

Nimrod had brought the art of lying. I could repeat one which he delivered while lying (in both senses of the word) on his death bed, but that *that* might be misconstrued into the pure effect of delirium. For my own part, I consider it as another illustration of "the ruling passion strong in death." That he believed his own stories, and expected they would be believed by his hearers, I am fully persuaded. Of this infirmity of mind I shall not attempt to trace the causes; but, wherever it exists in the same degree, I consider it as presenting a case for the consideration of the physician rather than of the moralist.

Translated from the French.

VISIT TO A MISER.

I had thoughtlessly promised the young Vicomte de Confians to accompany him, and almost as soon as I had risen he called to remind me of my engagement. When we had arrived at the Rue des Gres he looked round with an anxiety and uneasiness that surprised me. His face by turns became livid and crimson. He was a prey to some horrible anguish, and the perspiration started from his forehead when he perceived that he had reached the gate. At the moment we got out of his tilbury a fiacre entered the street; the falcon-eye of the young man enabled him to distinguish a female within the carriage, and then an expression of almost savage joy animated his countenance. He called a boy who was passing, and desired him to hold his horse. We mounted the steps of the old miser. Since I had left the house he had placed a small square grating in the middle of the door, and it was not till after I had been recognized that we were admitted. I found him seated in his arm-chair, motionless as a statue, his eyes fixed upon the mantle piece, where he seemed reading some memorandums of accounts. A small lamp, once green, but now obscured with smoke and dirt, threw a lurid glare upon his pale face. He turned his eyes toward me, but did not speak. 'Father Gosbeck,' said I, 'I bring you one of my most intimate friends'—'Whom I mistrust as much as the devil himself,' whispered the old man. 'On my account you will render him your good offices at the ordinary price, and you will extricate him from a pressing difficulty.' The vicomte bowed in confirmation, seated himself, and prepared to hear his answer, with one of those courtly attitudes of which it is impossible to describe the graceful baseness. Father Gosbeck remained in his chair at the corner of the fire, unmoved and immovable. He resembled the statue of Voltaire, as it appears at night on entering the vestibule of the Theatre Francais. He raised slightly, as by way of salutation, the worn-out grey casket with which he covered his head, and the small portion of yellow skull it exhibited completed his resemblance to the marble. 'I have no money, except for my customers,' said the usurer. 'You are vexed, then, that I have been to ruin myself with others beside yourself,' said the young man, smiling. 'Ruin you!' replied Pere Gosbeck, with a tone of irony. 'You would say that one cannot ruin a man who has no capital?'—'But I defy you to find in all Paris any thing more capital than I am,' cried the vicomte, rising and turning upon his heel. This half-serious buffoonery had no effect upon Gosbeck. 'Can I with any decency,' said he, 'lend a *sous* to a man who already owes thirty thousand francs and does not possess a *denier*? Besides, you lost ten thousand francs the night before last, at M. Lafitte's ball.'—'Sir,' replied the young man, with exquisite impudence, and approaching as he said it, 'my affairs do not concern you. He who has time owes nothing for the present.'—'True.'—'My bills will be taken up.'—'Possibly.'—'And at this moment the business between us is simply to know if I offer you sufficient security for the sum that I am about to borrow.'—'Just so.' The noise of a fiacre stopping at the gate was heard from without. 'I go for something that will perhaps satisfy you,' cried the young man. He soon afterwards returned, leading by the hand a lady, who appeared to be twenty-five or twenty-six years old. She was of remarkable beauty, and I had no difficulty in recognizing the countess of whom Gosbeck had formerly spoken to me. On entering the damp and sombre chamber of the usurer, she cast a look of suspicion upon the vicomte. The terrible anguish of her heart was evident, and her proud and noble features had an almost convulsive expression. I could easily believe my companion had now become the evil genius of her destiny. They seemed both standing before their judge, who with a cold and severe look examined them, as an old Dominican of the sixteenth century may have watched the tortures of two Moors in the dungeons of the Holy Inquisition. 'Sir,' said she, with a trembling voice, 'are there any means of obtaining the price of these diamonds—presenting a casket—reserving to myself the right to repurchase them?' As I volunteered to explain to her how this might be done, she seemed to breathe more freely; but the vicomte knit his brow, aware that with such a condition the usurer would advance a less sum upon them. Gosbeck was absorbed. He had seized his magnifying glass, and was examining the jewels in silence. If I were to live a hundred years, I should never forget the remarkable picture that his face presented at that moment. A flush spread over his pale cheeks; his eyes seemed to sparkle with supernatural fire; he rose, went to the light, and held the diamonds near his toothless mouth, as if he would have

