

THREE ROSES.

A maiden stood by the gates of Life,
A slender girlish thing,
And plucked three roses from the vine,
Which by the gates did swing.

"This is for health—this for wealth,
And this for sweet Love," she said.
The white for health, the gold for wealth,
But that for sweet Love was red.

The white she placed on her bosom sweet,
The gold in petals fell to her feet,
But the deep-red rose, with a sound of mirth,
She pressed to her lips, and there sprang to birth.

A tumult of joy—of pain—of bliss—
A rapturous sense in the single kiss,
So strange—so passing sweet—
That the rose on her bosom and at her feet

Lay there unheeded—crushed—forgot,
By the passionate red, she prized them not.
But passed in clear beyond the gate
Close-clasped to her lips her unknown fate.

"O come with me through life," she said,
"Sweet Love, nor leave me when I am dead,
For of a truth so sweet a thing
Even in Death great joy must bring."

A CURIOUS FAMILY.

And so you are anxious to know about the family? Some one, perhaps, has given you the idea that we are a strange race. Well, then, I will tell you, and you may judge. It is not a cheerful tale, remember; hardly gloomy; a little sad, but certainly curious. It may even strike some people as absurd; but then, what of that! Religious creeds awaken reverence in thousands, while in as many others they only provoke smiles of incredulity.

Famous conjurers have performed extraordinary feats in legerdemain that have awakened in their audiences speculative theories, embracing a large percentage of faith in a supernatural cause, even though the magicians have announced the phenomena to be purely the result of skill. From this I would argue that intelligent people who ascribe to simple feats of magic supernatural agencies are apt to do the same thing in other matters where there is an unexplained or inexplicable cause. In point of fact, it has always been in past ages, and will be in the present, a common feature of the mind to robe the incomprehensible in the garments of the supernatural. And, therefore, my friend, the history I am about to relate may seem at first to be highly colored by the supernatural, while in fact it may be only the effect of physical causes so delicate and so complex that modern science has not been able to grasp and define its law. However, the remarkable man of whom I am about to tell you was certainly possessed of faculties and powers which, though uncommon to men at large, were repeated generation after generation in the family of De Courcey.

I would have you bear in mind throughout two facts, which I have deduced from my knowledge of the traditions of the family and my observation of my cousin, Henry De Courcey. The first is, a preponderance of nerve power, or nervous strength, and that it predominated in the fourth generation as an accumulated force; the second is, that in every fourth generation the race became extinct, with the exception of one male heir, who inherited all the family estate. Bearing this in mind, I will first tell you of the traditions, that you may better appreciate the character of my cousin, to whom I was bound by every feeling of personal attachment.

Historians of late years have awarded far greater credit to the lieutenant of William the Conqueror than was customary a century ago. Henri De Courcey, our great ancestor, was recompensed by the Sovereign Invader, for his immeasurable services, by liberal grants of lands wrested from the unhappy Saxon barons.

He was admirably fitted for the position he filled in the Norman Duke's service; he was a leader, a soldier, by natural genius; and it was he who alone could enforce discipline, loose though it might have been in that great army of adventurous freebooters. The chroniclers ascribe to him a sullen, cynical and morose disposition. He was short, slender in person, and almost diminutive by comparison with his contemporaries. The advantage he lost in this respect in the eyes of a semi-civilized army was counterbalanced by his indomitable will, his magnetic force as an orator, and his coolness and daring as a soldier. In the times of peace, when the sword was laid aside by the gallant to serenade his lady fair, De Courcey passed through the gay throngs with his head bowed down, dejected, listless, and muttering to himself. He seemed to hate the society of his fellow man, and strolled listlessly along, or shut himself up with some books secured from Rome. But when the horn sounded with the martial notes of war a complete change took place; the wearied, halting, lagging step became firm, quick and elastic, the large hazel eyes, shaded with melancholy, dilated with clear and piercing glances. And then the voiceless tongue seemed inspired with burning eloquence, to awaken enthusiasm in the sluggish and excitement in the willing.

