

pents but a few yards from me. The long prairie-grass, dried almost to tinder by the tropical sun, smoked and crackled beneath their glowing trail; and in another moment a dozen fires were sparkling and leaping along the ground, raising an impassable barrier between me and my pursuers, but, at the same time, menacing me with a fate more terrible than any their weapons could inflict, and before which even the peril of the past night grew faint and dim. I had but one resource—to turn and flee before this incombatable foe; but when gaining the scent, I gave a momentary glance behind, I was well-nigh appalled, for the conflagration had already spread and stretched into a wide field of flames, reddening the steep hillsides, devastating the ravine to its central stream, and rushing on my track like a fiery tide. The whole wilds on my side of the valley would shortly be ablaze with one of those terrific grass-fires which in that dry climate a single spark will suffice to kindle, and which, taller than a man, rage unchecked and unchecked over vast tracts of country. All I could do was again to flee; but my breathless race was no more for life, but to delay the death no human effort could finally avert. It was a frightful doom to anticipate; and as I still toiled through the cumbrous grass, visions of my distant home and its loved inmates, thoughts of the beleaguered comrades whose fate would be scarce less miserable than mine, pressed on me with expressible distress and pain.

Meanwhile, stronger, louder, and fiercer, the mighty conflagration swept on, running in fiery streams along the parched-up herbage, igniting the tickets, exploding in volleys of sparks from out the brushwood, and rolling along in thick clouds of smoke. Quaggas, antelopes, hares, nay, even snakes and lizards, fled before its scorching breath, and, despairing and weary, I followed in their rear. Suddenly, through the circling smoke, I perceived one of those strange, crater-like mounds of rock so frequent in the African wilds. Could I but gain its shelter, my case might be less desperate; and with renewed energy, I strove to reach it; but my strength was almost gone: my breath came fast, and my feet faltered in their eager course, while the flames rolled after me with redoubled speed, and more than once I felt as if I must yet sink to the earth, and yield passively to the fate whose only consolation was, that it would be brief as terrible. No words can tell the intense suspense of those few minutes—the swift rushing blasts of heated air, the swelling tumult of the following surges, telling how near grew the destroyer, while yet far ahead was the little ark in which there might be safety. At length, just as the flames touched my heels, I gained its base; to scramble up the rugged ascent was the work of a moment, then, panting and prayerful, I sank down in its shallow basin, as I hoped, saved.

And so it proved. The fire swept and surged around the stony islet, scathing its guardian aloes, devouring the sparse herbage in its interstices, and almost suffocating me with its dense masses of smoke, then passed on its devastating career until it should be stopped by some interposing stream. Ere long, the denuded ground cooled sufficiently, and descending from the mound, I soon reached Graham's Town, whose rampart of rocky hills protected it from danger. The following night, I formed one of the five hundred men who relieved the besieged outpost, and escorted its inmates back to safety, lighted on our way by the Caffre-lit flames of our recent home and of all our worldly goods. Many, since then, have been the perils of my military life, but none recall a more thrilling memory than those of the journey ending with the Grass-fire Adventure.

**MUTUAL SYMPATHY.**—We should make it a principle to extend the hand of friendship to every man who discharges faithfully his duties, and maintains good order, who manifests a deep interest in the welfare of society, whose deportment is upright, whose mind is intelligent, without stopping to ascertain whether he swings a hammer or draws a thread. There is nothing so distant from all natural claims as the reluctant recognition, the backward sympathy, the forced smile, the checked conversation, the hesitating compliance, which the well-off are apt to manifest to those a little lower down.

## WHAT SHALL I OFFER THEE?

"WHAT shall I offer thee?

Life is so strange;  
All I can give to thee  
Surely must change."

"Give me an ivy leaf,  
Green as the pine;  
Something in after years  
That shall be mine."

"What shall I offer thee  
What shall I send?  
What shall I give to thee  
Now as a friend?"

"Give me an evergreen  
Fresh from the bough,  
That shall in after years  
Be as 'tis now."

"What shall I offer thee?  
Gifts I have none;  
What to remember me  
When I am gone?"

"Give me an evergreen  
Fresh, ere we part;  
Something to hide away  
Close to my heart."

HERMANN L.

Montreal, Sept., 1865.

## DR. RAMSAY'S GHOST STORY.

WE were sitting round the fire at Squire Jones' one evening early in January in the year 185—. It was not exactly a family party, for a great many of the people assembled were not related, but we all knew each other very intimately, and though we were a good round dozen in number, yet our conversation had assumed that quiet dreamy character which more usually marks a smaller and less sociable gathering than ours was. We were all staying in the house, and, having exhausted the usual evening amusements, we had, with one consent, as it were, collected round the large old-fashioned fireplace in the library. There was no light save that from the fire, for the introduction of candles had been strongly negatived.

"Oh, no!" cried Kate Crofton, when the squire had suggested it, "we can talk so much better without them."

"And why so, my dear?" said the squire.

"Oh! I don't know," said Kate, who was a general favourite; "but it is much more cosy when one has nothing to do."

