Colonial Farmer.

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Correspondence.

For the Colonial Farmer.

RURAL TOPICS.

CARE OF STOCK IN WINTER.

Farmers do not consult their own interest when they neglect to provide warm, comfortable quarters for their live stock in winter, to say nothing of the inhumanity in exposing cattle to the pitiless storms and cold winter winds unprotected. I have seen farmers turn their cattle into a field in the dead of winter, where there was a hay stack, and leave them there till the hay was consumed, or rather wasted, as it was thrown around upon the snow, and much of it was trampled under the feet of the cattle and was lost. These farmers could sit by their warm fires and smoke their pipes and tell stories while storms were raging without, the thermometer far below zero, and their poor cattle suffering in the icy blasts! Can it be possible that any such farmers exist in 1877? Is there one so dull in intellect as not to know that it is a reckless waste of fodder to feed cattle in this manner? Besides the inhumanity in thus treating cattle, they require about one-third more feed to keep them in good condition as to flesh than they do when housed in warm quarters; and we may safely estimate the increasing expense of wintering stock in the fields, or in cold stables, at from $10 to $15 per head, when hay is worth 15 per ton. A cow ordinarily requiries two tons of hay to winter her in warm quarters, with meal, roots, &c., if in milk; but when kept where she suffers from the cold, an extra half ton of hay must be added to her allowance, also extra meal, roots, &c.; consequently a farmer with twenty head of cattle, who winters them properly, saves from $200 to $300 annually over the cost of wintering on the careless system that some farmers adopt. In twenty years he saves, say $5,000; and it is by doing things *right* that some farmers get rich, while doing them wrong tends to poverty.

THE EEG TRADE IN NEW YORK.

The receipt of eggs in New York city for November, 1877, was over 40,000 barrels. This number is a fair average for each month in the year, the spring months exceeding, and the winter months falling under 40,000. Each barrel will contain about 1,000 eggs, more or less. The number of barrels received in one year, rating the monthly receipts at 40,000, is 480,000, or 480,000,000 eggs, which, at twenty-four cents per dozen, a fair average price, amount to $9,600,000—nine million six hundred thousand dollars. Now, when it is considered that a large portion of these eggs are are sent to Brooklyn, Jersey City, Newark, and other near-by places, covering about two millions and a half of population, it is evident that the estimate is not too high, being less than $4 worth of eggs per annum for each inhabitant, and that includes all the eggs used in cooking by confectioners of every kind. As hens average, good and poor layers, they will lay about 100 eggs each per year; consequently, it requires 4,800,000 hens to lay the eggs sent to New York yearly, worth 50 cents each, or $2,400,000. If these hens were sitting in nest boxes 18 inches wide, side by side, they would extend 4,090 miles, or further than from New York to San Francisco. Estimating ten hens as the average number kept by all classes of people who sell eggs to country store-keepers, the number of families who supply New York with eggs is four hundred and eighty thousand. Probably the time will come when poultry men will keep 100,000 or more hens near our large cities to supply them in part with eggs; but it will require an outlay of capital and a skill in their management that is unknown at this time. The man who solves the great question: "How can 10,000 to 100,000 fowls be kept by one person *profitably?*" will be a benefactor of his country.

FEED FOR SWINE.

