

GRACE DARLING'S BOAT.

IN THE FISHERIES' EXHIBITION.

It stands—amid a myriad objects strange,
Marks of a fisher's life;
A loving sight, to glorify the range
Of sea-born joy and strife!

It speaks—above the tumult of the hour,
Stronger than thought or speech—
This memory of self-devotion's power.
Further than sound can reach!

To brave the perils of the heartless deep,
When every wave meant death,
With woman's earnestness to save and keep
Alive each struggling breath!

To fight the pitiless seas and wrest the prize
Of human lives in victory,
This Heaven-gift boat recalls to happy eyes
A soul's nobility!

The pride of race, the boast of dauntless deeds,
Must pale beneath her fame,
Eternal as the ocean's breath—so speeds
The memory of her name.

To raise our thoughts from grovelling desires,
To keep us staunch and brave,
To wake the nobler impulse that inspires
Self-sacrifice to save!

To touch our lives with that far tenderness
That reaches everywhere:
Until the deeds which human kind may bless,
We almost seem to share.

ISIDORE G. ASCHER.

THOMAS CRANE'S OATH.

BY CLARENCE M. BOUTELLE.

I.

Thomas Crane counted the strokes as they were given by the tall old clock in the hall, and rose regretfully. "Twelve, and I must go," he said, which to Harry Fenton meant that his friend would stand up and talk for an hour in exactly the same way in which he had talked for six hours' sitting, that he would talk for a half hour longer in the hall, finish with fifteen minutes outside the door, and that at fifteen minutes before two o'clock in the morning—with a chance of not more than five minutes' error either way—it would be possible to go to bed. Thomas Crane had the reputation of being sure; he was certainly slow.

One could scarcely blame Thomas Crane for his slowness at this time. The room in which he and Fenton had spent the long evening was the ideal of comfort. Some rooms are furnished to please those who may happen to see them from time to time, and are elegant; some are furnished because rooms are necessary, and are commonplace; some are furnished to please the one who spends his time in them, and are comfortable and homelike. Harry Fenton's study was of the latter kind. Every chair and table, every paper and book seemed to have something of Fenton's individuality, and to his friend could but be attractive. The night outside was equally unattractive. The icy wind was piling the snow into long hard drifts in the darkness. The contrast was not a pleasant one to one who must soon face the storm.

On the table nearest the fireplace were the books the friends had been using from time to time in their discussion; curious works on the strangest features in mental science; collections of instances which have never been explained, and perhaps never will be; books on the brain and nerves. These two old college chums never failed to meet once a week in the young lawyer's study to spend an evening in their favorite way.

Standing near the open fire, Thomas Crane said: "I must maintain that there is not merely a possible, but a probable, connection between any two persons you may name. Trace back your life, and somewhere it crosses the life of the beggar you pass in the street. But for me, the man who makes my clothes and the woman who cooks my food would have different lives from what they do. You grant it? Well, then, trace it on, and what happens? But for them, what? I tell you, Fenton, your life and mine ways that of human beings beyond the seas." What grew out of this took place about the hour which Fenton had felt from experience would be spent standing in the cheerful firelight.

In the hall the conversation had drifted to another phase of the fascinating subject, and as Crane took down his overcoat he was saying: "Of course, there is such a thing as indirect, unintentional responsibility. The man who does a good deed may rob some one behind him of deserved praise when he allows the deed to be counted to his own credit; and the man whose life set in motion the train of events which resulted in the good may never even dream of it. And, on the other hand, we meet men every day who are really responsible for the crimes for which other men endure punishment. Not knowingly, not purposely, not with malice, but, in truth, responsible for all that." From this the discussion went on for a half-hour or more, and then Crane opened the door to go. The bitter cold rushed in in a fierce blast, as he said in answer to his friend's last remark: "An oath should be sacred. I can conceive of no circumstances which would warrant its being broken."

