

### The Tell-Tale Finger of the Sea.

We have heard of the wrongs and absurdities wrought by the ancient law of Mortmain, but I can never get my strange experience of the justice that was brought about by "the dead hand," and by it alone, when the hands of the living would have been utterly impotent. Some of those who witnessed what I am about to relate may see this when it is in print; and if so they will doubtless be willing to corroborate the facts.

The incident occurred as I was returning from my first trip to Europe, but you must know that for several years before then I had had some unimportant business relations with the firm of Murdenthrope Brothers, builders. I forget the number of their then place in Franklin street, New York. They were a thrifty pair well on in their 50s, though they used every art to keep as near 35 as might pass muster. Their father, two years deceased, had left them the business, and just about that time a large sum of money had fallen in, \$100,000 it was said, and as it had been invested in England, Jacob and Benjamin had been across to settle the affair.

As the tender was taking the big crowd of us passengers along the Mersey to the magnificent Segullia, I was politely saluted by the pair.

"Hello, Jake—what you here, too, Ben? Bless my soul—who'd a thought it? Been over to contract for a new palace for some fourth ward American duchess?"

"No, sirree," said Ben, rather sourly, as it struck me. "No, sir! our girls ain't jest fools enough to go farther and fare worse than they would at home."

"They've never been able to catch you yet, anyway," I replied jokingly, giving a wink to the elder brother, who was reputed to be as popular a ladies' man as Ben was a bear. They were bachelors, both.

I felt I had not struck the right keynote, so I ventured a congratulation on the good luck they now had—as I surmised—entered upon the enjoyment of. At this Jack gave a queer jerk of his head: "Tain't all gold as glitters, sir, is it? But Ben and I have had smooth enough sailing so far, haven't we, Ben? and I don't know as either of us really needs another dollar—"

"Not for our own selves, why, certainly not," said Ben, "but I've got that scheme o' mine everlastin'ly in my head, night and day, and when you're kinder comin' in sight o' land, as you may say, you know how you'd feel if some iceberg was to come along and just bid fair to smash you all up to—"

Before I had time to wonder why Jake should flatterly interrupt his brother with a highly ridiculous remark about feeling rather seakish we had arrived at the steamer and were all engaged in a mad scramble to gather our wraps and struggle off the rocking gangway to the deck of the liner as it towered majestically overhead.

I could not sleep that first night, though the sea was not at all rough. At last I wrapped up and strolled on deck. It was just as the dawn was breaking, and I leaned over the rail, fascinated by the play of the flotsam and jetsam rubbish that was being tossed into the light by the waves. One particular splinter of wood, peculiarly shaped, kept bobbing up and down with a regularity that started me on a queer train of thought.

At last I grew chilly, which aroused me sufficiently to decide upon going below for a cup of hot bouillon. I started to go, when who should come pacing along like a race-walker but Jake Murdenthrope.

"Hello, there! What's kicked you out of a snug berth this raw morning?"

"Oh I've had a devilish bad nightmare; always do aboard ship, 'specially after bottled beer and a pipe."

"Well, I guess I should sleep soundly through a tempest if I were going home with a fortune in my pocket—"

"Oh, bless the fortune! It's that that bothers me, but what's the use of talking about it? It's just what I want to forget," and we set off on a smart tramp from end to end of the deck. It was just what I needed.

I'll be bound your brother takes good fortune easier than you seem to, I gathered from what he was saying when we met on the tender that he has some benevolent scheme on hand or in mind.

"He always was a bit of a crank; what do you think? The fool refused to come on the boat at all; the minute the plank was going to be taken in I'm hanged if he didn't rush right back and jump into the tender?"

What a queer trick to be sure! Well, I guess he thought there was something left or—"

"Not a bit of it—he never would agree to fair and square sharings—never—I wish to God I'd—"

"Look at that thing down there," I said, as we came round to where I had been standing. I caught sight of the bit of wood unexpectedly, and felt glad to change the current of a rather unpleasant conversation.

"There, see anything?"

"Don't, there, don't you see that white thing—there—look at it now—it's behind that wave now—it'll come up in a second—now, then—can't you see it right there?"

