

SHAM COUNTRY.

[FROM PAUL IN WORDLAND.]

A CHILDREN'S STORY.

"Come in here!" said Interjection, stopping before a wide arched entrance, over which some words were written. "It is a funny place—I go in sometimes." Paul looked up. "Sham Country," he read; "I don't think I ever read of it before." But no sooner had he stepped across the threshold than he found himself in a great city full of sound and bustle, of people coming and going, and vehicles of all kinds. On either hand were splendid shops, filled with finer things than he had ever seen in his life before; fruit stores with great piles of golden oranges, pineapples, bananas, pears and other fruit; furniture warerooms with curiously carved chairs and tables in front; eating houses that looked like fairyland with their marble tables, velvet carpets and silken hangings. But they had not gone far when a choking sensation came over Paul. "Stop!" he gasped, "there is something the matter, I can't breathe."

"It's only the atmosphere of the place," answered Interjection, coolly. "Stand still a moment or two, and you will grow used to it."

And in a little while he found he could go on quite well again. Presently they found themselves in front of the largest store they had seen yet. It had two wide entrances, through which the people were passing in a continual stream, and above was written in big gilt letters "Cant Shop." Paul took this to be an abbreviation of candy shop, for the windows were filled with sweetmeats of every conceivable size, colour and form, some built into great red and white pyramids, or turreted castles, others packed in quaint little boxes, or cut in fantastic shapes that were continually suggesting something, he didn't now what. Behind the counter stood a fat, smiling man who, Interjection said, was Cant himself, and very busy the people kept him; he could scarcely serve them fast enough. The women went principally to a counter at one side, heaped up with twists of different coloured paper, that Paul took to be motto candies but which Interjection said were called conventionalities, and had nothing inside. Then there were lawyers with their bags over their shoulders; queer men all twisted awry, whom Paul knew, without asking, to be politicians, for his father had told him they were always one-sided men; religionists of various kinds, some of them dressed in very funny ways. But the ministers surprised Paul most, there were so many of them, and they nearly all bought little images that looked like dolls. However, Interjection told him they were called platitudes, and kept principally for clergymen, who used a great many of them in the pulpit.

As he was watching a man that was eating something that looked very nice and soft and round, and that Interjection said was called bombast and helped people to speak easily, somebody touched him on the arm, and a sweet voice said, "Buy one of my glasses, little gentleman, one of my little glasses."

He turned round, and there was standing by him the prettiest girl he had ever seen in his life. Her eyes were blue as the sky and her hair bright golden, and over one arm she carried a basket full of little mirrors with quaintly cut mother-of-pearl handles, one of which she held up before Paul with a smile. He glanced in it, and was so delighted with his own reflection that he stretched out his hands involuntarily to take it from her, when Interjection caught him suddenly by the arm and dragged him back a few paces.

"Why did you do that?" said Paul, angrily, while the girl turned away to another customer.

"That's Self-Deception," whispered Interjection. "If you buy from her she will entice you into her labyrinth, and you will wander about until your eyes drop out and you will never see any more."

Paul looked with horror at the girl, who had just sold one of her glasses and was coaxing the poor fellow to follow her, smiling over her shoulder at him in the prettiest way.

"Come!" he said, "let us go away. I am afraid of her."

So they turned down a side street. Here there were no shops, and the crowd was less, so that Paul could observe the crowd more closely, and he saw to his surprise that they all, men and women alike, wore veils thrown over the head and falling down on the shoulders. And these veils were very different in colour and texture; for, while some, those worn by the young people, were gauzy and of delicate tints, so that the face looked beautiful underneath, others were ugly, dark and coarse, and so thick as to make the features of the wearer invisible.

"Why do they wear them?" asked Paul. "I should think they would be always stumbling."

"Oh, no," said Interjection. "They are called illusions, and the people like them very much. It makes them very unhappy when they fall off."

The street they were walking on had broadened into an avenue, and on either side were magnificent houses of white marble or different coloured stone, surrounded by handsome grounds.

"I suppose the great people live here," said Paul, and Interjection began to tell him who the different places belonged to. Deceit, who, he said, was very wealthy and of great influence in Sham Country, lived in one of the finest, and right across the road from him Fraud, beside whom, in two houses adjoining one another, dwelt the two sisters, Equivocation and Dissimulation. Far back from the road,

almost hidden in a clump of trees, was Slander's cottage. He was very seldom seen, Interjection said, but had his say in everything all the same. A little further on there was a crowd of people standing before a gate.

