

dren!—you amaze me!" said Mr. St. Leger, sinking back upon her pillow, as if she had been electrified.

"Humph!" quoth the doctor, "she was much too automaton a personage for me to be surprised at anything she did; but it is a common error to mistake vacuity for virtue, and ignorance for innocence. Why, here is Mr. St. Leger, I have no doubt," cried the doctor, as a carriage stopped at the door. In another minute a step was heard upon the stairs, Florence attempted a precipitate escape into the dressing-room, but was detained by Mrs. St. Leger laying her hand upon her arm, and ordering her not to go. In another instant Leslie was in the room, and at his mother's bed-side; he did not see his wife in his anxiety to see his mother; and poor Florence had fainted for fear of the denouement that must inevitably take place. Dr. B.—put out his arm to prevent her from falling to the ground. Mrs. Carlton ran for some water. Leslie turned to see what was the cause of the commotion—he saw a woman lying across the bed with her face downward. As he helped to raise her, the dim light from a solitary candle gleamed upon her face, and he beheld his wife to all appearance dead. "Good God! Florence, my own poor Florence! how came you here? and they have murdered you!" cried Leslie, frantically—"will no one save her?" continued he, "send—go—bring a physician—every physician—bring them all?"

"Gently, sir," said the Doctor, "she will recover soon, if you do not all crowd round her, and keep the air from her."

"On your peril do not trifle with me," said Leslie, looking wildly on his wife's wasted form, and the wan cheek, where want of sleep, and so many nights and days of watching had wrought a change that appeared fearful in his eyes:—"you think she will recover."

"She is recovering," said Dr. B.—, dashing a tear from the corner of his eye, for he now began to comprehend the whole scene, and how Florence had been so good a nurse, although she had not walked the hospitals.

"Mother, mother," said Leslie, willing to grasp at hope from every one, "do you think she'll recover?"

"I do, Leslie," said Mrs. St. Leger, bursting into tears as she placed Florence's cold hand in Leslie's burning palm, and pressed them both within her own—"and I do think, although everybody does not say so, that she is an angel."

THE VIOLONCELLO'S NEXT ENGAGEMENT.

The glories of the entertainment have faded, down goes the gas, out scramble the audience. It is the last night of the season; and the band is playing the National Anthem over the said season's grave to give it a decent burial. Even the first fiddle feels out of sorts. The bassoon has a tear-drop trembling on his left eyelash, unsuspicious of the fact that it glistens visibly in a tiny ray from the footlight. As for the violoncello next him, that hoary-headed old veteran of a score of two pantomimes, surely this particular pantomime's death grieves him but little. Why should it—while he can twine his bony left arm round that old violoncello's neck as if it lived and loved him, when he can bend his grey head to its strings and hear the sweet patios of their tones; when he can pass his long skinny musician's fingers fondly over them to draw forth rich, soothing, swelling, falling, beautiful melody? Why should there be a quivering lip and a trembling eyelash when the last chord comes?

The chord is struck, and over. Out of the orchestra, and already on his way home is the first violin; the cornet has brought up the rear with a cadenza morando; the big drum has closed his last roll; second violin has packed up his instruments; bassoon and violoncello remain alone with the dying lights in the hall.

"Dick!" said the bassoon, quietly. Poor old white-faced violoncello never heeded. The left arm in the rusty sleeve still clasped the instrument's neck in that loving way, the old grey head bent down over the strings with his eyes closed.

"Poor old chap!" observed the bassoon pityingly as he turned up his coat collar and tucked his instrument case under his arm. "Blowed if he ain't a playin' now!"

"Dick, Dick!" tapping the old violoncello good naturedly on the shoulder. The old man opened his eyes and awoke to the silence.

"Hallo, Tom Hornby! What, all gone? I thought," he looked around him in disappointed inquiry, and spoke in a tone of sadness—"I thought he repeated that second strain. Well, well! How deaf I'm getting, to be sure!" The rusty black coat heaved with a sigh as its wearer rose and shut his music.

"All gone but you, Tom?" he said sorrowfully. "Well I won't deny I thought they might ha' wished me 'Good night,' or 'Good-bye,' or something of the sort, for the last night; but I won't grumble. An old fellow, who's as deaf as a post, and has nobody to mind him, ain't no place in an orchestra. He'd better get out of the road as quick as he can, and make no fuss about it. Friends ain't in his line."

