machine. A pause that seemed interminable—a silence that might be heard—followed. I know not how long it lasted. At length the wheel moved, and a piece of paper fell through to the ground, upon which was written in a good plain, though evidently trembling hand: "I will unfasten the bolts at ten o'clock to-night. God pardon you if you are deceiving me."

There was something very touching to me in these few words—timid trustfullness, yet natural misgiving. It may seem strange to say, but I was startled by the conviction they afforded that the whole dreadful story was real. There she was, within that wall, Grace Wilson, the poor child, the witness of the murder, the prisoner of eight years. I should soon see her, speak to her. These thoughts and feelings crowded so upon me that Mr. Davis had to speak almost harshly to me ere he could arouse me to the exertion of rising and leaving the place. All our plans were successfully put in practice. Mr. Davis came to me when the children were gone to bed, and all was quiet in the abbey, and we immediately enclosed ourselves within the passage leading to the secret chambers. There we waited in silence till the old abbey clock tolled out the hour of ten, its deep hoarse tones deadened by the thick walls around us. Mr. Davis had previously moved the spring, which caused the surface of the apparently massive wall to slide aside, discovering a strong narrow door in the actual wall of the chamber. We drew near to it and listned, and very soon we heard harsh grating noises within, like the removal of heavy bolts and bars. The sounds ceased and Mr. Davis laid his hand upon the handle of the door, and after a moment's hesitation, turned the lock. It yielded to his touch, and turning to me, he gently drew me through the door at the same moment with himself, but a step or two behind him. My heart beat so fast and violently, that it somewhat diverted my attention; my head throbbed, and my eyes were dazzled. I saw only that I was entering a lighted chamber, but I could not at first distinguish a single object within it.

[We regret that want of space compels us to leave the conclusion of this story for our next paper. We hope that such of our readers as take an interest in the perusal of literary productions have not failed to read "The Witness." It is deeply interesting, and is written with great ability.—ED. EXAMINER.]

Gleanings from late Papers.

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

WHAT VANCOUVER'S ISLAND AND BRITISH COLUMBIA HAVE GOT TO OFFER TO EMIGRANTS.

From time to time we get a great number of letters from abroad from individuals anxious to learn what inducements these colonies offer to emigrants. As the Governments of these Colonies have not yet published the Prize Essays and scattered them around for distribution to inquirers abroad, we have either to throw such communications away or answer them through the 'Colonist.' Last steamer we received a letter from New Brunswick, making sundry inquiries, and as there is no Prize Essay—no Emigration guide to distribute, we publish it with a few hurried answers, so that New Brunswickers and all others interested, may get a copy of the 'Colonist' to send home to their inquiring friends. Here is the letter:—

UPHAM, KING'S CO., N.B., Dec. 6, 1861.

EDITOR BRITISH COLONIST—I wish to ask a favor of you—can you and will you give me a correct idea of your country for persons desirous to emigrate from here? Also of the neighboring colony, the prospects for farming, trading, lumbering and mining? when vegetation commences and when harvested? what kinds of crop are raised? what blights, frosts, insects, drought and rains? what winter is like, the length of it? The degrees of temperature, winter and summer? The prices of agricultural produce? of horses, oxen, cows, sheep, &c.? The expense of a single passenger from New York to Victoria, and from thence to Cariboo, for a first and second class passage? Let me know the price of wages for servant men and women with farmers? Wages for men are from $4 to $24 per month and board; women from $2 to $6 per month. Please let me know what time the miners leave for Cariboo in the Spring?

I am keeping a country store 25 miles from St. John; have a farm of 40 acres of middling land; and sell about £1000 worth of goods a year at about 17 per cent. advance, which is a very small business. I have also a wife, five children, and I am 32 years old, ready to take hold of anything that will suit best. I will give my opinion of this country, and you can compare the two together and tell me whether I can better myself by going there or not. Spring opens from the middle of April to the 1st of May. We put the crop in as soon as possible, and about the 1st of August commence haying, and have the harvest all in before the middle of October. November the ground freezes up and stays so with snow from one to four feet deep and cold to match. We have frost from full moon in August to full moon in June, which hurts the buckwheat, potatoes, corn, &c., on low lands. Wheat has for the last ten or fifteen years been cut off by weevil; oats hurt with lice and smut; and stock has to be fed from the 1st of October to the 1st of June.