"What are they waiting for?" asked Paul.

"I suppose Hypocrisy is coming out," answered Interjection. "He lives here and there is always a crowd to see him pass."

"Let us wait, too," said Paul; for peeping through the gate he had caught sight of a gold chariot before the door, drawn by two white horses, and of a man with a beautiful face standing on the step. Just then a voice said with a sigh behind them, "Ah, it is ever so, Truth wanders unbecked while Hypocrisy rides in honour," and turning round he saw a woman standing near him, whose dress was threadbare and shabby, and who had a pale, careworn face. In her hand she carried a pair of spectacles, which she continually offered to the people around her, but none were willing to take them; indeed, they pushed away from her as far as they could with looks of anger and dislike.

"Who is it?" whispered Paul, "and why do the people treat her so rudely?"

"Truth," said Interjection. They don't like her spectacles, they say everything looks strange and different through them. The woman came up to Paul and held out the glasses with a sad smile, and he was so sorry for her that he took them and put them on. Instantly everything was changed around him. The great city with its splendid palaces had shrunk to a miserable village, with here and there a few scattered hovels, the light was gray and dim, and Hypocrisy's castle stood out against the sky like an immense black prison, with iron doors and barred windows. The people's gay clothing hung on them in rags, and almost all of them blind, or crippled, or suffering-looking, with dim eyes and hollow cheeks. And now the gates were opened, and Hypocrisy drove out; but his glittering carriage had become a heavy iron car, and his face was so cold and cruel that Paul hated to look at it. And the wretched people, with shouts, flung themselves before him, and the iron wheels went over them, crushing them, which terrified Paul so much that he pulled off the spectacles hastily, and there was the city again, full of light and cheerful sound and gaily dressed people. And the latter were still shouting and flinging up their caps, for Hypocrisy had just driven away. Paul could see his gold chariot glistening in the sun, and the prancing white horses. Then he turned to Truth, who was still standing beside him, and, handing her back the spectacles, said politely, "Thank you, but I don't think I care for them," and taking Interjection by the arm he whispered, hurriedly, "Come away. Let us go back to Wordland. I don't like Sham Country at all, it frightens me."

And in such a hurry was he to be out of the place that he would scarcely stay to look at the strange things Interjection showed him by the way—Quack's wonderful bazaar, with its hundreds of little stalls, whereon were set out nostrums for everything under the sun, from sham medicines and complexions to recipes for happiness and other-world revelations; or the funny lady, Affection, who was selling false smiles at a corner; or False Sentiment's handsome booth, with its wares so lovely outside, so hollow within. But all at once he stopped with a cry of wonder. In front of him, at the corner of a street, was a quaint, pretty little house of light wood, curiously carved and shaped. There were tiny spiral staircases clinging to it here and there like great yellow caterpillars, corner balconies with heavy wooden hoods, quaint dormer windows that peeped over the roof in comical fashion. Everything about it, even to the chimney, was twisted into some odd fantastic shape, and everywhere, over the doors and round the windows up to the very roof, were flower and vine carvings, sometimes caught up in festoons, sometimes hanging in long wreaths. But the most wonderful thing to Paul was that all over the front, peeping out from the leaves, craning from under the eaves, lurking in the corners of windows and doors, were carved heads, and these heads never kept the same expression for two minutes together. When he first caught sight of them they were all frowning and shaking themselves at him as hard as they could, then they burst out laughing and nodded in the friendliest way possible. Paul laughed, too, and there were the heads looking down at him with a sad, sober expression, as if he had done something wrong, and in a minute they were all lolling on one side and winking drolly. The windows of the house were wide open, and he could see into a room where there were many little tables, and at these people were seated who seemed to be eating something out of glass dishes.

"That is Fancy Shop," said Interjection; "isn't it a pretty place?"

"And what are the people taking?" asked Paul.

"Those in the small dishes are dreams, and in the larger, reveries."

"I would like very much to try one," said Paul. "Are they nice?"

"They say they are not very good for one," said Interjection; "that if you take many you will never be able for any hard work."

"I wonder if anything is good for one in this place," said Paul, as they went on again to the arched entrance now plainly visible in the distance before them.

All at once a voice called out: "Facts enlarged, facts enlarged. Here are your nice facts made double the size for next to nothing."

And turning round Paul saw a man coming towards them, a large man, with a broad, good-natured face. On his back he carried a peddler's pack, and when he caught

the boy's eye he continued in a wheedling tone, "Any facts to improve, young sir. There's no one can do up a fact like myself. You won't know it again in about a minute. I'll make you a pretty scandal out of a cheese-paring, or a romance out of two hand-shakes and a smile."