And certainly it is so. An easy chair, a bright fire, cheerful company, and no prospect of being obliged to get up too early the next morning,—with these attributes how pleasantly may an idle hour be spent! I could write pages, expatiating on the peculiar charms of fire-light, but I won't, as nobody would read it; more particularly at the commencement of a tale.

Our conversation had, as I have said, become quiet and dreamy, when suddenly Harry Leslie, a nephew of the squire's, said:—

"Have you heard that this house is haunted?" Now if there is one thing that people have a tendency to talk of in that uncertain light, it is of anything that carries some element of the supernatural about it. "Have you ever heard that this house is haunted?" said Harry Leslie.

"Oh! no," said Kate Crofton, all eagerness. "Do tell us all about it. I am sure I should not be able to go to bed to-night unless Julia Vane slept in the same room. Julia is so strong-minded, ain't you, Julia?" But Julia was better engaged listening to honeyed nothings uttered by Arthur Storm, her devoted admirer for the time being.

"Do tell us all about it," said Kate again.

"What nonsense, Harry," the squire interrupted; "you ought not to put such ideas into people's heads."

"No, but indeed, uncle, there is a ghost. That tyrant of the poor slaves, Mr. Fussemont, told me the other day."

"Mrs. Fussemont ought to hold her tongue," said the squire severely.

"You'll be as bad a tyrant as Mrs. Fussemont, if you don't let me tell them the direful tragedy that led to this uneasy spirit roaming up and down the staircase, clad in a white sheet, and having left his head behind him. Now, Kate, if you go and look out of your door

about half-an-hour after the rest of the people in the house are asleep, you are sure to see him. Just try, will you?"

"How can you be so absurd? as if I would, even supposing he were there at all," she replied.

"Then you wouldn't stop and take a sketch of him, as that relation of Lord Byron's did of the ghost at Newstead?"

"But whose ghost is it?" she asked.

"I cannot enter into all the particulars of the horrible story, as uncle won't let me. But it is some old Sir Hubert de Jones, who lived I don't exactly know when, but somewhere about the time of the Crusades. He was an ornament to our family, I can assure you. He ground down the poor, he cheated the church, he laughed at the priest, he murdered his wife, he ran away in battle, and at length died from drinking. Now don't you think we should want a great many gallons of holy water before we could lay such a ghost as his?"

"Isn't it all nonsense?" said Mary Seymour, turning to me.

"No, no," cried Kate, interposing. "I do like a good ghost tale, particularly if it is true. It frightens one so, you know. But Harry has made this so absurd. Now, Dr. Ramsay, you tell us one, do."

"I tell you one?" I said; "do you think I know anything of ghosts? Besides, if I attempt to frighten you, I may succeed too well."

There was a short pause, and then somebody said:—

"I think that ghost stories told simply for the sake of amusement ought always to be made up. They are not likely then to do any harm; others sometimes frighten people too much."

"But I like a ghost tale to be true," said Kate.

"Yes," cried Harry. "First of all the rattle of a chain, then a groan, after that a suppressed shriek, a hollow whisper—"

"Oh, yes!" cried Kate.

"A pale blue light, a skeleton hand, a damp earthy smell—"

"Yes, yes!" Kate was getting quite excited.

"A suffocating sensation of fear, a cold shudder, an agitated interrogation, a fearful struggle, and then—"

"Oh! what then?"

"Then—to awake."

"You are so absurd, Harry, I won't talk to you. Now do, doctor," she said, turning to me, "do you tell us something. I am sure you must have plenty at your fingers' ends."

"I will tell you a short one," I replied; "After that the squire and I must go and have our cigar in the bed, as it is getting late, and you won't have any beauty sleep. So we must go soon."

"Oh, how delightful!" she said.

"What, our going to smoke?"

"No, the tale, of course. Now please to begin."

"Well, I will tell you about a ghost I met on Waterloo Bridge."

"Stir up the fire," whispered she to Harry, "it is getting so dark."

"I thought you liked to listen in the dark," he said. "Not too dark, you know. And now we are all attention, doctor."

"When I was commencing my professional life in London, I was only too glad to meet with patients, and therefore I had no objection to their being at a considerable distance from my residence, or among the lower orders. In fact, at my first start I had very few who were otherwise. I was living then near Russell Square, and had a patient on my hands, whose wretched abode was situated in one of those dark lanes branching off from the Waterloo Road. To get there I had of course to cross the bridge. Now Waterloo Bridge can hardly be said to be a place where

The breeze pause and die,  
Letting the rose-leaves fall;

in the first place it is bleak and gusty, and in the second, there are no rose-leaves to fall there. But we can with great truth say that

At midnight the moon cometh,  
And looketh down alone;

for after the twelve o'clock train has left, the passengers who cross the bridge are few and far between. To me it appears, even by day, when crowded with vehicles and foot passengers, to be by no means a lively spot. I don't know whether the approaches produce the feeling, but so it is; and although I consider it a fine work of art, and, as the guide-books say, a fitting monument to the memory of a great man, viz, the builder, if I have to cross it, no matter what the hour, I am always glad when it is done.