

YOUTH AND AGE.

(On the Centennial Anniversary of American Independence.)

"We have to confess that England is old and the United States young,"—*Times*

Punch sees no harm in that confession, Age is a thing comparative; In History's immense procession Some realms than others longer live, What diagnosis marks the time When any State is in its prime?

America is young, no doubt, And keeps her hundredth birthday merrily Her cannon roar; her speakers spout; Her toasts and sentiments ring cheerily; And how tall talk in fyttes has flowed In Bayard Taylor's long drawn Ode!

Hail we the democratic mind Self-crowned with freedom's deathless laurel; Nor her large Liberty upraid, Because its winning cost a quarrel, Prosperity and social health To the colossal Commonwealth!

Yet is Old England quite so old As the Chiquoleger maintains, Whose oldest, noblest blood is rolled Through the wide Union's youthful veins? In all things good, beneath the sun, John Bull and Jonathan are one.

Long centuries of stately life Are England's birthday gift to her; Columbia's youth, with vigor rife, Is felt in England's heart astrife, In young America's Centennial Old England feels herself perennial.

—*Punch*.

The Chalk Rift Tunnel.

IS THERE A NATURAL PASSAGE UNDER THE STRAITS OF DOVER—A STRANGE STORY OF SUBMARINE SMUGGLING.

The London correspondent of the *New York Sun* tells what he pronounces the strangest history of the century. He tells how Government officials were informed of the existence of a secret passage under the Straits of Dover, and of the willingness of the holders of the secret to surrender it to the Government. At last the officials sent for one of the party.

THE SECRET OF "GERICAULT'S HOPE."

Mr. Fleetwood Heald, on being introduced to Mr. Cross, produced a letter dated a week earlier from Paris, and signed by Gericaultaine, saying in effect that Mr. Heald had full authority from him, on the terms proposed, to make the communication to the two Governments respecting the cavern called "Gericault's Hope."

"As I am the only other person interested," said Mr. Heald, "this secret being made known only to the eldest person of our two families of Heald and Gericault at a time, I feel fully authorized to communicate to the British and French Governments, through you, the rather startling fact that a family of Kentish yeomen and a family of Picard nobles have been acquainted with a secret route under the English Channel since the year 1696."

Rather startling, indeed! Mr. Cross is a gentleman of the utmost *aplomb*, but this matter of fact communication upset his equanimity completely, and my informant tells me that the Secretary was strongly inclined to believe himself in the company of a madman.

Mr. Fleetwood Heald, however, quietly went on to explain that he himself, though proud to be the representative and descendant of a long line of Kent farmers, whose name he bore, was also descended from some of the bluest blood of France, the de Gericaults of Saint-Nicolas sur Mer, a family that had fought under Joinville and Francis I., under Henry Quatre and Conde, always on horseback, and always with honour. At the time of the League the de Gericaults became Protestants, and continued to hold that faith

in the latter time. At the period of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the old tower and chateau of Gericault at St. Nicolo was owned by the Sieur Jules de Gericault, a bachelor, but his younger brother, Arnaud, was a lawyer in Evreux, procureur du roi in the Provincial Parliament, and a married man with a large family. His eldest son, Josceline, an ardent youth, fresh from college, had got into serious difficulties with the authorities, owing to his active resistance to the dragonnading brutalities practised upon the Protestant emigres, and his troubles finally culminated in an attempt to arrest him. He resisted, and was so unfortunate as to kill a lieutenant of the King's Guard. Instant flight was his only resource, and by his father's advice he took refuge with his uncle, the old bachelor Jules, who lived a solitary life in the tower.

Josceline's place of refuge, however, was betrayed, and he was about to be captured, when his uncle hastily took him into the cellars of the chateau, into a pit or cell known as "the dungeon." He lifted a stone from the floor of this cell and disclosed a stone stairway. "Descend here," said the Sieur. "This stair leads you to the most precious possession of the house, the cavern of Gericault's Hope. It has been known to one member of the family ever since the raids of the Northmen. It is a refuge and a sheltering place in any great emergency, and no one knows the depth of it. It goes under the sea; that we know. Descend these steps—you have flint and steel—at the foot of the steps, in a crypt, you will find a lamp ready for lighting. There are viches, also. To night I will bring you provisions and news. Here you will be safe. There is a bed in the room beyond the crypt. Do not venture into the cave beyond where it is walled. You might be lost."