It was said he believed in astrology and held communion with those who pretended to know what stores the mysterious Future confined in her halls. Certain it was, however, that many things happened which he had predicted, and in consequence thereof some of his sturdy fol-

lowers openly asserted their belief in his allegiance to the Spirit of Evil. One day some of his most trusted friends and followers had gathered about the board in the banquet hall, and his little son stood by his knee. One hand rested on the fair-haired head of the lad and the other held high a massive tankard, in response to a toast. Suddenly De Courcey brought down his drinking-cup with a crash on the table, and seizing the boy, bore him to the huge chimney, where great forest-logs crackled and flamed, and scanned the boy's features with intensity. Then he called an attendant and bade him remove the trembling boy to the women's apartments; and turning to his friends, who stood anxiously watching, said: "That boy will shoot an arrow up into the air, and before the twang of the string has passed away upon air or the arrow fall back upon earth, my body and life will be parted, and no man can prevent it." The prediction was true—perhaps it was fate—or, still, only a vision of the future.

The next and most reliable account of any member of the family who possessed the singular power of reading, in a measure, the destined future, was a Henry De Courcey, who settled on the left bank of the winding Potomac in the year 1710 or thereabout. The following extract, taken from a letter yellowed with age, describes an almost similar circumstance attending his death. It will be observed that this vision of death is always given to the one in the fourth generation who dies. The letter referred to reads:

"Henry De Courcey was filled with the wildest fancies; his nature was so morbid that his life seemed unbearable to himself, and we feared lest in some moment of extreme melancholy he would take his own life. He was led by a hope, which has proven false, that possibly a change of climate, an emigration into a new world, might so act upon the physique and constitution that the laws that caused the singular but constant accentuations of their race might be set aside. With this in view he left the halls of luxury in the mother country, and built a rude cabin in this out-of-the-way colony in Virginia. The children feared him, and this caused him pain. Night after night he would walk up and down by the river bank, talking to himself in a low, monotonous voice. His moods were unaccountable. At times he would be merry, laughing and talkative; then suddenly his bright eye would become dimmed, and he would look sad and depressed. At first his motion was slow and mechanical, but little by little grew faster and faster, until he almost ran. He talked to us of visions, and toward the last they became more and more frequent; and once he startled us by a curious speech.

"Thank you gods that the morrow is a secret hid from you and that the day you die is unknown. When the new moon can be first seen in the day I leave you. Lay me to sleep by the river, beneath the shade of the willow, and bear me in remembrance kindly.

"You may imagine the effect it produced, and we calculated as closely as we could about the day when the new moon would be seen as a pale crescent in the sky, with uncommon interest, not a little touched with superstitious fear, for the most skeptic among us refrained from jeering, because Henri De Courcey was acknowledged by all to be a remarkable person. The day we calculated arrived, and never was a man more gay than De Courcey. His spirits were exuberant; he laughed and jested with all. We had a dull feeling at our heart, and concealed it beneath affected high spirits. We noticed that suddenly when he seemed the brightest that day a change came over him, and he left the gay group with his head bowed down as though wrapt in thought, with a slow, mechanical step. The sun was sinking, the pale silver crescent hung in the sky, and long shadows, lengthening shades of night, crept as spectral forms over the land from beneath the forest trees and the clumsy walls of stone.

"Onward with faster foot passed Henri De Courcey, his hands clasped behind his back, with his head bowed down, watching the creeping darkness mantling the things of light. He passed on, muttering, 'Shadows, shadows: I walk from them to the sunlight, yet their coldness follows, follows me, ever on.' A flower which, men say, symbolizes immortality, caught his restless eye; the shadows were creeping toward it; he leaned forward and plucked it from its fragile stem, exclaiming, 'Out of the shadow into the sunlight.' The shades of night grew deeper, the silver crescent was turning slowly to the burnished gold, and fitful lights massed in brilliant colors the western sky, when, as a schoolboy, tired of play, throws himself down on the lap of earth, so did De Courcey, clasping with a strong hand the little flower. And when we touched him, to bid him rise, we saw that he had spoken the word of prophecy—the soul of De Courcey had passed through the shadows of earth into the sunlight beyond."

What I have told you is the tradition of my family—what I now relate is my own experience. You will observe that the regularity of the generations for so many years establishes a precedent, if such a thing can be, for the general order of the future, and the accumulating nerve-power in the fourth generation gives the member who dies almost superhuman knowledge and a vision of the future. There is a tradition in our family that this is the result of a curse, which is, briefly, that an early ancestor, with brutal gallantry, exhibited various modes of

death to a young woman who had laughed his suit to scorn and in the fate of war became his prisoner. To retaliate, he gave her the choice of marriage with him or death. She accepted the latter; and, dying, cursed him and his race to see death before it came. But then you know, my friend, that is only a silly legend.