"Well," said Fenton, "I think we have pretty completely covered the whole ground to-night. You have brought up the theories of a connection between all human beings, and of a far-fetched kind of responsibility in which I don't believe, and I will take pleasure in a conflict with you on these points next week. And now, do you know it's confounded cold? I am half inclined to drive you away, old friend; can you deduce anything mathematical or psychological from that?"

"Both," said Crane, "two straight lines intersect in only one point. Five minutes might make a man too late for the inevitable. I certainly ought not to be too early for my fate." And with these laughing words on his lips he indeed went straight to his fate.

Crossing the little park which seemed doubly desolate from night and storm, as though to balance its Summer beauty, there was a sudden cry a little ahead. A quarter minute two men seemed engaged in a terrible struggle, but before he could reach them one had rushed away among the trees, and the other had fallen to the earth. Crane's first impulse was to follow the runaway; his second, and the one he acted upon, was to assist the other. Crane had studied medicine before his father had prevailed upon him to be a banker, so as to perpetuate the business in which the family had grown rich for three generations. It scarcely needed more than the glimpse he could get of the wounded man's face in the darkness and the sound of his failing voice to prove to him that all that the poor fellow had to say must be said at once. The knife in the other man's hand done its work only too well.

"How long will I live?" said the stranger, in a wonderfully calm and even voice. There was perfect sincerity in the tones he used; he evidently felt that "Will I live?" would have been a wasted question.

Crane answered with equal frankness: "Not five minutes!"

"Are you rich?" in a weaker tone.

"Yes."

"Charitable?"

Thomas Crane felt a doubt, but he said "Yes" again.

"Will you give a stranger—a dying stranger—a year of your time?"

"Will I give—?" began Crane.

"Listen," with sudden energy. "I hadn't an enemy in the world. I am dying by the hand of a murderer. Will you give me one year to find the man who is responsible for this? And will you make it cost him his life?"

Crane hesitated, but looked into the eyes turned towards his face and said "Yes" again.

"Swear it!"

A longer pause, and then Crane said, solemnly: "I do swear it!"

A wilder blast swept across the park, and when it had past, Crane was looking down on the dead face of the man whose path had crossed his that fearful night, and to whom he had pledged a year of his life.

II.

Thomas Crane testified at the inquest to the conflict he had seen, and to being with the man at his death. To his father and to Harry Fenton only did he tell of the fearful oath he had taken in the tempest of that January night. Both grieved that he had taken it, but neither said one word to induce him to break it.

"My legal knowledge is at your command," said Harry Fenton.

"My fortune is at your command," said his father.

Long before noon the dead man's relatives had come to claim him—his widowed mother and his sister; but they had nothing to tell which would throw any light on the murder. Charlie Jackson had spoken the truth when he said he had not an enemy in the world. He had no great amount of money. It was a most terrible mystery.

The next day Thomas Crane began his search. Search around the scene of the murder was rewarded by finding the knife with which the deed was done. The police had failed to find it. Crane found it himself.

Days followed in which he carefully examined the stock of cutlery in one store after another in his search for knives like it. He found its mate at last in a little variety store far out in the suburbs, the only one like it which he had seen for sale in the whole city. He bought it, treated the man who sold it to a glass of beer, praised the little child who came into the store from the dwelling behind it, and so won upon the man that he learned where the other two knives from the quarter dozen he had had, had gone when sold.

He took the likeliest case first.

A fellow who had been indicted for manslaughter once, and who was popularly believed to have escaped by false swearing, was followed first. Whatever he had been doing, he was evidently covering up his tracks. But when found at last, late in March, a thousand miles away from where Crane had commenced to follow him, he was sitting in a bar-room whittling a shingle with the mate of the knife which had killed Jackson, and two months of hard work had come to nothing. Crane was disgusted, not disheartened.

The next day he was on his way back to begin again.

The other man was an express messenger. An honest, hardworking, straightforward man, it seemed almost a mockery to follow him. Crane took another step forward in regard to the

knives themselves before he began. He went to the manufacturers, and from them to the wholesale dealers, telling them just enough of his purpose to secure their aid, and traced the knives from the place where they were made.