"Why—why—it looks something like a—"

"Yes, that's it—like a hand—what! Good God—it is a hand!"

Jake turned livid, he looked perfectly awful in that morning light. The shock nerved me up, I hallooed out—I know not what—but hail a dozen of the officers and men were with us in a jiffy. I could only point overboard, speechless. There now was an arm, stiff as a mast, with that evil finger, which I had mistaken for a splinter, pointing, now here now there, but in each still moment it pointed dead at our group.

A boat was over in a twinkling. Jake soon came round, but more fearfully scared than before. He joined us in peering over the rail, the hideous corpse lay in the boat just beneath, its arm and finger pointing right up to where we stood. I turned away in loathing and horror. I noticed Jake stood transfixed, his eyes glared immovably upon the ghastly treasure trove of the sepulchral sea.

The body was laid on the deck. We gathered around; I took Jake's arm in mine and half-dragged him to the spot. When they moved for us to view the body, I felt a shudder run right through my frame, as Jake uttered a thrilling cry and fell prone upon the deck.

It was Ben's dead body. At the trial, for the ship put into Queens-town, when Jake's delirious talk left no doubt that a fratricidal crime had been committed, it came out that Jake, the elder, had been considerably indebted to his brother Ben, and had hoped the new legacy would induce the latter to forgive the debt.

It was further proved that Benjamin had had drawn up, in proper legal form, a deed of gift of \$350,000 to establish an orphan asylum and training school, and the transfer would have been completed on his receiving the loaned money, together with his share of the legacy. There was no doubt that Jake, in his bitter disappointment, had pushed his brother overboard that first night, and he was duly hanged without one breeze of sympathy from either side of the ocean.

The effect of that night's strange unrest and my appalling illusion turning into reality can never be described nor ever be forgotten.

### Something of an Old Foggy.

"It is an invariable custom of Bishop Loughlin, the venerable Catholic prelate of Brooklyn," remarks a paragrapher of the New York Sun, "to go personally to the Brooklyn post-office each morning, when he was in good health, for his mail. The Bishop always walks on these trips. He goes partly for exercise and partly because he likes to see and greet his many friends on the way. The Bishop's custom in this respect is similar to that of the late Horatio Seymour. The great Democrat always used to walk down from his residence to the Utica post-office each morning, and take a good deal of time in the operation. Such was Mr. Seymour's fondness for this morning walk that when Utica came to be a big city, and the letter carrier system was about to be introduced, Mr. Seymour opposed the innovation strenuously. He declared that it was one of the most beneficial customs that could be imagined for the citizens of a town or city to meet each other daily in some such place as the post-office, and there discuss and debate questions of a public and social nature. Of course Mr. Seymour was defeated in his efforts to keep the letter carrier system out of Utica. But he regretted his defeat bitterly, and declared that Democratic institutions suffered a severe blow thereby. Mr. Seymour's neighbors laughed at him, but it was just such ideas and speeches on his part that gave him a greater and more idolatrous personal following, perhaps, than any other resident of this state ever enjoyed."

### A Jumbo Spider.

E. M. Tutwiler, superintendent of the Sloss Iron and Steel Company's mines at Coalburg, has preserved in alcohol the largest black spider ever seen in this section.

A few days ago Tutwiler heard a great commotion among the chickens in his yard. He went out to investigate, and saw a small chicken being slowly drawn into a hole in the ground. Some invisible reptile had caught the chicken by one leg and was drawing it into the hole in spite of its desperate struggles.

Tutwiler approached, and looking down in the hole, discovered an immense black spider. He punched it with a stick and compelled it to release the chicken. He then dug the spider out of its den and placed it in a jar of alcohol. It lived an hour after being put in the jar. When dead the spider was taken out, weighed and measured. It mens 2½ inches across the back and weighed nine ounces. Its longest legs were 4½ inches in length and its eyes were as large as a hotel clerk's diamond's.—Birmingham, (Ala.) Corr. St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

### She Didn't Walk with the Lord.

There is an old lady residing in Roxbury, a native of "The Land o' Cakes," amiable in character, a sincere Christian, but a little deaf, a circumstance which sometimes leads her to give queer answers to questions asked her. While visiting the house of a friend a few evenings ago it was decided to hold a prayer meeting. After the exercises one of the company approached the old lady and asked:

"D'ye walk wi' the Lord?"