A writer in the *Country Gentleman* says: "Having for some years kept numerous swine both for fattening and breeding purposes, I have practised, in the fall, feeding them steamed potatoes, and the result fully satisfies me that hogs, on half the corn with steamed potatoes, do fall as well as with a full ration of corn, and as a feed for chickens, with a little milk, they are not to be excelled. A bushel of potatoes will certainly make as much pork as one half bushel of corn (and I think three pecks) if properly fed in connection with each other. To get the most value, however, potatoes should not be boiled, but steamed. We all know the peculiar excellence of a mealy potato over a boiled one, and steaming has in fact the same effect as baking. The potato does not become water soaked, but the moisture of the potato becomes heated and expands, thus breaking up the starch cells, so that the potato is comminuted with but little trouble, and can be fully digested by the animal." The best way to cook feed for swine is to boil the potatoes and corn meal together, adding roots of some kind, as beets, parsnips, carrots, or pumpkins. Steaming may be good for potatoes alone; but it is decidedly better to mix a variety of feed to be cooked; and always use a liberal supply of corn and meal where hogs are being fattened. Some farmers feed corn in the ear to them, and not much else; but that is a wasted practice, as much of the grain is scattered among the manure of the pen and is lost. The experience of our most advanced swine breeders is, that cooked meal produces considerable more pork than the same weight of shelled corn or meal fed uncooked. Farmers should have a commodious building at the side of their pig pen, with a brick or stone floor. Here a large boiler kettle should be set in brick, mason work, to be used in cooking the feed. A pump inside the building should supply the water needed; and the arrangement should be such as to admit of feeding the swine without going outside. This building should have a cellar under it for roots, and also be large enough on the first floor to afford room for meal, &c. One half the means of a farmer's success, is in having his outbuildings commodious, in the right place, and properly arranged, so that all of his operations in relation to his live stock may be done thoroughly and economically.

DEEP PLOWING.

Some twenty years ago there was a mania among the agricultural theorists for deep plowing. Every farmer, it was said had a farm under his lands of great value, where the plow had not yet reached. No matter what the characters of the surface and the subsoils were, the plow should go in to its beam. But these men are beginning to get their eyes open. Mr. George E. Waring, Jr., in speaking of the results of ten years' management of "Ogden farm," in the *Agriculturist*, says: "About six acres were sown seven or eight years ago, plowed about twelve inches deep. The subsoil of blue clay, which was brought to the surface, was a lasting injury to the land. It still shows the ill effect of the treatment, in spite of time and manure. Certainly in this case—and I think many other similar instances could be found—deep plowing was a grave mistake, and it will be well for enthusiasts who are disposed to follow the extreme theories of the deep plowers, to study very cautiously the character of the subsoil which they propose to bring to the surface. I confess to having been an advocate of these theories for many years, and I have seen them sustained on certain soils, but I have slowly come to the belief that it is usually the safest plan to leave the "surface soil" where nature made it, and where she always keeps it in her most fertile forests and fields. There are some soils that would be benefitted by plowing twelve inches deep, but they are scarce." The rule may be said to be: "Never turn up over one or two inches of unfertile subsoil in one season; and when so turned up the land should receive a dressing of manure."

SOWING CLOVER SEED.

Joseph Harris, of Rochester, N. Y., who professes to be a thorough, scientific farmer, says: "My own practice is to harrow the wheat three times in the spring. We go over the wheat both ways with the harrow, and then sow the clover seed and follow with the harrow to cover the seed. If the ground is very hard, the harrows do not break up the crust sufficiently to afford a good covering for the seed, and if dry weather follows we have a poor catch on these hard spots. It depends very much on the soil and season. The harrowing helps the wheat, and kills a good many weeds, and on sandy loam the harrow leaves a good seed bed for the clover, and if we are favored with a few showers we are pretty sure of a good catch of clover." Farmers may frequently try this system of harrowing with success, but they must be sure that they do not tear up too much of the wheat. A fine toothed harrow is best. Probably as good, or better results, would be shown by first sowing the clover seed, and then harrowing it in. On this plan, the seed need not be sown as early as it usually is when the land is not harrowed; but it should be sown when the land is dry.

RINGBONE IN HORSES.

A veterinary surgeon says: "Give your horse absolute rest from all work or driving and apply a mild blister to the parts affected, composed of one part of biniodide of mercury and eight parts of lard. Mix these materials thoroughly together. Cut the hair off short over the exostosis or bony growth, then before applying the blister, apply to the parts to be blistered only pure cider vinegar in as hot a temperature as can well be borne by but thoroughly done, apply the blister, and hand-rub this well into the surthe hand, using a sponge and hand-rub well in the parts. This carefully face of the skin. Turn your horse out during the middle of the day in pleasant weather. It will probably take three months and perhaps longer to make a cure, and the animal must, as above mentioned, have absolute rest during this time. It may be found necessary to apply the blister twice or perhaps three times before a cure is accomplished.

