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Author: S. Weir Mitchell

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A QUACK

AND

THE CASE OF GEORGE DEDLOW

By S. Weir Mitchell, M.D., LL.D. Harvard And Edinburgh

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INTRODUCTION

Both of the tales in this little volume appeared originally in the “Atlantic Monthly” as anonymous contributions. I owe to the present owners of that journal permission to use them. “The Autobiography of a Quack” has been recast with large additions.

“The Case of George Dedlow” was not written with any intention that it should appear in print. I lent the manuscript to the Rev. Dr. Furness and forgot it. This gentleman sent it to the Rev. Edward Everett Hale. He, presuming, I fancy, that every one desired to appear in the “Atlantic,” offered it to that journal. To my surprise, soon afterwards I received a proof and a check. The story was inserted as a leading article without my name. It was at once accepted by many as the description of a real case. Money was collected in several places to assist the unfortunate man, and benevolent persons went to the “Stump Hospital,” in Philadelphia, to see the sufferer and to offer him aid. The spiritual incident at the end of the story was received with joy by the spiritualists as a valuable proof of the truth of their beliefs.

S. WEIR MITCHELL

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A QUACK

At this present moment of time I am what the doctors call an interesting case, and am to be found in bed No. 10, Ward 11, Massachusetts General Hospital. I am told that I have what is called Addison’s disease, and that it is this pleasing malady which causes me to be covered with large blotches of a dark mulatto tint. However, it is a rather grim subject to joke about, because, if I believed the doctor who comes around every day, and thumps me, and listens to my chest with as much pleasure as if I were music all through—I say, if I really believed him, I should suppose I was going to die. The fact is, I don’t believe him at all. Some of these days I shall take a turn and get about again; but meanwhile it is rather dull for a stirring, active person like me to have to lie still and watch myself getting big brown and yellow spots all over me, like a map that has taken to growing.

The man on my right has consumption—smells of cod-liver oil, and coughs all night. The man on my left is a down-easter with a liver which has struck work; looks like a human pumpkin; and how he contrives to whittle jackstraws all day, and eat as he does, I can’t understand. I have tried reading and tried whittling, but they don’t either of them satisfy me, so that yesterday I concluded to ask the doctor if he couldn’t suggest some other amusement.

I waited until he had gone through the ward, and then seized my chance, and asked him to stop a moment.

“Well, my man,” said he, “what do you want!”

I thought him rather disrespectful, but I replied, “Something to do, doctor.”

He thought a little, and then said: “I’ll tell you what to do. I think if you were to write out a plain account of your life it would be pretty well worth reading. If half of what you told me last week be true, you must be about as clever a scamp as there is to be met with. I suppose you would just as lief put it on paper as talk it.”

“Pretty nearly,” said I. “I think I will try it, doctor.”

After he left I lay awhile thinking over the matter. I knew well that I was what the world calls a scamp, and I knew also that I had got little good out of the fact. If a man is what people call virtuous, and fails in life, he gets credit at least for the virtue; but when a man is a—is—well, one of liberal views, and breaks down, somehow or other people don’t credit him with even the intelligence he has put into the business. This I call hard. If I did not recall with satisfaction the energy and skill with which I did my work, I should be nothing but disgusted at the melancholy spectacle of my failure. I suppose that I shall at least find occupation in reviewing all this, and I think, therefore, for my own satisfaction, I shall try to amuse my convalescence by writing a plain, straightforward account of the life I have led, and the various devices by which I have sought to get my share of the money of my countrymen. It does appear to me that I have had no end of bad luck.

As no one will ever see these pages, I find it pleasant to recall for my own satisfaction the fact that I am really a very remarkable man. I am, or rather I was, very good-looking, five feet eleven, with a lot of curly red hair, and blue eyes. I am left-handed, which is another unusual thing. My hands have often been noticed. I get them from my mother, who was a Fishbourne, and a lady. As for my father, he was rather common. He was a little man, red and round like an apple, but very strong, for a reason I shall come to presently. The family must have had a pious liking for Bible names, because he was called Zebulon, my sister Peninnah, and I Ezra, which is not a name for a gentleman. At one time I thought of changing it, but I got over it by signing myself “E. Sanderaft.”

Where my father was born I do not know, except that it was somewhere in New Jersey, for I remember that he was once angry because a man called him a Jersey Spaniard. I am not much concerned to write about my people, because I soon got above their level; and as to my mother, she died when I was an infant. I get my manners, which are rather remarkable, from her.

My aunt, Rachel Sanderaft, who kept house for us, was a queer character. She had a snug little property, about seven thousand dollars. An old aunt left her the money because she was stone-deaf. As this defect came upon her after she grew up, she still kept her voice. This woman was the cause of some of my ill luck in life, and I hope she is uncomfortable, wherever she is. I think with satisfaction that I helped to make her life uneasy when I was young, and worse later on. She gave away to the idle poor some of her small income, and hid the rest, like a magpie, in her Bible or rolled in her stockings, or in even queerer places. The worst of her was that she could tell what people said by looking at their lips; this I hated. But as I grew and became intelligent, her ways of hiding her money proved useful, to me at least. As to Peninnah, she was nothing

special until she suddenly bloomed out into a rather stout, pretty girl, took to ribbons, and liked what she called “keeping company.” She ran errands for every one, waited on my aunt, and thought I was a wonderful person—as indeed I was. I never could understand her fondness for helping everybody. A fellow has got himself to think about, and that is quite enough. I was told pretty often that I was the most selfish boy alive. But, then, I am an unusual person, and there are several names for things.

My father kept a small shop for the sale of legal stationery and the like, on Fifth street north of Chestnut. But his chief interest in life lay in the bell-ringing of Christ Church. He was leader, or No. 1, and the whole business was in the hands of a kind of guild which is nearly as old as the church. I used to hear more of it than I liked, because my father talked of nothing else. But I do not mean to bore myself writing of bells. I heard too much about “back shake,” “raising in peal,” “scales,” and “touches,” and the Lord knows what.

My earliest remembrance is of sitting on my father’s shoulder when he led off the ringers. He was very strong, as I said, by reason of this exercise. With one foot caught in a loop of leather nailed to the floor, he would begin to pull No. 1, and by and by the whole peal would be swinging, and he going up and down, to my joy; I used to feel as if it was I that was making the great noise that rang out all over the town. My familiar acquaintance with the old church and its lumber-rooms, where were stored the dusty arms of William and Mary and George II., proved of use in my later days.

My father had a strong belief in my talents, and I do not think he was mistaken. As he was quite uneducated, he determined that I should not be. He had saved enough to send me to Princeton College, and when I was about fifteen I was set free from the public schools. I never liked them. The last I was at was the high school. As I had to come down-town to get home, we used to meet on Arch street the boys from the grammar-school of the university, and there were fights every week. In winter these were most frequent, because of the snow-balling. A fellow had to take his share or be marked as a deserter. I never saw any personal good to be had out of a fight, but it was better to fight than to be cobbed. That means that two fellows hold you, and the other fellows kick you with their bent knees. It hurts.

I find just here that I am describing a thing as if I were writing for some other people to see. I may as well go on that way. After all, a man never can quite stand off and look at himself as if he was the only person concerned. He must have an audience, or make believe to have one, even if it is only himself. Nor, on the whole, should I be unwilling, if it were safe, to let people see how great ability may be defeated by the crankiness of fortune.

I may add here that a stone inside of a snowball discourages the fellow it hits. But neither our fellows nor the grammar-school used stones in snowballs. I rather liked it. If we had a row in the springtime we all threw stones, and here was one of those bits of stupid custom no man can understand; because really a stone outside of a snowball is much more serious than if it is mercifully padded with snow. I felt it to be a rise in life when I got out of the society of the common boys who attended the high school.

When I was there a man by the name of Dallas Bache was the head master. He had a way of letting the boys attend to what he called the character of the school. Once I had to lie to him about taking another boy’s ball. He told my class that I had denied the charge, and that he always took it for granted that a boy spoke the truth. He knew well enough what would happen. It did. After that I was careful.

Princeton was then a little college, not expensive, which was very well, as my father had some difficulty to provide even the moderate amount needed.

I soon found that if I was to associate with the upper set of young men I needed money. For some time I waited in vain. But in my second year I discovered a small gold-mine, on which I drew with a moderation which shows even thus early the strength of my character.

I used to go home once a month for a Sunday visit, and on these occasions I was often able to remove from my aunt’s big Bible a five- or ten-dollar note, which otherwise would have been long useless.

Now and then I utilized my opportunities at Princeton. I very much desired certain things like well-made clothes, and for these I had to run in debt to a tailor. When he wanted pay, and threatened to send the bill to my father, I borrowed from two or three young Southerners; but at last, when they became hard up, my aunt’s uncounted hoard proved a last resource, or some rare chance in a neighboring room helped me out. I never did look on this method as of permanent usefulness, and it was only the temporary folly of youth.

Whatever else the pirate necessity appropriated, I took no large amount of education, although I was fond of reading, and especially of novels, which are, I think, very instructive to the young, especially the novels of Smollett and Fielding.

There is, however, little need to dwell on this part of my life. College students in those days were only boys, and boys are very strange animals. They have instincts. They somehow get to know if a fellow does not relate facts as they took place. I like to put it that way, because, after all, the mode of putting things is only one of the forms of self-defense, and is less silly than the ordinary wriggling methods which boys employ, and which are generally useless. I was rather given to telling large stories just for the fun of it and, I think, told them well. But somehow I got the reputation of not being strictly definite, and when it was meant to indicate this belief they had an ill-mannered way of informing you. This consisted in two or three fellows standing up and shuffling noisily with their feet on the floor. When first I heard this I asked innocently what it meant, and was told it was the noise of the bearers’ feet coming to take away Ananias. This was considered a fine joke.

During my junior year I became unpopular, and as I was very cautious, I cannot see why. At last, being hard up, I got to be foolishly reckless. But why dwell on the failures of immaturity?

The causes which led to my leaving Nassau Hall were not, after all, the mischievous outbreaks in which college lads indulge. Indeed, I have never been guilty of any of those pieces of wanton wickedness which injure the feelings of others while they lead to no useful result. When I left to return home, I set myself seriously to reflect upon the necessity of greater care in following out my inclinations, and from that time forward I have steadily avoided, whenever it was possible, the vulgar vice of directly possessing myself of objects to which I could show no legal title. My father was indignant at the results of my college career; and, according to my aunt, his shame and sorrow had some effect in shortening his life. My sister believed my account of the matter. It ended in my being used for a year as an assistant in the shop, and in being taught to

ring bells—a fine exercise, but not proper work for a man of refinement. My father died while training his bell-ringers in the Oxford triple bob—broke a blood-vessel somewhere. How I could have caused that I do not see.

I was now about nineteen years old, and, as I remember, a middle-sized, well-built young fellow, with large eyes, a slight mustache, and, I have been told, with very good manners and a somewhat humorous turn. Besides these advantages, my guardian held in trust for me about two thousand dollars. After some consultation between us, it was resolved that I should study medicine. This conclusion was reached nine years before the Rebellion broke out, and after we had settled, for the sake of economy, in Woodbury, New Jersey. From this time I saw very little of my deaf aunt or of Peninnah. I was resolute to rise in the world, and not to be weighted by relatives who were without my tastes and my manners.

I set out for Philadelphia, with many good counsels from my aunt and guardian. I look back upon this period as a turning-point of my life. I had seen enough of the world already to know that if you can succeed without exciting suspicion, it is by far the pleasantest way; and I really believe that if I had not been endowed with so fatal a liking for all the good things of life I might have lived along as reputably as most men. This, however, is, and always has been, my difficulty, and I suppose that I am not responsible for the incidents to which it gave rise. Most men have some ties in life, but I have said I had none which held me. Peninnah cried a good deal when we parted, and this, I think, as I was still young, had a very good effect in strengthening my resolution to do nothing which could get me into trouble. The janitor of the college to which I went directed me to a boarding-house, where I engaged a small third-story room, which I afterwards shared with Mr. Chaucer of Georgia. He pronounced it, as I remember, “Jawjah.”

In this very remarkable abode I spent the next two winters, and finally graduated, along with two hundred more, at the close of my two years of study. I should previously have been one year in a physician’s office as a student, but this regulation was very easily evaded. As to my studies, the less said the better. I attended the quizzes, as they call them, pretty closely, and, being of a quick and retentive memory, was thus enabled to dispense with some of the six or seven lectures a day which duller men found it necessary to follow.

Dissecting struck me as a rather nasty business for a gentleman, and on this account I did just as little as was absolutely essential. In fact, if a man took his tickets and paid the dissection fees, nobody troubled himself as to whether or not he did any more than this. A like evil existed at the graduation: whether you squeezed through or passed with credit was a thing which was not made public, so that I had absolutely nothing to stimulate my ambition. I am told that it is all very different to-day.

The astonishment with which I learned of my success was shared by the numerous Southern gentlemen who darkened the floors and perfumed with tobacco the rooms of our boarding-house. In my companions, during the time of my studies so called, as in other matters of life, I was somewhat unfortunate. All of them were Southern gentlemen, with more money than I had. Many of them carried great sticks, usually sword-canes, and some bowie-knives or pistols; also, they delighted in swallow-tailed coats, long hair, broad-brimmed felt hats, and very tight boots. I often think of these gentlemen with affectionate interest, and wonder how many are lying under the wheat-fields of Virginia. One could see them any day sauntering along with their arms over their companions’ shoulders, splendidly indifferent to the ways of the people about them. They hated the “Nawth” and cursed the Yankees, and honestly believed that the leanest of them was a match for any half a dozen of the bulkiest of Northerners. I must also do them the justice to say that they were quite as ready to fight as to brag, which, by the way, is no meager statement. With these gentry—for whom I retain a respect which filled me with regret at the recent course of events—I spent a good deal of my large leisure. The more studious of both sections called us a hard crowd. What we did, or how we did it, little concerns me here, except that, owing to my esteem for chivalric blood and breeding, I was led into many practices and excesses which cost my guardian and myself a good deal of money. At the close of my career as a student I found myself aged twenty-one years, and the owner of some seven hundred dollars—the rest of my small estate having disappeared variously within the last two years. After my friends had gone to their homes in the South I began to look about me for an office, and finally settled upon very good rooms in one of the down-town localities of the Quaker City. I am not specific as to the number and street, for reasons which may hereafter appear. I liked the situation on various accounts. It had been occupied by a doctor; the terms were reasonable; and it lay on the skirts of a good neighborhood, while below it lived a motley population, among which I expected to get my first patients and such fees as were to be had. Into this new home I moved my medical text-books, a few bones, and myself. Also, I displayed in the window a fresh sign, upon which was distinctly to be read:

DR. E. SANDERAFT. Office hours, 8 to 9 A.M., 7 to 9 P.M.

