

THE DEATH'S HEAD.

A correspondent of the N. Y. Mirror translates the following extraordinary "Ghost Story," from a French journal:—

A few days ago in a garrisoned town, near Paris, an addition to the barracks was in process of construction. The ground that the new building was to occupy, had formed a part of an ancient cemetery, and the workmen, in sinking the necessary foundations, each day turned up a large quantity of bones, which were carried away and thrown into an immense ditch dug for that purpose at some little distance from the spot. One evening some soldiers of the garrison, assembled in a neighboring tavern, were conversing of this incident, some lightly and in mockery, others with marks of superstitious awe. Among the "Esprits forts," were a Brigadier and trumpeter.

"No matter," said the trumpeter to the Brigadier, "I'll wager you who mock at the dead, dare not go and fetch me a head, at midnight from the ditch."

"What will you wager?"

"Beer at discretion, for us all."

"Done! at five minutes past twelve, the Death's head shall be there on the table, to see us drink to your health, and at your expense."

"We shall see," replied the trumpeter, with a confident air.

Some blamed, others applauded the impious bravado. Midnight strikes; the Brigadier leaves the tavern, and advances in the deep shadow toward the ditch, which served as a receptacle of these sad relics of mortality. At length he reaches the spot, provided with a small ladder, which firmly adjusting among the bones beneath, he slowly, and rung by rung descended to the bottom of the trench. The night was dark and stormy, thick clouds obscured the sky, and the wind swept along the earth mournfully with a wail like that for the departed. In the deep obscurity he distinguished nothing; stooping with outstretched hands, he meets with only disjointed and crumbling fragments, here a thigh, a leg, a rib-bone, or other portions of the human frame. At length advancing a step, he stumbles against something, and falls; he stretches out his hands to find the cause of his accident, and feels beneath his hand the Death's head; eagerly he seized upon it, passed his fingers in the cavities of the eyes and nose, and seeking out his ladder, ascends, crying boastfully aloud, "Well if that's all!" but scarcely had he reached the top, than a strange dread voice rises from beneath:

"Wretch! why dost thou come with impious hand to violate my remains! Profane, give me back my head!"

The Brigadier stops, more in surprise than in awe; but suddenly he feels the ladder agitate beneath his feet.

"Give me back my head! give me back my head!" repeats the lamentable voice, and the ladder is more violently shaken.

"Well, then," cries the Brigadier, "there's your head;" and balancing it at arm's length he launches it with all his force to the bottom of the ditch.

A terrible cry responds to the shock. The Brigadier feels his courage deserting him; he leaps upon the bank and flies with all his speed. Arrived, pale, and covered with a cold sweat, at the tavern where his friends await the issue of the expedition, he recounts the frightful occurrence. Looks of terror are exchanged.—Some try to laugh, and accuse the soldier of hallucination or deceit.

"But where is the trumpeter?" some one asks; he who by his wager had caused the sacrilege, was not there.

"Bah" is the reply. "He was afraid of paying the wager, he's gone." And thereupon, no one thought of drinking more; for the emotion of the Brigadier had communicated itself to all. They separated for the night. The next day, at the hour of commencing the works, the trumpeter was found dead at the bottom of the ditch. The Brigadier in launching the Death's head had split open the head of the sacrilegious intruder.

Jekyll was told of the death of an eminent brewer who perished by falling into a large vat on his own premises. "I see," says Jekyll, "found floating on his watery beer."

A LONDON PRINTING OFFICE.

By eight o'clock the whole body had arrived. Many in their costume resemble common laborers; others are better clad, several are well dressed, but all bear in their countenances the appearance of men of considerable intelligence and education. They have scarcely assumed their respective stations, when blue mugs, containing each a pint or half a pint of tea or coffee, and attended either by a smoking hot roll stuffed with yellow butter, or by a couple of slices of bread and butter, enter the hall. The little girls, who, with well combed hair, and clean, shining faces, bring their refreshments, and carry them to those who have not breakfasted at home. Before the empty mugs have vanished, a boy enters the hall at a fast walk, with a large bundle under his arm, of morning newspapers. This intellectual luxury, the compositors, by a friendly subscription, allow themselves to enjoy. From their connection with the different presses, they manage to obtain the very earliest copies, and thus the news of the day is known to them; the leaders of the different newspapers are criticised, applauded or condemned—an hour or two before the great statesmen of the country have received the observations, the castigations, or the intelligence they contain. One would think, that compositors would be as sick of reading as a grocer's boy is of treacle; but that is not the case: it is proved that they not only willingly pay for their newspapers, but often indemnify one of their community for giving up his work, and reading the news aloud to them while they are laboring at their work; they will, moreover, even pay him to read to them any new book which they consider to contain interesting information. It of course requires very great command of the mind to give attention to what is read from one book when men are constantly engaged in the creation of another. The apprentices and inferior workmen cannot attempt to do this, but the greater number, astonishing as it may sound, can listen without injury to their avocation.—Very shortly after eight o'clock the whole body are at their work, at which, it may be observed, they patiently continue, with only one hours interval, until eight o'clock at night.—Quarterly Review.

