

## Life.

Life is a rose, brier-burdened, yet sweet—  
Blooming a day.  
Flinging its perfume like perfume to meet—  
Wind blown away.  
Leaf after leaf spreads its blush to the air,  
Kissed by the sun.  
Deeper-hued growing as joy wakes it fair—  
Love's guerdon won.  
Leaf after leaf shrinks up from the heart  
Leaving it bare;  
Color and fragrance and joy all depart—  
None left to care.  
Nay, the Divine in it lingers there still;  
God's care in all.  
Rose-leaves but drop at the beck of His will—  
Fetters which thrall.  
Up from it's trammels the freed spirit wings,  
Higher to soar;  
Alas! immortal, a pure essence flings—  
Sweet evermore!

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# THE BLACK-INDIES!

By JULES VERNE.

## CHAYTER IV.

### THE FORD FAMILY.

(Continued.)

They were about to sit down.  
"One moment, Simon," said James Starr.  
"Do you want me to eat with a good appetite?"  
"That will be doing us the greatest honor possible, Mr. James," said Simon Ford.  
"Then it is better to have nothing on my mind. I have two questions to ask you."  
"Go on, Mr. James."  
"Your letter speaks of a communication of a nature to interest me?"  
"It is very interesting indeed."  
"For you?"  
"For you and for me, Mr. James. But I do not wish to speak of it until after breakfast, and in the place itself. Otherwise, you would not believe me."

"Simon," said the engineer, "look at me—so, in the eye. An interesting communication?"  
Yes—good! I will ask you no more about it," he added, reading in the old overseer's face the answer he hoped for.  
"And the second question?" asked Simon.  
"Do you know Simon, who the person is that could write me that?" He handed Simon the anonymous letter.

Simon Ford took the letter and read it very attentively. Then showed it to his son. "Do you know that hand?" said he.  
"No, father!"  
"And this letter was stamped at the Aberfoyle post-office," asked Simon Ford.

"Yes, the same as yours."  
"What do you think of that, Harry?" asked Simon Ford, wrinkling his forehead.  
"I think, father, that some one has had a motive for preventing Mr. Starr from keeping the appointment made with you."

"But who?" cried the old miner. "Who has read my secret thoughts?"  
Simon Ford fell into a pensive "reverie," which was soon broken by his wife's voice.  
"Sit down, Mr. Starr, the soup is cooling."

For the present let us think no more of the letter.  
Thus invited, each took a seat. James Starr being honored with a chair opposite Madge, and the father and son facing each other. It was a plentiful Scotch meal. First they had hotchpotch—a soup in which the meat swims in an excellent broth. To believe old Simon, his wife had no rival in the art of preparing hotchpotch. The same was true of the cocky-luky, a kind of chicken ragout, flavoured with onions, which merited more praise.  
All was washed down by an excellent ale, drawn from the best casks in the Edinburgh breweries.

But the principal dish was a haggis, the national pudding, made of meats and barley-meal. This remarkable dish, which inspired the poet Burns with one of his first odes, met the fate of all the best things in the world—it passed like a dream.

Madge received the sincere compliments of her guest.

The breakfast was finished with a desert, composed of cheese and cakes—oaten cakes—finely prepared, accompanied by several little glasses of "usquebaugh," an excellent brandy made from grain, which was twenty-five years old—just Harry's age.

The meal lasted a good hour. James Starr and Simon Ford had not only eaten heartily—they had talked incessantly, principally over old times at Aberfoyle.

Harry had been very quiet. Twice he had left the table and the house. It was evident that he felt very uneasy since the accident of the stone, and he wanted to search in the vicinity of the cottage. The anonymous letter was not calculated to re-assure him.

During one of these absences, the engineer said to Simon Ford and Madge:

"You have a fine son there, my friend."

"Yes, Mr. James," said the old overseer eagerly, "a good and devoted one."

"He is quite satisfied here?"

"He would not leave us."

"Still, you hope to see him marry?"

"Harry get married!" cried Simon Ford. "And to whom? To a girl up above, who would love merry-making and dancing, and prefer her clan to our mine! Harry would not do it!"