The most of these "horse doctors," who style themselves "veterinary surgeons," are "quacks," and profess to know a great deal more than they really do know; but frequently they give good remedies (culled from books probably) and it is well to try them, when it is evident that they are harmless. When you see one of those "surgeons" using "highfalutin" expressions to show off his assumed learning, set him down as a humbug.

Miscellaneous.

The horse is always ready to lend us his power for our support and good. Why, not, then, watch over him, protect him from cold and hanger, supply him with all the nutritious food his system requires, so that his muscles and tendons may be elastic, and his large hazel eyes sparkle with life? The eye is a most magnificent mirror and interpreter of the mental and physical power of the horse. When the eye is dull and heavy, the elastic step is stiffened, the constitution impaired, the coat has lost its glossy appearance, the animal is reduced to poverty, disease, and death, caused by abuse, exposure, musty feed, and foul and badly-ventilated stables. Let us all treat our horses more humanely. —*Colman's Rural.*

Sand, if not the best, is one of the best articles in use for bedding cattle. It is a good deodorizer, and keeps the stable sweet. As the cattle work it back into the trench under their feet, it mixes with the manure, and thus divides it, and makes it more suitable for the use of plants. If the distance to haul is not too far, its very cheapness ought to recommend its use. In barns that have no cellars, were it used freely, it would absorb a large amount of urine that is now wasted. Soil and muck are dirty things to use in the stable, but sand is clean. Then, too, it is a nice thing to use under hen roosts, to receive the droppings, which can be easily raked off and kept in barrels, and in spring mixed with fine cow manure—one part of the former to two of the latter. This being shovelled over thoroughly two or three times, makes a mass of rich manure. A large handful of this in the hill will set corn to growing finely. Flowers, too, grow and blossom far better in soil that has an admixture of sand. So clayey and peaty soils are benefitted by its combination with them, and vice versa. When spread on heavy soils in grass, it produces more effect than any chemical manure I have ever seen used.—*N. E. Farmer.*

When to Prune Fruit Trees.

Long experience shows that when it is desirable to produce a free growth of shoots and leaves, pruning should be done when the trees are dormant, as in the winter season, or early in the spring, before the sap begins to flow. When fruit trees appear to grow too rapidly, and to produce too much wood, they may be pruned moderately in the summer season, cutting away a portion of the wood by degrees; but a shoot growing in an improper place may be cut away at any time. An experiment made by pruning apple trees every month in the year, for two seasons, showed that the wounds of the branches cut in February and March, at the end of five years, when all had healed over, were found to be the least decayed under the healed surface. When trees are pruned in winter, or I may say at any time, it is best to cover the wounds with a hot mixture of tar, and pulverized brick dust or fine sand. A solution of shellac in alcohol, as thick as can be applied with a brush, is considered by many as the best preparation that can be applied.

During the mild days of winter, orchards may be pruned—while little else can be done, but good judgment should be exercised in regard to selecting the branches to be cut away. It is ruinous to an orchard to cut and slash away one third to one-half the limbs. All that should be done is to give the trees a good shape, and only cut away such limbs as are plainly in excess of the natural requirements of the tree to conform to the extent of its roots. If we take away too much of the top of a tree, it is like taking blood from a man—the more that is taken, the less vitality remains in him, therefore in pruning, only the few unsightly branches, and those improperly situated, should be cut away.—*Rural New Yorker.*

Horse-Shoes and Horse-Shoeing.

On an average, horses require shoeing once a month. The length of time a shoe will wear depends much on the kind of service a horse is doing, and on the kind of road he is daily travelling. A team horse in heavy draught does not wear out as many shoes as one used in a hack; quick motion grinds shoes down more rapidly than slow use. Some pavement is harder on shoes than an ordinary road, while the friction of a gravelly road wears them away rapidly. Wooden pavement is but a little saving to the wear and tear of shoes, for the grit and dust which become impacted in the interstices of the wooden block grind away shoes like the friction of an emery wheel. The hind shoes wear out first, and there is more strain and friction on them than on the forward shoes. It is impossible and improper for a horse to wear shoes more than six weeks, for the growth of the foot shortens the shoe, as well as changes the shape otherwise. The neglect will cause the shoe to encroach upon the soft textures of the foot and produce lameness.