"Oh, no," she replied, not distinctly hearing the question. "I jest come back and forrit to see Mrs. Geigie."

### THAT WALK THROUGH THE WHEAT.

Together we walked in the evening time, Above us the sky spread golden clear, And he bent his head and looked in my eyes, As if he held me of all most dear, Oh, it was sweet in the evening time!

And our pathway went through the fields of wheat; Narrow that path and rough the way, But he was near, and the birds sang true, And the stars came out in the twilight gray, Oh, it was sweet in the evening time!

Softly he spoke of the days long past, Softly of blessed days to be; Close to his arms, and closer I pressed, The corn-field path was Eden to me, Oh, it was sweet in the evening time!

Grayer the twilight grew, and grayer still, The rocks flitted home through the purple shade; The thought-tingles sang where the thorn-sted high, As I walked with him in the woodland glade, Oh, it was sweet in the evening time!

And the latest gleams of daylight died; My hand in his enfolded lay; We swept the dew from the wheat as we passed; For narrower, narrower wound the way, Oh, it was sweet in the evening time!

He looked in the depth of my eyes, and said: "Sorrow and gladness will come for us, sweet; But together we'll walk through the fields of life, Close as we walked through the fields of wheat." —Good Words.

### A Peculiar Kind of Warfare.

Making war on Indians is unlike any other war making in which armies engage. Finding them, not fighting them is the difficult problem to solve. If the reader will consider that the theatre of operations in any Indian campaign—whether in Wyoming, Dakota, the Indian Territory and Texas, or Arizona—is about as large as the New England States with New York added; that each of these possible theatres of war is an uninhabited wilderness; that they are without roads, and often impenetrable for hundreds of miles because of arid deserts or impassable mountain ranges; that while all parts of each Territory are to the Indian as familiar as the paths of the home orchard are to the farmer and his children, it is and of necessity must be an unknown land to the best-informed white man; that in these trackless wilds the Indian had no fixed habitation; that upon being discovered by his enemy the direction of the trail he takes is a matter of indifference to him; that where night finds him is his home, and that his subsistence and clothing are always with him—if all these and collateral matters depending on them are considered, an idea can be formed of how difficult it is to make successful war on the Indian.

In war the Indian, though partially civilized, reverts to his worst phase of savagery. Much has been written as to the false sentimentality which crops up in the discussion of the Indian question by humanitarians and lovers of fair play, which it is not intended here to repeat. But it may properly be observed that it is worse than nonsense to urge that the Indian regards the white intruders as the descendants of those who, two centuries and more ago, came to this country and by night deprived the Indians of the lands and hunting fields, and is through his children pursuing the "red man toward the setting sun." The Indians' knowledge of history scarcely extends beyond one generation. His white enemy is served in war as is any other enemy, and for the same reasons. He has no inherited animosities dating from the time of the Pilgrim Fathers. Nor does he feel gratitude for kind usage shown to his ancestors or to himself. The annuities paid him are looked upon as tributes exacted by fear or someless worthy principle, and kindness shown him are those by whom they are shown are weak and afraid of him.

Fortunately for the whites, the Indians in their warfare are not in the habit of attacking our so-called forts on the frontier, else the horrors of past wars would equal in any year the fearful pictures of the Indian mutiny against the English. Our frontiers have often been at the mercy of the Indians, but the capture in any instance could not have been made without great loss of life, and it is characteristic of the race that they are slow to attack when certain death awaits any great numbers. They are brave where superstitious beliefs make chances of safety greatly in their favor, but will not take the risks that satisfy the civilized warrior.—Gen. Wesley Merritt, U. S. A.

### Before and After.

From the New York Tribune.