devoured them. The glitter of those beautiful gems seemed reflected in his eyes. He murmured some vague words, lifted by turns the bracelets, the earrings, the necklace, the diadem, and held them to the light to judge of their water, their color and their polish. He took them out of the casket, he put them back, and again took them out, played with them to bring out all their brilliance more like a child than an old man, or perhaps like both at once. 'Beautiful diamonds!' he exclaimed. 'Before the Revolution they would have been worth three hundred thousand francs. What water! what beauty! Under the Empire it would have required two hundred thousand francs to have made such a set. But,' added he, with an expression of scorn, 'at present the diamond is falling in price every day. Since the peace, Brazil and Asia have overwhelmed us with them. They are no longer worn except at court.' Yet even while uttering these discouraging words he examined the stones one by one with an unspeakable joy. 'Without a spot!—yes, here is one spot—here is a flaw—but *this* is a beauty!' And his wan visage, as the light of the jewels glared upon it, seemed like one of those mouldy antique mirrors that we meet with in a provincial inn, which gives the traveller who has courage enough to look at himself the appearance of a man falling into a fit of apoplexy. 'Well!' said the vicomte, striking him on the shoulder: The dotard trembled. He relinquished his baubles, laid them upon his desk, seated himself, recommenced the usurer, and again became smooth, hard, and cold as a column of marble. 'How much must you have?'—'A hundred thousand francs for three years.'—'Possibly!' He then drew from a mahogany box, which was his casket, a pair of balances inestimable for their exactness. He weighed the stones, estimating with a glance the weight of the setting—Heaven only knows how—and during this operation his features struggled between joy and severity. That cadaverous face, lighted up by those gems, had something about it more horrible than I can describe. The countess seemed to comprehend all the danger of the precipice toward which she was approaching. There was still some feeling of remorse within her, and it only required, perhaps, an effort—a charitable hand extended to save her. I determined to attempt it. Gosbeck interrupted me by a sign of the head, and turning toward the culprit, 'Eighty thousand francs in ready money,' said he, with a low, soft voice, 'and you will leave me the diamonds.'—'But,' replied the young man—'Take it or leave it,' said Gosbeck, giving back the casket to the countess. I again drew near her and whispered, 'you will do better, madam, to throw yourself at once at the feet of your husband.' The usurer doubtless understood my words by the movement of my lips, and cast upon me a look in which there was something infernal. The face of the young man became livid, for the hesitation of the countess was palpable. He approached her, and, though he spoke low, I heard the words, 'Adieu, Emily—be happy! As for me, to-morrow I shall no longer have a care.'—'O, sir,' she cried addressing herself to Gosbeck, 'I accept your offer.' The usurer gave the money, and the countess rose and retired, deeply feeling into what a labyrinth of shame and guiltiness she had allowed herself to be drawn.

A REVERY.

I laid me down on a soft, grassy bank, beside a brook whose soothing flow of waters; came in rich and varied music to my ear. Sleep fanned me gently with his pinions, and at length I slumbered—but my thoughts were not idle. Fancy was busy at her playful tasks, and I stood amid the ruins of old Rome. There was a soft, balmy fragrance in the air, at the hour of sunset.

And the rich, golden clouds, wreathing and twining themselves in beauty—the gray ruins mellowed by the tints of parting day, that lingered and played in glory about their summits, and the faint whisper of the wandering zephyr, wrapt the soul in melancholy musings, on the beauties of the present and the mighty grandeur of the past. At length one lone star was seen floating serenely in the sea of glory, that covered the west, and then another, and another appeared in various parts, until the whole heavens were sparkling with their brilliant gems, and night was seated on the dusky throne of the firmament. Then men laid aside their daily toil, and came forth, in gladness, with laugh and song and dance, to greet the harbinger of rest. Then too, the tinkle of the light guitar, and the soft whisper of love borne upon the evening breeze, stole with a melting melody upon the heart.

Suddenly there came a rushing sound as if the thunders of the last day was sweeping by, and every star faintly flickered for a moment and then went out in darkness; and though there was no cloud that threw its sable form athwart the sky, yet all the heavens were robed in gloom. Men forgot the laugh, and dance, and song, and strained their eyes, with fearful glare, upon the murky sky. The beasts ran howling to their dens, or crouched in trembling submission, to the earth. Then all was quiet, it was as if the dark waves of eternity had rolled over and hid beneath their bosom, the relics of a parted and lost world. And the fearful stillness that gathered and reigned around, was only broken by fiendish laughter, and yells, and shrieks, of demons ever and anon hurling in the air.