"Simon," said Madge, "you will not insist upon our Harry not marrying?"

"I will insist on nothing," said the old miner; "but there is no hurry. Who knows but we may find him—"

Harry entered at this moment, and Simon Ford was silent.

Madge stood up: all followed her example, and went to sit for a moment at the door of the cottage.

"Well, Simon," said the engineer, "I am listening."

"Mr. James," said Simon Ford, "it is not your ears, but your legs that I need. Are you thoroughly rested?"

"Rested and refreshed, Simon. I am ready to go with you wherever you please."

"Harry," said Simon, turning to his son "light our safety-lamps."

"Safety-lamps!" cried James Starr, much surprised, for explosions of fire-damp are not to be feared in mines absolutely empty of coal.

"Yes, Mr. James, for prudence."

"My brave Simon, are you not going to offer me a miner's dress?"

"Not yet, Mr. James—not yet," said the old overseer, his eyes flashing singularly in their deep sockets.

Harry, who had entered the cottage, soon came out, carrying the safety-lamps.

He handed one to the engineer, another to his father, and taking the third in his left hand, armed himself with a long stick.

"Forward!" cried Simon Ford, grasping a stout pick which rested near the cottage door.

"Forward!" repeated the engineer. "Good-bye, Madge!"

"God be with you!" said the Scotchwoman.

"A good supper, wife, you know," cried Simon Ford. "We shall be hungry when we get back, and will do it honor."

## CHAPTER V.

### SOME INEXPLICABLE PHENOMENA.

The superstitions of Scotland are well known. In certain clans the lands tenants taken from hyperborean mythology. Education though largely and liberally spread over the country, has not yet been able to confine the legends to the category of fiction. They seem to be inherent in the soil of old Caledonia. It is still the land of spirits and ghosts, of goblins and fairies. There always appears the evil genius, who only departs by means of ready money; the *Seur* of the Highlanders, who, by a gift of second sight, predicts approaching deaths; the *May Moul-lach*, which shows itself under the form of a young girl, with hairy arms, and predicts the misfortunes with which the families are menaced; the fairy *Branshie*, who announces fatal events; the *Brawnies*, to whom is confided the care of the household furniture; the *Uirish*, who frequents more particularly the wild gorges of Loch Katrine, and many others.

It is natural that the population of the Scotch mines should furnish its share of legends and fables to this mythological repository. If the mountains of the Highlands are peopled with fanciful beings, either good or bad, with much more reason should the dark mines be haunted to their lowest depths. Who makes the deposit tremble during the stormy nights; who puts the miner on the track of the vein yet unworked; who lights the fire-damp, and presides over the terrible explosions, if not some genius of the mine? It was, at least, the belief, wide spread, among the superstitious Scotch. In truth, the majority of the miners willingly believed in the supernatural, when only physical phenomena were in operation, and it would have been a loss of time to endeavor to convince them of the truth. Where should credulity be more freely developed than at the bottom of these abysses?

Now, the Aberfoyle mines, precisely because worked in the land of legends, would abound most naturally in all the incidents of the supernatural.

Then legends are numerous there. Besides it is necessary to add, that certain phenomena hitherto unexplained, could not help furnishing new food to public credulity.

In the first rank of the superstitious miners of the Dochart Pit figured Jack Ryan, Harry's comrade. He was the very strongest partizan of the supernatural. He transformed all those fantastic histories into songs, which made him very popular during the winter evenings.

But Jack Ryan was not the only one who showed his credulity. His comrades affirmed not less positively that the pits of Aberfoyle were haunted; that certain imperceptible beings wandered there frequently, the same as in the Highlands. In fact, it would be very extraordinary if this belief in spirits did not prevail. Is there, indeed, any place better arranged than a dark and deep mine for the frolics of the goblin, the goblin, the elf, and other actors of the melodrama? The scenery

was all ready; why should not supernatural personages come to play their parts?

