

"Speak out, like a man," I said; "is your wife confined with a prophecy, or what is the matter with you?"

"Hepzibah, the prophetess, is well; and her prophecies are abiding the fullness of their fulfilment. I would speak with you on a very secret and important matter, concerning also her revealings."

"Then I will send the child away. Here, Bunny, run and ask mother Jones

"That will not do; I will not speak here. Walls are thin, and walls have ears. Come down to the well with me."

"But the well is a lump of walls," I answered, "and children almost always

"There are no children. I have been down. The well is dry, and the children know it. No better place can be for speaking."

Looking down across the church-yard, I perceived that he was right; and so I left Bunny to dwell on her breakfast, and went with Hezekiah. Among the sand-hills there was no one; for fright had fallen on everybody, since the sands began to walk, as the general folk now declared them. And nobody looked at a sand-hill now with any other feeling than towards his grave and tombstone.

Even my heart was a little heavy, in spite of all scientific points, when I straddled over the stone that led into the sandy passage. After me came Hezekiah, groping with his grimy hands, and calling out for me to stop, until he could have hold of me. However, I left him to follow the darkness, in the wake of his own ideas.

A better place for secret talk, in a parish full of echoes, scarcely could be found, perhaps, except the old "Red House" on the shore. So I waited for Perkins to unfold, as soon as we stood on the bottom step, with three or four yards of quicksand, but no dip for a pitcher below us. The children knew that the well was dry, and some of them perhaps were gone to try to learn their letters.

What then was my disappointment, as it gradually came out, that so far from telling me a secret, Hezekiah's object was to deprive me of my own! However, if I say what happened, nobody can grumble.

In the first place, he manœuvred much to get the weather-gage of me, by setting me so that the light that slanted down the grey slope should gather itself upon my honest countenance. I, for my part, as a man unwarned how far it might become a duty to avoid excess of accuracy, took the liberty to prefer a less conspicuous position; not that I had any lies to tell, but might be glad to hear some. Therefore, I stuck to a pleasant seat upon a very nice sandy slab, where the light so shot and wavered, that a badly inquisitive man might seek in vain for a flush or a flickering of the most delicate light of all—that which is cast by the heart or mind of man into the face of man.

Upon the whole, it could scarcely be said, at least as concerned Hezekiah, that truth was to be found, just now, at the bottom of this well.

"Dear brother Dyo," he gently began, with the most brotherly voice and manner; "it has pleased the Lord, who does all things aright, to send me to you for counsel now, as well as for comfort, beloved Dyo."

"All that I have is at your service," I answered very heartily; looking for something about his wife, and always enjoying a thing of that kind among those righteous fellows; and we heard that Hepzibah had taken up, under word of the Lord, with the Shakers.*

"Brother David, I have wrestled hard in the night-season, about that which has come to pass. My wife——"

"To be sure," I said.

"My wife, who was certified seven times as a vessel for the Spirit——"

"To be sure, they always are; and then they gad about so——"

"Brother, you understand me not; or desire to think evil. Hepzibah, since her last confinement, is a vessel for the Spirit to the square of what she was. Seven times seven is forty-nine, and requires no certificate. But these are carnal calculations."

All this took me beyond my depth, and I answered him rather crustily; and my

* These fine fellows are talked of now, as if we had found a novelty. They came through South Wales on a "starring" tour, thirty years ago, and they seemed to be on their last legs then. Under the moon is there anything new?