"Now come, Dick, old man," expostulated the bassoon, "don't go for to speak like that. You know there's one chap as is sorry for you—dash my hide if he ain't. Yes, say I, Dick, count me as your friend whenever you like. There's a bed for you, and the same fare as I has

myself whenever you like to claim 'em; and if we can't find you another 'sit' somewhere directly, it's a pity. Blow me, it's a pity!"

"Tom Hornby, you're a good-hearted fellow," returned the violoncello gratefully, as his stolid face relaxed a little before the bassoon's genial smile. "A useless, old, worn out blessing like mine ain't much to give anybody," he continued; "but such as it is, take it, Tom, for your kindness; and may you never have such a black world before as I've got now!"

They shook hands; the bassoon stepped through the little narrow door beneath the stage; and his companion, bearing his unwieldy violoncello, extinguished the last gas jet as he followed him.

"Good-night, Tom Hornby; God bless you." Again they shook hands; then bassoon whistled off into the hurrying crowd at the stage-door, and violoncello turned to face the wind the other way.

Old violoncello buttoned his rusty coat close, and turned up the collar as if the wind might find that an obstacle in its attack upon his scraggy old throat, whilst he hugged that dingy big fiddle of his close against his body, and setting his eyes straight before him, dragged his trembling knees in the direction they pointed. Up one street and down another; along a wide white road, lined with tall white mansions; down a narrow, wriggling, dark alley, lined with rickety lodging-houses. On he trudged through the grey, pulpy mud of trampled snow. On and on to that dreary blank of future which lay before him, the old lack-lustre eyes fixed in that straight, forward look of despair, the cold loneliness steadily settling down upon his aged heart to brood there. For the season was over, and old violoncello had struck his last chord at the hall.

"You see, Dolbs," the leader of the orchestra had said, "now the full season's over, it's unreasonable to expect the management to keep up such a band; so, much as it goes against me to say it, we must part."

"Quite right," had chimed in the manager with the ferocious moustache. "Establishment expenses must be cut down, my man; everybody can't stop on; so there you are! Might as well ask me to keep an extra bandsman out of my own salary!"

So old violoncello struck his last chord and went, with a leaden heart. Good-hearted Tom Hornby comforted him with hopes of that next engagement. But who would have him—poor, old, worn-out, deaf as he was? Nobody, he said. And his heart sank like a lump of cold lead as he thought of that answer.

The pulpy slush changed to white untrodden snow upon the path; the streets were quieter and darker. Old violoncello reached his humble lodging, admitted himself by his latch-key, climbed the three flights of rickety stairs. In the tiny garret at the top of them, was a fireless grate, a square white bed, a table, a chair, and a window, one broken pane of which was stopped with brown paper. As he lighted his two inches of lean candle and showed these, the old man sat down upon the chair and bent his grey head upon the table. No tear was in his eyes when he lifted them. He drew his violoncello closer to him; he hugged it as he might a favorite child; then he bent his head once more upon the little table, and his bow slipped to the floor from the numbed fingers which clasped it.

Lower and lower burned the candle, whilst outside upon the bars of the window-panes, white snow gathered higher and higher as the flakes kept falling. When the blanched face was again upturned, the eyes were moistened.

"So we've come to it at last, have we, old fiddle?" the old man moaned in apostrophe of his loved violoncello, as he stooped to pick up the bow. "We're old now, both of us; we're no use now! You're patched and cracked, and your master's deaf. They don't want a pair like us nowadays. We're ready almost for our last engagement. Yes, old fiddle; you have been a good servant to your old master, and you could do something, too, in your day; but not much longer—not very much longer. We're old now; they can do without us."

A tear dropped upon the finger-board, and the old man wiped it carefully off with his coat sleeve.

"Yes, old friend," he continued, gazing affectionately on his battered companion of wood and strings, "we've been friends for long, but we're coming to our last engagement."

