

THE GUAHIBI MOTHER.

The following affecting story is told by Humboldt:—Where the Atabapo enters the Rio Teini, but before we reached its confluence, a granitic hummock, that rises on the western bank, near the mouth of the Guasacavi, is called the rock of the Guahibi Woman, or the rock of the Mother Piedra de la Madre. We inquired the cause of so singular a denomination. Father Zea could not satisfy our curiosity, but some weeks after, another missionary, one of the predecessors of this ecclesiastic, whom we found settled at San Fernando, as president of the missions, related to us an event which I recorded in my journal, and which excited in our minds the most painful feelings. If, in these solitary scenes, man scarcely leaves behind him any trace of his existence, it is doubly humiliating for a European to see perpetuated by the name of a rock, by one of those imperishable monuments of nature, the remembrance of the moral degradation of our species, and the contrast between the virtues of a savage and the barbarism of civilised man.

In the year 1797, the missionary of San Fernando had led his Indians to the banks of the Rio Guaviave, on one of those hostile incursions which are prohibited alike by religion and Spanish laws. They found in an Indian hut a Guahibi mother with three children, two of whom were still infants. They were occupied in preparing the flour of cassava: resistance was impossible; the father was gone to fish, and the mother tried in vain to flee with her children. Scarcely had she reached the Savannah, when she was seized by the Indians of the mission, who go to hunt men, like the whites and the negroes in Africa: the mother and her children were bound, and dragged to the bank of the river; the monk, seated in his boat, waited the issue of an expedition, of which he partook of the danger. Had the mother made too violent a resistance, the Indians would have killed her; for every thing is permitted when they go to the conquest of souls, and it is children in particular they seek to capture, in order to treat them in the mission as peitos, or slaves of the Christians. The prisoners were carried to San Fernando, in the hope that the mother would be unable to find her way back to her home by land. Far from those children who had accompanied their father on the day in which she had been carried off, this unhappy woman showed signs of the deepest despair. She attempted to take back to her family the children who had been snatched away by the missionary, and fled with them repeatedly from the village of San Fernando, but the Indians never failed to seize her anew; and the missionary, after having caused her to be mercilessly beaten, took the cruel resolution of separating the mother from the two children who had been carried off with her. She was conveyed alone towards the mission of the Negroe, going up to the Atabapo; slightly bound, she was seated at the bow of the boat, ignorant of the fate that awaited her; but she judged by the direction of the sun, that she was removed farther and farther from her hut, and her native country. She succeeded in breaking her bonds, threw herself into the water, and swam to the left bank of the Atabapo; the current carried her to the shelf of rock, which bears her name to this day. She landed, and took shelter in the woods, but the president of the missions ordered the Indians to row to shore, and follow the traces of the Guahibi. In the evening she was brought back, stretched upon the rock, (la Piedra de la Madre,) a cruel punishment was inflicted on her with some straps of menatee leather, which serve for whips in that country, and with which the alcades are always furnished. This unhappy woman, her hands tied back with strong stalks of mavacure, was then dragged to the mission of Javita.

She was then thrown into one of the caravanseras, that are called Casa de Roy. It was the rainy season, and the night was profoundly dark. Forests, till then believed to be impenetrable, separated the mission of Javita from that of San Fernando, which was twenty-four leagues distant in a straight line. No other part is known than that of the rivers; no man ever attempted to go by land from one village to another, were they only a few leagues apart: but such difficulties do not stop a mother who is separated from her children. Her children are at San Fernando de Atabapo; she must find them again, she must execute her project of delivering them from the hands of Christians—of bringing them back to their father, on the banks of the Guaviave. The Guahibi was carelessly guarded in the caravansera. Her arms being wounded, the Indians of Javita had loosened her bonds, unknown to the missionary and the alcades; she succeeded by the help of her teeth in breaking them entirely; she disappeared during the night, and, at the fourth rising sun, was seen at the mission of San Fernando, hovering round the hut where her children were confined. "What that woman performed," added the missionary who gave us this sad narrative, "the most robust Indian would not have ventured to undertake. She traversed the woods at a season when the sky is constantly covered with clouds, and the sun, during whole days, appears but for a few minutes. Did the course of the waters direct her way, the inundation of the river forced her to go far from the banks of the main stream, through the midst of woods, where the movement of the waters is almost imperceptible. How often must she have been stopped by the thorny lianas that form a network around the trunks they entwine? How often must she have swam across the rivulets that run into the Atabapo? This unfor-