I felt now that I had done my fair share toward attaining a virtuous subsistence, and so I waited tranquilly, and without undue enthusiasm, to see the rest of the world do its part in the matter. Meanwhile I read up on all sorts of imaginable cases, stayed at home all through my office hours, and at intervals explored the strange section of the town which lay to the south of my office. I do not suppose there is anything like it else where. It was then filled with grog-shops, brothels, slop-shops, and low lodging-houses. You could dine for a penny on soup made from the refuse meats of the rich, gathered at back gates by a horde of half-naked children, who all told varieties of one woeful tale. Here, too, you could be drunk for five cents, and be lodged for three, with men, women, and children of all colors lying about you. It was this hideous mixture of black and white and yellow wretchedness which made the place so peculiar. The blacks predominated, and had mostly that swollen, reddish, dark skin, the sign in this race of habitual drunkenness. Of course only the lowest whites were here—rag-pickers, pawnbrokers, old-clothes men, thieves, and the like. All of this, as it came before me, I viewed with mingled disgust and philosophy. I hated filth, but I understood that society has to stand on somebody, and I was only glad that I was not one of the undermost and worst-squeezed bricks.

I can hardly believe that I waited a month without having been called upon by a single patient. At last a policeman on our beat brought me a fancy man with a dog-bite. This patient recommended me to his brother, the keeper of a small pawnbroking-shop, and by very slow degrees I began to get stray patients who were too poor to indulge in up-town doctors. I found the police very useful acquaintances; and, by a drink or a cigar now and then, I got most of the cases of cut heads and the like at the next station-house. These, however,

were the aristocrats of my practice; the bulk of my patients were soap-fat men, rag-pickers, oystermen, hose-house bummers, and worse, with other and nameless trades, men and women, white, black, or mulatto. How they got the levies, fips, and quarters with which I was reluctantly paid, I do not know; that, indeed, was none of my business. They expected to pay, and they came to me in preference to the dispensary doctor, two or three squares away, who seemed to me to spend most of his days in the lanes and alleys about us. Of course he received no pay except experience, since the dispensaries in the Quaker City, as a rule, do not give salaries to their doctors; and the vilest of the poor prefer a "pay doctor" to one of these disinterested gentlemen, who cannot be expected to give their best brains for nothing, when at everybody's beck and call. I am told, indeed I know, that most young doctors do a large amount of poor practice, as it is called; but, for my own part, I think it better for both parties when the doctor insists upon some compensation being made to him. This has been usually my own custom, and I have not found reason to regret it.

Notwithstanding my strict attention to my own interests, I have been rather sorely dealt with by fate upon several occasions, where, so far as I could see, I was vigilantly doing everything in my power to keep myself out of trouble or danger. I may as well relate one of them, merely to illustrate of how little value a man's intellect may be when fate and the prejudices of the mass of men are against him.

One evening, late, I myself answered a ring at the bell, and found a small black boy on the steps, a shoeless, hatless little wretch, curled darkness for hair, and teeth like new tombstones. It was pretty cold, and he was relieving his feet by standing first on one and then on the other. He did not wait for me to speak.

"Hi, sah, Missey Barker she say to come quick away, sah, to Numbah 709 Bedford street."

The locality did not look like pay, but it is hard to say in this quarter, because sometimes you found a well-to-do "brandy-snifter" (local for gin-shop) or a hard-working "leather-jeweler" (ditto for shoemaker), with next door, in a house better or worse, dozens of human rats for whom every police trap in the city was constantly set.

With a doubt in my mind as to whether I should find a good patient or some dirty nigger, I sought the place to which I had been directed. I did not like its looks; but I blundered up an alley and into a back room, where I fell over somebody, and was cursed and told to lie down and keep easy, or somebody, meaning the man stumbled over, would make me. At last I lit on a staircase which led into the alley, and, after much useless inquiry, got as high as the garret. People hereabout did not know one another, or did not want to know, so that it was of little avail to ask questions. At length I saw a light through the cracks in the attic door, and walked in. To my amazement, the first person I saw was a woman of about thirty-five, in pearl-gray Quaker dress—one of your quiet, good-looking people. She was seated on a stool beside a straw mattress upon which lay a black woman. There were three others crowded close around a small stove, which was red-hot—an unusual spectacle in this street. Altogether a most nasty den.

As I came in, the little Quaker woman got up and said: "I took the liberty of sending for thee to look at this poor woman. I am afraid she has the smallpox. Will thee be so kind as to look at her?" And with this she held down the candle toward the bed.

"Good gracious!" I said hastily, seeing how the creature was speckled "I didn't understand this, or I would not have come. I have important cases which I cannot subject to the risk of contagion. Best let her alone, miss," I added, "or send her to the smallpox hospital."

Upon my word, I was astonished at the little woman's indignation. She said just those things which make you feel as if somebody had been calling you names or kicking you—Was I really a doctor? and so on. It did not gain by being put in the ungrammatical tongue of Quakers. However, I never did fancy smallpox, and what could a fellow get by doctoring wretches like these? So I held my tongue and went away. About a week afterwards I met Evans, the dispensary man, a very common fellow, who was said to be frank.

"Helloa!" says he. "Doctor, you made a nice mistake about that darky at No. 709 Bedford street the other night. She had nothing but measles, after all."

"Of course I knew," said I, laughing; "but you don't think I was going in for dispensary trash, do you?"

"I should think not," said Evans.

I learned afterwards that this Miss Barker had taken an absurd fancy to the man because he had doctored the darky and would not let the Quakeress pay him. The end was, when I wanted to get a vacancy in the Southwark Dispensary, where they do pay the doctors, Miss Barker was malignant enough to take advantage of my oversight by telling the whole story to the board; so that Evans got in, and I was beaten.

You may be pretty sure that I found rather slow the kind of practice I have described, and began to look about for chances of bettering myself. In this sort of locality rather risky cases turned up now and then; and as soon as I got to be known as a reliable man, I began to get the peculiar sort of practice I wanted. Notwithstanding all my efforts, I found myself, at the close of three years, with all my means spent, and just able to live meagerly from hand to mouth, which by no means suited a man of my refined tastes.

Once or twice I paid a visit to my aunt, and was able to secure moderate aid by overhauling her concealed hoardings. But as to these changes of property I was careful, and did not venture to secure the large amount I needed. As to the Bible, it was at this time hidden, and I judged it, therefore, to be her chief place of deposit. Banks she utterly distrusted.

Six months went by, and I was worse off than ever—two months in arrears of rent, and numerous other debts to cigar-shops and liquor-dealers. Now and then some good job, such as a burglar with a cut head, helped me for a while; but, on the whole, I was like Slider Downeyhylle in Neal's "Charcoal Sketches," and kept going "downer and downer" the more I tried not to. Something had to be done.

It occurred to me, about this time, that if I moved into a more genteel locality I might get a better class of patients, and yet keep the best of those I now had. To do this it was necessary to pay my rent, and the more so because I was in a fair way to have no house at all over my head. But here fortune interposed. I was caught in a heavy rainstorm on Seventh Street, and ran to catch an omnibus. As I pulled open the door I saw behind me the Quaker woman, Miss Barker. I laughed and jumped in. She had to run a little before the 'bus again stopped. She got pretty wet. An old man in the corner, who seemed in the way of taking charge of other

people's manners, said to me: "Young man, you ought to be ashamed to get in before the lady, and in this pour, too!"

I said calmly, "But you got in before her."

He made no reply to this obvious fact, as he might have been in the bus a half-hour. A large, well-dressed man near by said, with a laugh, "Rather neat, that," and, turning, tried to pull up a window-sash. In the effort something happened, and he broke the glass, cutting his hand in half a dozen places. While he was using several quite profane phrases, I caught his hand and said, "I am a surgeon," and tied my handkerchief around the bleeding palm.

The guardian of manners said, "I hope you are not much hurt, but there was no reason why you should swear."

On this my patient said, "Go to ——," which silenced the monitor.

I explained to the wounded man that the cuts should be looked after at once. The matter was arranged by our leaving the 'bus, and, as the rain had let up, walking to his house. This was a large and quite luxurious dwelling on Fourth street. There I cared for his wounds, which, as I had informed him, required immediate attention. It was at this time summer, and his wife and niece, the only other members of his family, were absent. On my second visit I made believe to remove some splinters of glass which I brought with me. He said they showed how shamefully thin was that omnibus window-pane. To my surprise, my patient, at the end of the month,—for one wound was long in healing,—presented me with one hundred dollars. This paid my small rental, and as Mr. Poynter allowed me to refer to him, I was able to get a better office and bedroom on Spruce street. I saw no more of my patient until winter, although I learned that he was a stock-broker, not in the very best repute, but of a well-known family.

Meanwhile my move had been of small use. I was wise enough, however, to keep up my connection with my former clients, and contrived to live. It was no more than that. One day in December I was overjoyed to see Mr. Poynter enter. He was a fat man, very pale, and never, to my remembrance, without a permanent smile. He had very civil ways, and now at once I saw that he wanted something.

I hated the way that man saw through me. He went on without hesitation, taking me for granted. He began by saying he had confidence in my judgment, and when a man says that you had better look out. He said he had a niece who lived with him, a brother's child; that she was out of health and ought not to marry, which was what she meant to do. She was scared about her health, because she had a cough, and had lost a brother of consumption. I soon came to understand that, for reasons unknown to me, my friend did not wish his niece to marry. His wife, he also informed me, was troubled as to the niece's health. Now, he said, he wished to consult me as to what he should do. I suspected at once that he had not told me all.

I have often wondered at the skill with which I managed this rather delicate matter. I knew I was not well enough known to be of direct use, and was also too young to have much weight. I advised him to get Professor C.

Then my friend shook his head. He said in reply, "But suppose, doctor, he says there is nothing wrong with the girl?"

Then I began to understand him.

"Oh," I said, "you get a confidential written opinion from him. You can make it what you please when you tell her."

He said no. It would be best for me to ask the professor to see Miss Poynter; might mention my youth, and so on, as a reason. I was to get his opinion in writing.

"Well?" said I.

"After that I want you to write me a joint opinion to meet the case—all the needs of the case, you see."

I saw, but hesitated as to how much would make it worth while to pull his hot chestnuts out of the fire—one never knows how hot the chestnuts are.

Then he said, "Ever take a chance in stocks?"

I said, "No."

He said that he would lend me a little money and see what he could do with it. And here was his receipt from me for one thousand dollars, and here, too, was my order to buy shares of P. T. Y. Would I please to Sign it? I did.

I was to call in two days at his house, and meantime I could think it over. It seemed to me a pretty weak plan. Suppose the young woman—well, supposing is awfully destructive of enterprise; and as for me, I had only to misunderstand the professor's opinion. I went to the house, and talked to Mr. Poynter about his gout. Then Mrs. Poynter came in, and began to lament her niece's declining health. After that I saw Miss Poynter. There is a kind of innocent-looking woman who knows no more of the world than a young chicken, and is choke-full of emotions. I saw it would be easy to frighten her. There are some instruments anybody can get any tune they like out of. I was very grave, and advised her to see the professor. And would I write to ask him, said Mr. Poynter. I said I would.

As I went out Mr. Poynter remarked: "You will clear some four hundred easy. Write to the professor. Bring my receipt to the office next week, and we will settle."

We settled. I tore up his receipt and gave him one for fifteen hundred dollars, and received in notes five hundred dollars.

In a day or so I had a note from the professor stating that Miss Poynter was in no peril; that she was, as he thought, worried, and had only a mild bronchial trouble. He advised me to do so-and-so, and had ventured to reassure my young patient. Now, this was a little more than I wanted. However, I wrote Mr. Poynter that the professor thought she had bronchitis, that in her case tubercle would be very apt to follow, and that at present, and until she was safe, we considered marriage undesirable.

Mr. Poynter said it might have been put stronger, but he would make it do. He made it. The first effect was an attack of hysterics. The final result was that she eloped with her lover, because if she was to die, as she

wrote her aunt, she wished to die in her husband's arms. Human nature plus hysteria will defy all knowledge of character. This was what our old professor of practice used to say.

Mr. Poynter had now to account for a large trust estate which had somehow dwindled. Unhappily, princes are not the only people in whom you must not put your trust. As to myself, Professor L. somehow got to know the facts, and cut me dead. It was unpleasant, but I had my five hundred dollars, and—I needed them. I do not see how I could have been more careful.

After this things got worse. Mr. Poynter broke, and did not even pay my last bill. I had to accept several rather doubtful cases, and once a policeman I knew advised me that I had better be on my guard.

But, really, so long as I adhered to the common code of my profession I was in danger of going without my dinner.

Just as I was at my worst and in despair something always turned up, but it was sure to be risky; and now my aunt refused to see me, and Peninnah wrote me goody-goody letters, and said Aunt Rachel had been unable to find certain bank-notes she had hidden, and vowed I had taken them. This Peninnah did not think possible. I agreed with her. The notes were found somewhat later by Peninnah in the toes of a pair of my aunt's old slippers. Of course I wrote an indignant letter. My aunt declared that Peninnah had stolen the notes, and restored them when they were missed. Poor Peninnah! This did not seem to me very likely, but Peninnah did love fine clothes.

One night, as I was debating with myself as to how I was to improve my position, I heard a knock on my shutter, and, going to the door, let in a broad-shouldered man with a whisky face and a great hooked nose. He wore a heavy black beard and mustache, and looked like the wolf in the pictures of Red Riding-hood which I had seen as a child.

"Your name's Sanderaft?" said the man.

"Yes; that's my name—Dr. Sanderaft."

As he sat down he shook the snow over everything, and said coolly: "Set down, doc; I want to talk with you."

"What can I do for you?" said I.

The man looked around the room rather scornfully, at the same time throwing back his coat and displaying a red neckerchief and a huge garnet pin. "Guess you're not overly rich," he said.

"Not especially," said I. "What's that your business?"

He did not answer, but merely said, "Know Simon Stagers?"

"Can't say I do," said I, cautiously. Simon was a burglar who had blown off two fingers when mining a safe. I had attended him while he was hiding.

"Can't say you do. Well, you can lie, and no mistake. Come, now, doc. Simon says you're safe, and I want to have a leetle plain talk with you."

With this he laid ten gold eagles on the table. I put out my hand instinctively.

"Let 'em alone," cried the man, sharply. "They're easy earned, and ten more like 'em."

"For doing what?" I said.

The man paused a moment, and looked around him; next he stared at me, and loosened his cravat with a hasty pull. "You're the coroner," said he.

"I! What do you mean?"

"Yes, you're the coroner; don't you understand?" and so saying, he shoved the gold pieces toward me.

"Very good," said I; "we will suppose I'm the coroner. What next?"

"And being the coroner," said he, "you get this note, which requests you to call at No. 9 Blank street to examine the body of a young man which is supposed—only supposed, you see—to have—well, to have died under suspicious circumstances."

"Go on," said I.

"No," he returned; "not till I know how you like it. Stagers and another knows it; and it wouldn't be very safe for you to split, besides not making nothing out of it. But what I say is this, Do you like the business of coroner?"

I did not like it; but just then two hundred in gold was life to me, so I said: "Let me hear the whole of it first. I am safe."

"That's square enough," said the man. "My wife's got"—correcting himself with a shivery shrug—"my wife had a brother that took to cutting up rough because when I'd been up too late I handled her a leetle hard now and again.

"Luckily he fell sick with typhoid just then—you see, he lived with us. When he got better I guessed he'd drop all that; but somehow he was worse than ever—clean off his head, and strong as an ox. My wife said to put him away in an asylum. I didn't think that would do. At last he tried to get out. He was going to see the police about—well—the thing was awful serious, and my wife carrying on like mad, and wanting doctors. I had no mind to run, and something had got to be done. So Simon Stagers and I talked it over. The end of it was, he took worse of a sudden, and got so he didn't know nothing. Then I rushed for a doctor. He said it was a perforation, and there ought to have been a doctor when he was first took sick.

