

balked there, fled back to the silent woods and the desolate drifting snow.

The rugged face of the man beside me was perhaps the most pleasant thing to look at, but all its cheerful energy had blazed into some mysterious dread. This old highland blood tends strangely to the occult. It is the last surviving instinct of barbarism, fostered still among their northern fastnesses. The horses were large and powerful, and with heads well lifted they swung steadily on; but the glancing brilliancy of their eyes, coming to me at odd moments as they threw back their quivering lips, seemed to my excited imagination, full of that same indefinable something, which flitted over the driver's face, and of which I myself felt so painfully conscious.

"Does all the road lie straight along like this?" I questioned, chiefly for the sake of interrupting my own train of thought.

"Na, it does na'. It taks a turn further on, an' gets unco staney. This is what I ca' a damned mirchy nicht—it gars ma bluid loup."

The shadows were hastening to envelop us. They rose up from the woods, and they came down from the heavens; they hurried together from the north and the south, from the east and the west—swift-footed messengers of darkness. And the dim vapours, shaping themselves, seemed almost tangible, closing about me oppressively.

The ground began to grow rougher. Large boulders strewed the wayside. We had reached the base of a small hill and our pace slackened a little. Suddenly awaking to the fact that my hands and feet were cold, and feeling thoroughly chilled, I bethought me of my brandy.

"On a night of this kind there is nothing like brandy," I remarked handing the flask to my companion, "perhaps the gentleman inside might be the better for some—he was lightly clad; just see!"

He gave me the reins and jumped down. I heard his feet crunch on the road, and I heard the stage-door open, but how he came to be sitting beside me, the next instant, is more than I can explain. Even in the gloom the ghastly paleness of his face was invisible. He held out his hand mechanically for the reins.

"Well, where is the flask? Did you leave it with him?" I demanded.

"There's twa o' them noo." The tone in which these words were enunciated is indescribable. The abject terror in the coarse voice, rendered me speechless. "An'," he continued, speaking with evident difficulty, "they're baith alike, they're settin' glamerin' at ane anither."

"Nonsense!" I said sternly, "you are dreaming, man!"

"I said doon then yersel!"

I said no more, and we toiled on up the hill. It might have been a quarter of an hour later when, as we again reached level road, above the noise of the wheels and the clatter of the hoofs, we heard the sound of voices. They issued from the coach. A dialogue was being carried on, and apparently of no peaceful nature, for the tones grew suddenly loud and violent. The words were not distinguishable.

Neither of us looked at the other; my every nerve was in tension.

"I'll be damned, gin they've."

"Hus—sh!" I retorted fiercely.

"Wae's me—we twa are bickerin' aboon, an' they twa are fightin' ahin't us. Gee up, Tam! Gee up, Jamie! Thae deil himsel's ahin't us. Hech, mon! But I wad like noo tae be settin' by a bleezin' ingle instead o' tumblin' along thae gate here amaisht dead. I'm a' i' a smither."

So he rambled on flourishing his whip and crying out to the horses, while I sat straining my ears to catch every sound from the coach.

Presently the voices ceased and for an hour we drove in uninterrupted silence. I could see the faint outlines of the trees as they rushed past us through the wide, dark space. The grey plain of the sky seemed infinitely far away; its dull shimmer was like the fancy of a dream. As the minutes grew our alarm subsided; excitement cannot outlive its cause. A certain easiness had even made itself felt, when with awful distinctness the voices behind us again rang out; a muffled sound of scuffling ensued and then a heavy noise as of a body falling. The perspiration stood out upon my brow; the driver was muttering foolishly to himself.

"Come, come, let us see into this matter!" I cried, "We'll both get down."

"I'll no budge."

"What! are you such a coward?"

"Ca' it sae, ca' it sae. I'll hae nae dealin's wi' ghaists."

And now there came from within a long groan of anguish. My heart failed me—I sat still. For the rest of the journey not another word was spoken. Swiftly, silently, fearfully, we sped along until the out-hanging lantern like a great red eye discovered in the little inn our destination.

Warm and panting the horses stood; warm and friendly the light shone out upon us. With a sigh of relief I rose to my feet. The door of the coach was slowly opened.

"God!" gasped the driver.

He had passed from the coach and was standing there in the road once more looking towards us, the wild eyes once more thrilling us.

