

Insane, He Swept the Keys.

It was at one of the railroad stations in the northwest that the incident referred to in the poem below occurred. A young man had been the only hope of an indigent mother. Educated, refined, and of noble intellect, he gave much promise to the future, but alas! in an evil hour he commenced the use of strong drink, and by it became totally insane. As a vagabond, he wandered from place to place, repeating "I will sing of my Redeemer," while, in imitation of his playing in the days gone by, his fingers would wander over the keys of the organ. His reason had fled, and with it the joy and hope of a poor mother. Ah, how many are following his course to-day! How many to-day are on the road to destruction! "Let us crush this monster—" "Let us work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

All day long 'twas cloudy, gloomy,
For there fell a constant rain,
And a crowd of men and women
Waited for the coming train.
Warm were they in silk and satins,
Seated in the cosy room,
Smoking, reading,—little cared they
For outsiders in the gloom.

Swing the heavy shutters wider,
For the restless, moving tide,
Talking, walking—walking, talking,
Talking of the coming ride.
Drifting with the crowd, a stranger
Entered carelessly the door,
Polished form and noble bearing,
Though he ragged was and poor.

See! he gazes on the wealthy—
He had seen much better days:
How he sings!—his fingers wander
O'er the long-forgotten keys.
"I will sing of my Redeemer
And his wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross he suffered
From the curse to set me free."

Hushed was now the chit-a-chatter,
Wond'ring all what this could be—
"On the cross he sealed my pardon,
Paid the debt and made me free!"
There he stood—insane—oblivious!
Staring, too, so vacantly!
Neither home, nor mother had he
And so pitiful to see!

Lips once crimson—now so pallid!
Ashen, too, his sunken cheek;
See him stand there staring blankly!
Not a word we hear him speak!
Yet he sang such broken-heart words!
Tott'ring o'er a drunkard's grave—
"I will tell the wondrous story
How my lost estate to save!"

Oh, the cursed, cursed wine-cup!
Oh, the cruel men who sell!
See them in this land of Bibles,
Sending thousands down to hell!
Lo! the wrecks along the sea—
See your ragged, motley train!
Widows, orphans,—these are relics
Of the strong men they have slain!

In that train are starving, stealing,
Gambling, murd'ring, pilgery,—death!
Ah! the news of some dire evil
Greets the ear at every breath!
See! the sky is dark and threat'ning!
Look! the storm is deep and wide!
What can check its awful fury?
Who can shield us from its tide?

Hark! the wise men of our nation—
They are calling from afar;
Hear ye not the clash of armour,
Ready for the coming war?
Lift the flag of Prohibition!
Sound aloud the true keynote;
If you'd kill this dreadful demon,
Ye must kill it with your vote!

—The Issue.

A True Ghost Story.

BY W. H. A.

Most of the ghost stories one hears are but mean accounts of what ignorant and weak-minded people simply imagine they saw or heard, and will not brook the least enquiry, but the story I am about to relate is a faithful narration of facts that will bear the strictest investigation and at the end be received by all as a *true* ghost story.

The incident occurred in New England, and was related to me by a fine old sea captain as one dark night on the western shore of Newfoundland we sat by the fire and listened to the raging of the storm. He described the New England village from which he came as it existed half-a-century or more ago. There by the water in the bay, and some distance from its nearest neighbour, the little fishing hamlet stood. The cleared land which belonged to its inhabitants, and on which grazed their cows and flocks of sheep, stretched away over the hill behind the houses, while down this hill came the road which led onward along the shore. In this solitary retreat the women and children were left alone and unprotected throughout a portion of the year, but they feared no evil as none ever attempted to molest them, and their only anxiety was that the sturdy men and boys, who were away fishing on the banks and elsewhere, might come back home in safety.

One year however, as soon as the men had departed, a ghastly sight was witnessed. Just at dusk on Saturday evening was seen a white-clothed company moving down the hillside. Slowly the apparition approached, revealing at length a large, long coffin which was borne in the midst. It is easier to imagine than to describe the terror which this weird and unearthly sight infused into the hearts of the timid and defenceless people. How fearfully they strained their eyes through the gathering darkness to see where it would go! How glad they were at last to see it pass down the road and out of sight! But even with this relief afforded them their anxious hearts were troubled, for they wondered why it had appeared to them. Was it a "token" to them that the loved ones out at sea had met with danger and with death—that no more they would see their homes, their wives, their children! Or did it mean that disease and death were swiftly coming upon the terrified villagers themselves! *What* could the ghostly visit mean! There followed a week of anxious suspense during which the ghost and the import of its coming was the talk of all. The next Saturday evening came, and lo, again appeared the apparition! With greater terror and anxiety than before the sight was marked and watched. Another anxious week elapsed and again the doleful company with its ominous burden came down the hill and disappeared! Surely as it had now appeared for the *third* time its message