"Well, the man died, and as I kept about the house, my wife had no chance to talk. The doctor fussed a bit, but at last he gave a certificate. I thought we were done with it. But my wife she writes a note and gives it to a boy in the alley to put in the post. We suspicioned her, and Stagers was on the watch. After the boy got away a bit, Simon bribed him with a quarter to give him the note, which wasn't no less than a request to the coroner to come to the house to-morrow and make an examination, as foul play was suspected—and poison."

When the man quit talking he glared at me. I sat still. I was cold all over. I was afraid to go on, and afraid to go back, besides which, I did not doubt that there was a good deal of money in the case.

“Of course,” said I, “it’s nonsense; only I suppose you don’t want the officers about, and a fuss, and that sort of thing.”

“Exactly,” said my friend. “It’s all bosh about poison. You’re the coroner. You take this note and come to my house. Says you: ‘Mrs. File, are you the woman that wrote this note? Because in that case I must examine the body.’”

“I see,” said I; “she needn’t know who I am, or anything else; but if I tell her it’s all right, do you think she won’t want to know why there isn’t a jury, and so on?”

“Bless you,” said the man, “the girl isn’t over seventeen, and doesn’t know no more than a baby. As we live up-town miles away, she won’t know anything about you.”

“I’ll do it,” said I, suddenly, for, as I saw, it involved no sort of risk; “but I must have three hundred dollars.”

“And fifty,” added the wolf, “if you do it well.”

Then I knew it was serious.

With this the man buttoned about him a shaggy gray overcoat, and took his leave without a single word in addition.

A minute later he came back and said: “Stagers is in this business, and I was to remind you of Lou Wilson,—I forgot that,—the woman that died last year. That’s all.” Then he went away, leaving me in a cold sweat. I knew now I had no choice. I understood why I had been selected.

For the first time in my life, that night I couldn’t sleep. I thought to myself, at last, that I would get up early, pack a few clothes, and escape, leaving my books to pay as they might my arrears of rent. Looking out of the window, however, in the morning, I saw Stagers prowling about the opposite pavement; and as the only exit except the street door was an alleyway which opened along-side of the front of the house, I gave myself up for lost. About ten o’clock I took my case of instruments and started for File’s house, followed, as I too well understood, by Stagers.

I knew the house, which was in a small uptown street, by its closed windows and the craped bell, which I shuddered as I touched. However, it was too late to draw back, and I therefore inquired for Mrs. File. A haggard-looking young woman came down, and led me into a small parlor, for whose darkened light I was thankful enough.

“Did you write this note?”

“I did,” said the woman, “if you’re the coroner. Joe File—he’s my husband—he’s gone out to see about the funeral. I wish it was his, I do.”

“What do you suspect?” said I.

“I’ll tell you,” she returned in a whisper. “I think he was made away with. I think there was foul play. I think he was poisoned. That’s what I think.”

“I hope you may be mistaken,” said I. “Suppose you let me see the body.”

“You shall see it,” she replied; and following her, I went up-stairs to a front chamber, where I found the corpse.

“Get it over soon,” said the woman, with strange firmness. “If there ain’t no murder been done I shall have to run for it; if there was”—and her face set hard—“I guess I’ll stay.” With this she closed the door and left me with the dead.

If I had known what was before me I never could have gone into the thing at all. It looked a little better when I had opened a window and let in plenty of light; for although I was, on the whole, far less afraid of dead than living men, I had an absurd feeling that I was doing this dead man a distinct wrong—as if it mattered to the dead, after all! When the affair was over, I thought more of the possible consequences than of its relation to the dead man himself; but do as I would at the time, I was in a ridiculous funk, and especially when going through the forms of a post-mortem examination.

I am free to confess now that I was careful not to uncover the man’s face, and that when it was over I backed to the door and hastily escaped from the room. On the stairs opposite to me Mrs. File was seated, with her bonnet on and a bundle in her hand.

“Well,” said she, rising as she spoke, and with a certain eagerness in her tone, “what killed him? Was it poison?”

“Poison, my good woman!” said I. “When a man has typhoid fever he don’t need poison to kill him. He had a relapse, that’s all.”

“And do you mean to say he wasn’t poisoned,” said she, with more than a trace of disappointment in her voice—“not poisoned at all?”

“No more than you are,” said I. “If I had found any signs of foul play I should have had a regular inquest. As it is, the less said about it the better. The fact is, it would have been much wiser to have kept quiet at the beginning. I can’t understand why you should have troubled me about it at all. The man had a perforation. It is common enough in typhoid.”

“That’s what the doctor said—I didn’t believe him. I guess now the sooner I leave the better for me.”

“As to that,” I returned, “it is none of my business; but you may rest certain about the cause of your brother’s death.”

My fears were somewhat quieted that evening when Stagers and the wolf appeared with the remainder of the money, and I learned that Mrs. File had fled from her home and, as File thought likely, from the city also. A few months later File himself disappeared, and Stagers found his way for the third time into the penitentiary. Then I felt at ease. I now see, for my own part, that I was guilty of more than one mistake, and that I displayed throughout a want of intelligence. I ought to have asked more, and also might have got a good fee from Mrs. File on account of my services as coroner. It served me, however, as a good lesson; but it was several months before I felt quite comfortable.

Meanwhile money became scarce once more, and I was driven to my wit’s end to devise how I should

continue to live as I had done. I tried, among other plans, that of keeping certain pills and other medicines, which I sold to my patients; but on the whole I found it better to send all my prescriptions to one druggist, who charged the patient ten or twenty cents over the correct price, and handed this amount to me.

In some cases I am told the percentage is supposed to be a donation on the part of the apothecary; but I rather fancy the patient pays for it in the end. It is one of the absurd vagaries of the profession to discountenance the practice I have described, but I wish, for my part, I had never done anything more foolish or more dangerous. Of course it inclines a doctor to change his medicines a good deal, and to order them in large quantities, which is occasionally annoying to the poor; yet, as I have always observed, there is no poverty as painful as your own, so that I prefer to distribute pecuniary suffering among many rather than to concentrate it on myself. That's a rather neat phrase.

About six months after the date of this annoying adventure, an incident occurred which altered somewhat, and for a time improved, my professional position. During my morning office-hour an old woman came in, and putting down a large basket, wiped her face with a yellow-cotton handkerchief, and afterwards with the corner of her apron. Then she looked around uneasily, got up, settled her basket on her arm with a jerk which may have decided the future of an egg or two, and remarked briskly: "Don't see no little bottles about; got the wrong stall, I guess. You ain't no homeopath doctor, are you?"

With great presence of mind, I replied: "Well, ma'am, that depends upon what you want. Some of my patients like one, and some like the other." I was about to add, "You pay your money and you take your choice," but thought better of it, and held my peace, refraining from classical quotation.

"Being as that's the case," said the old lady, "I'll just tell you my symptoms. You said you give either kind of medicine, didn't you?"

"Just so," replied I.

"Clams or oysters, whichever opens most lively, as my old Joe says—tends the oyster-stand at stall No. 9. Happen to know Joe?"

No, I did not know Joe; but what were the symptoms?

They proved to be numerous, and included a stunning in the head and a misery in the side, with bokin after victuals.

I proceeded, of course, to apply a stethoscope over her ample bosom, though what I heard on this and similar occasions I should find it rather difficult to state. I remember well my astonishment in one instance where, having unconsciously applied my instrument over a clamorous silver watch in the watchfob of a sea-captain, I concluded for a moment that he was suffering from a rather remarkable displacement of the heart. As to my old lady, whose name was Checkers, and who kept an apple-stand near by, I told her that I was out of pills just then, but would have plenty next day. Accordingly, I proceeded to invest a small amount at a place called a homeopathic pharmacy, which I remember amused me immensely.

A stout little German, with great silver spectacles, sat behind a counter containing numerous jars of white powders labeled concisely "Lac.," "Led.," "Onis.," "Op.," "Puls.," etc., while behind him were shelves filled with bottles of what looked like minute white shot.

"I want some homeopathic medicine," said I.

"Vat kindt?" said my friend. "Vat you vants to cure!"

I explained at random that I wished to treat diseases in general.

"Vell, ve gifs you a case, mit a pook," and thereon produced a large box containing bottles of small pills and powders, labeled variously with the names of the diseases, so that all you required was to use the headache or colic bottle in order to meet the needs of those particular maladies.

I was struck at first with the exquisite simplicity of this arrangement; but before purchasing, I happened luckily to turn over the leaves of a book, in two volumes, which lay on the counter; it was called "Jahr's Manual." Opening at page 310, vol. i, I lit upon "Lachesis," which proved to my amazement to be snake-venom. This Mr. Jahr stated to be indicated for use in upward of a hundred symptoms. At once it occurred to me that "Lach." was the medicine for my money, and that it was quite needless to waste cash on the box. I therefore bought a small jar of "Lach." and a lot of little pills, and started for home.

My old woman proved a fast friend; and as she sent me numerous patients, I by and by altered my sign to "Homeopathic Physician and Surgeon," whatever that may mean, and was regarded by my medical brothers as a lost sheep, and by the little-pill doctors as one who had seen the error of his ways.

In point of fact, my new practice had decided advantages. All pills looked and tasted alike, and the same might be said of the powders, so that I was never troubled by those absurd investigations into the nature of remedies which some patients are prone to make. Of course I desired to get business, and it was therefore obviously unwise to give little pills of "Lac.," or "Puls.," or "Sep.," when a man needed a dose of oil, or a white-faced girl iron, or the like. I soon made the useful discovery that it was only necessary to prescribe cod-liver oil, for instance, as a diet, in order to make use of it where required. When a man got impatient over an ancient ague, I usually found, too, that I could persuade him to let me try a good dose of quinine; while, on the other hand, there was a distinct pecuniary advantage in those cases of the shakes which could be made to believe that it "was best not to interfere with nature." I ought to add that this kind of faith is uncommon among folks who carry hods or build walls.

For women who are hysterical, and go heart and soul into the business of being sick, I have found the little pills a most charming resort, because you cannot carry the refinement of symptoms beyond what my friend Jahr has done in the way of fitting medicines to them, so that if I had taken seriously to practising this double form of therapeutics, it had, as I saw, certain conveniences.

Another year went by, and I was beginning to prosper in my new mode of life. My medicines (being chiefly milk-sugar, with variations as to the labels) cost next to nothing; and as I charged pretty well for both these and my advice, I was now able to start a gig.

I solemnly believe that I should have continued to succeed in the practice of my profession if it had not

happened that fate was once more unkind to me, by throwing in my path one of my old acquaintances. I had a consultation one day with the famous homeopath Dr. Zwanzig. As we walked away we were busily discussing the case of a poor consumptive fellow who previously had lost a leg. In consequence of this defect, Dr. Zwanzig considered that the ten-thousandth of a grain of aurum would be an overdose, and that it must be fractioned so as to allow for the departed leg, otherwise the rest of the man would be getting a leg-dose too much. I was particularly struck with this view of the case, but I was still more, and less pleasingly, impressed at the sight of my former patient Stagers, who nodded to me familiarly from the opposite pavement.

I was not at all surprised when, that evening quite late, I found this worthy waiting in my office. I looked around uneasily, which was clearly understood by my friend, who retorted: “Ain’t took nothin’ of yours, doc. You don’t seem right awful glad to see me. You needn’t be afraid—I’ve only fetched you a job, and a right good one, too.”

I replied that I had my regular business, that I preferred he should get some one else, and pretty generally made Mr. Stagers aware that I had had enough of him. I did not ask him to sit down, and, just as I supposed him about to leave, he seated himself with a grin, remarking, “No use, doc; got to go into it this one time.”

At this I, naturally enough, grew angry and used several rather violent phrases.

“No use, doc,” said Stagers.

Then I softened down, and laughed a little, and treated the thing as a joke, whatever it was, for I dreaded to hear.

But Stagers was fate. Stagers was inevitable. “Won’t do, doc—not even money wouldn’t get you off.”

“No?” said I, interrogatively, and as coolly as I could, contriving at the same time to move toward the window. It was summer, the sashes were up, the shutters half drawn in, and a policeman whom I knew was lounging opposite, as I had noticed when I entered. I would give Stagers a scare, charge him with theft—anything but get mixed up with his kind again. It was the folly of a moment and I should have paid dear for it.

He must have understood me, the scoundrel, for in an instant I felt a cold ring of steel against my ear, and a tiger clutch on my cravat. “Sit down,” he said. “What a fool you are! Guess you forgot that there coroner’s business and the rest.” Needless to say that I obeyed. “Best not try that again,” continued my guest. “Wait a moment”; and rising, he closed the window.

There was no resource left but to listen; and what followed I shall condense rather than relate it in the language employed by Mr. Stagers.

It appeared that my other acquaintance Mr. File had been guilty of a cold-blooded and long-premeditated murder, for which he had been tried and convicted. He now lay in jail awaiting his execution, which was to take place at Carsonville, Ohio. It seemed that with Stagers and others he had formed a band of expert counterfeiters in the West. Their business lay in the manufacture of South American currencies. File had thus acquired a fortune so considerable that I was amazed at his having allowed his passion to seduce him into unprofitable crime. In his agony he unfortunately thought of me, and had bribed Stagers largely in order that he might be induced to find me. When the narration had reached this stage, and I had been made fully to understand that I was now and hereafter under the sharp eye of Stagers and his friends, that, in a word, escape was out of the question, I turned on my tormentor.

“What does all this mean?” I said. “What does File expect me to do?”

“Don’t believe he exactly knows,” said Stagers. “Something or other to get him clear of hemp.”

“But what stuff!” I replied. “How can I help him? What possible influence could I exert?”

“Can’t say,” answered Stagers, imperturbably. “File has a notion you’re ‘most cunning enough for anything. Best try something, doc.”

“And what if I won’t do it?” said I. “What does it matter to me if the rascal swings or no?”

“Keep cool, doc,” returned Stagers. “I’m only agent in this here business. My principal, that’s File, he says: ‘Tell Sanderaft to find some way to get me clear. Once out, I give him ten thousand dollars. If he don’t turn up something that will suit, I’ll blow about that coroner business and Lou Wilson, and break him up generally.’”

“You don’t mean,” said I, in a cold sweat—“you don’t mean that, if I can’t do this impossible thing, he will inform on me?”

“Just so,” returned Stagers. “Got a cigar, doc?”

I only half heard him. What a frightful position! I had been leading a happy and an increasingly profitable life—no scrapes and no dangers; and here, on a sudden, I had presented to me the alternative of saving a wretch from the gallows or of spending unlimited years in a State penitentiary. As for the money, it became as dead leaves for this once only in my life. My brain seemed to be spinning round. I grew weak all over.

“Cheer up a little,” said Stagers. “Take a nip of whisky. Things ain’t at the worst, by a good bit. You just get ready, and we’ll start by the morning train. Guess you’ll try out something smart enough as we travel along. Ain’t got a heap of time to lose.”