Please write as soon as possible.

Yours, &c. J. C. UPHAM.

P. S.—I notice that the editor of the "Colonial Empire" receives the 'Colonist' regularly, so the same direction will fetch me an answer all right. J. C. U.

There are enough questions in this letter to write a book about, and we only regret that our space prevents us from answering them so fully as we desire. But as Canadians, New-Brunswickers and Nova-Scotians are a class of immigrants who are very desirable, inasmuch as they go to work instead of looking for petty offices to starve a family on in keeping genteel appearances, we shall try to answer briefly our correspondent's questions. Whatever New Brunswick may be—and we have a tolerably vivid recollection of the Lower Provinces—whether as bad as our correspondent makes it or not, we are persuaded—and we speak after four years' experience in these colonies—that if the Loyalists of '83 who settled New-Brunswick, or if the New-England fillibusters who took Nova-Scotia from the French twenty odd years before, had known there was such a healthy climate and such a productive soil in this country as there is, they would have emigrated hither *en masse* and left Acadia to the Acadians. Our candid impression is, that with all the disadvantages which the pioneer emigrant may labor under in either of these colonies, there is a better show for the Provincial emigrant—bred to trade or inured to labor—to realize a competency here than in either of the Eastern Provinces. The lowest temperature this winter in Vancouver Island has been 5° above zero; in British Columbia, 15° below zero. But this has been an unusually severe winter—nothing like it has occurred on this coast perhaps for the last twenty-one years. Old residents set down the return of hard winters at ten, twelve, twenty-one years. Usually the winters last two months — not more —are very mild, very little snow, and stock is never housed. The experience of the present winter will no doubt induce farmers to lay up a store of fodder for their stock hereafter. Grazing, however, is generally very profitable; in fact cannot be otherwise for many years to come. Horses are worth from $50 to $500; oxen per yoke $100 to $150; cows $30 to 40; sheep $4 to 5; hogs on foot 2 to 8 cents per lb. Wheat is sown in October, February and March, and is cut in July and August. It yields about 33 bushels an acre; average weight 64 lbs. Barley, oats and peas are sown in February and March, and is cut in July and August. Barley yields 56 lbs. to the acre and weighs 54 lbs; oats 50 bushels to the acre and weighs 30 to 39 lbs. Instances are not uncommon of potatoes yielding 600 bushels to the acre, oats 72 bushels. Other vegetables grow to a great size, and the yield is enormous in comparison with the Eastern Provinces. Fruit grows to perfection; three years only are required to mature a splendid orchard. Indian corn also comes to maturity and yields well; yet but little is cultivated. The price of agricultural productions in the interior of British Columbia is very high, and agriculture is the best paying business an immigrant can engage in. At Lillooet, 225 miles from the Cariboo mines, last fall, potatoes were 3 cents per lb., onions 5 to 10 cents, hay $100 to $120 per ton. At Williams' Lake, there is an excellent farm 60 miles from the Cariboo mines, the price of produce last summer was; vegetables, 8 cents per lb.; hay 7 to 10 cents; barley and oats, 30 cents per lb. At the Forks of Quesnelle, in the Cariboo mines, and 60 miles from Williams' Lake, produce last fall was: vegetables, 25 cents per lb, barley, 40 cents; hay, 25 cents; oats, 50 cents; butter, $1.50; fresh beef, 40 cents; flour and bacon, 70 cents. So much for prices in British Columbia. At Victoria prices ruled a great deal lower than at Lillooet, owing to the large quantities brought in from Washington Territory, Oregon and California. Blights, insects, and droughts, the farmer is not troubled with.