must be true. *What could that message be?* During the suspense of the following week some of the men came home, and soon they were listening to the harrowing story of the ghost. At once, like brave men, they resolved, at all hazards, to get to the bottom of it. Arming themselves, on Saturday evening they lay in ambush and waited for the sight. Soon they saw the spectre advancing to the spot where they lay concealed! Their stout hearts almost failed them, as they looked upon the frightful company, but true to their resolve they sprang boldly forth upon the ghost! And now the apparition was explained! Those white-robed creatures fled for very life! Within the coffin which they flung to the earth was found a newly slaughtered sheep—the last one stolen by this band of disguised rascals who had found an easy if dishonest way of providing Sunday's dinner from the flock of the peaceful villagers! The story is another proof of the folly of fearing what we suppose to be supernatural—another proof of the fact that "we cannot see anything very much worse than ourselves." Let our girls and boys learn the lesson.

The Great Siberian Road.

FROM GEORGE KENNAN'S ILLUSTRATED ARTICLE IN THE *MAY CENTURY*, WE QUOTE THE FOLLOWING:—

"These transport waggons, or *obozes*, form a characteristic feature of almost every landscape on the great Siberian road from the Ural Mountains to Tiumen. They are small four-wheeled, one-horse vehicles, rude and heavy in construction, piled high with Siberian products, and covered with coarse matting, securely held in place by large wooden pins. Every horse is fastened by a long halter to the preceding waggon, so that a train of fifty or a hundred obozes forms one unbroken caravan from a quarter of a mile to half a mile in length. We passed 538 of these loaded waggons in less than two hours, and I counted 1,445 in the course of our first day's journey. No further evidence was needed of the fact that Siberia is not a land of desolation. Commercial products at the rate of 1,500 tons a day do not come from a barren arctic waste.

"As it gradually grew dark towards midnight, these caravans began to stop for rest and refreshment by the roadside, and every mile or two we came upon a picturesque bivouac on the edge of the forest, where a dozen or more oboze drivers were gathered around a cheerful camp-fire in the midst of their waggons, while their liberated but hobbled horses grazed and jumped awkwardly here and there along the road or among the trees. The gloomy, evergreen forest, lighted up from beneath by the flickering blaze, and faintly tinged above by the glow of the northern twilight, the red and black Rembrandt outlines of the waggons, and the group of men in long

kaftans and scarlet or blue shirts, gathered about the camp-fire, drinking tea, formed a strange, striking, and peculiarly Russian picture.

"We travelled without stop through out the night, changing horses at every post-station, and making about eight miles an hour, over a fairly good road. The sun did not set until half past nine, and rose again about half past two—so that it was not at all time very dark.

"The villages through which we passed were sometimes of great extent, but consisted almost invariably of only two lines of log-houses, standing with their gables to the road, and separated one from another by inclosed yards, without a sign anywhere of vegetation or trees. One of these villages formed a double row five miles in length of separate houses, all fronting on the Tsar's highway. Around every village there was an inclosed area of pasture land, varying in extent from 200 to 500 acres, within which were kept the inhabitants' cattle; and at the point where the inclosing fence crossed the road, on each side of the village, there were a gate and a gate-keeper's hut.

"These gate-keepers are almost always old and broken-down men, and in Siberia they are generally criminal exiles. It is their duty to see that none of the village cattle stray out of the inclosure, and to open the gates for passing vehicles at all hours of the day and night. From the village commune they receive for their services a mere pittance of three or four roubles a month, and live in a wretched hovel made of boughs and earth, which throughout the year is warmed, lighted, and filled with smoke by an open fire on the ground."

A Clever Boy.

"FATHER," said a hopeful sprig, "how many fowls are there on that table?"

"Why," said the old gentleman, as he looked complacently on a pair of finely-roasted chickens that were smoking on the dinner table; "why, my son, there are two."

"Two!" replied young smartness. "there are three, sir, and I'll prove it."

"Three!" replied the old gentleman, who was a plain matter-of-fact man, and understood things as he saw them, "I'd like to have you prove that."

"Easily done, sir; easily done! Isn't that *one*?" laying his knife upon the first.

"Yes, that's certain," said his father.

"And isn't that *two*?" pointing to the second; "and don't *one* and *two* added together make three?"

"Really," said the father, turning to the old lady, who was listening with astonishment to the learning of her son; "really, this boy is a genius, and deserves encouragement. Here, old lady, do you take *one* fowl, and I'll take the *second*, and John may have the *third* for his learning."