I was silent. A great anguish had me in its grip. I might squirm as I would, it was all in vain. Hideous plans rose to my mind, born of this agony of terror. I might murder Stagers, but what good would that do? As to File, he was safe from my hand. At last I became too confused to think any longer. “When do we leave?” I said feebly.

“At six to-morrow,” he returned.

How I was watched and guarded, and how hurried over a thousand miles of rail to my fate, little concerns us now. I find it dreadful to recall it to memory. Above all, an aching eagerness for revenge upon the man who had caused me these sufferings was uppermost in my mind. Could I not fool the wretch and save myself? Of a sudden an idea came into my consciousness. Then it grew and formed itself, became possible, probable, seemed to me sure. “Ah,” said I, “Stagers, give me something to eat and drink.” I had not tasted food for two days.

Within a day or two after my arrival, I was enabled to see File in his cell, on the plea of being a clergyman from his native place.

I found that I had not miscalculated my danger. The man did not appear to have the least idea as to how I was to help him. He only knew that I was in his power, and he used his control to insure that something more potent than friendship should be enlisted in his behalf. As the days went by, his behavior grew to be a frightful thing to witness. He threatened, flattered, implored, offered to double the sum he had promised if I would save him. My really reasonable first thought was to see the governor of the State, and, as Stagers's former physician, make oath to his having had many attacks of epilepsy followed by brief periods of homicidal mania. He had, in fact, had fits of alcoholic epilepsy. Unluckily, the governor was in a distant city. The time was short, and the case against my man too clear. Stagers said it would not do. I was at my wit's end. "Got to do something," said File, "or I'll attend to your case, doc."

"But," said I, "suppose there is really nothing?"

"Well," said Stagers to me when we were alone, "you get him satisfied, anyhow. He'll never let them hang him, and perhaps—well, I'm going to give him these pills when I get a chance. He asked to have them. But what's your other plan?"

Stagers knew as much about medicine as a pig knows about the opera. So I set to work to delude him, first asking if he could secure me, as a clergyman, an hour alone with File just before the execution. He said money would do it, and what was my plan?

"Well," said I, "there was once a man named Dr. Chovet. He lived in London. A gentleman who turned highwayman was to be hanged. You see," said I, "this was about 1760. Well, his friends bribed the jailer and the hangman. The doctor cut a hole in the man's windpipe, very low down where it could be partly hid by a loose cravat. So, as they hanged him only a little while, and the breath went in and out of the opening below the noose, he was only just insensible when his friends got him—"

"And he got well," cried Stagers, much pleased with my rather melodramatic tale.

"Yes," I said, "he got well, and lived to take purses, all dressed in white. People had known him well, and when he robbed his great-aunt, who was not in the secret, she swore she had seen his ghost."

Stagers said that was a fine story; guessed it would work; small town, new business, lots of money to use. In fact, the attempt thus to save a man is said to have been made, but, by ill luck, the man did not recover. It answered my purpose, but how any one, even such an ass as this fellow, could believe it could succeed puzzles me to this day.

File became enthusiastic over my scheme, and I cordially assisted his credulity. The thing was to keep the wretch quiet until the business blew up or—and I shuddered—until File, in despair, took his pill. I should in any case find it wise to leave in haste.

My friend Stagers had some absurd misgivings lest Mr. File's neck might be broken by the fall; but as to this I was able to reassure him upon the best scientific authority. There were certain other and minor questions, as to the effect of sudden, nearly complete arrest of the supply of blood to the brain; but with these physiological refinements I thought it needlessly cruel to distract a man in File's peculiar position. Perhaps I shall be doing injustice to my own intellect if I do not hasten to state again that I had not the remotest belief in the efficacy of my plan for any purpose except to get me out of a very uncomfortable position and give me, with time, a chance to escape.

Stagers and I were both disguised as clergymen, and were quite freely admitted to the condemned man's cell. In fact, there was in the little town a certain trustful simplicity about all their arrangements. The day but one before the execution Stagers informed me that File had the pills, which he, Stagers, had contrived to give him. Stagers seemed pleased with our plan. I was not. He was really getting uneasy and suspicious of me—as I was soon to find out.

So far our plans, or rather mine, had worked to a marvel. Certain of File's old accomplices succeeded in bribing the hangman to shorten the time of suspension. Arrangements were made to secure me two hours alone with the prisoner, so that nothing seemed to be wanting to this tomfool business. I had assured Stagers that I would not need to see File again previous to the operation; but in the forenoon of the day before that set for the execution I was seized with a feverish impatience, which luckily prompted me to visit him once more. As usual, I was admitted readily, and nearly reached his cell when I became aware, from the sound of voices heard through the grating in the door, that there was a visitor in the cell. "Who is with him?" I inquired of the turnkey.

"The doctor," he replied.

"Doctor?" I said, pausing. "What doctor?"

"Oh, the jail doctor. I was to come back in half an hour to let him out; but he's got a quarter to stay. Shall I let you in, or will you wait?"

"No," I replied; "it is hardly right to interrupt them. I will walk in the corridor for ten minutes or so, and then you can come back to let me into the cell."

"Very good," he returned, and left me.

As soon as I was alone, I cautiously advanced until I stood alongside of the door, through the barred grating of which I was able readily to hear what went on within. The first words I caught were these:

"And you tell me, doctor, that, even if a man's windpipe was open, the hanging would kill him—are you sure?"

"Yes, I believe there would be no doubt of it. I cannot see how escape would be possible. But let me ask you why you have sent for me to ask these singular questions. You cannot have the faintest hope of escape, and least of all in such a manner as this. I advise you to think about the fate which is inevitable. You must, I fear, have much to reflect upon."

"But," said File, "if I wanted to try this plan of mine, couldn't some one be found to help me, say if he was to make twenty thousand or so by it? I mean a really good doctor." Evidently File cruelly mistrusted my skill, and meant to get some one to aid me.

"If you mean me," answered the doctor, "some one cannot be found, neither for twenty nor fifty thousand

dollars. Besides, if any one were wicked enough to venture on such an attempt, he would only be deceiving you with a hope which would be utterly vain. You must be off your head."

I understood all this with an increasing fear in my mind. I had meant to get away that night at all risks. I saw now that I must go at once.

After a pause he said: "Well, doctor, you know a poor devil in my fix will clutch at straws. Hope I have not offended you."

"Not in the least," returned the doctor. "Shall I send you Mr. Smith?" This was my present name; in fact, I was known as the Rev. Eliphalet Smith.

"I would like it," answered File; "but as you go out, tell the warden I want to see him immediately about a matter of great importance."

At this stage I began to apprehend very distinctly that the time had arrived when it would be wiser for me to delay escape no longer. Accordingly, I waited until I heard the doctor rise, and at once stepped quietly away to the far end of the corridor. I had scarcely reached it when the door which closed it was opened by a turnkey who had come to relieve the doctor and let me into the cell. Of course my peril was imminent. If the turnkey mentioned my near presence to the prisoner, immediate disclosure would follow. If some lapse of time were secured before the warden obeyed the request from File that he should visit him, I might gain thus a much-needed hour, but hardly more. I therefore said to the officer: "Tell the warden that the doctor wishes to remain an hour longer with the prisoner, and that I shall return myself at the end of that time."

"Very good, sir," said the turnkey, allowing me to pass out, and, as he followed me, relocking the door of the corridor. "I'll tell him," he said. It is needless to repeat that I never had the least idea of carrying out the ridiculous scheme with which I had deluded File and Stagers, but so far Stagers's watchfulness had given me no chance to escape.

In a few moments I was outside of the jail gate, and saw my fellow-clergyman, Mr. Stagers, in full broadcloth and white tie, coming down the street toward me. As usual, he was on his guard; but this time he had to deal with a man grown perfectly desperate, with everything to win and nothing to lose. My plans were made, and, wild as they were, I thought them worth the trying. I must evade this man's terrible watch. How keen it was, you cannot imagine; but it was aided by three of the infamous gang to which File had belonged, for without these spies no one person could possibly have sustained so perfect a system.

I took Stagers's arm. "What time," said I, "does the first train start for Dayton?"

"At twelve. What do you want?"

"How far is it?"

"About fifteen miles," he replied.

"Good. I can get back by eight o'clock to-night."

"Easily," said Stagers, "if you go. What do you want?"

"I want a smaller tube to put in the windpipe—must have it, in fact."

"Well, I don't like it," said he, "but the thing's got to go through somehow. If you must go, I will go along myself. Can't lose sight of you, doc, just at present. You're monstrous precious. Did you tell File?"

"Yes," said I; "he's all right. Come. We've no time to lose."

Nor had we. Within twenty minutes we were seated in the last car of a long train, and running at the rate of twenty miles an hour toward Dayton. In about ten minutes I asked Stagers for a cigar.

"Can't smoke here," said he.

"No," I answered; "of course not. I'll go forward into the smoking-car."

"Come along," said he, and we went through the train.

I was not sorry he had gone with me when I found in the smoking-car one of the spies who had been watching me so constantly. Stagers nodded to him and grinned at me, and we sat down together.

"Chut!" said I, "left my cigar on the window-ledge in the hindmost car. Be back in a moment."

This time, for a wonder, Stagers allowed me to leave unaccompanied. I hastened through to the nearer end of the hindmost car, and stood on the platform. I instantly cut the signal-cord. Then I knelt down, and, waiting until the two cars ran together, I tugged at the connecting-pin. As the cars came together, I could lift it a little, then as the strain came on the coupling the pin held fast. At last I made a great effort, and out it came. The car I was on instantly lost speed, and there on the other platform, a hundred feet away, was Stagers shaking his fist at me. He was beaten, and he knew it. In the end few people have been able to get ahead of me.

The retreating train was half a mile away around the curve as I screwed up the brake on my car hard enough to bring it nearly to a stand. I did not wait for it to stop entirely before I slipped off the steps, leaving the other passengers to dispose of themselves as they might until their absence should be discovered and the rest of the train return.

As I wish rather to illustrate my very remarkable professional career than to amuse by describing its lesser incidents, I shall not linger to tell how I succeeded, at last, in reaching St. Louis. Fortunately, I had never ceased to anticipate the moment when escape from File and his friends would be possible, so that I always carried about with me the very small funds with which I had hastily provided myself upon leaving. The whole amount did not exceed sixty-five dollars, but with this, and a gold watch worth twice as much, I hoped to be able to subsist until my own ingenuity enabled me to provide more liberally for the future. Naturally enough, I scanned the papers closely to discover some account of File's death and of the disclosures concerning myself which he was only too likely to have made.

I came at last on an account of how he had poisoned himself, and so escaped the hangman. I never learned what he had said about me, but I was quite sure he had not let me off easy. I felt that this failure to announce his confessions was probably due to a desire on the part of the police to avoid alarming me. Be this as it may, I remained long ignorant as to whether or not the villain betrayed my part in that unusual coroner's inquest.

Before many days I had resolved to make another and a bold venture. Accordingly appeared in the St. Louis papers an advertisement to the effect that Dr. von Ingenhoff, the well-known German physician, who had spent two years on the Plains acquiring a knowledge of Indian medicine, was prepared to treat all diseases by vegetable remedies alone. Dr. von Ingenhoff would remain in St. Louis for two weeks, and was to be found at the Grayson House every day from ten until two o'clock.

To my delight, I got two patients the first day. The next I had twice as many, when at once I hired two connecting rooms, and made a very useful arrangement, which I may describe dramatically in the following way:

There being two or three patients waiting while I finished my cigar and morning julep, enters a respectable-looking old gentleman who inquires briskly of the patients if this is really Dr. von Ingenhoff's. He is told it is. My friend was apt to overact his part. I had often occasion to ask him to be less positive.

"Ah," says he, "I shall be delighted to see the doctor. Five years ago I was scalped on the Plains, and now"—exhibiting a well-covered head—"you see what the doctor did for me. 'T isn't any wonder I've come fifty miles to see him. Any of you been scalped, gentlemen?"

To none of them had this misfortune arrived as yet; but, like most folks in the lower ranks of life and some in the upper ones, it was pleasant to find a genial person who would listen to their account of their own symptoms.

Presently, after hearing enough, the old gentleman pulls out a large watch. "Bless me! it's late. I must call again. May I trouble you, sir, to say to the doctor that his old friend called to see him and will drop in again to-morrow? Don't forget: Governor Brown of Arkansas." A moment later the governor visited me by a side door, with his account of the symptoms of my patients.

Enter a tall Hoosier, the governor having retired. "Now, doc," says the Hoosier, "I've been handled awful these two years back." "Stop!" I exclaimed. "Open your eyes. There, now, let me see," taking his pulse as I speak. "Ah, you've a pain there, and there, and you can't sleep; cocktails don't agree any longer. Weren't you bit by a dog two years ago?" "I was," says the Hoosier, in amazement. "Sir," I reply, "you have chronic hydrophobia. It's the water in the cocktails that disagrees with you. My bitters will cure you in a week, sir. No more whisky—drink milk."

The astonishment of my patient at these accurate revelations may be imagined. He is allowed to wait for his medicine in the anteroom, where the chances are in favor of his relating how wonderfully I had told all his symptoms at a glance.

Governor Brown of Arkansas was a small but clever actor, whom I met in the billiard-room, and who day after day, in varying disguises and modes, played off the same tricks, to our great common advantage.

At my friend's suggestion, we very soon added to our resources by the purchase of two electromagnetic batteries. This special means of treating all classes of maladies has advantages which are altogether peculiar. In the first place, you instruct your patient that the treatment is of necessity a long one. A striking mode of putting it is to say, "Sir, you have been six months getting ill; it will require six months for a cure." There is a correct sound about such a phrase, and it is sure to satisfy. Two sittings a week, at two dollars a sitting, will pay. In many cases the patient gets well while you are electrifying him. Whether or not the electricity cured him is a thing I shall never know. If, however, he began to show signs of impatience, I advised him that he would require a year's treatment, and suggested that it would be economical for him to buy a battery and use it at home. Thus advised, he pays you twenty dollars for an instrument which cost you ten, and you are rid of a troublesome case.

If the reader has followed me closely, he will have learned that I am a man of large and liberal views in my profession, and of a very justifiable ambition. The idea has often occurred to me of combining in one establishment all the various modes of practice which are known as irregular. This, as will be understood, is really only a wider application of the idea which prompted me to unite in my own business homeopathy and the practice of medicine. I proposed to my partner, accordingly, to combine with our present business that of spiritualism, which I knew had been very profitably turned to account in connection with medical practice. As soon as he agreed to this plan, which, by the way, I hoped to enlarge so as to include all the available isms, I set about making such preparations as were necessary. I remembered having read somewhere that a Dr. Schiff had shown that he could produce remarkable "knockings," so called, by voluntarily dislocating the great toe and then forcibly drawing it back into its socket. A still better noise could be made by throwing the tendon of the peroneus longus muscle out of the hollow in which it lies, alongside of the ankle. After some effort I was able to accomplish both feats quite readily, and could occasion a remarkable variety of sounds, according to the power which I employed or the positions which I occupied at the time. As to all other matters, I trusted to the suggestions of my own ingenuity, which, as a rule, has rarely failed me.