Thus reasoned Jack Ryan and his comrade of the Aberfoyle mines. It has been said that the different pits communicated with each other by long subterranean galleries cut between the veins. Thus, there was under Stirling County an enormous, massive rock, crossed in every direction by tunnels, full of caves, perforated with shafts—a kind of hypogeum, of subterranean labyrinth; which presented the appearance of a vast ant-hill.

The miners of the different pits often met either when they were going to the works or returning from them. Thus there was constant facilities for intercourse, and to circulate from one pit to another the stories which originated in the mine. The tales thus spread with marvellous rapidity, passing from mouth to mouth, and increasing, as is the custom.

Meanwhile, two men, better instructed, and of a more practical temperament than the others, had always opposed this delusion. They did not admit, in any degree, the intervention of goblin, genii, or goblins.

These were Simon Ford and his son.

And they proved it well by continuing to inhabit the dark crypt after the abandonment of the Dochart Pit. Perhaps good Madge had some leaning towards the supernatural, like all Scotch women from the Highlands. But she was obliged to repeat these histories of apparitions to herself, which she did conscientiously so as not to lose the old traditions. If Simon and Harry Ford had been as credulous as their comrades, they would not have abandoned the mine either to the genii or to the furies. The hope of discovering a new vein would have made them brave all the fantastic cohort of goblins.

They were credulous, they were full of faith only on one point; they could not admit that the carboniferous deposit of Aberfoyle was entirely exhausted. It may be said with some justice that Simon Ford and his son had on this subject implicit faith—that faith in God which nothing could shake.

That is the reason that, for ten years without missing a single day, obstinate, immovable in their convictions, the father and son took their pick, their rod and their lamp.

Thus they went together seeking, tapping the rock with quick blows, listening if it gave a favorable sound.

As long as the borings had not reached the granite of the primary rocks, Simon and Harry Ford agreed that the searching, futile today might bring results to-morrow, and that it should be undertaken.

Their entire life—they would pass it in endeavoring to restore to ancient prosperity to the Aberfoyle mine. If the father should succumb before the hour of success, the son would undertake the work alone. At the same time these two impassioned guardians of the mine went through it for the purpose of taking care of it. They made use of the fillings-in and the arches. They looked if a caving-in was to be feared, and if it were necessary to condemn any part of the pit. They examined the grippings from the upper waters, they directed them, they drew them off in canals to a swamp. In a word, they had voluntarily constituted themselves the protectors and preservers of their unproductive domain, from which had come out so much riches, now dissolved in smoke! It was during some of these excursions that Harry was more particularly struck with certain phenomena, of which he sought in vain the explanation.

Thus, several times, when he was in some narrow cross-gallery, he thought he heard noises similar to those produced by the pick when struck on the filled-in wall.

Harry, whom the supernatural, no more than the natural, could not frighten, had hastened to discover the cause of this mysterious work.

The tunnel was empty. The young miner's lamp, illuminating the walls, had not shown any recent trace of the pickers or the pick. Harry then asked himself if it were not an acoustic illusion of some odd or fanciful echo.

Other times, in suddenly throwing a strong light towards a suspicious fissure, he thought he saw a shadow pass. He sprang forward. Nothing, not even an outlet which could permit a human being to hide from his pursuit.

On two occasions within a month, Harry, visiting the western part of the pit, heard distinctly distant detonations, as if some miner had exploded a dynamite cartridge.

The last time, after the most careful search he had discovered that a pillar had just been shivered by a blast.

By the light of the lamp, Harry carefully examined the wall affected by the blast. It was not made of a simple bank of stones, but of a pay of schist, which had penetrated to this depth in the floor of the coal deposit? Was the object of the blast the discovery of a new vein? Did some one only wish to cause the falling in of this portion of the mine? These were the questions Harry asked himself and, when he told the circumstances to his father, neither the old overseer nor he could answer the question in a satisfactory manner.

"It is strange," often repeated Harry, "the presence of an unknown person in the mine seems to be impossible, and still, there can be no doubt of it! Is some one else, then, seeking some unworked vein? Or rather, is he not attempting to annihilate what remains of the Aberfoyle mines? But with what object? I will know it, if it costs me my life!"

