

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

HOME DREAM.

Weary and forlorn 'neath this ancient gable
I sit me down to wipe my brow and rest,
While in the distant West
Light vapours of alternate white and sable
Wave plumelike o'er the veil which shrouds
The sun in golden clouds.

I tire now of Alpine dale and mountain,
And roaming over foreign boreal fields
Where Nature sternly yields
Her hardest fruits; this classic fountain—
These Druid woods—even the beautiful sea
Have lost their charms for me.

I feel, as never I felt, the grievous burden
Of loneliness press upon my soul,
I see the intangible goal
Vanish into space, and no hopes of guerdon
For manly strivings in my solitude, now rise
Before my straining eyes.

But on this summer eve, a new sensation
Throbs through my spirit like a vital spark,—
A beacon in the dark
Of weary, weary years,—a strange pulsation
Waking sweet music upon rusted strings
In oracular murmurings.

My eyes with tears of joy are streaming,
And an infantile jubilation leaps
From unsuspected depths
Of my drained heart—the boon before me gleam-
ing
I grasp at with both hands and cry
In thankfulest ecstasy.

Ah! Home to the wanderer when his day is ended,
Home to the orphan in the lanes of life,
Exhausted with the strife
Of one against the many,—Home! where all joys
[are blended,
Joys of the present, the future and the past,
Sole joys of earth which last.

Joys never tasted! I close my eyes and listen
To distant echoes from the vale—the muffled
[sounds
Of busy household rounds,
The sweet low tones of wives whose soft eyes
[glisten
With love upon their offspring, and the grave
[word
Of benison at the board.

I see through the inner gloom the light of faces
Illumed by the hearth—the innocent smile
Of maidens without guile,—
The father's kindling look—the thousand graces
Of childhood in the crib, and, holy as angels' [prayer,
The mother's infinite care.

Would that a country home were mine!—and
[sobbing,
I think of quiet farms and winding streams,
And yellow, fecund gleams
Of sunshine on the corn,—the warm air throbbing
With the simmer of beech leaves—and the simple
[lease
Of rustic families.

Oh! I will take my pilgrim staff to-morrow,
And turn away from these bleak Northern climes
To where the silver chimneys
Of my parish bells invite me. All the sorrow,
All the cark of solitary travel then will cease,
And I shall dwell in peace.

Yes, I will rest among the few who love me,
Or will create new loves where none remain,
And mingle in the train
Of those who live and hope. An angel above me
Beckons me onward to the purple shore,
My Home for ever more.

JNO. LESPERANCE.

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

THE
MYSTERY OF SAINTED GROVE.

BY DION.

CONCLUSION.

Such was the tale implicitly believed by Antoine, but inquiry as to the character of the man who told it disclosed the following facts:—

Some years before, there had come to the village in the capacity of school-master, one of those stray waifs of fortune who are to be found in almost every hamlet in America. Nothing was known of his previous career save what dropped from his own lips. His real or assumed name was Henry Daubrey, and he admitted that he was a native of the Island of Jersey. Beyond this, his history seemed shrouded in mystery; but it was evident to those who were competent to judge that he must have received a fine classical education. Possessing a perfect knowledge of the French language, he was very successful as a teacher, and his popularity in that capacity was great in all quarters; but as a set-off to his usefulness, he was unfortunately a drunkard of the worst description. The fees received for the task of licking the ideas of the village children into shape were barely sufficient to keep his "soul the body's guest," but his small income was augmented by the quarterly allowance granted by the Government for educational purposes. Amidst the circumstances in which he was placed, he never in his sober state lost those characteristics which are so visibly impressed on the man who has been accustomed to good society, and always, save in his cups, retained the deportment of a gentleman. From the hour, however, he received his salary until it was spent, and all other sources of credit stopped, he lived in a chronic state of drunken-