The largest success attended the novel plan which my lucky genius had devised, so that soon we actually began to divide large profits and to lay by a portion of our savings. It is, of course, not to be supposed that this desirable result was attained without many annoyances and some positive danger. My spiritual revelations, medical and other, were, as may be supposed, only more or less happy guesses; but in this, as in predictions as to the weather and other events, the rare successes always get more prominence in the minds of men than the numerous failures. Moreover, whenever a person has been fool enough to resort to folks like myself, he is always glad to be able to defend his conduct by bringing forward every possible proof of skill on the part of the men he has consulted. These considerations, and a certain love of mysterious or unusual means, I have commonly found sufficient to secure an ample share of gullible individuals. I may add, too, that those who would be shrewd enough to understand and expose us are wise enough to keep away altogether. Such as did come were, as a rule, easy enough to manage, but now and then we hit upon some utterly exceptional patient who was both foolish enough to consult us and sharp enough to know he had been swindled. When such a fellow made a fuss, it was occasionally necessary to return his money if it was found impossible to bully him into silence. In one or two instances, where I had promised a cure upon prepayment of two or three hundred dollars, I was either sued or threatened with suit, and had to refund a part or the whole of the amount; but most people preferred to hold their tongues rather than expose to the world the

extent of their own folly.

In one most disastrous case I suffered personally to a degree which I never can recall without a distinct sense of annoyance, both at my own want of care and at the disgusting consequences which it brought upon me.

Early one morning an old gentleman called, in a state of the utmost agitation, and explained that he desired to consult the spirits as to a heavy loss which he had experienced the night before. He had left, he said, a sum of money in his pantaloons pocket upon going to bed. In the morning he had changed his clothes and gone out, forgetting to remove the notes. Returning in an hour in great haste, he discovered that the garment still lay upon the chair where he had thrown it, but that the money was missing. I at once desired him to be seated, and proceeded to ask him certain questions, in a chatty way, about the habits of his household, the amount lost, and the like, expecting thus to get some clue which would enable me to make my spirits display the requisite share of sagacity in pointing out the thief. I learned readily that he was an old and wealthy man, a little close, too, I suspected, and that he lived in a large house with but two servants, and an only son about twenty-one years old. The servants were both women who had lived in the household many years, and were probably innocent. Unluckily, remembering my own youthful career, I presently reached the conclusion that the young man had been the delinquent. When I ventured to inquire a little as to his habits, the old gentleman cut me very short, remarking that he came to ask questions, and not to be questioned, and that he desired at once to consult the spirits. Upon this I sat down at a table, and, after a brief silence, demanded in a solemn voice if there were any spirits present. By industriously cracking my big toe-joint I was enabled to represent at once the presence of a numerous assembly of these worthies. Then I inquired if any one of them had been present when the robbery was effected. A prompt double knock replied in the affirmative. I may say here, by the way, that the unanimity of the spirits as to their use of two knocks for “yes” and one for “no” is a very remarkable point, and shows, if it shows anything, how perfect and universal must be the social intercourse of the respected departed. It is worthy of note, also, that if the spirit—I will not say the medium—perceives after one knock that it were wiser to say yes, he can conveniently add the second tap. Some such arrangement in real life would, it appears to me, be highly desirable.

It seemed that the spirit was that of Vidocq, the French detective. I had just read a translation of his memoirs, and he seemed to me a very available spirit to call upon.

As soon as I explained that the spirit who answered had been a witness of the theft, the old man became strangely agitated. “Who was it?” said he. At once the spirit indicated a desire to use the alphabet. As we went over the letters,—always a slow method, but useful when you want to observe excitable people,—my visitor kept saying, “Quicker—go quicker.” At length the spirit spelled out the words, “I know not his name.”

“Was it,” said the gentleman—“was it a—was it one of my household?”

I knocked “yes” without hesitation; who else, indeed, could it have been?

“Excuse me,” he went on, “if I ask you for a little whisky.”

This I gave him. He continued: “Was it Susan or Ellen?”

“No, no!”

“Was it—” He paused. “If I ask a question mentally, will the spirits reply?” I knew what he meant. He wanted to ask if it was his son, but did not wish to speak openly.

“Ask,” said I.

“I have,” he returned.

I hesitated. It was rarely my policy to commit myself definitely, yet here I fancied, from the facts of the case and his own terrible anxiety, that he suspected, or more than suspected, his son as the guilty person. I became sure of this as I studied his face. At all events, it would be easy to deny or explain in case of trouble; and, after all, what slander was there in two knocks? I struck twice as usual.

Instantly the old gentleman rose up, very white, but quite firm. “There,” he said, and cast a bank-note on the table, “I thank you,” and bending his head on his breast, walked, as I thought, with great effort out of the room.

On the following morning, as I made my first appearance in my outer room, which contained at least a dozen persons awaiting advice, who should I see standing by the window but the old gentleman with sandy-gray hair? Along with him was a stout young man with a head as red as mine, and mustache and whiskers to match. Probably the son, I thought—ardent temperament, remorse, come to confess, etc. I was never more mistaken in my life. I was about to go regularly through my patients when the old gentleman began to speak.

“I called, doctor,” said he, “to explain the little matter about which I—about which I—”

“Troubled your spirits yesterday,” added the youth, jocosely, pulling his mustache.

“Beg pardon,” I returned; “had we not better talk this over in private? Come into my office,” I added, touching the younger man on the arm.

Would you believe it? he took out his handkerchief and dusted the place I had touched. “Better not,” said he. “Go on, father; let us get done with this den.”

“Gentlemen,” said the elder person, addressing the patients, “I called here yesterday, like a fool, to ask who had stolen from me a sum of money which I believed I left in my room on going out in the morning. This doctor here and his spirits contrived to make me suspect my only son. Well, I charged him at once with the crime as soon as I got back home, and what do you think he did? He said, ‘Father, let us go up-stairs and look for it,’ and—”

Here the young man broke in with: “Come, father; don’t worry yourself for nothing”; and then turning, added: “To cut the thing short, he found the notes under his candle-stick, where he left them on going to bed. This is all of it. We came here to stop this fellow” (by which he meant me) “from carrying a slander further. I advise you, good people, to profit by the matter, and to look up a more honest doctor, if doctoring be what you want.”

As soon as he had ended, I remarked solemnly: “The words of the spirits are not my words. Who shall hold

them accountable?”

“Nonsense,” said the young man. “Come, father”; and they left the room.

Now was the time to retrieve my character. “Gentlemen,” said I, “you have heard this very singular account. Trusting the spirits utterly and entirely as I do, it occurs to me that there is no reason why they may not, after all, have been right in their suspicions of this young person. Who can say that, overcome by remorse, he may not have seized the time of his father’s absence to replace the money?”

To my amazement, up gets a little old man from the corner. “Well, you are a low cuss!” said he, and taking up a basket beside him, hobbled hastily out of the room. You may be sure I said some pretty sharp things to him, for I was out of humor to begin with, and it is one thing to be insulted by a stout young man, and quite another to be abused by a wretched old cripple. However, he went away, and I supposed, for my part, that I was done with the whole business.

An hour later, however, I heard a rough knock at my door, and opening it hastily, saw my red-headed young man with the cripple.

“Now,” said the former, taking me by the collar, and pulling me into the room among my patients, “I want to know, my man, if this doctor said that it was likely I was the thief after all?”

“That’s what he said,” replied the cripple; “just about that, sir.”

I do not desire to dwell on the after conduct of this hot-headed young man. It was the more disgraceful as I offered but little resistance, and endured a beating such as I would have hesitated to inflict upon a dog. Nor was this all. He warned me that if I dared to remain in the city after a week he would shoot me. In the East I should have thought but little of such a threat, but here it was only too likely to be practically carried out. Accordingly, with my usual decision of character, but with much grief and reluctance, I collected my whole fortune, which now amounted to at least seven thousand dollars, and turned my back upon this ungrateful town. I am sorry to say that I also left behind me the last of my good luck.

I traveled in a leisurely way until I reached Boston. The country anywhere would have been safer, but I do not lean to agricultural pursuits. It seemed an agreeable city, and I decided to remain.

I took good rooms at Parker’s, and concluding to enjoy life, amused myself in the company of certain, I may say uncertain, young women who danced at some of the theaters. I played billiards, drank rather too much, drove fast horses, and at the end of a delightful year was shocked to find myself in debt, and with only seven dollars and fifty-three cents left—I like to be accurate. I had only one resource: I determined to visit my deaf aunt and Peninnah, and to see what I could do in the role of the prodigal nephew. At all events, I should gain time to think of what new enterprise I could take up; but, above all, I needed a little capital and a house over my head. I had pawned nearly everything of any value which I possessed.

I left my debts to gather interest, and went away to Woodbury. It was the day before Christmas when I reached the little Jersey town, and it was also by good luck Sunday. I was hungry and quite penniless. I wandered about until church had begun, because I was sure then to find Aunt Rachel and Peninnah out at the service, and I desired to explore a little. The house was closed, and even the one servant absent. I got in with ease at the back through the kitchen, and having at least an hour and a half free from interruption, I made a leisurely search. The role of prodigal was well enough, but here was a better chance and an indulgent opportunity.

In a few moments I found the famous Bible hid away under Aunt Rachel’s mattress. The Bible bank was fat with notes, but I intended to be moderate enough to escape suspicion. Here were quite two thousand dollars. I resolved to take, just now, only one hundred, so as to keep a good balance. Then, alas! I lit on a long envelop, my aunt’s will. Every cent was left to Christ Church; not a dime to poor Pen or to me. I was in a rage. I tore up the will and replaced the envelop. To treat poor Pen that way—Pen of all people! There was a heap more will than testament, for all it was in the Bible. After that I thought it was right to punish the old witch, and so I took every note I could find. When I was through with this business, I put back the Bible under the mattress, and observing that I had been quite too long, I went downstairs with a keen desire to leave the town as early as possible. I was tempted, however, to look further, and was rewarded by finding in an old clock case a small reticule stuffed with bank-notes. This I appropriated, and made haste to go out. I was too late. As I went into the little entry to get my hat and coat, Aunt Rachel entered, followed by Peninnah.

At sight of me my aunt cried out that I was a monster and fit for the penitentiary. As she could not hear at all, she had the talk to herself, and went by me and up-stairs, rumbling abuse like distant thunder overhead.

Meanwhile I was taken up with Pen. The pretty fool was seated on a chair, all dressed up in her Sunday finery, and rocking backward and forward, crying, “Oh, oh, ah!” like a lamb saying, “Baa, baa, baa!” She never had much sense. I had to shake her to get a reasonable word. She mopped her eyes, and I heard her gasp out that my aunt had at last decided that I was the person who had thinned her hoards. This was bad, but involved less inconvenience than it might have done an hour earlier. Amid tears Pen told me that a detective had been at the house inquiring for me. When this happened it seems that the poor little goose had tried to fool deaf Aunt Rachel with some made-up story as to the man having come about taxes. I suppose the girl was not any too sharp, and the old woman, I guess, read enough from merely seeing the man’s lips. You never could keep anything from her, and she was both curious and suspicious. She assured the officer that I was a thief, and hoped I might be caught. I could not learn whether the man told Pen any particulars, but as I was slowly getting at the facts we heard a loud scream and a heavy fall.

Pen said, “Oh, oh!” and we hurried upstairs. There was the old woman on the floor, her face twitching to right, and her breathing a sort of hoarse croak. The big Bible lay open on the floor, and I knew what had happened. It was a fit of apoplexy.

At this very unpleasant sight Pen seemed to recover her wits, and said: “Go away, go away! Oh, brother, brother, now I know you have stolen her money and killed her, and—and I loved you, I was so proud of you! Oh, oh!”

This was all very fine, but the advice was good. I said: “Yes, I had better go. Run and get some one—a doctor. It is a fit of hysterics; there is no danger. I will write to you. You are quite mistaken.”

This was too feeble even for Pen, and she cried:

“No, never; I never want to see you again. You would kill me next.”

“Stuff!” said I, and ran down-stairs. I seized my coat and hat, and went to the tavern, where I got a man to drive me to Camden. I have never seen Pen since. As I crossed the ferry to Philadelphia I saw that I should have asked when the detective had been after me. I suspected from Pen’s terror that it had been recently.

It was Sunday and, as I reminded myself, the day before Christmas. The ground was covered with snow, and as I walked up Market street my feet were soon soaked. In my haste I had left my overshoes. I was very cold, and, as I now see, foolishly fearful. I kept thinking of what a conspicuous thing a fire-red head is, and of how many people knew me. As I reached Woodbury early and without a cent, I had eaten nothing all day. I relied on Pen.

Now I concluded to go down into my old neighborhood and get a lodging where no references were asked. Next day I would secure a disguise and get out of the way. I had passed the day without food, as I have just said, and having ample means, concluded to go somewhere and get a good dinner. It was now close to three in the afternoon. I was aware of two things: that I was making many plans, and giving them up as soon as made; and that I was suddenly afraid without cause, afraid to enter an eating-house, and in fear of every man I met.

I went on, feeling more and more chilly. When a man is really cold his mind does not work well, and now it was blowing a keen gale from the north. At Second and South I came plump on a policeman I knew. He looked at me through the drifting snow, as if he was uncertain, and twice looked back after having passed me. I turned west at Christian street. When I looked behind me the man was standing at the corner, staring after me. At the next turn I hurried away northward in a sort of anguish of terror. I have said I was an uncommon person. I am. I am sensitive, too. My mind is much above the average, but unless I am warm and well fed it does not act well, and I make mistakes. At that time I was half frozen, in need of food, and absurdly scared. Then that old fool squirming on the floor got on to my nerves. I went on and on, and at last into Second street, until I came to Christ Church, of all places for me. I heard the sound of the organ in the afternoon service. I felt I must go in and get warm. Here was another silly notion: I was afraid of hotels, but not of the church. I reasoned vaguely that it was a dark day, and darker in the church, and so I went in at the Church Alley entrance and sat near the north door. No one noticed me. I sat still in a high-backed pew, well hid, and wondering what was the matter with me. It was curious that a doctor, and a man of my intelligence, should have been long in guessing a thing so simple.

For two months I had been drinking hard, and for two days had quit, being a man capable of great self-control, and also being short of money. Just before the benediction I saw a man near by who seemed to stare at me. In deadly fear I got up and quickly slipped through a door into the tower room. I said to myself, “He will follow me or wait outside.” I stood a moment with my head all of a whirl, and then in a shiver of fear ran up the stairs to the tower until I got into the bell-ringer’s room. I was safe. I sat down on a stool, twitching and tremulous. There were the old books on bell-ringing, and the miniature chime of small bells for instruction. The wind had easy entrance, and it swung the eight ropes about in a way I did not like. I remember saying, “Oh, don’t do that.” At last I had a mad desire to ring one of the bells. As a loop of rope swung toward me it seemed to hold a face, and this face cried out, “Come and hang yourself; then the bell will ring.”

If I slept I do not know. I may have done so. Certainly I must have stayed there many hours. I was dull and confused, and yet on my guard, for when far into the night I heard noises below, I ran up the steeper steps which ascend to the steeple, where are the bells. Half-way up I sat down on the stair. The place was cold and the darkness deep. Then I heard the eight ringers down below. One said: “Never knowed a Christmas like this since Zeb Sanderaft died. Come, boys!” I knew it must be close on to midnight. Now they would play a Christmas carol. I used every Christmas to be roused up and carried here and set on dad’s shoulder. When they were done ringing, Number Two always gave me a box of sugar-plums and a large red apple. As they rang off, my father would cry out, “One, two,” and so on, and then cry, “Elias, all over town people are opening windows to listen.” I seemed to hear him as I sat in the gloom. Then I heard, “All ready; one, two,” and they rang the Christmas carol. Overhead I heard the great bells ringing out:

And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas day, on Christmas day.