I was at Harvard College in 1857, which you may have heard, was the year when the celebrated lectures on "Things not Generally Known," were delivered by a learned professor of that estimable institution of learning. I was a waif in the world, with no relatives nearer than some distant cousins in Virginia, but as an orphan of considerable property and a guardian disposed to be liberal, I did not lack friends or pleasant homes to visit. At that time I was ignorant of the peculiarities of my race. These lectures were on metaphysical subjects, and as some extraordinary performances in a so-called spiritualistic seance were exciting considerable gossip, the learned gentleman ventilated his opinions freely in a special paper, called "Physiological Affinities and Metaphysical Phenomena," greatly to his own discredit and the satisfaction of his audience.

The newspapers freely commented upon these lectures, and it was not long before they and their readers arrayed themselves in formidable battalions to discuss the pros and cons of the subject the learned gentleman had introduced to their notice. Once more the distinguished professor ascended the steps of the lecturers' stand to demonstrate the incomprehensible was not supernatural, but only the result of physical laws too subtle and complex to be reduced to a scientific basis. Naturally enough, from all parts of the country assembled a miscellaneous audience, in whom superstition, awakened by curious experiences, had left them uncomfortable—uncertain as to their beliefs in some matters.

My classmates, as well as myself, took pride in a code which rejected everything that could not be proven. We were a band of skeptics, of youthful cynics, and we dearly loved to smile at all who had faith in things which could not be demonstrated. We felt so very wise, poor fools! We daily examined a register in which were inscribed the names of all who were to attend the new course of lectures, and taxed our wit to jeer and scoff.

One day, however, my eye was attracted by a name similar to my own; not so much on that account—although the name is an uncommon one—but because it awakened within me considerable interest. It was a signature hurriedly written in a quick, nervous hand, every character of which was ill-formed, but still singularly indicative of strength in its writer. I glanced at it casually at first, but soon discovered that it seemed to fascinate me, and I fell into a brown study over it. Wherever I went that day I read it—it seemed branded on wood, engraven on stone and printed on every piece of paper I touched.

What could there have been about a simple writing of a name which should have awakened within me such uncommon interest? I wondered why it should have attracted me. I could not dislodge it from my mind. It led me, strangely enough, back to the hall in which the volume it was recorded within was preserved. I read it over again, scanned it, and at last traced it on fine paper. I even inquired of the clerk if he remembered the subscriber, his appearance, his age, and had formed any impression of him. The register contained the address of his lodgings as well as his name. I had occasion to remember this when I found myself strolling through the street in which the building he lodged in was located, some time later in the evening of the same day. I remember having stopped and looked up as though chance might have led the bearer of the name to the window. Mechanically I crossed the street, possibly to verify the number; and as a lodger standing at the door seemed inclined to regard me with suspicion, I ascended the stairs as though I had business on the premises. Tacked to the door was a card upon which was engraved the name Henri De Courcey, Maple Wood, Virginia, with a heavy pencil-mark passed over the address. Instantly there flashed over me a remembrance that I had heard as a boy from my father of a connection in Virginia, of whom for some strange reason or other neither he nor my mother could ever be induced to speak.

The door was opened by an aged colored servant, who seemed at first surprised to see me standing there, and, in a voice faltering with agitation, asked me whether I had knocked and whether I had come to see his master. I gave him my card, and the old man retreated, looking once or twice over his shoulder, his features indicating such extreme emotion that I was sensibly affected, and he passed through an interior chamber into a third room. Whether it was the old man's disturbed countenance or the strangeness of my own situation, I could not tell at the time; but whatever the cause, I felt a cold, chill, depressed feeling stealing over me. The first room was evidently used as a breakfast room and the second as a sleeping apartment, the doors of which communicated in a direct line with a third door, into a third room, through which the servant had passed, and I followed and paused on its threshold, holding in my right hand, which rested on my right hip, a walking stick, while I held my hat in my left. The room was in great disorder; a table stood in the centre strewn with manuscript and large maps. About the room stood several cases of books, all more or less unpacked; a lounge,

covered with books, somewhat back from the walls, crossed the corner diagonally; behind it stood a book-case closely packed with a miscellaneous library, holding two bronze figures, a clock and a lamp.