ness. When in this condition, the habits of the man were altogether changed, no subterfuge was too low to descend to, if by it he could gratify his appetite for drink, and clever and shrewd were the schemes to which he would resort to accomplish his purpose. His constitution, greatly undermined by the reckless life which it was evident he had led previous to his arrival in the settlement, at length succumbed to a spree which had been unusually protracted, and without a hand to close his eyes, or a lip to breathe a prayer, this clever but misguided man had resigned his soul to His Maker in the midst of a debauch about a year before my residence in the village. As soon as I learned the character of Daubrey, I concluded that the parchment document and its accompanying story had been employed as the means to borrow money from my friend, by playing on his peculiar ideas on the subject of buried money. Indeed the parchment when closely examined carried self-contained evidence which proved it a fabrication. On the back could be seen the marks where writing had been erased by scraping, but this had not escaped the notice of Antoine, and Daubrey had accounted for it by telling him that originally on the back there had been written a complete inventory of the treasures, and that one of his ancestors for some reason had removed it. A minute examination revealed to me the outline of certain words of legal phraseology which bore a suspicious appearance, and could not be erased without destroying the sheet, on account of the ink having penetrated further than in those parts which had disappeared. It needed no efforts of the imagination to distinctly trace "Victoria by the Grace of God," "whereas," together with other words that always find their way into those pleasant fictions of law called "The Common Courts," and I concluded that the sheet had originally been used in what is called a "Nisi Prius Record," and perhaps after furthering one scheme of extortion had fulfilled its mission, and I lamented with Jack Cade "that the skin of an innocent lamb should be made parchment, and parchment being scribbled o'er should undo a man." Knowing how delicate a matter it is to impeach the integrity of a dead man to a friend who bore the highest respect for his memory, I kept my discovery to myself. The knowledge of human nature possessed by Daubrey would at once suggest the idea of wresting the current superstitions of the place to his plan, and making the grove the centre of attraction. The employment of parchment, a substance completely unknown to Antoine, instead of paper, was a bright thought of this clever but unscrupulous man, whilst the introduction of the black cat was a brilliant stroke of genius, which indefinitely postponed the search, as poor Antoine mournfully assured me, that a cat "able to fill the requirements was not to be found in any house for miles along the coast." Only in one place had he seen a cat that seemed to possess the peculiar requisites desired by the Prince of Darkness. It was in a hotel at Bathurst, kept by one Baldwin, as jolly and warm-hearted an Irishman as ever enveloped a glass of whiskey, and whose stories had kept me in roars of laughter during the few days I lived in his house before proceeding down the coast. As I had to visit this place before leaving Caraque, I promised Antoine that I would procure the cat if it was at all possible, and kept my promise by bringing it with me on my return, my jolly landlord being glad to be rid of it. No words can express the joy of Antoine, when he found the animal was all that could be desired, every hair being of the deepest sable. All that we now required was such a night as that on which Tam O'Shanter set out on his homeward trip. I do not know whether Antoine followed the formula laid down in "The Book of Common Prayer," and prayed for rain in the set phrases directed to be used when we desire Providence, for one especial benefit, to change those immutable laws by which the Universe is governed, but day passed after day without a cloud appearing in the sky, and I commenced to congratulate myself that I would be able to avoid the foolish adventure in which I promised to play a part. During the few remaining days that I intended to stay in the village, I amused myself by visiting my favourite spots around the neighbourhood, accompanied by the truest friend that I had in the place. This companion in my pedestrian tours was a large and shaggy dog of the Newfoundland breed, owned by the people in whose house I boarded, and who reciprocated the notice I extended to him by all those outward signs of affection peculiar to his species. His fondness for me at last became a source of annoyance, as he was continually quarrelling with all the dogs he met in our rambles, and it at last became a necessity, when I did not desire his company, to confine him in an outhouse in which cattle were kept during the winter season. So sagacious, however, was "Boule," that on being released after my departure from the house, he would at once proceed to my favourite retreats, the first one visited being "Sainted Grove." His intimate knowledge of my habits at last led to the ludicrous scene I am about to relate. On the last evening that I was to spend in the village, the clouds, for