In towns not far away knives like these had been bought and sold again, but only the three he had already known of had ever been sent to the city in which the murder took place.

There was nothing left to do but to follow the express messenger. Crane began his work. He had seen the man once or twice, and so knew him by sight. He found him one morning in his neat yard at home. He was cutting limbs from the trees next the walk; and, to Crane's disappointment the knife he used was not the mate of the one which had killed young Jackson.

Thomas Crane went that afternoon to see the Jacksons. They had known for some time that he was following up the case, and he had been to see them several times. He told them what he had done, and what he had found out; but he did not tell them yet why he was following the murderer. It was beginning to be a ghastly piece of business in his estimation, yet he scarcely dared hope for so welcome a thing as failure. Think of it! A man bending all his energies to one dread end, and hoping that the ghastly necessity of being the avenger of a murder may pass by him. How the man longed for January again, that beautiful April morning. If he could only fall sick; but his oath kept him from exposure; the year of his life was to be given in honesty, even though unwillingly.

In the evening Crane called on Harry Fenton.

"I'd give anything for a look at the inside of that man's house," said he, in conclusion.

"Well," said Fenton, "the case is a strong one already. If the express messenger is guilty, he could never be convicted and hung on what we know now. But with proof that you have given your time for months to following up this case, it would be the easiest thing to clear you if caught and arraigned as a housebreaker. If you want to examine the inside of that man's house, break in some night when there is no one at home."

"You, a lawyer, my friend, advise this?"

"Under the circumstances, yes."

III.

The next day the express messenger's wife was sick, the day after better, the day after that worse, and so on for weeks. Thomas Crane watched the premises, nights, for a chance to become a burglar, and spent a large part of every day at the Jacksons' homestead.

It happened as might have been expected. Lizzie Jackson became the wife of Thomas Crane, after an engagement of one short month, late in December. He told her of his fearful oath before the marriage. She was shocked, even though her husband was following the murderer of her brother.

"It isn't long now, barely a fortnight; and you may put what evidence you have in the hands of the authorities and be free yourself, then. Be brave and true only a little longer," she said.

And Thomas Crane answered, "I will."

That night the evening paper contained the following item:

"We are glad to be able to announce that Mrs. John Land is able to travel. The doctors have informed her, however, that a change of climate is absolutely necessary. Mr. and Mrs. Land left for Florida this morning with their two little ones. Mr. Land will return in a few days."

Thomas Crane laid down the paper, kissed his bride, and said, sadly:

"Duty first, you know. I must break into John Land's house to-night."

An hour later Crane was inside the express messenger's house. His heart ached as he looked around him. Privation and sacrifice everywhere. Little devices to make discomfort more comfortable, of the possibility of which the rich man who was looking it over had never dreamed. Thomas Crane was ashamed of his suspicions. He half turned to go, but a vivid memory of the dead eyes of a man looking into his nerved him to do what he felt was mean and treacherous. "I swore it," he said, and he remained.

The desk in which John Land kept his papers was easy to find and easy to open. Bundles of letters were cast aside, old account-books were not opened. Presently a neat bundle was found. The first paper was "The Last Will and Testament of John Land." The next was an envelope, closely sealed, and addressed to the lawyer who had written the will. It was indorsed "To be opened only at my death." But Thomas Crane opened it. Inside was another envelope indorsed, "To be opened only when some person shall have been indicted for the murder of Charles Jackson, January 7th, 1881." Crane opened that also. It was a long and circumstantial account of the murder and all facts connected with it.

