

THE STORY OF A LOOKING-GLASS.

To-day, as I was turning over the papers in an old desk, to find a copy of my prize poem (subject, *Pugna apud Talabiscam nuper commissis*) wherewith to gratify the eyes of Alfred, my eldest, who is at home for the holidays, the first thing which I beheld was the newspaper containing the account of Tom Arklow's death. "The Battle of Talavera" was forgotten in a moment. My first emotion was a sharp and bitter pang of regret for the loss of the truest-hearted friend in the world; the second feeling, an indefinite idea that I was now released from a strange obligation. Putting my hands over my face, and resting my elbows on the faded green baize of the desk, I sat quite silent for several minutes. The thoughts which had hovered about in my brain collected themselves, and took shape and substance. Suddenly the whole truth flashed upon me in a connected form, and I remembered that I had solemnly promised to keep the following queer story a profound secret, till the chief actor in it, poor Tom himself, should have been twenty years in the grave. As the newspaper bore date, January 31, 1840, I am now at liberty to set on record the Story of a Looking-glass.

If I use the first person instead of the third, it will seem more like Tom speaking, and it makes me feel young again to recall his voice.

"I do not know"—this was generally how he used to begin—"I do not know why I accepted Eustace Graydon's invitation to spend the 'Long' with him, for he was not in our set, you know, Charley; but, at all events, accept it I did; and one glorious morning at the beginning of July, I found myself driving up the broad road between the larches which leads to Lauden Friars. Graydon's family were people who had risen from prosperous bankers in the county town to prosperous squires on the county sessions bench; clever, worldly, practical people, with a good chance of a baronetcy in the next generation, and not a scrap of romance in their composition. Eustace Graydon, of St. Caradoc's, was the only son grown up; Phillip, his brother, was a mere child. His woman-kind, as he called them, consisted of five sisters, for 'they were seven' at Lauden Friars.

"I enjoyed myself exceedingly during the early part of my visit. The house was a thoroughly pleasant one to stay at. The horses were good; the dinners neither too sparing nor too sumptuous; the library and the trout-stream both well stocked. Sketching-parties, and rides to see the neighbouring lions, enlivened the fine days. Scott's novels, and the *Edinburgh Review* (then just fresh); the brilliant talk of some of the most rising Whig M. P.'s; and last, not least, certain never-to-be-forgotten games of chess with pretty Geraldine Graydon, made rainy days yet pleasanter. So weeks passed on, till one day I noticed an unusual expression of vexation on the forehead of my handsome hostess. There were whisperings, too, amongst the girls, and an unwonted bustle amongst the servants, which indicated something astir. I asked Eustace Graydon, as we stood at the window after breakfast, for an explanation of the mystery. "I am glad you asked," he said, "for I really don't know how I should have had courage to breach the subject with becoming seriousness. We all want to ask you to do us a favour, and not one of us can summon up courage to do it. But as you have asked me yourself, I must needs be spokesman. My father has a letter saying that Sir George Blank, the attorney-general, and his lady, will be here to-day, on their way to town; and Sir George Blank wants to settle what part my father is to play in the grand national drama to be brought out at St. Stephen's next session. It so happens, also, that old Killpack and his four daughters are coming to spend their annual fortnight to-morrow; and as the masons and bricklayers render the wing uninhabitable, we are in distress for room; and unless you will kindly and graciously condescend to sleep in Hester's room—I mean in the room over the library—we shall be puzzled how to provide for their accommodation."

"I laughed at such a slight cause occasioning an instant's embarrassment, professed my perfect and entire readiness to sleep anywhere, and quoted a line from *She Stoops to Conquer* about the charms of three chairs and a bolster."

"Eustace thanked me, and went away to relieve his mother of her household cares. We went out fishing in the morning, and on our return found the new guests arrived. The dinner that day was the least lively I had yet sat down to at Lauden Friars. The great gun, as happens often with great guns in Pulpit, House, and Bar, hung fire rather than otherwise. He was an ugly man, who talked blue-book in a raucous voice; besides which, he engaged the attention of Geraldine the whole evening, and disgusted me amazingly. I felt convinced the destinies of our country were imperiled by his share in their direction. The rest of the party—old Killpack, his wife, and the rector of the parish, sociable, simple, Tory folk—were clearly bored beyond all utterance by the self-invited guest; and the whole evening was such a contrast to the former ones, that I could scarcely believe it was passed in the same place."

