

A TRAGEDY BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

"Few people are aware," writes Henry Labouchere, "that Sir Walter Scott once wrote a tragedy called 'The House of Aspen.' The substance of the story and part of the diction was borrowed from a dramatic romance called 'The Holy Tribunal,' which fills the sixth volume of the 'Tales of Antiquity,' by Bert Weber. The famous actor, John Kemble, at one time was very anxious to bring out the play at Drury Lane and promised to appear in it with the great Mrs. Siddons. But great objections appeared to this proposal. There was danger that the mainspring of the story—the binding engagements formed by the members of the Secret Tribunal—might not be sufficiently felt by an English audience, to whom the nature of that singularly mysterious institution was unknown from early association. There was also, according to Kemble's experienced opinion, too much blood, too much of the dire catastrophe of 'Tom Thumb' and 'Hamlet,' where almost all the characters die on the stage. It was, besides, esteemed perilous to put the parade of the secret conclave at the mercy of the underlings in the cast and the scene-shifters, who, by a ridiculous motion, gesture, or accident, might turn seriousness and gravity into farce. Sir Walter Scott willingly acquiesced in this reasoning and never afterward made any attempt to gain the honors of dramatic authorship and the glory of the stage."

A STRANGE STORY.

A British vessel of war had just entered a harbour in the New Hebrides, when her commander heard a pistol-shot from a schooner lying near. The skipper of another British vessel had kept his eye on the schooner, for the very good reason that he had lent her some tools, which he was reluctant to lose. He therefore asked the captain of the *Spitfire* (let us call her) to go aboard the schooner and inquire about the shot. The captain went aboard, and found that the active and intelligent supercargo, having pistoled the captain and frightened the mates, was just starting with a crew of Kanakas for Treasure Island. It is not necessary to give the exact latitude and longitude of this emporium. What had occurred was simple and dramatic. In the previous year the supercargo, a most accomplished and highly educated gentleman, chanced to be in a schooner near Treasure Island. Here a war was going on between two tribes. Siding with the weaker, the supercargo won them a decisive victory. The grateful natives showed him all their stores, like Caliban, and these included gold dust galor and pearls. He therefore returned to Sydney, and tried to get a properly equipped schooner. But owners were incredulous. Finally, one man sent the adventurer forth in a schooner under the absolute command of an elderly Scotch skipper, who was to return whenever he pleased. Now the skipper was quietly writing a letter to his wife, perhaps in Greenock, and was telling her that he had no confidence in the supercargo, when that gentleman, looking over his shoulder, and seeing that the skipper was on the point of abandoning his guest, blew his brains out. The shot was heard by the commander of the *Spitfire*, who arrested the supercargo, and conveyed him to a place where he was tried and found guilty. But he was not hanged. By the latest accounts he was governor of the local gaol, still keeping the secret of his isle of gold dust. Here, then, is a topic for Mr. Stevenson, or his partner in literature, Mr. Lloyd Osborne, who by this time might try a romantic essay "off his own bat." More practical minds may prefer to get at the secret of the supercargo. Certainly I never heard of gold dust in these islands before, and, of course, the supercargo may be a homicidal maniac. But his success in his gaol looks as if he had his wicked wits about him.—*Longman's Magazine*.

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