Whilst the snowflakes fell thicker and thicker against the window, softly and noiselessly, the old man drew his bow across the strings of the violoncello in a half-unconscious way, bending down his head to the instrument just as he always did. Though his ears were deaf to aught else, they never failed to drink in the tones which sprang from those vibrating chords. Slowly, weirdly, pathetically, the music rose and fell in gentle ripples around the room, so hushed and low that it awakened no echoes in the silent house. Only in that poor chamber would it wander; only around that poor old couple, instrument and player, would its sweet melody float. As he played the old man's eyes closed, and from his face the lines of settled despair gradually cleared away, till only a happy smile was left beaming around wrinkles. The player's thoughts were far away; to him the cold room and the snowy window were become as naught. Back in the little garden of fifty years ago, in the arbour scented by pink and rose, with the dark velvet pansies clustering the little plot at his feet, he was listening again to that same old tune as he heard it at first, when the wife, long dead, sang the words and he played the air upon

the well-remembered violin. He could hear her voice; he could smell the roses' perfume. Surely it was that same violin he was playing now! From his closed eyes, down the white cheeks, tears dropped warm and fast upon the strings of the violoncello. He heeded them not; his thoughts were far away.

So the tune rose and fell, and the snow gathered thicker and thicker upon the window panes, till the candle on the little table flickered out. Yet the arm in the rusty sleeve did not weary in its slow, regular motion: the cold fingers still pressed the strings; the player did not wake to darkness of the room.

"We're old now," he murmured; "they don't want us any longer."

His eyes were still shut; but the tune waxed slower, and slower, and slower, till it died altogether. The bow slipped from the old man's fingers; the grey head sank upon the table; the violoncello rested soundless against the breast of the rusty black coat.

When the morning came, and a bright sun-ray struggled through the snow-blocked window-panes, they shone upon a tiny table, a square white bed, a fireless grate, a patched and dingy old violoncello. But the bow had fallen upon the floor, and the player's nerveless fingers hung white and stiffened upon the strings.

Old Violoncello had gone to his last engagement.—*Family Magazine.*

SAME OLD THING.

An old granger strolled into a bookstore, the other day, and stopped at a table where a lot of cheap novels were displayed. He picked one of them up, and began to turn its leaves with a curious and amused expression of countenance. A clerk passing by just then, the granger said:—

"They keep on writin' these yallow-kivered novels yet, I see."

Clerk said they did.

"Used to read every blessed one that kum out when I was a boy. Reckon I've gone through mor'n fourteen baskets on 'em in my day, though I hain't tackled one in about forty years now. Don't s'pose they'd read as they did then. Gittin' married and raisin' a large family sorts o' knocks the romantic and picturesque out of a man, as it were. And with a wife and children lookin' to ye for bread, what do you care for 'Ogarita, the Forest Queen; or, the Trajedy of the False Eyebrow,' hey? I used to set up all night readin' the 'Mysteries of the Castle of San Juan del Boot Jack,' or somethin' like that, with my teeth chatterin' till I shook the whole house. Couldn't do it now. But, I say, do the novels run as they used to?"

"Pretty much the same," replied the obliging clerk.

"You don't say! Does the boss herowine exclaim, 'Unhand me, villain, or by me father's great horn spoons, I'll throw meself from the cliff and seek a peaceful grave beneath the waves that rattle for a position at its foot'?"

"That's about the run of it."

"Well, I declare! And when the villain swears she must be his'n, though the heavens fall and hell yawns at his feet, she shrieks the name of 'Gonraldo,' and takes the fatal plunge into the seething waters of the dark abyss. The billows close over her be-e-a-u-ti-ous form, when, lo, Gonraldo—what does Gonraldo do nowadays, say?"

"Gonraldo plunges in—"

"Exactly!" interrupted the granger, excitedly, "Gonraldo, who has been watchin' things from another cliff, rushes in and rescues her from the clutch of the demon waves, crying, 'Ha! ha! foiled! foiled! Oh, it's just the way the old thing run when I was a boy. Hain't changed it a bit. And the pirate stories. Do they still skim the bright sea foam in rakish lookin' skuners, hull painted jet black, with a narrer streak of red runnin' along the sides?"

"Oh, yes."

"You don't tell me! And is the pirate's bride as good lookin' as she used to be? I can see her now, standin' at the head of the powder magazine with a coal oil lamp in her hand, as she exclaims to her husband, who is about to throw the handsome captive overboard, 'Gomez de la Rutabaga, hold thy hand! Touch but a hair of that fair youth's head, and I will blow thee and thy murderous crew to the weeping stars, and scatter thy proud bark among the coral reefs of the down sweeping sea!"

"What a memory you have got."

"Oh, I'm a hustler. Hain't read a pirate story since I was a boy, but I remember just how they used to go. And the pirate's cave, too. Same old cave, I s'pose?"