A mere instant he waited, then disappeared within the tavern. Rushing together with an irresistible impulse we pulled aside the door of the coach. The light fell through the windows straight upon the fixed, white eyes of a little, elderly man, whose body, prostrate in the floor, lay in a great pool of blood. Through his heart was plunged to

the hilt an old-fashioned dirk. The stiff fawn hat had rolled under the seat.

I think we did not breathe—there was not a sound save that dull, faint splash of the blood as it dripped through the planking to the ground beneath. My eyes, falling from the dead man's face upon the oblong grip-sack which rested near the door, read: "John R. Jesse."

"God almighty! murder, murder, murder!" shouted the driver, running towards the house. Helpless I followed him.

"Did any o' ye catch sight o' an uncanny auld chiel wha cam in ae minute syne? Some o' ye maun ha seen him!" With incredible rapidity he jerked this out.

"I seen him," came from a slatternly girl behind the bar, "he went through here into the back room a minute ago, had on a long, light coat and a big, light hat, looked crazed—I seen him!"

The clamour soon spread. From room to room they hurried, and the search was still in progress, when the girl, the only other witness, edging her way among the crowd of rough shoulders to look at the dead man, outstretched now on the long table, shrieked: "Why *this* is him!"

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE AMERICAN IDEA OF GOVERNMENT.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—There is a story of an American politician, who borrowed a copy of Plato's "Republic," and after perusal returned it with the remark, "I see he's got some of my ideas." We are reminded of this story by a letter which lately appeared in THE WEEK. Your correspondent claims that the idea of government as resting on the will of the people as its source will be known for all time as the American idea of government. I venture to question the American title to this idea. I submit that it is older than America, and that it owns America more than America owns it. Tacitus found it amongst our early ancestors on the banks of the Elbe. Here is his account of it: "On smaller matters the chiefs debate; on greater matters all men. . . . The multitude sits around. . . . Presently the king or chief, according to the age of each, according to his birth, according to his glory in war, or his eloquence, is listened to, speaking rather by the influence of persuasion than by the power of commanding. If their opinions give offence they are thrust aside with shouts; if they are approved the hearers clash their spears." Save in the matter of costume and weapons, wherein does this primitive assembly differ from an American caucus? The American Constitution is a most valuable document. It was framed by men who had enjoyed the inestimable advantage of being British colonists, and its vital force lies in the British constitutional principles which are embedded in it. It seems necessary, therefore, to lodge a protest against this most recent American capture. An idea which dates back to the patriarchal and tribal times should not now be appropriated and patented as an original American invention.

G. M. M.

THE FUTILITY OF INDEPENDENCE.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—In a recent issue you have discussed with characteristic ability the question of Canadian Independence, upon which question, indeed, you would appear to have not only crossed the Rubicon, but to have burned your boats behind you. Permit me to mention a few points which have occurred to me in connection with your summing up of the objections to Independence, as being found in three words: Weakness, poverty, and ingratitude. In the first place, the question of our future is not so much positive as comparative; we are not confined to merely one alternative to colonialism, which condition I should deprecate for the future as much as you could possibly do, but have a choice of at least two besides. The question in my mind is: Would we not be stronger, more respected by the United States, more influential abroad, better known in the markets of the world, if we were to form part of a great Confederation than if we were to be a comparatively small, isolated, and scattered community? It is possible that the Republic to the South might not be aggressive, but none the less would we, under Independence, be entirely dependent upon any action which they might see fit to take. It would be this practical, though not nominal, dependence which would be so galling to a proud people.

But, to my mind, the chief objection to Independence is in the fact that were any of the Provinces to consider themselves aggrieved at an action taken by one of them or by the Central Government, the tendency would be to appeal to the United States for assistance and support, or else to use that potent force, the threat of secession, possibly backed up by promised external aid, in order to obtain satisfaction from the Central Executive in the matter which may have caused displeasure. Nor is this the only danger. Even now when forming a part of the British Empire we have seen a movement inaugurated in New York which, if ever it proved successful, would inevitably land us in Annexation. How much greater would the danger of such agitation and the exertions of aggressive demagogues in the United States be if we were comparatively at their mercy.