Trading is a branch of industry that pays well, whether in Victoria, V. I., or at New Westminster, Hope, Lytton, Yale, or Lillooet, Fraser River, or in the mining camps of Cariboo. Lumbering is a business that has not yet been very largely entered into. We have two or three small mills just started around Victoria, and a very extensive establishment belonging to Stump & Co. at Alberni, on the west coast of this Island. The demand for lumber will however increase every year; and, what with home consumption and for exportation, the lumbering business in a few years must become very extensive and highly lucrative. In British Columbia, there are four or five mills—distributed among the towns on the Fraser River, and in the Cariboo mines two or three small ones. The lumber business in the mines must prove very profitable, as large quantities of lumber will be required for buildings, bridge, flumes, and miners, sluices.

Mining is our great branch of industry on which all classes depend. The gold fields are known to extend in British Columbia from the 49th parelel to its northern boundary, 54 ° 40, and lately new diggings have been struck at Stickeen, 160 miles further North. The mines pay more on the average than those of either Australia or California, in proportion to the number of men at work. Cariboo is the great point of attraction. Fabulous fortunes were made there in a few weeks last fall; so all that is required is to have our mines well known abroad to make these Colonies teem with population. We need not enlarge on our Gold Mines. If the world will not believe in their richness, we don't care. They'll be known fast enough. The first of June is the right time to arrive at Cariboo; although many go earlier. But gold mines do not exhaust our mineral wealth. We have some of the best copper mines in the world, and in abundance. We have also silver and lead, besides those two potent agents of civilization—coal and iron—in any quantity.

The wages of farm hands on Vancouver Island varies from $40 to $75 per month and board. Carpenters get $4 to $5 per day, and laborers $3 per day. Servant women get from $25 to $50 per month and board; but they don't get those prices very long for all such domestic angels are picked up so quickly by bachelors that fine ladies have generally to do their own work with the assistance of an aborigine, male or female, whom they instruct in domestic arts. With a large immigration of the hard-fisted sex, we can also find room for five hundred or a thousand Bluenose lasses, which will be better with matrimony than immigration to the factories of New England.

The rate of passage from New York to San Francisco varies continually. The large number who are leaving the Eastern States for California, owing to the civil war, cram the steamers and raise the rate of passage. A short time ago the rate of passage from New York to San Francisco, in first cabin, was $230; in second cabin, $180. From San Francisco to Victoria, cabin $50; steerage, $25. An economical miner can reach Cariboo from Victoria for $50. It would, however, be better to have $100 to pay extra expenses along the road. Part of the journey is made by steamboat, part by coach, but for about 230 miles of the road the traveller will either have to foot it or hire a mule or horse, as there is no wagon road. But we live in hopes that a wagon road will be constructed during the ensuing summer. In that case stages will roll over the route expeditiously.—*Victoria, (V. I.) British Colonist, Feb. 25.*

(From the London Saturday Review.)

AMERICAN FEELING TOWARDS ENGLAND.

The blind fury of all American parties against England is not pleasant to contemplate. It is said that even the South shares the animosity of its bitterest enemies against the former object of their common envy and dislike; but it is only known that the North has, since the first disruption, poured forth an unceasing stream of vituperation and menace against the unoffending Mother country. It would be painful to think that any want of courtesy, of justice, or of consideration had furnished an excuse for the profligate attacks of Federalist orators and writers; but it is perfectly certain that no course which could possibly have been adopted would have averted the torrent of American malignity. If England had been a nation of Brights, even exaggerated partisanship would, with some reason, have been treated as a form of officious interference. The Confederates would have justly resented the gratuitous hostility of foreigners; and the New York papers would have classed English sympathizers with the domestic agitators who are from time to time accused as the real authors of secession. No student of the unsavoury literature of American journalism can doubt that an eager support of the Northern Government would have been ascribed to a selfish jealousy of slave-holding prosperity, and to a desire to foment an intestine quarrel. It would have been asked, not without plausibility, why aristocratic and monarchical England should suddenly have been impressed with enthusiasm for Republican institutions. The solution would have been sought in some imaginary plot for the ruin of the South, and for the establishment of the military despotism which is now thought, by some speculators, to be the probable result of the war. It would have been difficult for English apologists to explain an interference which could not have been defended on any political ground. If slave emancipation had been put forward as a pretext, it would have been urged that the Union still recognized slavery; and yet the unfortunate Englishman who confessed any doubt of the probability of abolition would have been stigmatized as an inhuman calumniator.