tunate woman was asked how she had sustained herself during the four days. She said, "that exhausted with fatigue, she could find no other nourishment than those great black ants called Vachas, which climb the trees in long bands, to suspend on them their resinous nests!" We pressed the missionary to tell us, whether the Guahibi had peacefully enjoyed the happiness of remaining with her children, and if any repentance had followed this excess of cruelty; but at our return from the Rio Negroe, we learned that the Indian mother was not allowed time to dress her wounds, but was again separated from her children, and sent to one of the missions of the Upper Orinoko, where she died, refusing all kind of nourishment, as the savages do in great calamities. Such is the remembrance annexed to the fatal rock, "Piedra de la Madre."

ANECDOTES OF THE INSANE.

No. I.

A wrong sensation does not constitute a person insane. He may have "double vision;"—he may see two fingers, when only one is held up; yet he is not on that account insane. Neither if a person sees images,—figures,—spectres, is he insane, if he do not believe their existence is real. Some persons see images of objects which have no existence; and they know that such things do not exist; and therefore they are not insane. They are aware that it is a mere deception. Some see appearances of human beings, brutes, and various animals; but they are perfectly aware that it is entirely the effect of disease. One of the most remarkable instances of this description occurred at Berlin; in the person of a bookseller named Nicolai. He saw, at certain times, an immense number of living objects; but he was aware that it was all the effect of unhealthy excitement. He had gone through considerable mental application; and being aware that this was all a delusion, he was no more insane for seeing them, than a person would be for thinking he saw two fingers, when you held up but one. You know that Brutus and Socrates are said to have seen,—the one the shade of Cæsar, and the other the "familiar spirit," as he called it; but if neither the one nor the other believed this, or if they merely believed it in accordance with the belief of the day, they were not mad; but if they knew better, and yet believed these things, then they were deranged. But in a great number of cases of insanity, you find an absurd belief. Persons may believe something so preposterous, that everybody will consider them mad for so doing. A case is recorded of a butcher, who firmly believed he saw a leg of mutton hanging from his nose. He was certainly mad. Another is told of a baker, who fancied himself butter; and refused to go into the sunshine, lest he should melt. A painter thought he was transformed into putty; and thought that he could not walk without being compressed. Others have fancied themselves glass; and would not sit down lest they should crack. Luther furnished an instance of an absurd opinion of this description; for, though so able a man, he was mad on some points. He fancied himself possessed by the devil,—as did also the Roman Catholics; and that he heard him speak. In Hudibras there is the following couplet in reference to this circumstance:—

"Did not the dev'l appear to Martin
Luther in Germany, for certain?"

Luther, in his works, speaks of the devil appearing to him frequently; and says he used to drive him away by scoffing and jeering;—observing that the devil, being a proud spirit, cannot bear to be contemned and scoffed. Some popish writers affirmed that Luther was the offspring of "an incubus,"—a kind of young devil; and at length, when he died, he was strangled by the devil. Dr. Ferriday, of Manchester, had a patient of the same persuasion as Luther. He fancied he had swallowed the devil. Many persons fancy that there are frogs and serpents within them; and one woman fancied that a whole regiment of soldiers was within her. One man fancied that he was too large to go through a doorway; and being pulled through he screamed, and fancied he was being lacerated; and actually died of the fright. A woman fancied she had been dead, and had been sent back to the world without a heart, and was the most miserable of God's creatures. At the Friends' "Retreat," near York, one patient writes,—
"I have no soul. I have neither heart, liver, nor lungs; nor a drop of blood in my veins. My bones are all burnt to a cinder. I have no brain; and my head is sometimes as hard as iron, and sometimes as soft as a pudding." Another patient in the "Retreat" wrote the following verses in reference to this hypochondriac:—

"A miracle, my friends, come view!—
A man (admit his own words true)
Who lives without a soul.
Nor liver, lungs, nor heart has he;
Yet sometimes can as cheerful be
As if he had the whole.