Every little internal trouble or disturbance would be magnified and encouraged by outside influences, and I

venture to say that within five years of such a consummation as Independence, we would find ourselves forced into the arms of the States by a process of alternate coaxing and coercion. As to the poverty plea, I can only say that it would be infinitely cheaper for us to go in for a federation with all the powerful auxiliary advantages which the Mother Country could share with us than to take upon ourselves the immense consular, diplomatic, naval, and military expenses which would be incumbent upon us, even though limited to the smallest possible sum, under a state of Independence.

It is not necessary to do more than allude to the question of ingratitude. It would seem to me to be more a question of justice. If the Mother Country, which has protected our national infancy, encouraged our constitutional expansion, assisted our commercial growth, treated us with never-varying conciliation and kindness, should ask us to join her in a national and political partnership which should take the form of a great federation, it would be not only just for us to accept, but incumbent upon us as a duty which we owed to our ancestors, to our country, and to ourselves, in order to perpetuate our allegiance to a common flag and political principle. Yours, etc.

J. CASTELL HOPKINS.

Toronto, September 18, 1889.

TRUE TALE.

THE Chevalier Léon Paul Vasilivitch de Saarkow was, as his name implies, a European of mixed but correct extraction. He was by profession a pianist, and at heart a genuine, conscientious and refined artist. But from lack of address, personal timidity and a commonplace exterior, he neglected to score any startling success. Good pianists are not to-day the rarity they once were. It is almost harder to find a downright bad pianist than a fairly good one. And, although friends and critics all insisted and conceded that Saarkow was much more than a merely fair performer, he made no great success with his gift. Concocting all over Europe, he kept his home and dearest affections centred in Paris, and the small and exclusive public which knew him there was not surprised one day to find that he had suddenly left for a tour in the British Isles. From that tour, however, he never returned. Playing only twice in London, he accepted some engagements for Wales and Scotland, where pianists are presumably rarer than in the metropolis, and from Edinburgh and other large towns he proceeded one night to a small town of the name of Glyntawr, where he had been billed and announced for a month. The town hall was miserably lighted, cold and half empty. Poor Saarkow, whose health had long been failing, almost unknown to himself, and who foresaw debts and all sorts of trouble at the close of his tour, went about his work half-heartedly. He was quite addicted to composition—indeed, he laboured under the delusion that the creative, and not the executive, was his forte—and the programme contained, along with a Beethoven sonata and numerous small selections, a requiem and nocturne of his own. The man was ill, cold, tired, disgusted, embittered. In the middle of the requiem his fingers grew stiff, refused to work, his head fell forward on the keys, his profile showed sickly yellow against the white ivory underneath; he was quickly raised by those in attendance and carried behind, and for six months he was ill—ill all the time, sometimes worse, sometimes better, but unable to move or leave Glyntawr.

Not that he wished very madly to leave it. He had been taken from the town hall to the residence of a certain Mr. Andrew Peebles, the stationer and music-seller who lived with his daughter Judith, a charming and unaffected Scotch lassie of twenty-three, in a plain but comfortable house next the shop. First from pity, then from genuine interest, both Mr. Peebles and Judith had tended the interesting stranger, till a close sympathy flourished up between the hard but honest Scotch natures of the father and daughter, and the moody, restless, often irritable, but captivating personality of their guest. As for the future of the latter, it seemed anything but clear. He could not play at all. His nervous system seemed entirely shattered. He therefore took refuge in study and composition, a departure which increased his claims to attention and affection more than ever in the minds of Judith and her father. They were good souls of course, but not above a little fondness for flattery, and it did seem to flatter them that Destiny should have thrown in their way the Chevalier Léon Paul Vasilivitch De Saarkow. Completely cut off from the artistic world, Saarkow forgot that he could no longer grow in knowledge of his art.

During his convalescence, he frequently protested that he must soon be thinking of going.

"Go? And where will you go?" demanded Mr. Peebles, in honest Scotch fashion. "Look at your white face and your trembling hands; you are not fit to travel yet surely. I know this is no place for a musician, though, from what you have told me of your past career, I certainly see little to attach you to any spot in particular either in England or on the Continent. And if you really wish to compose, as you say you do, why here is your opportunity! You shall stay with me, at all events until you are strong; you shall have leisure and plenty, and who knows but that I may prove an Esterhazy and you a Haydn! Scotch fare is plain, I know; brose and herring are not probably what you would choose, but they have helped to pull you through a long illness all the same."

Saarkow was ill, weak, disgusted and disappointed. He had a burning, unquenchable desire to be a composer.