"At last it was time to retire, and I withdrew to my new sleeping-apartment. Eustace came with me, to show me my way; stayed a few minutes, grumbling at the stupidity of the new comers; and then wished me good-night. I sat for a few minutes before the fire, seeing all kinds of whimsical shapes and figures in its glowing caverns, and then began slowly to undress. I took off my coat, and put on my dressing-gown; but though tired when in the drawing-room, I now felt no inclination to sleep, and was suddenly seized with a desire to finish a volume of *Old Mortality* which I had commenced. The book was, I knew, on the table, and I resolved to go down stairs quietly and get it. Half an hour's reading in bed had become a habit with me. I put on my coat again, and opened my chamber-door. The house was so still, that I hesitated, and thought I would turn back, lest the country guests should get frightened if they heard footsteps creeping stealthily along the corridors. The temptation to know how the skirmish at Drumclog terminated, however, was too strong to be resisted, and I set out. As is usual on such occasions, the stairs seemed to prate of my whereabouts; every board on which I trod creaked, and every door-handle jarred which I turned. I reached the library, however, which was just underneath; secured my prize, closed the door, and set off on my homeward journey. Though I had been shown the way so recently by Eustace, I contrived to miss it; and to my great surprise, as I laid my hand on the door of the room which I considered my own, I heard voices. In a moment I perceived my mistake—I had turned down the wrong passage, and was on the eve of entering the butler's room. Congratulating myself on having been saved from a clumsy blunder, I turned

away, but not before a sentence or two of the conversation going on in the room caught my ear. The words were common enough, and might bear fifty constructions—"I hope he will not see it." Just in that vacant state of mind in which we catch at everything, I immediately fancied that the words referred to me. Thrusting aside the idea as silly, I went back, locked my door, stirred the fire, and began to examine the objects round me. The room itself was of a curious, old-fashioned shape, though the furniture, like that in the rest of the house, was modern. There were two divisions and two fireplaces in the apartment, and a space where one would have expected folding-doors. In the larger of the two divisions, raised a step higher than the other, stood the bed and all the appliances of a comfortable chamber. In the lower and smaller division there was a bath, a toilet-table, and on that table a looking-glass, I have said the appointments of the room were modern; but I must make an exception in regard to this glass, as the carved-work and shape of it were both of a date at least twenty years anterior to everything else.

"I was in capital health, and am—as you know, Charley—the last man in the world to be morbid or fanciful, but yet I was conscious to myself of a feeling of indefinite dread, the like of which I never experienced before, and the like of which, thank Heaven, I have never experienced since."

"I undressed slowly, and got into bed, but just then recollected my novel, which the mysterious sensation evoked by the examination of my sleeping-apartment had quite driven out of my head. I got out of bed, and took the book off a chair on which I had laid it. Just as I was returning, it occurred to me that I should require a table to put my candlestick on. I looked round for one which could be moved without noise. The most suitable seemed a light rosewood one in the second division of the room. To get it, I must needs pass the table on which stood the antique looking-glass. I mention the circumstance, because I was conscious to myself of feeling that passing this was for some inexplicable reason an objection; nevertheless, I went to the little table, and removed some small books and a flower-vase which stood on it placing them on the larger table, whereupon stood the glass. I had placed my candlestick on this table as well. The first time I faced the looking-glass, a white object appeared in it. I had my dressing-gown on, which was of a dark colour, so the reflection could not be of my own figure. Though, as I said before, utterly and entirely exempt from any traces of superstition, I still was at that moment—to use a word which I have often ridiculed—*verruis*. It cost an effort to look again in the glass. I summoned up courage, however, to meet it boldly; and never shall I forget the face that looked into mine."