A fortnight before this day on which Harry Ford guided the engineer through the labyrinth of the Dochart Pit, he was on the point of attaining the object of his search.

He was walking through the southwest extremity of the mine, a powerful lantern in his hand.

Suddenly it seemed to him that a light was extinguished, a few hundred feet before him, at the end of a narrow chimney, which was cut obliquely in the solid rock. He sprang toward the suspicious light.

Useless search. As Harry did not admit a supernatural explanation of physical things, he concluded that certainly an unknown being was prowling in the pit. But whatever he did, searching with the greatest care, scrutinizing the smallest fissure of the gallery, it was all he had for his trouble, he could not arrive at any certainty whatever.

Harry then trusted to chance to disclose to him this mystery. Farther and farther away he again saw lights, which flitted from place to place like a Jack's lantern; but their appearance had only the duration of a flash of lightning, and he was obliged to give up all idea of discovering the cause.

If Jack Ryan and the other superstitious ones of the mine had perceived these fantastic flames, they would certainly not have failed to attribute them to the supernatural.

But Harry did not even dream of such a thing. Nor did old Simon. And when the two talked of the phenomena, due evidently to a purely physical cause—

"My boy," repeated the old overseer, "let us wait. Some day all that will be explained."

All this time, it must be said, that never up to this period, had Harry or his father been exposed to an act of violence.

If the stone had, fallen that day, even at the feet of James Starr, had been thrown by the hand of an evildoer, it was the first criminal act of its kind.

James Starr, when asked about it, thought that this stone had become detached from the arch of the gallery. But Harry did not admit an explanation so simple. The stone, according to him, had not fallen, it had been thrown. Unless in rebounding it could never have described a trajectory, if it had not been moved by a foreign impulse.

Harry saw in it a direct attempt against him and his father, or even against the engineer. Knowing what we do, it will be admitted that his belief was well grounded.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ONE OF SIMON FORD'S EXPERIENCES.

Twelve o'clock struck from the old wooden clock in the room as James Starr and his two companions left the cottage.

The light which penetrated the ventilating shafts dimly lit the clearing. Harry's lamp gave out, but he did not wait to refill it, for the overseer was going to take the engineer to the very extremity of the Dochart Pit.

After traversing the principal gallery for a distance of two miles, the explorers—we shall see that it amounted to an exploration,—arrived at the mouth of a narrow tunnel. It looked like a side-aisle, with the arch resting on a wainscoting, covered with a whitish moss. It nearly followed the line, which fifteen hundred feet above, was traced by the upper course of the Forth. Fearing that James Starr was less familiar than formerly with the labyrinth of the Dochart Pit, Simon Ford recalled the general plan by comparing it with the geography of the surface. They walked together while talking. Ahead, Harry lit the way. He tried, by suddenly throwing light toward the dark windings, to discover some suspicious shadow.

"Do we go much farther along here, old Simon?" asked the engineer.

"Half a mile, Mr. James. Once we could have done this in a berlin, on the tramways. But that's a long time ago!"

"We are going to the very end of the last seam?" asked James Starr.

"Yes; I see that still you know the mine well."

"Eh, Simon, if I do not deceive myself, it will be difficult to go much farther."

"In fact, Mr. James, it was just here that we took out the last piece of coal in the deposit. I remember it as if it were still there. I gave the last blow, and it echoed louder in my breast than in the rock. There was nothing more than sandstone and schist around us, and when the wagon rolled toward the shaft, I followed it with a sinking heart, as we follow a pauper's funeral? It seemed to me that the soul of the mine went out with it."

The gravity with which the old overseer pronounced these words affected the engineer, who shared his sentiments. They were those of the sailor who abandons his sinking ship; of the laird who sees the home of his ancestors pulled down.

James Starr had taken Simon Ford's hand in his. But suddenly the latter seized the engineer's hand—pressing it firmly.

"That day we were all mistaken! No, the old mine was not dead. It was not a corpse that the miners abandoned, and I dare swear, Mr. James, that the heart still lives!"

[To be Continued.]

Sergeant Bates has been knocked down, and there was no action near.  
—[N. Y. News.]