the first time in many weeks, began to gather in dark and rolling masses, and the sea to exhibit those unmistakable signs which, to an experienced eye, foretell a heavy storm. The fishing boats had stood in for the land early in the afternoon and were safely moored under lee of the shore, the earliest to arrive being my friend's boat, his practised eye foreseeing that the night about to follow would be such as was necessary for our adventure. For the first time since our acquaintance had commenced, I felt annoyed at his inquiry for me, but his kindness had been so unremitting that I felt it would be the basest of ingratitude if I refused to fulfil my portion of the agreement. The people with whom I boarded gave me more credit for common sense than I perhaps deserved, and when I left the house in company with Antoine, they had little idea that I was starting out to locate the spot at which the pirate of the Sainted Grove had deposited his blood-stained wealth. The ash tree, which I had discovered in a previous visit, was in no way remarkable, those swelling rings being frequently observed in that species. With a tape line Antoine had borrowed from a land surveyor in the village, we soon located the spot we were to dig, marking it with a small stake, which Antoine carefully covered with the dried leaves found scattered around. We then separated at the Grove, our roads lying in different directions, after agreeing that in case of a thunder-storm we should set out to meet each other about half-past twelve, and that Antoine was to bring the gift-offering to Satan enclosed in a small brass studded valise that I had left in his boat on my last fishing excursion, together with a pick and spade. Long before I reached my dwelling the play of the lightning could be distinctly seen in the west, but on account of the distance no thunder could be heard. Gradually, however, the storm approached the village, and long ere the appointed hour the heavens vomited forth in rapid succession the most vivid flashes of lightning I ever witnessed, whilst peal after peal of terrific thunder reverberated incessantly along the shores of the bay. In the midst of this storm I set out for the Grove. I confess that long before I arrived at the spot I was heartily sickened of the projected enterprise, and fervently hoped that Antoine was affected in the like manner, but in this hope I was doomed to disappointment, as he arrived almost at the same moment as myself. We then took our path through the wood, and such was the vividness of the lightning that it penetrated the dense foliage, and at times afforded me glimpses of the pallid features of my friend with fear written on every line, and which was only kept in check by his determined character. Arriving at the stake, we commenced to dig, Antoine turning the first sod. Not a word was spoken, yet I must admit that I was excited with alarm, not by any superstitious feeling, but from the awful character of the storm. Close by the spot where we were digging was a small hillock, about the size of an infant's grave, and on this Antoine rested whilst I took my turn with the spade. From where we stood we could see through the trees the bay beneath as when its waters were illuminated by the lightning. We had thus worked on for some time, when Antoine suddenly seized my arm and pointed down to the shore, and there during a flash that followed, I plainly perceived a small black vessel running in beneath the point. The scene was closed for a moment by darkness, and when the thunder for an interval ceased, I could distinctly hear the clanking of a chain cable being rapidly payed out at the base of the grove. Fear, like small-pox, is eminently contagious, and I am free to confess that my philosophy at this stage had nearly disappeared, and nothing but a feeling of bravado, which was anything but courage, kept me from at once leaving the place. Our utter silence, the fearful nature of the storm, the sudden appearance of the vessel, the clanking of the cable, and the novelty of the enterprise, all combined to produce a state of mind which was the opposite of calm and collected. We had now scooped out a hole to the depth of nearly three feet, when Antoine, who was digging, struck his spade on something which gave out a hard metallic sound. Motioning me to take his place, he hurriedly opened the valise and took out our feline surety, stroking it with one hand, whilst with the other he held it pressed to his side. Such was the fear that had gained possession of me, that even the ludicrous nature of this scene did not restore me to my senses. At this moment, directly in front of where we stood could be heard at a distance the rustling of feet amidst the leaves, then after a short interval I could distinctly hear the snapping of a dried twig. Nearer and nearer approached the footsteps, sounding to our overstrung ears like the tramp of an elephant, whilst every flash of lightning revealed the figure of Antoine dancing round the spot uneasily, and holding with outstretched hands the sable wretch that was doomed to the Plutonian shades. By this time, I had altogether ceased digging, and stood breathless and motionless, spade in hand, in the hole we had excavated. To and fro went the steps with an awful regularity of tread, and then stopped; suddenly almost beside us a loud and unearthly snort could be heard. The