The indignation which would have beeen aroused if England had taken a side is by no means appeased by the most deliberate and consistent neutrality. Week after week the peaceable Mother country is angrily informed that the time has come for abandoning an impartial position which can no longer be tolerated. The bystander is called upon to proclaim his opinion that, in the family quarrel, the stronger party is absolutely in the right. The English nation must, on pain of war, rejoice in the real or supposed victories of an army which is, according to general prognostication, to be directed against Canada as soon as its immediate task is accomplished. When self-denying generosity has achieved the rare triumph of sympathizing with a professed enemy, it will be further necessary to perform the difficult feat of adopting at the same time, with perfect unanimity, two directly antagonistic opinions. The Federal Government must be applauded for its intended abolition of slavery, and yet all advocacy of negro emancipation must be resolutely suppressed. It is difficult to say which class of American politicians hates England with the most ostentatious virulence. The shrill plaintiveness of Mrs. Stowe is more loudly echoed by Mr. Henry Beecher; and Mr. Wendell Philips never addresses an audience in favor of abolition without a profession of hostility to England. It is true that the believers in the "high and holy" mission of the Federal armies form but a small minority of Englishmen; but it is hard on those who hope against hope for immediate abolition to be repudiated by professed co-religionists in America. The philanthropist or Radical faction in the United States all but unanimously announces that the general scepticism of English politicians as to the intentions of the Federal Government will constitute a just cause of war on the first convenient opportunity.

The Democrats might have been expected to show a larger toleration for a mode of thought which is founded on a certain coincidence of opinion with their own. English writers have generally expressed a belief that the purpose of the war is to restore the Union, and not to emancipate the negroes. It is not, indeed, possible to reconcile the proceedings of different generals who think that their respective political prospects will be benefitted by the support of either of the contending parties. The Democrat General Butler protects by martial law all property, including slaves. The Republican General Hunter declares that slavery is incompatible with martial law, and he therefore summarily proclaims the freedom of the negro population. General Fremont was temporarily superseded in the course of last autumn for issuing a similar proclamation, and the policy of the President himself has generally been conservative and prudent. The Democrats have every reason to be satisfied with the course of English opinion; but at present they are struggling to recover their lost power, and there is but one unfailing method of acquiring popularity in America. A base sycophancy to the worst passions of an ignorant rabble is perhaps combined, in the agitators who represent contending parties, with a real and habitual feeling of ill-will to England. When the Republicans are denouncing the assertion that the war is not one of abolition, their opponents might be left behind in the political race if they also were not ready to protest, in turn, against the sympathy of England with the cause of emancipation. A foolish insolent writer actually demands that no further sympathy with abolition shall henceforth be expressed. It was penal to doubt that Northern success was identified with the liberation of the negro, and it is not less dangerous to think that, nevertheless, slavery may be, to a certain extent, an evil.

If American politicians were capable of understanding anything beyond the limits of their own country, they would perceive, once for all, that Englishmen are not to be frightened into silence. Free discussion of current events is one of the privileges which would be worth fighting for if it were seriously menaced. All other countries, all other political occurrences, have been publicly debated, if not without offence, at least without impertinent interference. For nearly a century Englishmen have sympathized with Poland, and yet Russia has never proposed to resent their judgment by arms. Although the great majority of the community wish well to Italy and to Hungary, there is no rumour of war with Austria. As long as the Americans illustrate great principles by their dissensions and disasters, their proceedings will occupy the attention of English observers; and it is, indeed, highly probable that they would be still more indignant if the remarkable events of the last year had scarcely been thought worthy of notice. The bluster which is encouraged by the existence of an enormous army and an unopposed navy will in no degree influence the conduct of England. Even if it were consistent with the national character to submit to insulting dictation, no spirit of subserviency can produce simultaneous compliance with two opposite demands. To conciliate at the same time the Republicans and the Democrats, it would be necessary to move in a perpetual cycle of contradictions.