I felt suddenly excited, and began to hum the air. Great heavens! There was the old woman, Aunt Rachel, with her face going twitch, twitch, the croak of her breathing keeping a sort of mad time with “On Christmas day, on Christmas day.” I jumped up. She was gone. I knew in a hazy sort of way what was the matter with me, but I had still the sense to sit down and wait. I said now it would be snakes, for once before I had been almost as bad. But what I did see was a little curly-headed boy in a white frock and pantalets, climbing up the stairs right leg first; so queer of me to have noticed that. I knew I was that boy. He was an innocent-looking little chap, and was smiling. He seemed to me to grow and grow, and at last was a big, red-headed man with a live rat in his hand. I saw nothing more, but I surely knew I needed whisky. I waited until all was still, and got down and out, for I knew every window. I soon found a tavern, and got a drink and some food. At once my fear left me. I was warm at last and clear of head, and had again my natural courage. I was well aware that I was on the edge of delirium tremens and must be most prudent. I paid in advance for my room and treated myself as I had done many another. Only a man of unusual force could have managed his own case as I did. I went out only at night, and in a week was well enough to travel. During this time I saw now and then that grinning little fellow. Sometimes he had an apple and was eating it. I do not know why he was worse to me than snakes, or the twitchy old woman with her wide eyes of glass, and that jerk, jerk, to right.

I decided to go back to Boston. I got to New York prudently in a roundabout way, and in two weeks’ time was traveling east from Albany.

I felt well, and my spirits began at last to rise to their usual level. When I arrived in Boston I set myself to thinking how best I could contrive to enjoy life and at the same time to increase my means. I possessed sufficient capital, and was able and ready to embark in whatever promised the best returns with the smallest

personal risks. I settled myself in a suburb, paid off a few pressing claims, and began to reflect with my ordinary sagacity.

We were now in the midst of a most absurd war with the South, and it was becoming difficult to escape the net of conscription. It might be wise to think of this in time. Europe seemed a desirable residence, but I needed more money to make this agreeable, and an investment for my brains was what I wanted most. Many schemes presented themselves as worthy the application of industry and talent, but none of them altogether suited my case. I thought at times of traveling as a physiological lecturer, combining with it the business of a practitioner: scare the audience at night with an enumeration of symptoms which belong to ten out of every dozen healthy people, and then doctor such of them as are gulls enough to consult me next day. The bigger the fright the better the pay. I was a little timid, however, about facing large audiences, as a man will be naturally if he has lived a life of adventure, so that upon due consideration I gave up the idea altogether.

The patent medicine business also looked well enough, but it is somewhat overdone at all times, and requires a heavy outlay, with the probable result of ill success. Indeed, I believe one hundred quack remedies fail for one that succeeds, and millions must have been wasted in placards, bills, and advertisements, which never returned half their value to the speculator. I think I shall some day beguile my time with writing an account of the principal quack remedies which have met with success. They are few in number, after all, as any one must know who recalls the countless pills and tonics which are puffed awhile on the fences, and disappear, to be heard of no more.

Lastly, I inclined for a while to undertake a private insane asylum, which appeared to me to offer facilities for money-making, as to which, however, I may have been deceived by the writings of certain popular novelists. I went so far, I may say, as actually to visit Concord for the purpose of finding a pleasant locality and a suitable atmosphere. Upon reflection I abandoned my plans, as involving too much personal labor to suit one of my easy frame of mind.

Tired at last of idleness and lounging on the Common, I engaged in two or three little ventures of a semi-professional character, such as an exhibition of laughing-gas, advertising to cure cancer,—“Send twenty-five stamps by mail to J. B., and receive an infallible receipt,”—etc. I did not find, however, that these little enterprises prospered well in New England, and I had recalled very forcibly a story which my father was fond of relating to me in my boyhood. It was about how certain very knowing flies went to get molasses, and how it ended by the molasses getting them. This, indeed, was precisely what happened to me in all my efforts to better myself in the Northern States, until at length my misfortunes climaxed in total and unexpected ruin.

Having been very economical, I had now about twenty-seven hundred dollars. It was none too much. At this time I made the acquaintance of a sea-captain from Maine. He told me that he and two others had chartered a smart little steamer to run to Jamaica with a variety cargo. In fact, he meant to run into Wilmington or Charleston, and he was to carry quinine, chloroform, and other medical requirements for the Confederates. He needed twenty-five hundred dollars more, and a doctor to buy the kind of things which army surgeons require. Of course I was prudent and he careful, but at last, on his proving to me that there was no risk, I agreed to expend his money, his friends’, and my own up to twenty-five hundred dollars. I saw the other men, one of them a rebel captain. I was well pleased with the venture, and resolved for obvious reasons to go with them on the steamer. It was a promising investment, and I am free to reflect that in this, as in some other things, I have been free from vulgar prejudices. I bought all that we needed, and was well satisfied when it was cleverly stowed away in the hold.

We were to sail on a certain Thursday morning in September, 1863. I sent my trunk to the vessel, and went down the evening before we were to start to go on board, but found that the little steamer had been hauled out from the pier. The captain, who met me at this time, endeavored to get a boat to ferry us to the ship; but a gale was blowing, and he advised me to wait until morning. My associates were already on board. Early next day I dressed and went to the captain’s room, which proved to be empty. I was instantly filled with doubt, and ran frantically to the Long Wharf, where, to my horror, I could see no signs of the vessel or captain. Neither have I ever set eyes on them from that time to this. I thought of lodging information with the police as to the unpatriotic design of the rascal who swindled me, but on the whole concluded that it was best to hold my tongue.

It was, as I perceived, such utterly spilt milk as to be little worth lamenting, and I therefore set to work, with my accustomed energy, to utilize on my own behalf the resources of my medical education, which so often before had saved me from want. The war, then raging at its height, appeared to offer numerous opportunities to men of talent. The path which I chose was apparently a humble one, but it enabled me to make very practical use of my professional knowledge, and afforded for a time rapid and secure returns, without any other investment than a little knowledge cautiously employed. In the first place, I deposited my small remnant of property in a safe bank. Then I went to Providence, where, as I had heard, patriotic persons were giving very large bounties in order, I suppose, to insure the government the services of better men than themselves. On my arrival I lost no time in offering myself as a substitute, and was readily accepted, and very soon mustered into the Twentieth Rhode Island. Three months were passed in camp, during which period I received bounty to the extent of six hundred and fifty dollars, with which I tranquilly deserted about two hours before the regiment left for the field. With the product of my industry I returned to Boston, and deposited all but enough to carry me to New York, where within a month I enlisted twice, earning on each occasion four hundred dollars.

After this I thought it wise to try the same game in some of the smaller towns near to Philadelphia. I approached my birthplace with a good deal of doubt; but I selected a regiment in camp at Norristown, which is eighteen miles away. Here I got nearly seven hundred dollars by entering the service as a substitute for an editor, whose pen, I presume, was mightier than his sword. I was, however, disagreeably surprised by being hastily forwarded to the front under a foxy young lieutenant, who brutally shot down a poor devil in the streets of Baltimore for attempting to desert. At this point I began to make use of my medical skill, for I did not in the least degree fancy being shot, either because of deserting or of not deserting. It happened, therefore, that a day or two later, while in Washington, I was seized in the street with a fit, which perfectly imposed upon the officer in charge, and caused him to leave me at the Douglas Hospital. Here I found it

necessary to perform fits about twice a week, and as there were several real epileptics in the ward, I had a capital chance of studying their symptoms, which, finally, I learned to imitate with the utmost cleverness.

I soon got to know three or four men who, like myself, were personally averse to bullets, and who were simulating other forms of disease with more or less success. One of them suffered with rheumatism of the back, and walked about like an old man; another, who had been to the front, was palsied in the right arm. A third kept open an ulcer on the leg, rubbing in a little antimonial ointment, which I bought at fifty cents, and sold him at five dollars a box.

A change in the hospital staff brought all of us to grief. The new surgeon was a quiet, gentlemanly person, with pleasant blue eyes and clearly cut features, and a way of looking at you without saying much. I felt so safe myself that I watched his procedures with just that kind of enjoyment which one clever man takes in seeing another at work.

The first inspection settled two of us.

“Another back case,” said the assistant surgeon to his senior.

“Back hurt you?” says the latter, mildly.

“Yes, sir; run over by a howitzer; ain’t never been able to stand straight since.”

“A howitzer!” says the surgeon. “Lean forward, my man, so as to touch the floor—so. That will do.” Then turning to his aid, he said, “Prepare this man’s discharge papers.”

“His discharge, sir?”

“Yes; I said that. Who’s next?”

“Thank you, sir,” groaned the man with the back. “How soon, sir, do you think it will be?”

“Ah, not less than a month,” replied the surgeon, and passed on.

Now, as it was unpleasant to be bent like the letter C, and as the patient presumed that his discharge was secure, he naturally allowed himself a little relaxation in the way of becoming straighter. Unluckily, those nice blue eyes were everywhere at all hours, and one fine morning Smithson was appalled at finding himself in a detachment bound for the field, and bearing on his descriptive list an ill-natured indorsement about his malady.

The surgeon came next on O’Callahan, standing, like each of us, at the foot of his own bed.

“I’ve paralytics in my arm,” he said, with intention to explain his failure to salute his superior.

“Humph!” said the surgeon; “you have another hand.”

“An’ it’s not the rigulation to saloot with yer left,” said the Irishman, with a grin, while the patients around us began to smile.

“How did it happen?” said the surgeon.

“I was shot in the shoulder,” answered the patient, “about three months ago, sir. I haven’t stirred it since.”

The surgeon looked at the scar.

“So recently?” said he. “The scar looks older; and, by the way, doctor,”—to his junior,—“it could not have gone near the nerves. Bring the battery, orderly.”

In a few moments the surgeon was testing one after another, the various muscles. At last he stopped. “Send this man away with the next detachment. Not a word, my man. You are a rascal, and a disgrace to honest men who have been among bullets.”

The man muttered something, I did not hear what.

“Put this man in the guard-house,” cried the surgeon, and so passed on without smile or frown.

As to the ulcer case, to my amusement he was put in bed, and his leg locked up in a wooden splint, which effectually prevented him from touching the part diseased. It healed in ten days, and he too went as food for powder.

The surgeon asked me a few questions, and requesting to be sent for during my next fit, left me alone.

I was, of course, on my guard, and took care to have my attacks only during his absence, or to have them over before he arrived. At length, one morning, in spite of my care, he chanced to enter the ward as I fell on the floor. I was laid on the bed, apparently in strong convulsions. Presently I felt a finger on my eyelid, and as it was raised, saw the surgeon standing beside me. To escape his scrutiny I became more violent in my motions. He stopped a moment and looked at me steadily. “Poor fellow!” said he, to my great relief, as I felt at once that I had successfully deceived him. Then he turned to the ward doctor and remarked: “Take care he does not hurt his head against the bed; and, by the by, doctor, do you remember the test we applied in Carstairs’s case? Just tickle the soles of his feet and see if it will cause those backward spasms of the head.”

The aid obeyed him, and, very naturally, I jerked my head backward as hard as I could.

“That will answer,” said the surgeon, to my horror. “A clever rogue. Send him to the guard-house.”

Happy had I been had my ill luck ended here, but as I crossed the yard an officer stopped me. To my disgust, it was the captain of my old Rhode Island company.

“Hello!” said he; “keep that fellow safe. I know him.”

To cut short a long story, I was tried, convicted, and forced to refund the Rhode Island bounty, for by ill luck they found my bank-book among my papers. I was finally sent to Fort Delaware and kept at hard labor, handling and carrying shot, policing the ground, picking up cigar-stumps, and other light, unpleasant occupations.

When the war was over I was released. I went at once to Boston, where I had about four hundred dollars in bank. I spent nearly all of this sum before I could satisfy the accumulated cravings of a year and a half without drink or tobacco, or a decent meal. I was about to engage in a little business as a vender of lottery policies when I first began to feel a strange sense of lassitude, which soon increased so as quite to disable me from work of any kind. Month after month passed away, while my money lessened, and this terrible sense of weariness went on from bad to worse. At last one day, after nearly a year had elapsed, I perceived on my face

a large brown patch of color, in consequence of which I went in some alarm to consult a well-known physician. He asked me a multitude of tiresome questions, and at last wrote off a prescription, which I immediately read. It was a preparation of arsenic.

"What do you think," said I, "is the matter with me, doctor?"

"I am afraid," said he, "that you have a very serious trouble—what we call Addison's disease."

"What's that?" said I.

"I do not think you would comprehend it," he replied; "it is an affection of the suprarenal capsules."

I dimly remembered that there were such organs, and that nobody knew what they were meant for. It seemed that doctors had found a use for them at last.

"Is it a dangerous disease?" I said.

"I fear so," he answered.

"Don't you really know," I asked, "what's the truth about it?"

"Well," he returned gravely, "I'm sorry to tell you it is a very dangerous malady."

"Nonsense!" said I; "I don't believe it"; for I thought it was only a doctor's trick, and one I had tried often enough myself.

"Thank you," said he; "you are a very ill man, and a fool besides. Good morning." He forgot to ask for a fee, and I did not therefore find it necessary to escape payment by telling him I was a doctor.

Several weeks went by; my money was gone, my clothes were ragged, and, like my body, nearly worn out, and now I am an inmate of a hospital. To-day I feel weaker than when I first began to write. How it will end, I do not know. If I die, the doctor will get this pleasant history, and if I live, I shall burn it, and as soon as I get a little money I will set out to look for my sister. I dreamed about her last night. What I dreamed was not very agreeable. I thought it was night. I was walking up one of the vilest streets near my old office, and a girl spoke to me—a shameless, worn creature, with great sad eyes. Suddenly she screamed, "Brother, brother!" and then remembering what she had been, with her round, girlish, innocent face and fair hair, and seeing what she was now, I awoke and saw the dim light of the half-darkened ward.

I am better to-day. Writing all this stuff has amused me and, I think, done me good. That was a horrid dream I had. I suppose I must tear up all this biography.

"Hello, nurse! The little boy—boy—"

"GOOD HEAVENS!" said the nurse, "he is dead! Dr. Alston said it would happen this way. The screen, quick—the screen—and let the doctor know."

THE CASE OF GEORGE DEDLOW

The following notes of my own case have been declined on various pretests by every medical journal to which I have offered them. There was, perhaps, some reason in this, because many of the medical facts which they record are not altogether new, and because the psychical deductions to which they have led me are not in themselves of medical interest. I ought to add that a great deal of what is here related is not of any scientific value whatsoever; but as one or two people on whose judgment I rely have advised me to print my narrative with all the personal details, rather than in the dry shape in which, as a psychological statement, I shall publish it elsewhere, I have yielded to their views. I suspect, however, that the very character of my record will, in the eyes of some of my readers, tend to lessen the value of the metaphysical discoveries which it sets forth.