"Thank you," said Paul, "but I haven't any of those things at present. Will you tell me your name?" he added, as the man was moving away.

"Exaggeration, at your service," was the answer, and presently they could hear him calling his 'facts enlarged' down a side street.

They were not far from the entrance now, and Paul quickened his steps, for he was anxious to be out of Sham Country as soon as possible, when Interjection said "Come in here," and pulled his arm, stopping him before an immense warehouse with large swinging doors that stood wide open, and through which he could see furniture of all kinds piled to the very ceiling.

"What is it?" he asked, for he had grown very suspicious of everything now.

"It is kept by Outward Appearance," said Interjection. "He sells forms and ceremonies and all sorts of social observances. He gets a good deal from Truth, and some of his things are hundreds of years old. Come in and see!"

But, while Paul was hesitating at the door there crawled round a corner of the building a terrible looking old man. He was bent nearly double over a great stick, and his eyes glared savagely through the tangled hair that fell in foul masses over his wrinkled face. His clothing was ragged and filthy, and when he snarled and shook his stick at them his lips curled back from red, toothless gums. Paul and Interjection were so terrified at the sight of him that they turned and ran as hard as they could, never stopping until they were in the great corridor of Wordland again. Then Paul looked back, but beyond the arch all was mist and darkness, he could see or hear nothing.

"Who was it?" he whispered, still breathless with having run so fast.

"Old Corruption," said Interjection, who was terrified, too, though he wouldn't acknowledge it. "He's always creeping about the lanes and byways of Sham Country, and appearing suddenly and frightening people."

J. E. SMITH.

Fraser River Gold.

Mr. Andrew C. Lawson's scientific report upon the claims of the Lillooet Hydraulic Mining company, which are situated on the west bank of the Fraser River, about one mile above the town of Lillooet, well known as the old Dickey Rancho, and consisting of about 320 acres of bench land at an altitude of 250 feet above river level, will be found very interesting in mining circles. The eastern boundary of the old rancho fronts on the Fraser. Steps are being taken by the company to control a water frontage one mile in extent on the Fraser, and of an average width of over half a mile. It is this block of land which it is proposed to subject to hydraulic mining to recover the gold contained in the gravel of which both the lower and upper benches are composed. Mr. Lawson has carefully examined the location with the object of proving first, to what extent gold is contained in the gravel composing the benches, and second, to what extent it is adapted to hydraulic methods of mining. In the early days of placer mining in British Columbia, the ground was occupied by numbers of miners who, by the crude methods at their disposal, were taking out gold from the surface layers of gravel at the rate of \$16 per man per day, according to information furnished by Mr. Smith, M.P.P., who resided there at the time, and who has lived there ever since. At the time of the Cariboo excitement, in 1862, this ground was suddenly abandoned by the miners, who went north, and white men never returned to the district in any force, but the ground has been mined in a desultory way by Chinese, who, not having complied with the regulations of the Mining Act, lost their claims. The difficulty of obtaining a supply of water has been a hindrance to more vigorous work. The past history of this location has gone to show that it contains gold in sufficient quantities to repay work of the crudest sort. Mr. Lawson received the assurance of an experienced placer miner, who had carefully prospected the locality, that there was "colour" in every pan of gravel he had washed. The present company have made two trial pits on the lower bench, one of which represents the removal of about 3,500 cubic yards of gravel, yielding \$700—equal to an average of twenty cents per cubic yard. There seems to be no doubt as to the auriferous properties of the gravel in paying quantities. It is estimated that this bench contains 60,000 yards of gold-bearing gravel. This quantity, at only ten cents per yard, represents \$6,000,000. All the conditions of the ground appear, from the experts' report, to be well adapted for hydraulic mining, the gravel composing the benches being stream-bedded and easily washed down and quite free from cemented conglomerate. And the mine being situated on a powerful stream like the Fraser, assists development. The company control 600 inches of water and any pressure can be obtained up to 600 feet. The above records of the mining expert bear out the testimony of Mr. A. McNaughton, of Quesnelle, Cariboo, who has been for 36 years in the mines, as to the richness of the undeveloped gold creeks in the Lillooet District, which, he predicts, will yet eclipse the past record of the great Cariboo country. The public will await with interest the result of the operations of the Hydraulic Mining Company on the Fraser.—*Victoria Colonist*, June 7, 1890.