Perhaps one of the saddest and most pathetic sights is to see the bright, joyous, fun-loving, brilliant dandy of 24 or thereabouts transformed into the spiritless, taciturn and shabby family man of middle life. We all know of such transformations as mysterious as they are unexplainable. In "Pendennis" Thackeray has painted for us, with a master hand, some of these evolutions downward in the clerical profession, when the brilliant Oxonian for whom everybody predicted a mine somehow or other missed the running, and comes out seedy, hopeless reclus in a country parsonage, whose very appearance suggests a life of tragedy. I know a number of such cases. There was Goodfellow, of Harvard. In all his class, and brilliant fellows they were, too, there were none so brilliant as he. His conversation sparkled with jest and epigram, and his good-natured bonhomie won him a host of friends. He was a good dresser, and set the fashion for

his class. When he was finally graduated with high honors, and announced his intention of entering the ministry, we all said that he would in a few years become one of the most famous preachers in the country. I visited him not long ago. He is the pastor of a parish in a large factory town, with a shabby-genteel congregation which worships in a shabby-genteel-looking church. He is married and has six children who quarrel and play in the mud and dust. He rarely smiles, and there is on his face a look of constant preoccupation. His clothes don't fit him, and are decidedly shabby. He no longer has a future, all his energies being consumed in the petty and carking cares of the present. Indeed, the best part of the man is gone, dead I might say; and there remains a galvanized automaton, which wearily goes through the motions of his calling. Oh, youth, youth, how often do you deceive us with the promise of a future that never comes!

### Curious Will Making.

A New York court has established the validity of a will of a citizen of that State, who left his entire property, about \$90,000, to the United States Government. The New York law prohibits bequests of more than a certain proportion of a man's estate to the religious or charitable institutions when he has near relatives living. In other words, a man cannot buy peace for his conscience by adding another wrong to those he has before committed. The first duty of property is to provide for those naturally and legally dependent on the man who owns it. The law will not even allow a man while living to impoverish himself so as to leave his family in want. If this is often in practice it is because existing laws are not enforced. What he cannot legally do while living the law will not help him to do when dead. But giving to the Government where a man has no near relatives, and those more distant that he has, is another matter. The court probably held in this case that the man was right in thinking he as nearly related to the entire American people, and had as much obligation to them, as he had to the few distant relatives who after death would claim what they had while living done nothing to prove they could properly have any interest in. People who do nothing for their distant relatives while living ought to be restrained by shame from profiting by their deaths. Where there are near relatives the laws of most States make more just disposition of property than its owners themselves would probably make. The law recognizes a supposed natural affection, which events often show does not really exist.

### A Resourceful Wife.

A good story comes from one of the rural districts of an ex-swell who married a young woman with a reputation, much to the chagrin of his family, "who cut him off," so to speak, for such a fatal mistake. Recently the paternal hearts began to relent and a proposition was made through an accommodating friend that the young ex-swell should divorce the objectionable daughter-in-law and receive in return not only the parental blessing, but a goodly part of the parental exchequer. When the matter was laid before madame she advised her spouse to accept the generous reward offered for the "inconstancy of man," suggesting that it would be advisable to replenish the empty coffers.

"What's a divorce more or less? Let's have one by all means—divide the spoils and get married over again."

Now, could a man, an ex-swell, have a more accommodating wife.

"Why," she said to a listening confidante—who, of course, circulated the matter as all well-regulated confidantes do—"Why I am ready to do anything for the dear boy." And she added ingeniously, "Only last winter, when he was strapped for funds, I went to San Francisco and worked in a bookbindery."—San Francisco Call.

### The June Bug Rampant.

The bug is a very useful insect, but how objectionable it can make itself on occasions was shown by an incident which occurred one night on the Central railroad of New Jersey. The milk train was carrying two passenger coaches behind the milk cars, and as the night was warm the half dozen passengers aboard had the windows all raised. The train had been standing on a side track a few minutes when a swarm of large June bugs, attracted by the car lights, flew in through the windows. In five minutes the seats were nearly covered with bugs, and they began to crawl around the legs of the passengers and to prove otherwise unpleasantly officious. In five minutes the insects had possession of the two cars and the passengers turned out. The problem which now presented itself was how to get the pests out of the cars before the train started. A fire was suggested, and while the passengers gathered brushwood and kindled a roaring blaze, one of the brakemen went into the cars and put the lights out. The ruse was successful, the bugs deserted the cars and the passengers went back, shut down the windows and sat in darkness until the train started.—New York Commercial Advertiser.

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