I am the son of a physician, still in large practice, in the village of Abington, Scofield County, Indiana. Expecting to act as his future partner, I studied medicine in his office, and in 1859 and 1860 attended lectures at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. My second course should have been in the following year, but the outbreak of the Rebellion so crippled my father's means that I was forced to abandon my intention. The demand for army surgeons at this time became very great; and although not a graduate, I found no difficulty in getting the place of assistant surgeon to the Tenth Indiana Volunteers. In the subsequent Western campaigns this organization suffered so severely that before the term of its service was over it was merged in the Twenty-first Indiana Volunteers; and I, as an extra surgeon, ranked by the medical officers of the latter regiment, was transferred to the Fifteenth Indiana Cavalry. Like many physicians, I had contracted a strong taste for army life, and, disliking cavalry service, sought and obtained the position of first lieutenant in the Seventy-ninth Indiana Volunteers, an infantry regiment of excellent character.

On the day after I assumed command of my company, which had no captain, we were sent to garrison a part of a line of block-houses stretching along the Cumberland River below Nashville, then occupied by a portion of the command of General Rosecrans.

The life we led while on this duty was tedious and at the same time dangerous in the extreme. Food was scarce and bad, the water horrible, and we had no cavalry to forage for us. If, as infantry, we attempted to levy supplies upon the scattered farms around us, the population seemed suddenly to double, and in the shape of guerrillas "potted" us industriously from behind distant trees, rocks, or fences. Under these various and unpleasant influences, combined with a fair infusion of malaria, our men rapidly lost health and spirits. Unfortunately, no proper medical supplies had been forwarded with our small force (two companies), and, as the fall advanced, the want of quinine and stimulants became a serious annoyance. Moreover, our rations were running low; we had been three weeks without a new supply; and our commanding officer, Major Henry L. Terrill, began to be uneasy as to the safety of his men. About this time it was supposed that a train with rations would be due from the post twenty miles to the north of us; yet it was quite possible that it would bring us food, but no medicines, which were what we most needed. The command was too small to detach

any part of it, and the major therefore resolved to send an officer alone to the post above us, where the rest of the Seventy-ninth lay, and whence they could easily forward quinine and stimulants by the train, if it had not left, or, if it had, by a small cavalry escort.

It so happened, to my cost, as it turned out, that I was the only officer fit to make the journey, and I was accordingly ordered to proceed to Blockhouse No. 3 and make the required arrangements. I started alone just after dusk the next night, and during the darkness succeeded in getting within three miles of my destination. At this time I found that I had lost my way, and, although aware of the danger of my act, was forced to turn aside and ask at a log cabin for directions. The house contained a dried-up old woman and four white-headed, half-naked children. The woman was either stone-deaf or pretended to be so; but, at all events, she gave me no satisfaction, and I remounted and rode away. On coming to the end of a lane, into which I had turned to seek the cabin, I found to my surprise that the bars had been put up during my brief parley. They were too high to leap, and I therefore dismounted to pull them down. As I touched the top rail, I heard a rifle, and at the same instant felt a blow on both arms, which fell helpless. I staggered to my horse and tried to mount; but, as I could use neither arm, the effort was vain, and I therefore stood still, awaiting my fate. I am only conscious that I saw about me several graybacks, for I must have fallen fainting almost immediately.

When I awoke I was lying in the cabin near by, upon a pile of rubbish. Ten or twelve guerrillas were gathered about the fire, apparently drawing lots for my watch, boots, hat, etc. I now made an effort to find out how far I was hurt. I discovered that I could use the left forearm and hand pretty well, and with this hand I felt the right limb all over until I touched the wound. The ball had passed from left to right through the left biceps, and directly through the right arm just below the shoulder, emerging behind. The right arm and forearm were cold and perfectly insensible. I pinched them as well as I could, to test the amount of sensation remaining; but the hand might as well have been that of a dead man. I began to understand that the nerves had been wounded, and that the part was utterly powerless. By this time my friends had pretty well divided the spoils, and, rising together, went out. The old woman then came to me, and said: “Reckon you’d best git up. They-’uns is a-goin’ to take you away.” To this I only answered, “Water, water.” I had a grim sense of amusement on finding that the old woman was not deaf, for she went out, and presently came back with a gourdful, which I eagerly drank. An hour later the graybacks returned, and finding that I was too weak to walk, carried me out and laid me on the bottom of a common cart, with which they set off on a trot. The jolting was horrible, but within an hour I began to have in my dead right hand a strange burning, which was rather a relief to me. It increased as the sun rose and the day grew warm, until I felt as if the hand was caught and pinched in a red-hot vise. Then in my agony I begged my guard for water to wet it with, but for some reason they desired silence, and at every noise threatened me with a revolver. At length the pain became absolutely unendurable, and I grew what it is the fashion to call demoralized. I screamed, cried, and yelled in my torture, until, as I suppose, my captors became alarmed, and, stopping, gave me a handkerchief, —my own, I fancy,—and a canteen of water, with which I wetted the hand, to my unspeakable relief.

It is unnecessary to detail the events by which, finally, I found myself in one of the rebel hospitals near Atlanta. Here, for the first time, my wounds were properly cleansed and dressed by a Dr. Oliver T. Wilson, who treated me throughout with great kindness. I told him I had been a doctor, which, perhaps, may have been in part the cause of the unusual tenderness with which I was managed. The left arm was now quite easy, although, as will be seen, it never entirely healed. The right arm was worse than ever—the humerus broken, the nerves wounded, and the hand alive only to pain. I use this phrase because it is connected in my mind with a visit from a local visitor,—I am not sure he was a preacher,—who used to go daily through the wards, and talk to us or write our letters. One morning he stopped at my bed, when this little talk occurred:

“How are you, lieutenant?”

“Oh,” said I, “as usual. All right, but this hand, which is dead except to pain.”

“Ah,” said he, “such and thus will the wicked be—such will you be if you die in your sins: you will go where only pain can be felt. For all eternity, all of you will be just like that hand—knowing pain only.”

I suppose I was very weak, but somehow I felt a sudden and chilling horror of possible universal pain, and suddenly fainted. When I awoke the hand was worse, if that could be. It was red, shining, aching, burning, and, as it seemed to me, perpetually rasped with hot files. When the doctor came I begged for morphia. He said gravely: “We have none. You know you don’t allow it to pass the lines.” It was sadly true.

I turned to the wall, and wetted the hand again, my sole relief. In about an hour Dr. Wilson came back with two aids, and explained to me that the bone was so crushed as to make it hopeless to save it, and that, besides, amputation offered some chance of arresting the pain. I had thought of this before, but the anguish I felt—I cannot say endured—was so awful that I made no more of losing the limb than of parting with a tooth on account of toothache. Accordingly, brief preparations were made, which I watched with a sort of eagerness such as must forever be inexplicable to any one who has not passed six weeks of torture like that which I had suffered.

I had but one pang before the operation. As I arranged myself on the left side, so as to make it convenient for the operator to use the knife, I asked: “Who is to give me the ether?” “We have none,” said the person questioned. I set my teeth, and said no more.

I need not describe the operation. The pain felt was severe, but it was insignificant as compared with that of any other minute of the past six weeks. The limb was removed very near to the shoulder-joint. As the second incision was made, I felt a strange flash of pain play through the limb, as if it were in every minutest fibril of nerve. This was followed by instant, unspeakable relief, and before the flaps were brought together I was sound asleep. I dimly remember saying, as I pointed to the arm which lay on the floor: “There is the pain, and here am I. How queer!” Then I slept—slept the sleep of the just, or, better, of the painless. From this time forward I was free from neuralgia. At a subsequent period I saw a number of cases similar to mine in a hospital in Philadelphia.

It is no part of my plan to detail my weary months of monotonous prison life in the South. In the early part of April, 1863, I was exchanged, and after the usual thirty days’ furlough returned to my regiment a captain.

On the 19th of September, 1863, occurred the battle of Chickamauga, in which my regiment took a

conspicuous part. The close of our own share in this contest is, as it were, burned into my memory with every least detail. It was about 6 P. M., when we found ourselves in line, under cover of a long, thin row of scrubby trees, beyond which lay a gentle slope, from which, again, rose a hill rather more abrupt, and crowned with an earthwork. We received orders to cross this space and take the fort in front, while a brigade on our right was to make a like movement on its flank.

Just before we emerged into the open ground, we noticed what, I think, was common in many fights—that the enemy had begun to bowl round shot at us, probably from failure of shell. We passed across the valley in good order, although the men fell rapidly all along the line. As we climbed the hill, our pace slackened, and the fire grew heavier. At this moment a battery opened on our left, the shots crossing our heads obliquely. It is this moment which is so printed on my recollection. I can see now, as if through a window, the gray smoke, lit with red flashes, the long, wavering line, the sky blue above, the trodden furrows, blotted with blue blouses. Then it was as if the window closed, and I knew and saw no more. No other scene in my life is thus scarred, if I may say so, into my memory. I have a fancy that the horrible shock which suddenly fell upon me must have had something to do with thus intensifying the momentary image then before my eyes.

When I awakened, I was lying under a tree somewhere at the rear. The ground was covered with wounded, and the doctors were busy at an operating-table, improvised from two barrels and a plank. At length two of them who were examining the wounded about me came up to where I lay. A hospital steward raised my head and poured down some brandy and water, while another cut loose my pantaloons. The doctors exchanged looks and walked away. I asked the steward where I was hit.

“Both thighs,” said he; “the doctors won’t do nothing.”

“No use?” said I.

“Not much,” said he.

“Not much means none at all,” I answered.

When he had gone I set myself to thinking about a good many things I had better have thought of before, but which in no way concern the history of my case. A half-hour went by. I had no pain, and did not get weaker. At last, I cannot explain why, I began to look about me. At first things appeared a little hazy. I remember one thing which thrilled me a little, even then.

A tall, blond-bearded major walked up to a doctor near me, saying, “When you’ve a little leisure, just take a look at my side.”

“Do it now,” said the doctor.

The officer exposed his wound. “Ball went in here, and out there.”

The doctor looked up at him—half pity, half amazement. “If you’ve got any message, you’d best send it by me.”

“Why, you don’t say it’s serious?” was the reply.

“Serious! Why, you’re shot through the stomach. You won’t live over the day.”

Then the man did what struck me as a very odd thing. He said, “Anybody got a pipe?” Some one gave him a pipe. He filled it deliberately, struck a light with a flint, and sat down against a tree near to me. Presently the doctor came to him again, and asked him what he could do for him.

“Send me a drink of Bourbon.”

“Anything else?”

“No.”

As the doctor left him, he called him back. “It’s a little rough, doc, isn’t it?”

No more passed, and I saw this man no longer. Another set of doctors were handling my legs, for the first time causing pain. A moment after a steward put a towel over my mouth, and I smelled the familiar odor of chloroform, which I was glad enough to breathe. In a moment the trees began to move around from left to right, faster and faster; then a universal grayness came before me,—and I recall nothing further until I awoke to consciousness in a hospital-tent. I got hold of my own identity in a moment or two, and was suddenly aware of a sharp cramp in my left leg. I tried to get at it to rub it with my single arm, but, finding myself too weak, hailed an attendant. “Just rub my left calf,” said I, “if you please.”

“Calf?” said he. “You ain’t none. It’s took off.”

“I know better,” said I. “I have pain in both legs.”

“Wall, I never!” said he. “You ain’t got nary leg.”

As I did not believe him, he threw off the covers, and, to my horror, showed me that I had suffered amputation of both thighs, very high up.

“That will do,” said I, faintly.

A month later, to the amazement of every one, I was so well as to be moved from the crowded hospital at Chattanooga to Nashville, where I filled one of the ten thousand beds of that vast metropolis of hospitals. Of the sufferings which then began I shall presently speak. It will be best just now to detail the final misfortune which here fell upon me. Hospital No. 2, in which I lay, was inconveniently crowded with severely wounded officers. After my third week an epidemic of hospital gangrene broke out in my ward. In three days it attacked twenty persons. Then an inspector came, and we were transferred at once to the open air, and placed in tents. Strangely enough, the wound in my remaining arm, which still suppurated, was seized with gangrene. The usual remedy, bromine, was used locally, but the main artery opened, was tied, bled again and again, and at last, as a final resort, the remaining arm was amputated at the shoulder-joint. Against all chances I recovered, to find myself a useless torso, more like some strange larval creature than anything of human shape. Of my anguish and horror of myself I dare not speak. I have dictated these pages, not to shock my readers, but to possess them with facts in regard to the relation of the mind to the body; and I hasten, therefore, to such portions of my case as best illustrate these views.

In January, 1864, I was forwarded to Philadelphia, in order to enter what was known as the Stump Hospital,

South street, then in charge of Dr. Hopkinson. This favor was obtained through the influence of my father's friend, the late Governor Anderson, who has always manifested an interest in my case, for which I am deeply grateful. It was thought, at the time, that Mr. Palmer, the leg-maker, might be able to adapt some form of arm to my left shoulder, as on that side there remained five inches of the arm-bone, which I could move to a moderate extent. The hope proved illusory, as the stump was always too tender to bear any pressure. The hospital referred to was in charge of several surgeons while I was an inmate, and was at all times a clean and pleasant home. It was filled with men who had lost one arm or leg, or one of each, as happened now and then. I saw one man who had lost both legs, and one who had parted with both arms; but none, like myself, stripped of every limb. There were collected in this place hundreds of these cases, which gave to it, with reason enough, the not very pleasing title of Stump Hospital.

I spent here three and a half months, before my transfer to the United States Army Hospital for Injuries and Diseases of the Nervous System. Every morning I was carried out in an arm-chair and placed in the library, where some one was always ready to write or read for me, or to fill my pipe. The doctors lent me medical books; the ladies brought me luxuries and fed me; and, save that I was helpless to a degree which was humiliating, I was as comfortable as kindness could make me.

I amused myself at this time by noting in my mind all that I could learn from other limbless folk, and from myself, as to the peculiar feelings which were noticed in regard to lost members. I found that the great mass of men who had undergone amputations for many months felt the usual consciousness that they still had the lost limb. It itched or pained, or was cramped, but never felt hot or cold. If they had painful sensations referred to it, the conviction of its existence continued unaltered for long periods; but where no pain was felt in it, then by degrees the sense of having that limb faded away entirely. I think we may to some extent explain this. The knowledge we possess of any part is made up of the numberless impressions from without which affect its sensitive surfaces, and which are transmitted through its nerves to the spinal nerve-cells, and through them, again, to the brain. We are thus kept endlessly informed as to the existence of parts, because the impressions which reach the brain are, by a law of our being, referred by us to the part from which they come. Now, when the part is cut off, the nerve-trunks which led to it and from it, remaining capable of being impressed by irritations, are made to convey to the brain from the stump impressions which are, as usual, referred by the brain to the lost parts to which these nerve-threads belonged. In other words, the nerve is like a bell-wire. You may pull it at any part of its course, and thus ring the bell as well as if you pulled at the end of the wire; but, in any case, the intelligent servant will refer the pull to the front door, and obey it accordingly. The impressions made on the severed ends of the nerve are due often to changes in the stump during healing, and consequently cease when it has healed, so that finally, in a very healthy stump, no such impressions arise; the brain ceases to correspond with the lost leg, and, as les absents ont toujours tort, it is no longer remembered or recognized. But in some cases, such as mine proved at last to my sorrow, the ends of the nerves undergo a curious alteration, and get to be enlarged and altered. This change, as I have seen in my practice of medicine, sometimes passes up the nerves toward the centers, and occasions a more or less constant irritation of the nerve-fibers, producing neuralgia, which is usually referred by the brain to that part of the lost limb to which the affected nerve belonged. This pain keeps the brain ever mindful of the missing part, and, imperfectly at least, preserves to the man a consciousness of possessing that which he has not.

