

saucy reply, cried to Alice to follow her. The latter obeyed, and Mabel followed with an alacrity and fearlessness that won the admiration of the group of officers now assembled on deck.

(To be continued.)

FATA MORGANA.

AMONG the marvels of nature there is nothing more beautiful or more surprising than that wonderful product of impalpable agencies, the mirage, or Fata Morgana, which is sometimes witnessed on the great Western plains, and occasionally in the vicinity of our lakes. The following account of one of these remarkable phenomena will doubtless prove interesting to many readers of THE HARP to whom the subject of mirages is probably an entirely unhacknied one:—

A MIRAGE OF THE PLAINS.

I was journeying in the summer of 18— with a small party of army officers, who, with their escort and waggon train were *en route* from "the States" to Santa Fe, in the Territory of New Mexico. We started from Fort Leavenworth about the middle of July, and for ten or twelve days, in passing through a country somewhat settled, each day found some new scene to interest us. The novelty of the journey, a trip of such a distance on horseback, enabled me to undergo cheerfully the fatigue, and success in hunting the buffalo and antelope amply compensated me for the discomforts arising from constant riding and unaccustomed exposure to the burning rays of the sun.

We gradually entered the dreary plains, where nothing save an occasional sand-hill, or here and there the skeleton of a horse or buffalo, relieved the wearied eye. It was the very picture of desolation. For days the same level plain seemed to travel with us. Pools of slimy water were found at known points on the route, at distances of from ten to fifty miles apart, compelling us to travel on several occasions a portion of the night, as well as the day, to reach them.

It was on Sunday and about the twenty-

third day of our journey that we saw the wonderful mirage. With a gentleman who had grown gray in the service, I was riding some distance ahead of the train. We had been travelling since daylight, and had many miles to go to reach a resting place where water for the tired and thirsty could be found. All day not a tree or shrub, not an animal save those in our train was to be seen; a kind of a woolly grass, parched and dead, covered the otherwise barren soil; around, on every side the same; the eye was pained by the dull vacancy; far away the sky seemed to meet and blend with the fading view; the sun poured down its rays with intense power; the horses and mules were begging for drink in their peculiarly expressive way, as we moved on in silence, thinking, no doubt, of the bubbling springs and rippling streams, of the green verdure and shady groves of the land of our homes.

All at once the sun was obscured by a cloud, and a slight shower of rain fell; and looking before me I saw, a short space to the right of the road, and apparently about two miles distant, a cluster of trees, small, but green and perfect in shape. While wondering that I had not before observed them, I directly saw others at some distance from the first noticed. Small, dull clouds hung around them, sitting like a dark veil over the scene, and through this veil of clouds moved shadowy and indistinct forms, which one by one, as the misty screen here and there faded slowly away, took shape and settled into stately oaks and towering elms and pines; and before our thirsty eyes, beyond the trees, appeared in outlines, dim at first, the borders of a lake of limpid waters.

Soon the curtained clouds were gone, and there, in all the distinct and inviting loveliness of nature, lay a placid lake in the midst of a verdant forest, holly and beech, oak and elm, pine and magnolia, all mingled together, yet each distinctly marked as by the Creator's hand. On the farther side were hills covered with lofty trees, and far away in the back ground, blue mountains, with large boulders protruding from their sides, added much to the picturesque grandeur of the view. Between the hills, over a rocky bluff, poured the waters of a sparkling cascade into the