There are but few practical mechanics who have sufficiently studied the foot of the horse. It is not enough to know the anatomy of the foot, and where to insert a nail not to cause pain, but the foot should be studied in in the state of nature, before the mechanism of man has by artificial appliance distorted it. The shape of the hoof of the wild horse, or of one that has never been shod, should be taken as a model. The foot is then properly balanced, neither too long nor too broad, but it has adjusted itself to nature, and the muscles and tendons are not strained by travel. Confinement and unskilful shoeing change the anatomical relations of the foot, and the best judgment of the mechanic is often taxed to correct the growing deformity—from unskilful shoeing. When a reasoning, skilful mechanic is found, the horse is safe in his hands, for he only preserves the normal shape of the hoof, and adjusts the shoe to protect it. The frog in the hoof of the horse is placed there for a particular purpose, and should not be cut by the shoer. If this is allowed, contraction and lameness will follow. The shape and weight of the shoe should be accommodated to the purpose for which they are designed. The track horse requires a shoe lighter and without corks, while the draught horse must have a heavy, broad shoe, with corks, to enable him to obtain foothold and travel with the least possible strain.—*Forest and Stream.*

Select Story.

A Ghostly Warning.

I CALL it a ghostly warning because, though it came not in the night-watches, in far-away tones, from the thin lips of a filmy apparition, it did come to me in the name of a dear friend long since gone to the Unknown Land.

In the spring of 1875, I visited Montreal, and, wishing to be entirely free for the business which necessitated my presence there, instead of going to the house of a relative, engaged board in a convenient locality under the same roof with an acquaintance. Excepting this lady, one friend and a cousin, no one to whom I was known was, during the first week, aware that I was in the city. This cousin, a very favorite one, then chanced to be in Canada for a few weeks, having left his wife and family temporarily alone in their home at Paris. As G——'s evenings hung rather heavily on his hands while away from his family, to which he was always devoted, he was good enough to enliven by his welcome presence many of mine, which otherwise would have been as dull as evenings in a boarding-house full of strangers must always be.

One morning, perhaps the third or fourth after my arrival, came the warning, delivered in a very straightforward, prosaic, unghostly way by the letter-carrier. One always examines the outside of a letter to see who it is from, probably for the same reason that leads one to listen to what other people say about one's friends before hearing what these have to say for themselves. I looked at this letter curiously. It was post-marked in the city at five o'clock of the previous afternoon, yet it was directed in a hand I had never expected to see again save when I looked again with tearful eyes over a bundle of yellow old letters tied up carefully in a corner of my desk at home. It was curious, I thought, that this rather peculiar chirography should be duplicated. Then I observed, with a start, that the middle name in the direction was not that which belongs to me, but one which I had adopted for two or three years of my childhood, preferring it to the family name which my parents gave me. I had outgrown this whim and returned to my baptismal name, but the friend referred to always took a sort of pleasure in reminding me of this and several other childish fancies which we had held in common. No one now living, so far as I was aware, so much as knew that I had ever signed the name I now saw before me.

So my curiosity was well awake before I opened the envelope. Owing to a circumstance which will be related further on, the letter is not now in my possession, but it ran very nearly, if not quite, as follows:

"Dearest E——,—It is sometimes permitted to us who have stepped into the light to give words of comfort or of warning to those who still wander in darkness. My word to you now is one of warning.

"One who is very dear to you is about to trust his life to the treacherous deep. If he does he will be lost. Upon you rests the responsibility. Prevent him from recrossing the ocean if you value his life.

"I am now, as of yore,
Ever lovingly yours,
ANNIE M. H——.

"By the hand of A. B. Sears, Spiritual Medium."

I don't think I am naturally superstitious, but it would be difficult to describe the effect of this letter upon my mind. It was not merely the nature of the communication, but its entire unexpectedness, that made it impressive. I read and re-read it carefully. The handwriting, if not precisely the same as that of my friend, certainly resembled it very strongly, and, though I had with me none of the actual writing to compare with it, I felt reasonably sure that my memory on this point was trustworthy. After thinking carefully over my list of acquaintances, I felt certain that there was no one of them who would be willing to play a practical joke of such a nature, and I knew of no one in the city who had ever heard of Annie's name. Then, too, there was the middle name of childish fancy which I had never signed since the days when Annie was my sole correspondent.