Where the pains come and go, as they do in certain cases, the subjective sensations thus occasioned are very curious, since in such cases the man loses and gains, and loses and regains, the consciousness of the presence of the lost parts, so that he will tell you, "Now I feel my thumb, now I feel my little finger." I should also add that nearly every person who has lost an arm above the elbow feels as though the lost member were bent at the elbow, and at times is vividly impressed with the notion that his fingers are strongly flexed.

Other persons present a peculiarity which I am at a loss to account for. Where the leg, for instance, has been lost, they feel as if the foot were present, but as though the leg were shortened. Thus, if the thigh has been taken off, there seems to them to be a foot at the knee; if the arm, a hand seems to be at the elbow, or attached to the stump itself.

Before leaving Nashville I had begun to suffer the most acute pain in my left hand, especially the little finger; and so perfect was the idea which was thus kept up of the real presence of these missing parts that I found it hard at times to believe them absent. Often at night I would try with one lost hand to grope for the other. As, however, I had no pain in the right arm, the sense of the existence of that limb gradually disappeared, as did that of my legs also.

Everything was done for my neuralgia which the doctors could think of; and at length, at my suggestion, I was removed, as I have said, from the Stump Hospital to the United States Army Hospital for Injuries and Diseases of the Nervous System. It was a pleasant, suburban, old-fashioned country-seat, its gardens surrounded by a circle of wooden, one-story wards, shaded by fine trees. There were some three hundred cases of epilepsy, paralysis, St. Vitus's dance, and wounds of nerves. On one side of me lay a poor fellow, a Dane, who had the same burning neuralgia with which I once suffered, and which I now learned was only too common. This man had become hysterical from pain. He carried a sponge in his pocket, and a bottle of water in one hand, with which he constantly wetted the burning hand. Every sound increased his torture, and he even poured water into his boots to keep himself from feeling too sensibly the rough friction of his soles when walking. Like him, I was greatly eased by having small doses of morphia injected under the skin of my shoulder with a hollow needle fitted to a syringe.

As I improved under the morphia treatment, I began to be disturbed by the horrible variety of suffering about me. One man walked sideways; there was one who could not smell; another was dumb from an explosion. In fact, every one had his own abnormal peculiarity. Near me was a strange case of palsy of the muscles called rhomboids, whose office it is to hold down the shoulder-blades flat on the back during the motions of the arms, which, in themselves, were strong enough. When, however, he lifted these members, the shoulder-blades stood out from the back like wings, and got him the sobriquet of the "Angel." In my ward were also the cases of fits, which very much annoyed me, as upon any great change in the weather it was common to have a dozen convulsions in view at once. Dr. Neek, one of our physicians, told me that on one occasion a hundred and fifty fits took place within thirty-six hours. On my complaining of these sights,

whence I alone could not fly, I was placed in the paralytic and wound ward, which I found much more pleasant.

A month of skilful treatment eased me entirely of my aches, and I then began to experience certain curious feelings, upon which, having nothing to do and nothing to do anything with, I reflected a good deal. It was a good while before I could correctly explain to my own satisfaction the phenomena which at this time I was called upon to observe. By the various operations already described I had lost about four fifths of my weight. As a consequence of this I ate much less than usual, and could scarcely have consumed the ration of a soldier. I slept also but little; for, as sleep is the repose of the brain, made necessary by the waste of its tissues during thought and voluntary movement, and as this latter did not exist in my case, I needed only that rest which was necessary to repair such exhaustion of the nerve-centers as was induced by thinking and the automatic movements of the viscera.

I observed at this time also that my heart, in place of beating, as it once did, seventy-eight in the minute, pulsated only forty-five times in this interval—a fact to be easily explained by the perfect quiescence to which I was reduced, and the consequent absence of that healthy and constant stimulus to the muscles of the heart which exercise occasions.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, my physical health was good, which, I confess, surprised me, for this among other reasons: It is said that a burn of two thirds of the surface destroys life, because then all the excretory matters which this portion of the glands of the skin evolved are thrown upon the blood, and poison the man, just as happens in an animal whose skin the physiologist has varnished, so as in this way to destroy its function. Yet here was I, having lost at least a third of my skin, and apparently none the worse for it.

Still more remarkable, however, were the psychical changes which I now began to perceive. I found to my horror that at times I was less conscious of myself, of my own existence, than used to be the case. This sensation was so novel that at first it quite bewildered me. I felt like asking some one constantly if I were really George Dedlow or not; but, well aware how absurd I should seem after such a question, I refrained from speaking of my case, and strove more keenly to analyze my feelings. At times the conviction of my want of being myself was overwhelming and most painful. It was, as well as I can describe it, a deficiency in the egoistic sentiment of individuality. About one half of the sensitive surface of my skin was gone, and thus much of relation to the outer world destroyed. As a consequence, a large part of the receptive central organs must be out of employ, and, like other idle things, degenerating rapidly. Moreover, all the great central ganglia, which give rise to movements in the limbs, were also eternally at rest. Thus one half of me was absent or functionally dead. This set me to thinking how much a man might lose and yet live. If I were unhappy enough to survive, I might part with my spleen at least, as many a dog has done, and grown fat afterwards. The other organs with which we breathe and circulate the blood would be essential; so also would the liver; but at least half of the intestines might be dispensed with, and of course all of the limbs. And as to the nervous system, the only parts really necessary to life are a few small ganglia. Were the rest absent or inactive, we should have a man reduced, as it were, to the lowest terms, and leading an almost vegetative existence. Would such a being, I asked myself, possess the sense of individuality in its usual completeness, even if his organs of sensation remained, and he were capable of consciousness? Of course, without them, he could not have it any more than a dahlia or a tulip. But with them—how then? I concluded that it would be at a minimum, and that, if utter loss of relation to the outer world were capable of destroying a man's consciousness of himself, the destruction of half of his sensitive surfaces might well occasion, in a less degree, a like result, and so diminish his sense of individual existence.

I thus reached the conclusion that a man is not his brain, or any one part of it, but all of his economy, and that to lose any part must lessen this sense of his own existence. I found but one person who properly appreciated this great truth. She was a New England lady, from Hartford—an agent, I think, for some commission, perhaps the Sanitary. After I had told her my views and feelings she said: "Yes, I comprehend. The fractional entities of vitality are embraced in the oneness of the unitary Ego. Life," she added, "is the garnered condensation of objective impressions; and as the objective is the remote father of the subjective, so must individuality, which is but focused subjectivity, suffer and fade when the sensation lenses, by which the rays of impression are condensed, become destroyed." I am not quite clear that I fully understood her, but I think she appreciated my ideas, and I felt grateful for her kindly interest.

The strange want I have spoken of now haunted and perplexed me so constantly that I became moody and wretched. While in this state, a man from a neighboring ward fell one morning into conversation with the chaplain, within ear-shot of my chair. Some of their words arrested my attention, and I turned my head to see and listen. The speaker, who wore a sergeant's chevron and carried one arm in a sling was a tall, loosely made person, with a pale face, light eyes of a washed-out blue tint, and very sparse yellow whiskers. His mouth was weak, both lips being almost alike, so that the organ might have been turned upside down without affecting its expression. His forehead, however, was high and thinly covered with sandy hair. I should have said, as a phrenologist, will feeble; emotional, but not passionate; likely to be an enthusiast or a weakly bigot.

I caught enough of what passed to make me call to the sergeant when the chaplain left him.

"Good morning," said he. "How do you get on?"

"Not at all," I replied. "Where were you hit?"

"Oh, at Chancellorsville. I was shot in the shoulder. I have what the doctors call paralysis of the median nerve, but I guess Dr. Neek and the lightnin' battery will fix it. When my time's out I'll go back to Kearsarge and try on the school-teaching again. I've done my share."

"Well," said I, "you're better off than I."

"Yes," he answered, "in more ways than one. I belong to the New Church. It's a great comfort for a plain man like me, when he's weary and sick, to be able to turn away from earthly things and hold converse daily with the great and good who have left this here world. We have a circle in Coates street. If it wa'n't for the consoling I get there, I'd of wished myself dead many a time. I ain't got kith or kin on earth; but this matters little, when one can just talk to them daily and know that they are in the spheres above us."

"It must be a great comfort," I replied, "if only one could believe it."

“Believe!” he repeated. “How can you help it? Do you suppose anything dies?”

“No,” I said. “The soul does not, I am sure; and as to matter, it merely changes form.”

“But why, then,” said he, “should not the dead soul talk to the living? In space, no doubt, exist all forms of matter, merely in finer, more ethereal being. You can’t suppose a naked soul moving about without a bodily garment—no creed teaches that; and if its new clothing be of like substance to ours, only of ethereal fineness,—a more delicate recrystallization about the eternal spiritual nucleus,—must it not then possess powers as much more delicate and refined as is the new material in which it is reclad?”

“Not very clear,” I answered; “but, after all, the thing should be susceptible of some form of proof to our present senses.”

“And so it is,” said he. “Come to-morrow with me, and you shall see and hear for yourself.”

“I will,” said I, “if the doctor will lend me the ambulance.”

It was so arranged, as the surgeon in charge was kind enough, as usual, to oblige me with the loan of his wagon, and two orderlies to lift my useless trunk.

On the day following I found myself, with my new comrade, in a house in Coates street, where a “circle” was in the daily habit of meeting. So soon as I had been comfortably deposited in an arm-chair, beside a large pine table, the rest of those assembled seated themselves, and for some time preserved an unbroken silence. During this pause I scrutinized the persons present. Next to me, on my right, sat a flabby man, with ill-marked, baggy features and injected eyes. He was, as I learned afterwards, an eclectic doctor, who had tried his hand at medicine and several of its quackish variations, finally settling down on eclecticism, which I believe professes to be to scientific medicine what vegetarianism is to common-sense, every-day dietetics. Next to him sat a female-authoress, I think, of two somewhat feeble novels, and much pleasanter to look at than her books. She was, I thought, a good deal excited at the prospect of spiritual revelations. Her neighbor was a pallid, care-worn young woman, with very red lips, and large brown eyes of great beauty. She was, as I learned afterwards, a magnetic patient of the doctor, and had deserted her husband, a master mechanic, to follow this new light. The others were, like myself, strangers brought hither by mere curiosity. One of them was a lady in deep black, closely veiled. Beyond her, and opposite to me, sat the sergeant, and next to him the medium, a man named Brink. He wore a good deal of jewelry, and had large black side-whiskers—a shrewd-visaged, large-nosed, full-lipped man, formed by nature to appreciate the pleasant things of sensual existence.

Before I had ended my survey, he turned to the lady in black, and asked if she wished to see any one in the spirit-world.

She said, “Yes,” rather feebly.

“Is the spirit present?” he asked. Upon which two knocks were heard in affirmation. “Ah!” said the medium, “the name is—it is the name of a child. It is a male child. It is—”

“Alfred!” she cried. “Great Heaven! My child! My boy!”

On this the medium arose, and became strangely convulsed. “I see,” he said—“I see—a fair-haired boy. I see blue eyes—I see above you, beyond you—” at the same time pointing fixedly over her head.

She turned with a wild start. “Where—whereabouts?”

“A blue-eyed boy,” he continued, “over your head. He cries—he says, ‘Mama, mama!’”

The effect of this on the woman was unpleasant. She stared about her for a moment, and exclaiming, “I come—I am coming, Alfy!” fell in hysterics on the floor.

Two or three persons raised her, and aided her into an adjoining room; but the rest remained at the table, as though well accustomed to like scenes.

After this several of the strangers were called upon to write the names of the dead with whom they wished to communicate. The names were spelled out by the agency of affirmative knocks when the correct letters were touched by the applicant, who was furnished with an alphabet-card upon which he tapped the letters in turn, the medium, meanwhile, scanning his face very keenly. With some, the names were readily made out. With one, a stolid personage of disbelieving type, every attempt failed, until at last the spirits signified by knocks that he was a disturbing agency, and that while he remained all our efforts would fail. Upon this some of the company proposed that he should leave; of which invitation he took advantage, with a skeptical sneer at the whole performance.

As he left us, the sergeant leaned over and whispered to the medium, who next addressed himself to me. “Sister Euphemia,” he said, indicating the lady with large eyes, “will act as your medium. I am unable to do more. These things exhaust my nervous system.”

“Sister Euphemia,” said the doctor, “will aid us. Think, if you please, sir, of a spirit, and she will endeavor to summon it to our circle.”

Upon this a wild idea came into my head. I answered: “I am thinking as you directed me to do.”

The medium sat with her arms folded, looking steadily at the center of the table. For a few moments there was silence. Then a series of irregular knocks began. “Are you present?” said the medium.

The affirmative raps were twice given.

“I should think,” said the doctor, “that there were two spirits present.”

His words sent a thrill through my heart.

“Are there two?” he questioned.

A double rap.

“Yes, two,” said the medium. “Will it please the spirits to make us conscious of their names in this world?”

A single knock. “No.”

“Will it please them to say how they are called in the world of spirits?”

Again came the irregular raps—3, 4, 8, 6; then a pause, and 3, 4, 8, 7.

“I think,” said the authoress, “they must be numbers. Will the spirits,” she said, “be good enough to aid us? Shall we use the alphabet?”

“Yes,” was rapped very quickly.

“Are these numbers?”

“Yes,” again.

“I will write them,” she added, and, doing so, took up the card and tapped the letters. The spelling was pretty rapid, and ran thus as she tapped, in turn, first the letters, and last the numbers she had already set down:

“UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL MUSEUM, Nos. 3486, 3487.”

The medium looked up with a puzzled expression.

“Good gracious!” said I, “they are MY LEGS—MY LEGS!”

What followed, I ask no one to believe except those who, like myself, have communed with the things of another sphere. Suddenly I felt a strange return of my self-consciousness. I was reindividualized, so to speak. A strange wonder filled me, and, to the amazement of every one, I arose, and, staggering a little, walked across the room on limbs invisible to them or me. It was no wonder I staggered, for, as I briefly reflected, my legs had been nine months in the strongest alcohol. At this instant all my new friends crowded around me in astonishment. Presently, however, I felt myself sinking slowly. My legs were going, and in a moment I was resting feebly on my two stumps upon the floor. It was too much. All that was left of me fainted and rolled over senseless.

I have little to add. I am now at home in the West, surrounded by every form of kindness and every possible comfort; but alas! I have so little surety of being myself that I doubt my own honesty in drawing my pension, and feel absolved from gratitude to those who are kind to a being who is uncertain of being enough himself to be conscientiously responsible. It is needless to add that I am not a happy fraction of a man, and that I am eager for the day when I shall rejoin the lost members of my corporeal family in another and a happier world.

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