

but one of the listeners, after recovering from his hilarity, thinking that he recognized an old friend in the last story, said, "Now Sam," which was the name of the oldest inhabitant, "you have been joshing us all along." "No," protested the old man, "every word I have been telling you is true. You can ask so and so," mentioning the names of several ancient residents, "if it be not true."

The effect of the hilarity having to some extent passed away again, the party found their spirits subsiding through the awful darkness and undefinable mystery that enshrouded them and that almost blotted out the gas jets in the low-ceilinged room in which they were sitting, so that they appeared like minute, fiery orbs set in the air above their heads. "Well," said one, "it will never do to sit here and suffocate; we must have something to cheer us until this enigma is solved."

He rang the bell that sat on the adjoining table to summon the Boniface. Its clear sound had just begun to die away, when the group was startled by a loud, shrill, doleful cry, unearthly in its weirdness, that froze the blood and pale the cheek of the listeners. This startling sound began in a high key, and continuing many seconds, seemed at last to be expiring in a low wail, when rising again on the murky atmosphere, in a mournful tone, in which misery, sorrow and despair seemed combined, it rang out in a female voice—the heartrending cry repeated again, "My daughter! Oh! my daughter!"

"Heavens! what is that?" exclaimed one. "It seems to come from the street," said another.

"Suppose we go and see what it is," said a third.

"Who can see anything in this darkness?" replied the first, "although it is only four o'clock," he added, examining his watch, and showing a disinclination to leave his comparatively safe quarters.

Going to the door, however, that opened on the street, and gazing down

the sidewalk, they observed the figure of what at one time must have been a tall, muscular woman of splendid form. Now, however, it was bent by premature age. From under a dark, broad-rimmed straw hat of a long departed fashion hung the loose grey hairs.

Across her shoulders was thrown a threadbare shawl of many faded hues. With her right hand she clasped the end of her shawl across her breast, and her left arm swung to and fro in unison with her tread. A shortness of one of her limbs gave a swaying motion to her step. Soon she was lost to view in the thickening darkness, and, as she finally disappeared, the same heartrending cry resounded through the air, so sadly that it surely would have raised her offspring from her grave had she been near. "My daughter! Oh! my daughter! My daughter! Oh! my daughter!"

"It's old mother Melville," said one. "She must have gone mad," said another, as the party retreated to the safe recesses of the room they had just vacated. After seating themselves, some one asked what she meant by this cry?

"Didn't you hear?" was the response. "Why, when she got up this morning her daughter was gone."

"I suppose she went off with some fellow on the train?" queried another.

"No," said the oldest inhabitant, restored to his natural frame of mind by this fresh evidence of human woe. "she enquired at the railway station and learned that she did not, and the old woman has been around town all day going to see the fellows that kept company with her, and with all the people with whom she might possibly be staying, and she satisfied herself that her daughter is not in the town, and she has been seized with the notion that she is dead." "Poor old body," he added, sympathetically, "I have been afraid for some time that the troubles with her daughter would