Between this book-case and lounge, resting against the latter with his left side exposed to me, stood Henri De Courcey, holding a book in the palm of his left hand, with the light from the lamp falling upon it over his right shoulder. His head was bent over the volume, and he turned the pages with a quick, nervous movement, running his index-finger along the margin of the page as though to check a passage the moment the eye should detect it. The servant approached him from the back, and spoke softly to attract his attention. He raised his head and saw me standing in the door; the book fell from his hand to the floor, and he swayed back, ward and forward as though violently agitated, while the hand so freed grasped the lounge for support. He passed the right hand over his forehead, and I heard him cry out,

"My God! again!"

The touch of the old servant seemed to reassure him, and, observing the card, which had fallen to the floor, he stopped and picked it up, and then to my surprise, advanced, saying:

"Mr. De Courcey, I have expected you."

He approached, crumpling the card in his hand, and I observed he had not once looked at it, and could not have seen my name.

That man was my cousin. For three months we saw each other daily, and I observed how he seemed subject to strange moods, which I watched with awe and interest. He was either extremely happy or extremely sad. Once in a while, just prior to an intense fit of melancholy, he would appear thoroughly indifferent to all his surroundings, and would seek abstraction in study, but most frequently in music; his favorite instrument was a violin, which seemed to be the chosen mouthpiece of his inward feelings. At such times he was inclined to be cynical, and would deride and scoff everything without mercy or reverence. It was during these three months I first learned of the singularities of my race, and the fact that he and I were of the fourth generation; that of inheritance in which one of us survived the other. One day I was seated in his room, smoking a cigar and glancing over some curious old folios, when he laid aside his violin and said,

"As long as I live you follow me; I go before."

He then took up his instrument and played upon it. Again he laid it down in his lap, and, touching the strings softly, said,

"Why the future is revealed to me I cannot tell, but this thing I know, that if all men could read the future of their lives as I do, the very sparkle and effervescence would depart from it, and all would be tame and flat. A knowledge of to-morrow beggars to-day."

Henri De Courcey was a man of extraordinary mental capacity; his mind was mathematical in many respects, having once obtained the rudiments of an art or science; a natural sequence of causes and effects worked out in his mind the most intricate problems of the science. His mind digested matters appertaining to the brain with as little effect as is occasioned to healthy digestive organs by the most easily digested substances.

In consequence of this mathematical tendency, his natural inclinations were to reject any superstitions accepted by the world at large as religious. This, perhaps, was more odd, as he constantly acknowledged the existence of forces and influences to which he was unable to ascribe true causes, yet the existence of which was proven in himself. He constantly spoke to me of his leaving me, but never, with one exception, mentioned the word death. "I object," he said, "to the word death, as it generally brings with it the idea of dissolution instead of easement; few persons disassociate practically the factors of the human being—the earthly tenement and the spiritual tenant. To deduct either one is to dissolve the unit man, and the remainder is either animal or spirit. Both have a positive individuality: one is subject to the laws concerning matter, and the other rises above the comprehension of men who deduct the laws, and cannot therefore be circumscribed. Why the latter should be imprisoned in the former no one can tell; what its scope is, and where it belongs, cannot be even properly conjectured. All things known in the created world recognize the laws by which they exist, and exert the influences they possess to govern themselves accordingly."

"The animal sensitiveness, the delicate nerve organism given to flowers, as well as to men, occasions a shrinking back from approaching dissolution. The delicate flowers which bloom in the early morning close securely as the sun rises, which would cause them to fade and wither, and recognize thereby the laws under which they exist. Man in shrinking back from what he knows is to be his translation to a traceless gas and a questionable palm full of dust, acts in accordance with the laws of matter, and is liable to confuse the animal fear of dissolution with his spirit's timidity, which he charges erroneously with fear. In most cases men forget they are two things in one and live in their surroundings simply. My perceptions, unfortunate as they are, distinctly interpret the two existences. A false affection exists for the body and its place in the order of created things. But still, my cousin, and is the heart of the man who knows the day on which he leaves the body—and for the body's sake. If I had a vision of the hereafter, as I have of the coming events which