spade dropped from my hands through terror, and when a flash of lightning for a moment lit up the spot, there on the mound before me stood a huge black figure with two great eyes fixed steadfastly on mine. I sprang from the place and in my eagerness to escape tripped on the edge of the hole I had been digging. Urged by the law of self-preservation I instinctively seized the leg of my friend; he uttered two shrieks that must have been heard above the peal of thunder that followed the flash, and in his nervousness must have clutched the cat rather violently as she dropped on my back when I slipped in my haste in getting from the haunted spot. What direction my friend took, I know not, but as fast as fear could lend speed to my feet, I fled with a soul filled with terror along the pathway leading from the grove, still pursued by the horrible figure, and not until I had gained the road, nearly dead from fright and the superhuman exertions I had made in my flight, did I discover that the friend by whom I had so persistently been pursued and whose eyes had so terrified me when gazing down from the knoll was my old friend, Boule, who, missing me from my room, had concluded I was to be found at my favourite retreat in Sainted Grove, and had by his unexpected appearance robbed me of the only opportunity that ever presented itself by which I might have been placed in the ranks of the millionaires, those mighty nabobs of the world.

Next morning at the break of day I sauntered down to the scene of our last night's exploit, in order to hide the pick and spade, and remove my valise, when I discovered Antoine coming along the road with hasty strides. The joy of the poor fellow at seeing me seemed almost as great as if we had discovered the strong box which we had been in search of during the previous night, as he informed me afterwards that he was sure I had been seized by the horrible figure with the glistening eyes, that presented itself on the small mound before our frightened gaze, and which our heated imaginations invested with huge and horrible proportions. When I told him the story of "Boule," he seemed thunderstruck at the discovery, but, at last roared out in almost convulsive laughter. His hands were terribly bitten by the black wretch, on which we relied to save us from demoniacal vengeance. Instead of taking the path from the highway, we walked down to the beach, where a small black schooner with a low hull sat like a duck on the water in safe anchorage. A part of the crew had come ashore to fill a water cask from a small spring that trickled down the face of the bank.

"Good morning, Skipper," said I, addressing myself generally to the company. "You must have arrived pretty late during the night."

"Well, yes," answered a man who seemed to command the party, "between one and two, we just grazed the point there, and if it had not been for the lightning, which lit up considerable, I assure you, we would have been ashore. We had just time to slip the anchor and snub her."

"Fishing, I suppose," said I.

"Yes, we belong to the "Lizzie A Tarr," Gloucester, after mackerel, but I say, Kurnel, who lives up in the woods there."

"No person that I know of," I answered, "at least, I know of no one, and I am about here almost every fine day."

"A nice quiet neighbourhood to live in, I fancy, if a person was inclined to be nervous," he queried, with an ironical smile playing on his lips.

"Oh, I don't know," said I carelessly, "the property, I believe, is owned by the Church."

"Well," said the Captain slowly, "if I am any judge of property, and there was any way of settling the question, I'd bet the drinks that the devil holds a first mortgage on it. Why, last night, stranger, after we anchored, we heard two screeches up in the bush there, that beat all the noises I ever heard before,—I heard a fellow scream as he was washed from the deck of the "Amabel Lee" in Casco Bay, one dark night, and I heard an old gentleman yell, after he broke through the fall ice opposite Bangor,—but, Lord! their screams was music to what I heard last night."

"The people around here, do say," said I, carelessly, "that the place is haunted, but I have never seen or heard anything myself that would lead me to suppose so."

"Kurnel," replied the Skipper, impressively, "I never was a ghost believing man, and don't put much faith in what the people say, but I guess, this time, I'll take their word for it, unless some one can trot out a living human that can make the same infernal noise I heard last night,—any chance to buy mackerel round here, Kurnel?"

I gave him all the information I possessed on that subject, and with Antoine took my way to the Grove. We both laughed heartily at the Captain's story, which he afterwards repeated at the village, thus adding the testimony of a stranger to the truth of the superstition.

We soon reached the spot from which we