Mrs. Land's brother was a desolate fellow, who was a disgrace to the whole family. He had been with Land the whole of the day before the murder. A package, said to contain five thousand dollars, had been found at night to contain only one thousand dollars. The express authorities did not suspect Land, but they did suspect his brother-in-law. They boldly claimed that he had changed packages, having had access to the envelopes in which money was sent. They offered to retain Land in spite of

his carelessness, if he would get the money back. The bank to which the money was sent agreed with the express managers. The whole matter should be hushed up on the return of the money. He returned home to find that his wife's brother had gone away, no one knew where. He must have the money, or must face disgrace and dishonor. He had seen a gentleman in draw five thousand dollars from the bank while he was there. He resolved to get it. The man was a gambler, usually a successful one, and would go home late at night. Land resolved to watch for him. He told those who had given him time that he would find his brother-in-law during the night, secure the money, and get him to leave town. He mistook Charles Jackson for the man with the money, and was being overpowered by him when he managed to get his knife and escape by killing him. A half-hour later he robbed the half-drunken gambler without difficulty. The robbery, reported the next day, sunk into insignificance beside the murder, and had scarcely been heard of outside of police circles. The five thousand dollars which Land presented at the bank next morning was expected there; Land believed his wife's brother was suffering no injustice in being supposed to have given it up under threat, and so he said he had. Land closed with a solemn protestation that the "man who had changed the money package was alone responsible for the murder."

And Thomas Crane shook his head and said: "I believe he is right, and I shall try to find that man." But he had the following message sent to the city, through which the passengers for Florida would pass the next morning, for all that:

"Arrest John Land for the murder of Charles Jackson, in this city, on January 7th, 1881. Full and complete proofs of the crime are secured."

At home—that is at Mrs. Jackson's—he found a letter from his father. He laid it unopened upon the table while he bade his wife and her mother good-night. "I shall sit up in the parlor to wait for answers to my messages," he said, after he had explained all, "and will come up later."

In the morning when Mrs. Jackson and her daughter came down-stairs, the little table in the hall was seen to have been moved to the very foot of the stairs. On it lay the letter which Crane had received from his father, open now. They stood together and read it:

"Come down and help us straighten out a queer mistake, for which you are responsible. On January 7th, 1881, after I had left the bank, you transacted two items of business, as shown by the books. One was the putting away of a package said to contain \$1,000. The other was sending to the — Bank a package containing \$5,000. The express company have done so much business with us that they might not inquire closely, but why the bank never made trouble I don't understand. But, in a nutshell, the package here was opened to-day and contains \$5,000, and as \$5,000 left our balance all right, only \$1,000 went to the — Bank. Come and help us fix it all right, as you are responsible for it."

They dropped the letter. The bride of a day glanced at her mother, and her mother back again to her. There was nothing of hope in either white face for the other. Both looked towards the parlor-door and shuddered. The utter desolation of despair in their new loss was chilling their hearts. There was no need to open the room to know the horrible thing it held for them.

The chain was complete. Thomas Crane was responsible; they knew he had kept his oath.

MISCELLANY.

A REMARKABLE book made and decorated by Miss Alexander, daughter of a portrait painter well known in Boston years ago, has been bought by Ruskin for his Sheffield museum at the price of three thousand dollars. It is a large quarto, and contains the folk lore of the Tuscan contadini. The text, music and pictures are done by Miss Alexander in pen and ink. The verses are framed or separated by exquisite drawings of the beautiful mountain plants indigenous to the region. Miss Alexander was four years in making the book.

From the first of next August Great Britain and Ireland will enjoy the benefits of an "inland parcel post." The government not only takes the precaution of limiting the weight of packages—seven pounds—but also the size, forbidding the transfer, by this method, of any having a combined length and girth of more than six feet. Postage for parcels weighing less than one pound will be three-pence. Over one and less than three pounds, six-pence. Between three and five pounds, nine-pence. Over five pounds, one shilling.

QUEEN VICTORIA attained her sixty-fourth birthday on the twenty-fourth of May, an age which has been exceeded by only eleven of the sovereigns of England, dating from the Norman conquest. On the twentieth of June her Majesty will have reigned over the United Kingdom for forty-six years, a length of reign which has been exceeded by three of the Kings of England only—viz., Henry VII., whose reign extended to fifty-six years; Edward III., whose reign lasted fifty-six years; and George III., whose reign extended to the long period of nearly sixty years. The queen has now been a widow for nearly twenty-two years, the Prince Consort having died on December 14, 1861.