Anon a star arose with a blood-red disk, at first a speck, and then it grew, and grew, until it became a sun that threw his lurid beams upon the faces of the wandering multitude, and all the earth was dyed with its blood-red hue. Cities crackling and crashing, crumbled and fell before it. On, on, still on, it came, cleaving its way, in fearful stillness, through the vast solitude,—it struck the men of earth with madness, for they could not turn away their gaze, and the blood rushed with tumultuous fury from their throbbing hearts,—their temples swelled and their eye-balls glared with a strange, unearthly, fire. Still they gazed with mad intoxication upon its disk and many of them rolled in the dust, writhed and tore their hair in agony; with parched lips and swollen tongues they cursed the influence of that star.

Then one of a lofty mien and melancholy air, who had calmly sat apart from the maddened multitude, arose and stretched forth his hands unto that star,—quickly he mounted through the air and followed in its course. Upward, upward, and as he went to it, it appeared more madly beautiful. Men ceased to wonder at the star, and turned their longing looks on him alone, and tossed their puny arms, in vain attempts to ascend the height which he had gained. He smiled in bitter mockery, at their useless efforts for every fount and source of feeling was dried within his withered heart, and he had no sympathy with his kind. Still to him it became more bright, until that which first appeared a star, now seemed a spirit, on whose head there was a crown of flame, and on whose deathless brow, in letters that seared the gazers' eye-balls, there was a name written, and it was *Ambition*. And though he had ascended far from the busy earth, yet it was as far above him as ever—and o'er his head the star-spirits passed and repassed, all with their flaming crowns, and he could hear the music made by the murmurings of their wings, and saw their clear brows clothed with awful majesty. Anon there came a monster rolling his immense serpentine folds, in mid air, but that youth heeded it not for his eyes were on the star. On, it came with hissing tongue and glutting eye, until it wound its slinky folds about the heart of him, who strove in vain to shake it off, and gazed more wistfully on the star, and it wreathed its folds more tightly round him, and breathed upon him its noisome breath until he fell down, again to the earth, whose inhabitants hailed with a shout of savage joy, another victim of envy and Ambition.

NOTES OF TRAVELLERS.

MOROCCO.—The manner in which corn is preserved in Morocco is deserving of mention. A subterranean cellar is dug seven or eight feet in depth, the sides of which are covered with reeds and straw, the bottom part being matted, and straw placed over it. The grain is then deposited, and well protected at top by straw being placed over it: the opening is covered by a large slab, over which the earth is heaped in a mound, to prevent the rain settling and entering. In these kind of granaries, or *matamoors*, as they are called, and which are usually made on sloping ground, to secure them from damp, wheat and barley, I was informed, would keep perfectly good for five years, and other grain to a longer period. The largest matamoors are at Rabat, and are capable of containing some hundred bushels.—*Spain, by Arthur de Capet Brooke.*

HANOVER.—There are in Hanover eleven Protestant convents, where young ladies may retire who have survived the bloom of youth, and have arrived at single blessedness, and may pass down the stream of time, in each other's society, in uninterrupted tranquillity. Each of these institutions is under the direction of an elderly lady, corresponding in some degree with the abbess of Catholic convents. The young ladies receive annually from two to three hundred rix-dollars, with which they are enabled to live genteelly. The restraints of the institutions are not severe. They receive visits from their friends, usually in the presence of their governess, though that is not required, or has been for a short time only. It is not necessary to reside here constantly; a few weeks of each year being sufficient to entitle them to the pension. Some of them accordingly pass most of their time with their friends, and whenever they are thrown out upon the world by the dissolution of their families, they have a refuge to which they can retire, without experiencing those mortifications which are so frequently attendant upon adversity. These asylums are under the direction of government, to which parents, wishing to procure such places for their children, apply. It requires some influence at court to obtain them, as the number of applicants is much greater than that of vacancies. Parents not unfrequently solicit them while children are quite young, and some of them receive the promise of them even from the cradle, although, I believe they do not enjoy the emolument until they approach the shady side of twenty, unless they reside in the convent at least a part of the time.—*Dwight's Travels in Germany.*

SHORTSIGHTEDNESS.—Shortsightedness is increasing so alarmingly, that the vision of a great many of the fine class takes in only the nearest object to them, that is, themselves; a defect which, in the most brilliant circles, forces them to confine their glances and their thoughts to their own persons and dress.