I put the letter in my bureau drawer and turned the key upon it. Putting this in my pocket, I went out, as usual, for the day, resolved not to let the matter trouble me. The business of the busy day totally drove it out of my mind, until, as I entered the house at dusk, the memory came back to me with a slight shock, such as an unwelcome memory produces. This was repeated and intensified when, upon entering my room, I found the letter lying on the top of the bureau. I tried the drawers: all were locked. I felt in my pocket: there was the key. I laughed at myself, and said, "I must have locked the stable-door, leaving the horse outside. I'll see that it's in now, any way." So I put the letter into the drawer, and, turning the key, placed it in my pocket before going down to dinner.

Soon after dinner my cousin came in, and we passed the evening in the pleasant parlour of my only acquaintance in the house, whom I will call Mrs. Murray. During these hours I did not think of the letter, having determined that I would not think of it; but when I went into my room for the night, after turning up the gas and stirring the fire, I went to the bureau to lay off my bracelets. There, stuck in the frame of the looking-glass, was the letter. The drawers were all locked; not a thing in them had been disturbed. A brooch, a little money, a finger-ring, some laces, and many little things that might have tempted a thief or a pilfering housemaid, were all just as I had left them in the same drawer where the letter had been. There could be no mistake about the matter this time. I had locked that letter in the drawer just before dinner, and had not since entered the room. Yet there the thing was staring me in the face, with the old, well-remembered handwriting and the long disused middle name, defying me to doubt the reality of its presence in a place where I had not put it.

Holding it in my hand and sitting in a low chair by the fire, I thought over the subject of the letter.

It has never seemed to me to be unreasonable to believe that if there is a life beyond the present, the spirits of those who have reached it before us may sometimes possess the inclination and the power to communicate with us. But I was not at all inclined to accept this communication as coming from the Spirit Land simply because it purported to do so. I had seen only one or two professed "mediums," and these by accident, but they had given me no desire to see more of their sort. It was a strong argument against the genuineness of this communication that it professed to come through the hands of a "medium." Still, I would grant to myself, for the moment, that this letter undoubtedly was from my dear old friend. What, in that case, could—what ought—I to do? Of course, the person referred to as in danger could only be my cousin G——, for, as far as I knew, no one else who was dear to me was thinking of crossing the Atlantic or any other ocean. But it was nonsense to say that if he were lost the responsibility of his loss would rest upon me. If any particular vessel had been mentioned in which it was said it would be dangerous to sail, or if any special week or month had been named, I would, to have satisfied my conscience, have faced my cousin's certain ridicule, and used my best powers of persuasion to induce him to take passage on another vessel or at a different time. But there was no such mention. He did not even know by what steamer he should leave, as all depended upon his business arrangements. As it was, how could I do or say anything to prevent his going where both his domestic and his business interests called him?

Thinking about it as a real communication from a present but unseen friend, I at last said aloud, as to one within hearing, "No, Annie, I can do nothing, and I will burn this letter, so that it shall not trouble me any more."

"A distinct whisper, apparently just by my ear, answered, "You'll be sorry if you do." Startled, I looked all about the room—behind the sofa, under the bed, back of the window curtains—though I knew as well before as I did afterward that there was no one in the room. The occupants of the rooms next to mine had been snoring for the last hour, and the halls had long been perfectly quiet.

Heedless of the whispered warning, I persisted in my purpose. The grate fire was nearly out, but there were live coals enough to light the paper, and I watched it while it was consumed to ashes.

The next morning I went out, as usual, spending the day in tedious details of business that would not arrange itself satisfactorily, and happily forgetting the burned letter until it was recalled, as I entered the house late in the afternoon, by the mail-carrier's latest budget waiting its several claimants on the shelf of the hat rack. Three letters were for me, and one of them was directed in the strange familiar hand, and mailed in the city that morning. In the evening my cousin was to take Mrs. Murray and me to the Academy of Music; so I put the letter, unopened, into my pocket, and resolutely forgot it until I had locked myself into my room for the night. Then I opened it. The contents were the same as before, only that this time the missive opened with a tender reproach for my unbelief, and the address of the "medium" was placed below his name.