"Tretty much the same cave. They light them with electricity now, though."

"Well, I s'pose so. Pirates tumble to these new wrinkles quick as anybody. Cook by steam, too, probably? Street cars running from the cave to the dock?"

"Yes, and a telephone connecting it with a signal station."

"Well," said the stranger, "we must expect a few changes in forty years. I see that the novel jogs along in about the same old beaten track, though. But an old man like me hain't any use for 'em any more. Good day."

And with a lingering though saddened look at the yellow covers that had called up fleeting visions of a past intellectual life, the old man left the store.

ORIGIN OF "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT."

The following translation of a Hebrew hymn is copied from one of the publications of the Percy Society.

It was originally written in Rabbinical Chaldee, and has a sort of lifting measure.

No doubt many will be surprised to find that the familiar nursery tale, which has been told to amuse children in England for many generations, has had so serious an original.

A TRANSLATION OF A HYMN FROM THE "SEPHER HAGGADAH," folio 23.

1.

A kid, a kid, my father bought
For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.

2.

Then came the cat and ate the kid
That my father bought
For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.

3.

Then came the dog and bit the cat
That ate the kid, &c.

4.

Then came the staff and beat the dog
That bit the cat, &c.

5.

Then came the fire and burned the staff
That beat the dog, &c.

6.

Then came the water and quenched the fire
That burned the staff, &c.

7.

Then came the ox and drank the water
That quenched the fire, &c.

8.

Then came the butcher and slew the ox
That drank the water, &c.

9.

Then came the Angel of Death and killed the
butcher
That slew the ox, &c.

10.

Then came the Holy One, blessed be He,
And killed the Angel of Death,
That killed the butcher,
That killed the ox,
That drank the water,
That quenched the fire,
That burned the staff,
That beat the dog,
That bit the cat,
That ate the kid,
That my father bought
For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.

The following is the interpretation:

1.—*The kid*, which is one of the pure animals, denotes the Hebrew nation. The Father, by whom it was purchased, is Jehovah, who represents himself in this relation to the Hebrews. The two pieces of money are Moses and Aaron.

2.—*The cat* denotes the Assyrians who took the ten tribes.

3.—*The dog* is symbolical of the Babylonians, who destroyed the Assyrian monarchy.

4.—*The staff* signified the Persians, who destroyed the Babylonian kingdom.

5.—*The fire* indicates the Greek Empire, under Alexander, which destroyed the Persian.

6.—*The water* denotes the Roman power, which destroyed the Grecian.

7.—*The ox* is the symbol of the Saracens, who destroyed the Roman power in the Holy Land.

8.—*The butcher* is the Crusader, who drove the Saracens off the Holy Land.

9.—*The Angel of Death* is the Turkish power, to which the land of Palestine is subject.

10.—The commencement of the tenth stanza is designed to show that God will take signal vengeance on the Turks; immediately after whose overthrow the Jews are to be restored to their own land and live under the Government of their long-expected Messiah.

VARIETIES.

A SECURE RETREAT.—When Carter, the lion king, was exhibiting with Ducrow at Astley's, a manager, with whom Carter had made and broken an engagement, obtained damages and issued a writ against him. The bailiffs came to the stage-door and asked for Carter. "Show the gentleman up," said Ducrow, and when they reached the stage there sat Carter composedly in the great cage with an enormous lion on each side of him. "There's Mr. Carter waiting for you, gentlemen," said Ducrow, "go in and take him. Carter, my boy, open the door." Carter proceeded to obey, at the same time eliciting, by a private signal, a tremendous roar from his companions. The bailiff, staggered back in terror, rolled over each other as they rushed down stairs, and nearly fainted before they reached the street.

MADemoiselle MARS.—On one of the very last occasions of her appearing before her own Parisian audience, when she had passed the limit at which it was possible for a woman of her advanced age to assume the appearance of youth, the part she was playing requiring that she should exclaim, "Je suis jeune! Je suis jolie!" a loud solitary hiss protested against the assertion, with bitter significance. After an instant's consternation, which held both the actors and audience silent, she added, with the exquisite grace and dignity which survived the youth and beauty to which she could no longer even pretend, "Je suis Mademoiselle Mars!", and the whole house broke out in acclamations, and rang with the applause due to what the incomparable artiste still was, and the memory of all that she had been.