"There was no image of my own features, not even the faint reflex of them which one sees in looking into a window. An entirely strange face appeared right before me, looking into me and through me with eyes instilled with a terrible fascination. It was a female face, belonging apparently to a beautiful girl just developing into the ripe perfection of womanhood. The complexion was a bright white; the shape not perfectly oval, for the forehead was very square, and the mouth small and open, so as to show teeth not too regular, but very white. The eyebrows were arched and dark; the hair of that pale gold which we see in Raphael's earlier Madonnas. So much I seemed to have remembered afterwards about the face; but at the time I looked at it I thought of nothing but the eyes, so beautiful, and yet strained into an expression of the most intense horror; so bewitching, and yet dilated and bursting with agony, as though ready to start from their red sockets. Of the rest of the figure visible in the glass, I remember little. There was a very graceful neck, and a necklace of flashing emeralds. But ere my first speechless fit of terror at the sight had subsided, a sound enhanced it, for I seemed to see the lips move, and to hear a whispered tone, frozen with terror, murmur the word, '*Dead!*'"

"The breath that spoke the word then clouded the surface of the glass with a bluish film, and the face was gone!"

"How the rest of that night passed, I cannot tell. I stood for some time looking at the glass, then exerted a strong effort, and rushed out of the room."

"I awoke next morning lying on a couch, on which I had sunk down exhausted. Being very fortunately an early riser, habit woke me, even after that night, at seven. Though I dared not glance into the room where the looking-glass stood, I contrived to dress myself and to appear at the breakfast-party at nine without traces of my disturbed night."

"The day passed off as the old days had passed; we were relieved, soon after breakfast, of the presence of the incubus and his lady; and things went on as they had done before the official visit. I rode, fished, talked, played chess, just as formerly. But all the time I was looking forward to the night with feelings of dread scarcely to be imagined, and fancying the hours moved with an incredible swiftness. In the evening, the family were all in the drawing-room, and the conversation turned on the book we had in reading, *Old Mortality*, and thence passed, naturally enough to the subject of the author of *Waverley's* most striking characteristics, and specially to his evident belief in supernatural appearances. Nothing new was said upon the subject by any of the party; Mr. Graydon took the incredulous line, and talked about dyspepsia; Mrs. Graydon had the same view, and yet confessed to a weakness in favour of one ghost who had appeared to an uncle of hers. The rector was silent until appealed to, and then professed himself unable to get over Col. Gardiner and Dr. Donne. Old Killpack went to sleep soon after the subject began; but the young ladies, though they had observed throughout the dialogue a discreet silence, were careful to go out of the room together after wishing us good-night. Eustace joined in the conversation now and then in a careless way, but expressed no positive opinion. As for me, I took up a book, and professed myself too absorbed in it to speak, while, alas! all the while I was listening to every common-place sentence with straining ears, and showering blessings on every speaker whose remarks occupied any time, for my dread of the night increased with every minute the clock ticked away. At last the butler entered with the large prayer-book. We knelt down while the rector read prayers, and then wished each other good-night. The family retired. After a quarter of an hour of sheer agony, I nerved myself to seek my chamber. Just as I was leaving the room, Eustace entered."

"'Alone,' he said; and his voice had quite lost the languid drawl that he generally adopted—'Alone, Arklow; that is just what I wanted. Sit down here. The servants are gone, and we shall be uninterrupted. I must talk very earnestly;

but before I ask you the question which I am about to put, let me implore you to speak as if I was an entire stranger, and tell me the whole truth, thinking nothing about sparing the feeling of others, and exciting scandal. Since you came down this morning, I have watched you with the closest observation, and I have seen enough to convince me that you never passed a day wherein the interchange of common civilities was more painful, and yet (contradiction, as it seems) never found hours go on so perversely quick. The expression of your countenance this evening whilst they talked about the apparitions of the unseen world, assured me I have not been wrong. You saw something last night in that room over the library?"

"Thus addressed, it was impossible to refuse to explain. I narrated as briefly as I was able the fact which you have heard. When I had finished, he rose, left the room for ten minutes, returned, sat awhile silent, then spoke:

"You have told me exactly what I expected to hear. It is due to you now to tell all the additional particulars with which I am acquainted. Before my father bought this place, it was the property of a family called Vaudeleur. They were Roman Catholics, and traced their pedigree, without a flaw, to the reign of the third Richard. Sir Philip, the last baronet, left one daughter, Hester. She was, report says, 'beautiful exceedingly;' and as the heiress of the largest estates in the county, had many suitors. Amongst them were two brothers, by name Frank and Herbert Wavewood. Hector loved Herbert, the younger and handsomer. I believe she was as sarcastic as she was lovely, and that at some ball she made Frank's plain face and stooping gait the subject of her wit. Sensitive and morbidly jealous, he resolved on humbling the woman who had despised him, and gifted his brother with the prize he himself so coveted. But in order to carry out his plan, he dissembled. Not affecting to conceal his own passion, he assumed a manly, generous tone, saying that one far worthier than he had won the heiress's hand, and that he must now be her father, and not her husband. The wedding-day came. Herbert and Hester were married. In those times, wedding-tours were not considered necessary, and a magnificent banquet and ball were to celebrate the event. The guests were beginning to assemble, and the bride was in her room with her bridesmaids and waiting-women. She was dozing, and seated at her toilet-table. Suddenly a servant rushed into the room, breathless, and flung herself at Hester's feet. Her message was told with frantic incoherence, but the main points of it were too clear. Mr. Herbert had gone out with Mr. Frank for a ride, to wile away the hours between the morning's rites and the evening's revel. They had tried the speed of each other's horses in a race up Windrush Hill—that tall sea-fronting cliff some three miles off westward—Mr. Herbert's horse, it was supposed, had been frightened by some object in the way, had plunged forward, and the rider was dashed to pieces. How Hester looked as she heard the story, I need not tell you, nor, perhaps, that she uttered only the one word, '*Dead!*' and fell down before the glass, a corpse!"

"And Frank?" I exclaimed.

"He died some years afterwards, but left a confession with the clergyman who attended him in his last moments, to the effect that he had induced Herbert, when excited by wine, to mount an unbroken horse, and had even struck the beast with his riding-whip, to urge him to take the plunge which hurled his brother out of the world."

"And the room?"

"Will never be occupied again. To-night—at least the small part of it which is left—we will spend together in my 'den.' It will remind us of the week before we went in for 'degrees.' I have ordered lights, coffee, and cigars."

"With all my heart; of course, sleep is out of the question. But you will not put any one again to pass the night there; to a woman or invalid, the fright might be fatal."

"To-morrow, the workmen who are building the new rooms in the wing, pull down the library and the chamber over it, and half an hour ago—directly, in fact, that I heard the story of your experience—I went up-stairs and broke the looking-glass!"

POWDERED COAL FOR UNHEALTHY PLANTS.—In a communication, addressed to the *Keese Horticulteur*, the writer states that he purchased a very fine rosebush, full of buds, and, after anxiously awaiting their maturing, was greatly disappointed, when this took place, to find the flowers small, insignificant in appearance, and of a dull, faded colour. Informed by the suggestion of a friend, he then tried the experiment of filling in the top of the pot, around the bush, to the depth of half an inch, with finely pulverized stone coal. In the course of a few days, he was astonished at seeing the roses assume a beautiful red hue, as brilliant and lively as he could desire.

He tried the same experiment upon a pot of petunias, and soon after, all the pale and indefinite coloured ones became of a bright red or lilac, and the white petunias were variegated with beautiful red stripes. Some of the lilac petunias became a fine dark blue. Others flowers experienced similar alterations; those of a yellow colour alone remained insensible to the influence of the coal.

The Hon. JAMES SKEAD, Senator of Canada, says: "I am satisfied the Nutritious Condiment is a good food for Horses, and I know of nothing equal to it when the object is to get up the condition of the animal as rapidly as possible. Ask your Druggist for a 25 cent package to try it, or send to the Montreal Depot, 32, St. François Xavier St., for 200 feeds which will be delivered free for \$3.00 to any part of Canada."

5-231

HOW THANKFUL WE SHOULD BE.—Almost all disorders of the human body are distinctly to be traced to impure blood. The purification of that fluid is the first step towards health. The Indian Medicine widely known as the Great Shoshonees Remedy and Pills commend themselves to the attention of all sufferers. No mistake can be made in their administration. In Scrofula, Bronchitis, Indigestion, Confirmed Dyspepsia, Liver and Lung Complaints, Rheumatism, &c., &c., the most beneficial effects have been and always must be obtained from the wholesome power exerted by this Indian Medicine over the system. Persons whose lives have been restored to ease, strength and perfect health by the Great Shoshonees Remedy and Pills, after fruitless trial of the whole pharmacopoeia of physic, attest this fact. 5-22 e