FROM PICARDY TO KENT DRY SHOD.

Josceline descended the stair, his uncle closed the trap and left him in horrible darkness. He found a lamp, however, lighted it, and then supplying himself with a torch, resolutely set out to explore the cavern. After passing through several chambers that had evidently been shaped out by the hand of man, Josceline came to the narrower part that seemed like a mere series of fissures in the chalk, cleft by other fissures at right angles, all descending at a sharp angle, so that the young man wished for a staff to aid his steps. Suddenly by a deep, hollow murmur over head, he felt sure that he was passing under the sea, but as the path was still plain, dry and easy he continued to descend, until fatigue made him stop for rest. By this time he had travelled several miles, and the cavern, or series of caverns, no longer descended, but kept a level or pretty near it, penetrating the chalk in a number of directions, in chambers or fissures of irregular height. These were all perfectly dry, and the air was pure.

Josceline returned toward the tower, ascended the steps, and found that his uncle had already been there and left him provisions, wine, and oil for several days, with a note saying he was closely watched, and must not come down again until the espionage was released.

Josceline carried his stores below and then, as he thought it must be night, he sought the dry straw bed his uncle had told him of, and went to sleep. He was awakened by dense suffocating smoke that came on him in volumes from above, and the noises he had heard left no doubt in his mind that the chateau was on fire. This, indeed, was the fact; the tower was burnt by the troops

after Jules had been carried off to prison in Arras. Sure that his retreat would now be detected, and oppressed by the smoke, Josceline hastily seized his stores and means of illumination and sought the recesses of the cave. He hurried inward for several hours, and at last, with inexpressible consternation, discovered that he was lost.

How long he wandered now he never could tell, but he knew that finally, after exploring no end of blind passages that led to nowhere, and at last losing his light, and stumbling on for a long while in the dark, much more than half mad, he heard voices, faint and muffled, on the other side of a wall of chalk. He knocked and cried, but there was no response. At last, in despair, he drew his couteau *do chasse* and cut his passage through into semi-daylight, and fainted.

This, Mr. Fleetwood Heald said, was the family legend concerning the discovery of the tunnel. Josceline de Gericault had cut himself through into the smugglers' cave on the coast of Kent, not five miles from Dover. This cave was chiefly the property of Farmer Heald, a prudent and close man, who at first was inclined to shoot the stranger, but finding him insensible, and perceiving there was some mystery about the youth's presence there, thought better of it, and took the young man to his house, closing the hole made. Finally, when Gericault was well enough to tell his story, Heald married him to his daughter, and built a famous beer cellar of his own with a secret passage into the cave, which he and Gericault explored thoroughly.

SMUGGLING UNDER THE SEA.

As soon as possible communication was had with France. Sieur Jules was dead from grief and rage. Arnaud had the ruins of the tower as his own possession; but was ignorant both of the cave and of his son's fate. At Heald's suggestion the tower was rebuilt and by degrees the firm of Glyn, Jansen, Gericault & Heald was established. The business was that of smuggling lices, silks, brandy, tobacco, &c. Glyn bought and sold in London; Jansen bought and sold in Arras, and Lille in Ghent and Antwerp. Heald and Gericault were the sole depositories of the secret of the submarine passage, and they did the smuggling. As the operation was perfectly safe, it was immensely profitable.

The secret, the custody always restricted to the eldest of each house, was well kept. The Healds always lived quietly in their apparent rank in life, but frequently intermarried with the Gericaults, who from being provincial nobles, fell at the time of the Revolution into the order of the commonalty.

The transit of the tunnel was made usually in two days and a night, and the goods were transported, in packs on the backs of the contemporary Gericault and Heald. They only made twenty or thirty trips a year at first, but about the beginning of this century, when smuggling was unusually profitable, they became more greedy, took several of the young men into the secret, and added some donkeys to their transportation service. In this way the firm grew rapidly rich; but, at the same time the secret was nearly lost. The tunnel had never been used for any but smuggling purposes, but one of the younger Gericaults, an ardent royalist, Vendean and particularly hostile to Napoleon, on one occasion took a French officer through it from England to France. Heald did not know this person's name, but shortly after his transit the word came to the Healds that the tunnel was suspected and