A LOVING FAMILY.—Mr. Sumner, in his recent address before the Peace Society, created no small sensation by calling the roll of Victoria's steam navy, as an illustration of the infernal spirit of war. The following is the list of names, as reported in the New York Independent. It was copied by Mr. Sumner from the latest official publication by the British navy: Acheron, Adder, Alecto, Avenger, Basilisk, Bloodhound, Bull-dog, Crocodile, Erebus, Firebrand, Fury, Goliath, Gorgon, Harpy, Hecate, Hound, Jackal, Mastiff, Pluto, Rattle-snake, Revenge, Salamander, Savage, Scorpion, Scourge, Serpent, Spider, Spiteful, Spitfire, Styx, Sulphur, Tartar, Terrible, Terror, Vengeance, Viper, Vixen, Virago, Volcano, Vulture, Warspite, Wildfire, Wolf, Wolverine.

A BETTER HALF.—The philosopher, Dow, jr., in the following paragraph gives us his notion of a proper help-mate.

Oh, you foolish idolaters at the shrine of beauty! Know you that hundreds of husbands are made miserable by handsome wives, and that thousands are happy in the possession of homely ones?—homely without, and beautiful within. Alas! what is beauty? It is a flower that wilts almost as soon as plucked—a transient rainbow—a fleeting meteor—a deceitful will-o-the-wisp—suffumigated moonshine. The kind of wife you want is one of good morals, and who knows how to mend your trousers—who can reconcile peeling potatoes with practical or fashionable piety—who can waltz with a dash-churn and sing with a tea-kettle—who understands broomology, and the true science of mopping—who can knit stockings without knitting her brows, and can knit up her husband's ravelled sleeve of care—who prefers sewing tares with the needle, than with the tongue. Such is decidedly a better half. Take her if you can get her, when you can find her—let her be up to the elbows in suds of a wash tub, or picking geese in a cow-stable.

A "rising young man" is one who rises regularly—not later than eight o'clock

A TIGHT FIX.

We read not long since in a St. Louis paper an account of the perils and distresses of a young man, who went one evening to see his lady love at the bewitching hour of midnight. The place of meeting was the roof of a house next to that where the young lady resided.—She and her sister came out, and they there sat on the roof to chat of subjects appurtenant to such rendezvous. After a while the voice of the young lady's father was heard in dangerous proximity to the group, and all three started to rise hastily and abandon the spot. But they couldn't rise! The roof was of asphaltum, and as the day had been uncommonly warm, that pitchy substance was rendered soft enough by the sun's rays to receive and retain any impression that might be made upon it. The young man found his unmentionables fastened or rather stuck tight to the roof, and the young ladies' dresses were in a similar predicament. The matter resulted in the young man being obliged to crawl out of his pantaloons, and jerk the ladies to their feet by main force!

AMERICAN CUNNING.—Some years ago, during the heat of a coffee speculation in Boston, when every body was holding on, waiting for the article to advance, an old merchant, keen as a razor, whose store was packed from the first to the fourth floor with prime green Rio, concluded, from signs which he well understood, that prices had reached their acme. He was too old a hand at the bellows not to know that the moment he, with his immense stock, began to sell off, the alarm would be taken, and down would go the prices. Quietly sending off a pretty stiff invoice of the article to auction, and giving the auctioneer a gentle hint to mind his own business, he attended the sale and bade readily at prevailing prices for the coffee. Other holders, who knew that he had about four times as much on hand as they had, concluded that it was safe to do it when he did, and so stood up manfully and bought largely. While old Mr. —'s carmen were tumbling his purchases into the front door of his warehouse, five times as many were carrying coffee away from the back door. One day he failed to appear at a coffee sale, and most of the dealers took the alarm, and prices declined a little. During the afternoon, a pretty large holder, who had always been ready to buy when he saw Mr. — willing, met him in the street, and asked the rate of coffee.

"I don't know what it's going at to-day," replied the old fellow, as cool and pleasant as an ice-cream.