The best proof that the American clamour is not occasioned by the conduct of England is to be found in the servile acquiescence of all parties in the proceedings of France. When the French Commodore in the Mississippi threatened Commodore Farragut with the vengeance of his Government, his protest was received without remonstrance. The visit of the French Minister to the Confederate head quarters received a studiously favourable interpretation, and finally the policy of the Emperor Napoleon in Mexico is almost popular in the United States, because it is supposed to be distasteful to England. The pressure which has been exerted by France with a view to open the blockaded ports has never caused a feeling of irritation against the Emperor Napoleon; and it was not to be expected that the steady resistance which it encountered in this country would produce the smallest feeling of good will to England. The vulgar hatred which is felt by all parties, and which is expressed even more strongly than it is felt, is neither to be conciliated nor greatly to be feared. Notwithstanding the eager spite of the American correspondent in London and Paris, England is not yet entirely dwarfed by the greatness of France, and it has no reason to fear the Northern Federation. The quarrel will probably be averted, not because it is absolutely groundless, but because it would be dangerous to the aggressor.

LIVERPOOL AS A SLAVE-TRADING PORT.—The Liverpool *Mercury* warns the British government that the slave-traders who have been expelled from New York find refuge in Liverpool, and boldly prosecute their atrocious traffic under the shadow of the British flag. The business is shrewedly done. Secret agents in New York fit out a vessel with a legitimate cargo for Liverpool, the cargo is discharged at that port, and the vessel is then laid up for a few weeks, while preparations are being made for the voyage to Africa. Ostensibly the ship is up for the East Indies, but it is known that her real destination is the slave-market. The old crew is got rid of by harsh treatment on the outward voyage, and a motley collection of foreigners is shipped to take its place. According to this account the slave-traders have actually established their headquarters in Liverpool, and the authorities find it difficult to trace their operations, so secret and sure are they.

A French naval officer holding a high command has tendered his resignation, in order to devote himself to the completion of a new fulminating spur which he has invented, which will not only drive in the side of a ship, but will lodge in its interior an explosive shell of the most dangerous character.

A number of years ago a free black man of Washington city raised sufficient money to purchase a black woman. By her he has since raised a family of six or seven children. As by the law of the District the child follows the condition of the mother, of course those children are his slaves. He has, therefore, filed his claim, and asked payment from the Government, valuing his *picaninnies* at $300 each.

A CONFIRMED GRUMBLER.—Some time ago there lived in Edinburgh a well known grumbler named Sandy Black, whose often-recurring fits of spleen or indigestion produced some amusing scenes of senseless irritability, which were highly relished by all except the brute's good, patient little wife. One morning Sandy rose bent on a quarrel; the haddies and eggs were excellent, done to a turn, and had been ordered by himself the previous evening; and breakfast passed without the looked-for cause of complaint. "What will you have for dinner, Sandy?" said Mrs. B. "A chicken, madam," said the husband. "Roast or broiled?" asked the wife. "Confound it, madam, if you had been a good and considerate wife, you'd have known before this what I liked," Sandy growled out, and, slamming the door behind him, left the house. It was in spring, and a friend who was present heard the little wife say, "Sandy's bent on a disturbance to-day; I shall not please him do what I can." The dinner-time came, and Sandy and his friend sat down to dinner; the fish was eaten in silence, and, on raising the cover of the dish before him, in a towering passion he called out, "Boiled chicken! I hate it, madam. A chicken boiled is a chicken spoiled." Immediately the cover was raised for another chicken, roasted to a turn. "Madam, I won't eat roast chicken," roared Sandy; "you know how it should have been cooked!" At the instant a broiled chicken with mushrooms was placed on the table. "Without green peas!" roared the grumbler. "Here they are, dear," said Mrs. Black. "How dare you spend my money in that way?" "They were a present," said the wife, interrupting him. Rising from his chair and rushing from the room, amidst a roar of laughter from his friend, he clenched his fist and shouted, "How dare you receive a present without my leave?"—*Airdrie Advertiser.*