Again I sat down and thought it all over, coming to the same conclusion as before. Even supposing, I reasoned that this is a genuine communication from Annie, she is mistaken in imagining that I can do anything to save G——'s life upon such vague information as this. If she knows so much of the future as she here professes to do, she must know much more than has here been told, and if she could write what she has written, she can write more. If that "medium" thinks I'm going to him to make enquiries, he's mistaken. The communication either is or is not from Annie. If it is, she must remember that I have always detested hints and oracular utterances, and know that I shall wait till she gives me proof of her power to foretell future events. If it is not from herself, the whole thing is a despicable trick, unworthy of a thought. But who, I reasoned again, could have either the information necessary to enable him even so far to personate Annie, or the motive to induce him to do it? Certainly, no one that I knew.

So I went to bed with the resolve that, as I could know nothing, I would think nothing more about it—a resolution easier to make than to adhere to.

The next morning my first thought was how I should dispose of the communication. Plainly, it was of no use to lock it up, and as little to burn it. I would carry it with me. If I lost it, that would surely be the last of this copy, and perhaps the discouraged writer would not try again. So, crossing a street hurridly I drew out my pocket-handkerchief, and with an emotion of relief felt that the uncanny little missive had fallen upon the mud-covered pavement amid thick-coming hoofs and wheels. But I had congratulated myself too quickly. A gentleman who crossed the street just after me saw it fall, and in the mistaken kindness of his heart followed half a block to restore the document. I'm afraid he thought my acknowledgements very ungracious, yet I tried my best to dissemble. Two more efforts to rid myself of the letter met with no better success. There was nothing for it but to fetch the mud-discolored epistle back with me, and that evening, as my cousin had other engagements and Mrs. Murray had gone out, I had nothing to hinder me from reflection on its contents.

I would not allow myself to think that I believed in the genuineness of the communication, yet the more I thought about it the more unaccountable it became. Still, I was strongly fixed in the opinion that even if the communication were what it purported to be, there was no step that I could or ought to take in regard to it. For a few moments I thought of handing the letter to my cousin to read, and so shifting whatever responsibility there might be over to his broad shoulders. But that, I reflected, would be a cowardly thing to do. Even if he should now laugh at the warning—as doubtless he would do—yet, if on his homeward voyage an accident should happen to the steamer on which he was, the memory of the despised warning would then be sure to awaken, as people always think of the things they should not; and perhaps, by disturbing the coolness of his judgment, and arousing the notion of fatality which slumbers in us all, the prophecy might help to its own fulfilment. That was a responsibility I would not take.

The letter continued a dreadful plague to me. I burnt this second one, and the next day's mail brought a third nearly-literal copy. This I tried to hide, but every evening when I unlocked my door, the letter appeared in some new and conspicuous place—now pinned to the head of my bedstead, then to a window curtain; now on the pillow, now on the sofa, or again stuck in the frame of the looking-glass—once tied to the gas fixture, and twice to the door handle. I could not get rid of its ever reproachful face, silently saying, "I warn, and you will not heed."

As far as I could without exciting suspicion as to my motives in making the inquiries—for I dreaded the sort of notoriety which would surely attach to one who was supposed to have received a supernatural communication—I satisfied myself that the landlady and servants had, and could have had, nothing to do with this letter and its mysterious migrations. It was ascertained that there had once been a duplicate key to my bureau, but not, as far as was known, to the hall door. The other doors were bolted on both sides.

Now, whether it was altogether owing to the effect on my imagination of this mysterious agility of an inanimate thing, or whether it was that the vexatious and troublesome nature of the business which detained me in town, and the physical and mental wearing it induced, combined with the undeniably poisonous cookery of the fashionable boarding-house, had altogether seriously affected my nervous system, I do not know, but certain it is that day and night I could not escape from the haunting refrain, "I have warned, but you will not heed, and you will be responsible for a life. For *his* life—the life of the father of the beautiful children you are so fond of, the husband of the woman who is dear to you, the friend whom you love for his own sake. It is for *his* life that *you* will be responsible."