His head (take his own words along)
Now hard as iron, yet ere long
As soft as any jelly.
All burnt his sinews and his lungs;
Of his complaints not fifty tongues
Could find enough to tell ye!

Yet he who paints his likeness here,
Has just as much himself to fear
He's wrong from top to toe.
Ah, friends, pray help us, if you can!
And make us each again a man;
That we from hence may go!"

One man, in the time of the first French Revolution, thought he had not got his own head. He is described in Moore's "Fudge Family at Paris." Mr. Fudge says:—

"Went to the mad house. Saw the man
Who thinks,—poor wretch,—that (while the fiend
Of discord here full riot ran)
He, like the rest, was guillotined;

But that when, under Boney's reign,
(A more discreet, though quite as strong one)
The heads were all restored again,
He, in the scramble, got a *wrong* one.

Accordingly, he still cries out,—
This strange head fits him most unpleasantly!
And always runs,—poor dev'l!—about,
Inquiring for his own incessantly.

Bishop Warburton, in a note to one of his works, speaks of a person who thought he was converted into a goose-pie. Pope, in his "Rape of the Lock," describes many of these fancies. He says, in giving a sketch of hypochondriacal persons,—

"Unnumber'd throngs on every side are seen,
Of bodies changed to various forms by spleen.
Here living tea-pots stand; one arm held out,
One bent;—the handle this, and that the spout.
A pipkin here, like Homer's triped, walks;
Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pie talks."

A man in the University of Oxford fancied himself dead, and lay in bed, waiting for the tolling of the bell; but not hearing it at the time he expected, he fell into a violent passion, and ran and tolled it himself. He was then spoken to on the absurdity of a dead man tolling his own bell; and it is said that he returned, and was afterwards sound in his intellect. Simon Brown, a dissenting minister, wrote the best answer to Findal's work, entitled, "Christianity as Old as the Creation;" but, notwithstanding the great powers of mind displayed in his work, he thought that, by the judgment of God, his rational soul had perished; and that he had only brute life. He absolutely inserted this in the dedication of his work to the Queen. This dedication, however, was afterwards suppressed. Baron Swedenburg, a very learned and able man, thought that he had had communications with God for thirty years; and that he had been shown by the Almighty, the mysteries of nature. Many think he was right; but no one could have that idea without insanity. It is similar to the case of the celebrated Pascal; who, while he was working the problem of the cycloid curve, with great powers of intellect, was tied (by his own desire) in a chair! lest he should fall into a yawning gulf, which he imagined to be before him.—*Elliotson's Lectures on Medicine.*

ON THE LANGUAGE OF UNTUTORED MEN.

Yet to such heights is all the plainness wrought.
Wit may admire, and letter'd pride be taught.

Prior.

Language participates of the passions and emotions which it describes. In the early periods of society the human mind was alternately agitated with violent emotions, or depressed with sullen despondency: silence is the usual attendant of the one, ardent, bold, and figurative language that of the other. Strong and bold language is necessary to express violent feelings and impetuous passions. The strong passions displayed in the uncultivated state of society, or amongst the rude and ignorant, have produced that lively and picturesque description, that splendid and bold imagery with which the songs and orations of ancient poets and orators abound. The effusions of fancy, the sallies of the imagination, and the war of the passions, unchecked by the improvement of reason, and the acquisition of knowledge.

The uncultivated nations carried on their public transactions, and mediated their treaties with greater pomp, and with bolder metaphors, than the moderns employ in their poetical compositions. A treaty of peace between Great Britain and the five nations of Canada, affords an instance of this kind, which is expressed in the following language:—"We are happy in having buried under the ground the red axe that has so often been dyed with the blood of our brethren. Now in this manner we inter the axe, and plant the tree of peace. We plant a tree, whose tops will reach the sun, and its branches spread abroad, so that it shall be seen afar off. May its growth never be stifled and choked; but may it shade both your country and ours with its leaves! Let us make fast his roots, and extend them to the utmost of your colonies. If the enemy should come to shake his tree, we would know it by the motion of its roots reaching into our country. May the Great Spirit allow us to rest in tranquillity upon our mats, and never again dig up the axe to cut down the tree of peace! Let the earth be trod hard over it, where it lies buried. Let a strong stream run under the pit, to wash the evil away out of our sight