

"I was resigned to die—resigned even to my mode of death. It was not, I thought, so very new after all, as to awaken unwonted horror in a man. Thousands have been sunk to the bottom of the ocean shut up in the holds of vessels—beating themselves against the battened hatches—dragged down from the upper world shrieking, not for life, but for death only beneath the eye and amid the breath of heaven. Thousands have endured that appalling kind of suffocation. I would die only as many a better man had died before me. I *could* meet such a death. I said so—I thought so—I felt so—felt so, I mean, for a minute—or more; ten minutes it may have been—or but an instant of time. I know not, nor does it matter if I could compute it. There *was* a time, then, when I was resigned to my fate. But, Heaven! was I resigned to it in the shape in which next it came to appal? Stranger, I felt that water growing hot about my limbs, though it was yet mid-leg deep. I felt it, and in the same moment heard the roar of the furnace that was to turn it into steam before it could get deep enough to drown one!

"You shudder. It was hideous. But did I shrink and shrivel, and crumble down upon that iron floor, and lose my senses in that horrid agony of fear? No! though my brain swam and the life-blood that curdled at my heart seemed about to stagnate there forever, still I *knew*! I was too hoarse—too hopeless—from my previous efforts, to cry out more. But I struck—feebly at first, and then strongly—frantically with my clenched fist against the sides of the boiler. There were people moving near who *must* hear my blows! Could not I hear the grating of chains, the shuffling of feet, the very rustle of a rope—hear them all, within a few inches of me? I did; but the gurgling water that was growing hotter and hotter around my extremities made more noise within the steaming cauldron than did my frenzied blows against its sides.

"Latterly I had hardly changed my position, but now the growing heat of the water made me plash to and fro; lifting myself wholly out of it was impossible, but I could not remain quiet. I stumbled upon something; it was a mallet!—a chance tool the smith had left there by accident. With what wild joy did I seize it—with what eager confidence did I now deal my first blows with it against the walls of my prison! But scarce had I intermitted them for a moment when I heard the clang of the iron door as the fireman flung it wide to feed the flames that were to torture me. My knocking was unheard, though I could hear him toss the sticks into the furnace beneath me, and drive to the door when his infernal oven was fully crammed.

"Had I yet a hope? I had; but it rose in my mind side by side with the fear that I might now become the agent of preparing myself a more frightful death. Yes; when I thought of that furnace with its fresh-fed flames curling beneath the iron upon which I stood—a more frightful death even than that of being boiled alive! Had I discovered that mallet but a short time sooner—but no matter, I would by its aid resort to the only expedient now left.

"It was this. I remembered having a marline-spike in my pocket, and in less time than I have taken in hinting at the consequences of thus using it, I had made an impression upon the sides of the boiler, and soon succeeded in driving it through. The water gushed through the aperture—would they see it? No; the jet could only play against a wooden partition which must hide the stream from view; it must trickle down upon the decks, before the leakage would be discovered. Should I drive another hole to make that leakage greater? Why, the water within seemed already to be sensibly diminished, so hot had become that which remained; should more escape, would I not hear it bubble and hiss upon the fiery plates of iron that were already scorching the soles of my feet? * * *

"Ah! there is a movement—voices—I hear them calling for a crowbar. The bulkhead cracks as they pry off the planking. They have seen the leak—they are trying to get at it! Good God! why do they not first dampen the fire? why do they call for the—the—

"Stranger, look at that finger; it can never regain its natural size; but it has already done all the service that man could expect from so humble a member. *Sir, that hole would have been*

plugged up on the instant unless I had jammed my finger through!

"I heard the cry of horror as they saw it without—the shout to drown the fire—the first stroke of the cold-water pump. They say, too, that I was conscious when they took me out—but I—I remember nothing more till they brought a julep to my bedside arterwards, *AND that julep!*"

"Cooling, was it?"

"STRANNGER!!!"

Ben turned away his head and wept—He could no more.—
Charles Fenno Hoffman.

SHAKING HANDS.

THERE are few things of more common occurrence than shaking hands; and yet I do not recollect that much has been speculated upon the subject. I confess, when I consider to what unimportant and futile concerns the attention of writers and readers has been directed, I am surprised that no one has been found to *handle* so important a matter as this, and attempt to give the public a rational view of the doctrine and discipline of shaking hands. It is a theme on which I have myself theorized a good deal, and I beg leave to offer a few remarks on the origin of the practice, and the various forms in which it is exercised.

I have been unable to find in the ancient writers any distinct mention of shaking hands. They followed the heartier practice of hugging or embracing, which has not wholly disappeared among grown persons in Europe, and children in our own country, and has unquestionably the advantage on the score of cordiality. When the ancients trusted the business of salutation to the hands alone, they joined but did not shake them; and although I find frequently such phrases as *jungero dextras hospitio*, I do not recollect to have met with that of *agitare dextras*. I am inclined to think that the practice grew up in the ages of chivalry, when the cumbersome iron mail, in which the knights were cased, prevented their embracing; and when, with fingers clothed in steel, the simple touch or joining of the hands would have been but cold welcome; so that a prolonged junction was a natural resort, to express cordiality; and as it would have been awkward to keep the hands unemployed in this position, a gentle agitation or shaking might have been naturally introduced. How long the practice may have remained in this incipient stage it is impossible, in the silence of history, to say; nor is there anything in the chronicles, in Philip de Comines, or the Byzantine historians, which enables us to trace the progress of the art into the forms in which it now exists among us.

Without therefore availing myself of the privilege of theorists to supply by conjecture the absence of history or tradition, I shall pass immediately to the enumeration of these forms:

1. The *pump-handle* shake is the first which deserves notice. It is executed by taking your friend's hand, and working it up and down, through an arc of fifty degrees, for about a minute and a half. To have its nature, force, and character, this shake should be performed with a fair steady motion. No attempt should be made to give it grace, and still less vivacity; as the few instances in which the latter has been tried have uniformly resulted in dislocating the shoulder of the person on whom it has been attempted. On the contrary, persons who are partial to the pump-handle shake should be at some pains to give an equal, tranquil movement to the operation, which should on no account be continued after perspiration on the part of your friend has commenced.

2. The *pendulum* shake may be mentioned next, as being somewhat similar in character; but moving, as the name indicates, in a horizontal instead of a perpendicular direction. It is executed by sweeping your hand horizontally towards your friend's, and after the junction is effected, rowing with it from one side to the other, according to the pleasure of the parties. The only caution in its use which needs particularly to be given, is not to insist on performing it in a plane strictly parallel to the horizon when you meet with a person who has been educated to the pump-handle shake. It is well known that people cling to the forms in which they have been educated, even when the substance is sacrificed in adhering to them. I had two acquaintances, both