During the daytime my work smothered this refrain, so that I only heard it as a disturbing echo; but when evening came with its relaxations I could not shut it out. At the theatre, the pretty stage where Rignold played Henry V., seemed written over with the flaming words. When I dined with friends, and one said in a laughing way about some trifling thing, "You will be responsible for that," I felt as if I had received judicial condemnation. When my cousin stood on the rug in front of Mrs. Murray's sitting-room fire, telling in eloquent words about Old World wonders which had burnt themselves into his artist heart, I heard them only as through a din of surging waters, in which I saw his noble head uselessly struggling, or I heard his voice as through the sobs of wife and children lamenting for husband and father.

I had maturely reflected and decided upon my course, and I would not permit reason to be overridden by imagination so far as to let the letter influence my actions; yet many a night I woke to find myself bitterly weeping and praying the pardon of G——'s wife that I had not at least tried the effect of giving him the warning.

I was glad when my business was at length despatched and I could leave the city; but it was not until several weeks after this that my cousin started for France. The twelve days that elapsed between the sailing of his steamer and that on which its safe arrival was reported in the papers were very long. And when it was all over, how angry I was at myself that I should have paid any heed to such a vague, and, as it now seemed, transparently spurious sort of warning!

My next thought was to send to a friend the letter of which I still held the third copy, with the request that he would ascertain for me if there were any such person as A. B. Sears professing to be a "Spiritual medium." After some weeks the answer was returned: "Yes, A. B. Sears is the *nom-de-guerre* of Abiathar Parsons, who, under his proper name, boards in the same house where you boarded last spring."

Abiathar Parsons! Then I remembered. In the days when Annie H—— and I, as recently separated schoolmates, were carrying on an active correspondence by mail, this Parsons was a clerk in the employ of the store-keeper who acted as postmaster in our native village. Upon inquiry, which I caused to be made of the housekeeper at my late lodgings, I found that during my stay in Montreal he had occupied the room next to Mrs. Murray's parlour, and on the same door with my room, and that his place at table had been nearly opposite my own. Parsons had not borne the best of reputations during his clerkship with the postmaster, and after a stay of a year or so had drifted away, carrying his laziness and cunning to a more appreciative market. In the well-covered, florid-faced man with black-dyed hair I had failed to recognize the lank, sallow, red-haired youth whom I had only seen and barely noticed behind the counter. Evidently, his memory had been better than mine, and from the position of his room in relation to Mrs. Murray's parlor he might easily have overheard the conversations between my cousin and myself relative to the former's return to Europe. How Mr. Parsons obtained access to my room and bureau drawers I do not certainly know, but as it seems that he had occupied the apartment for some weeks, it may not be doing him injustice to suggest that he then supplied himself with duplicate keys, thinking that they might prove useful in some possible contingencies.

Possessing, as he did, a remarkable facility in imitating handwritings—a facility which had more than once turned the eyes of suspicion upon the postmaster's clerk—and remembering that of Annie H——, which must have often passed through his hands, while knowing that she had long since passed away, his cunning presented to Abiathar Parsons—*alias* A. B. Sears—the idea that as he knew me, and probably remembered many little things connected with my family and early life which he could use to advantage in trading upon my credulity (while he remained unrecognised by me) here was an excellent opportunity to get a little money and extend his reputation as one whose predictions of the future must be relied upon, seeing that he knew so much of the past.

If, by any chance, the steamer on which my cousin sailed had met with disaster, and he had failed to reach his home, I should probably have made no investigation, but have simply accepted the communication as having been a genuine but sinfully-unheeded warning from the Spirit Land, and all the rest of my life have been weighed down with a burden of remorse as heavy as any ever borne by an actual murderer.

The trick of Mr. Parsons Sears was a very simple one, now it has been told, and I have not found it an easy task to excuse myself to myself for the importance I attached to the opposed warning, and for the real suffering so uselessly endured on account of it. But since that time I have felt much more charity than before for those unfortunate people who in hours of doubt, anxiety and grief have resorted for knowledge or consolation to sources which in their calmer moments they would have looked upon with contempt.

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