"It declined a little this morning."

"Did it?" responded Mr. —, with what seemed to his fellow-tradesman a strange manifestation of indifference.

"Yes, certainly! Haven't you heard it before?"

"No; but I expected as much."

"Why, we shall be ruined if the prices go down!"

"Not all, I presume," replied Mr. —, with an unmoved countenance.

"Why, you are into it deeper than any of us."

"Me!" exclaimed Mr. —, in well-feigned astonishment; "why, I have not a single bag in my store."

The next day the bubble burst, and a dozen grasping speculators, who had been for a month or two dreaming night and day over their golden gains, were ruined.—American paper.

A BOY HIS OWN GRANDFATHER.—A boy at Norwich is literally his own grandfather! It is in this wise:—There was a widow (Anne) and her daughter (Jane), and a man (George) and his son (Henry). The widow married the son, and her daughter married the father, the widow was therefore mother (in-law) to her husband's father, and consequently grandmother to her own husband (Henry). By this time she had a son, David, to whom she was great-grandmother. Now, as the son of a great-grandmother, must be either a grandfather or great uncle, this boy (David) was one or the other. He is his own grandfather.

A loafer, by the name of Cain, being asked by the magistrate, the other day, if he was the man that slew his brother, made answer, "No, yer 'oner; I is the chap not got slewed!"

IS HE ALIVE?—Some years ago a chap arrived at Augusta, Me., with one of those great curiosities, an Egyptian mummy, which he desired to exhibit. It was requisite then, that before the exhibition, permission should be obtained from the Judge of some of the inferior Courts. Accordingly, the showman proceeded to the Court House, where some Court was in session, and applied to the judge for a license, stating that at infinite trouble and expense, to say nothing of the danger, he had been fortunate enough to procure the greatest curiosity ever seen in the United States.

"What is it?" asked the judge.

"An Egyptian mummy, may it please the Court, more than 3,000 years old," said the showman.

"Three thousand years old," exclaimed the judge, jumping to his feet, "and is the darned critter alive?"

In a recent ride to Peoria, we discovered the following literary placard upon a gate post:

"fer Sail a Two Storry Hows And brn the Oner expex to Go To calforeny."

We had the curiosity to inquire, and found that the intelligent "Oner" was not a subscriber to any paper.

An Irishman employed on a railway was sent by his employer for some gunpowder.—Pat set off and on getting to the store saw over the entrance a sign on which was painted "Licensed to keep and sell gunpowder." He went back without the article, and on being asked the reason, replied, "Arrah, and d'ye think Pd let the dirty spalpeen come the Paddy over me by sellin' the powdher and then kapeen it himself?"

After the capture of Gaudaloupe by the English forces under — Beckwith, some sailors started in quest of a grog shop. In sauntering along the street, they came across a sign with the words "Bain chaud et froid," (Hot and cold baths.) Jack spelled it over several times, and then exclaimed, "My eyes! shipmates, here's where they sell beans chewed and fried!" Muttering curses on the dirty French they turned on their heels, and made for their ship as fast as possible.

"Ma," said a little girl who had scarcely entered her teens, "ma, maint I get married?"—"Why child!" said the anxious mother, "what on earth put that notion into your head?"—"Cause all the other girls are getting married as fast as they can, and I want to, too."—"Well, you must not think of such a thing—don't you ever ask me such a foolish question again.—Married indeed! I never heard the like!"—"Well, ma, if I can't have a husband, maint I have a piece of bread and butter?"

Some pretty good anecdotes are told of Western steamboat Captains, among which the following will pass muster:—

On a recent trip of one of the Illinois River Packets—a light draught one, as there were only two feet of water in the channel—the passengers were startled by the cry of "a man overboard!" The steamer was stopped and preparations made to save him, when the sound of his voice was heard, exclaiming—

"Go ahead with your d—d old steamboat! I'll walk along behind you!"

A clergyman who was consoling a young widow on the death of her husband, spoke in a very serious tone, remarking that he was one of the few—such a jewel of a christian. You cannot find his equal, you know." To which the sobbing fair one replied, with almost broken heart, "I don't know, but I'll try."

Every married man should let his wife have the management of the Home Department, and give her, as Secretary, the control of the different bureaus. Don't let her have anything to do with the War Department.

A Western paper states that a horse and waggon were drowned in the Ohio last week. They had a hard time of it, especially the waggon.

A medical writer in the Scalpel speaks of two old maids, "so dry they rattled!" The fellow ought to be indicted.

The wives along the Mississippi river never blow up their husbands. They leave that to the steamboats.