

THE

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FOR THE PHILADELPHIA MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

THE LATE "SPELL."

A MORE fortunate novelty than the months of rain and obscurity from which we are beginning to emerge, has not blessed the social community within the memory of that best of authorities, the oldest man. The period which immediately preceded it, was one of those dead calms in which all animation stagnates, in the absence of every thing wonderful, horrible, or new, to stir the common mind. The old year seemed to have borne away every thing that had life: Mrs. Sloman's star had changed its orbit; Admiral Codrington dropped the green curtain on the opera of the Archipelago; Queen Mab had scarcely harnessed the atomies, that were to draw her chariot over the sleeping senses of the personages of the Fancy Ball—in short, never were there more portentous indications of a dearth, than before the wonderful 'spell,' which, like the power expressed by the proper etymology of that word, elicited brightness from the gloom. Instead of diminishing, like ephemeral novelties, by its continuance, week after week rolled by, and still the wonder grew, as the prospect became more and more unpromising that the heavy drapery of the heavens would be withdrawn. It became THE TOPIC. Surprising were the feats of courage achieved by tongueless beaux, in the

field of the drawing-room. Dark days, which in their ordinary occurrence, make visits shunned as desperate attempts to leave a card, caused them to be encountered with romantic fearlessness: for the windows of heaven must be closed before the copiousness of the subject would be exhausted. Conversation flagged not into the awful pause prophetic of its end, which in common times is its fate; for the ramifications of the theme were of that infinite extent, that the five minutes of a morning call did not exhaust it; and with proper management, could be so attenuated as to supply a finale, under cover of which the visitor could effect his retreat, without the awkwardness of a silent departure. The cause was so inscrutable—at this time of year too!—seasons must be inverted—an English winter and but one suicide!—such were the varieties of the chime: save when some witling, fond of unhackneyed phrases, would throw in the admirable *bon mot*, of the promises guaranteed by the rainbow; or the surmise, that our belt of earth had slipped towards the pole, and a six months night was setting in.

The worst of the business was, that Dr. Patterson's lectures had not yet contained a word that could elucidate or explain the mystery. The extent to which parlour-philosophy ventured

Proud eagle who rid'st on the tempest afar,
 Thou hast heard the wild voice of the Reim-Kennar;
 Thou hast closed at her bidding the wings of thy pride,
 And folded them, calmly, in peace by thy side.
 She has quelled all thy madness and softened thy wrath,
 And her blessing attends thy retiring path.
 Calm be thy bosom, and placid thy sleep,
 When thou leavest the sky for the caves of the deep,
 There rest till the fates shall awake thee again ;---
 Proud dark-plumaged bird, thou hast heard my bold strain,
 And obeyed the wild voice of the Reim-Kennar.

S. G. F.

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ARCHY M'MORROW.

"YOUR humble servant, sir," was the constant salutation of my friend M'Morrow, and always uttered with an air which seemed to fix the acknowledgment of servitude rather in those to whom he spoke, than on himself. I was accustomed to regard him as the only happy man in my acquaintance; not that any of his attributes were such as either to command respect or win affection; but he had one quality, and that in no small measure, which always enables its possessor to dispense with every other—I mean self-importance. It differs from vanity in this, that the latter pines for the applause of others, while the former regards it with contempt. And from pride it is distinguished by the fact, that it is usually good-natured, and free from that morbid sensitiveness which makes the proud man miserable. There is, however, a distinction still more just and obvious. Vanity and pride are often co-existent with the noblest qualities of the head and heart; the latter, indeed, is generally found, where intellectual strength is conjoined with depth of feeling. Self-importance, on the contrary, is a foible of the vulgar and uncultivated mind. It neither flutters with the hope of ad-

miration, nor turns pale at the dread of disrespect, but, regarding its own superiority as an axiomatic truth, counts on its claim to the deference of others, as no less sure than indefeasible.

Such, at least, was the self-importance of M'Morrow. A firmer assurance of his own distinguished excellence he could not have possessed; and by means of it, he had acquired an imperturbable tranquillity and self-possession, which, in combination with higher qualities of heart and head, would have been an offensive and defensive weapon of incalculable value: in such combination, however, it could never have existed. Blindness to his own defects was the very basis upon which it rested. The slightest illumination of his understanding would have taught him to mistrust himself. He was happier, it is true, in consequence of this illusion. He was free from the perplexing anxieties of expectation, and the bitter pangs of disappointment; and, though he had no desire of improvement, as he had no perception of his wants,—he was amply repaid for the loss of its advantages, by a full belief that it was superfluous.

I have often been amused, by observ-

ing the multifarious ways in which this pervading quality of his mind was constantly developed. It began to show itself, no doubt, in infancy; for at the time when I was first thrown into his company, it was, if I may use the expression, the only trait remaining in his character. I mean, that his self-respect had so infused itself into all his feelings, and displayed itself in all his acts, that even by the most indifferent observer, it could not be overlooked. When a school-boy, though his learning was, at least, equivocal, he never appeared conscious of the slightest imperfection. A succession of blunders, sufficient to confound even ordinary impudence, on him made no impression. He either despised the corrections of the teacher, as acts of malevolent stupidity, or looked upon ignorance and mistake as things too trivial and mean to mar a character so elevated as his own. When he declaimed, not even shouts of derisive laughter could disturb his equanimity. He ascribed the mirth of his audience to every imaginable cause but his own absurdity—and I well remember his look of unaffected wonder, when a waggish friend one day informed him, in a whisper, of the truth. There was something almost pitiable in his case. It seemed as if disappointment, and contempt, and open ridicule, were totally incompetent to thrust into his mind a suspicion of his weakness. Sarcasm and delicate satire were, of course, incapable of acting upon such an object; and envy he never felt, for it always carries with it a sense of superiority in others. His friends soon abandoned him to the enjoyment of his imaginary greatness, and he came forth from school, at the age of seventeen, with the erudition of a plough-boy, and the air of a Great Mogul.

As he grew in years, he grew in self-importance. The first serious step which he took in life, after learning to read and write, was a signal proof

that elementary instruction had not impaired this estimable quality. From the rank and circumstances of his parents, the most liberal and extensive course of study was fully in his power; and friends were not wanting benevolent and weak enough to urge him to pursue it. He wisely resisted their advice; not because he felt his own incompetence, but because he looked on all additional preparatory improvement as, in his case, wholly useless. Having gravely asserted this indubitable fact, he solemnly selected for his future occupation, the profession of the law. Those who knew him but a little, rubbed their eyes at this determination; and those who knew him best, laughed heartily, in secret, at the thought of his professional career. It was at this point that our personal histories diverge. We separated; and before we came again in contact with each other, he had burst forth upon the world a counsellor at law.

I will not attempt a description of my feelings, as I crossed the threshold of the court-house, in the county-town of ——. The recollection of what M' Morrow was of old, and the doubtful anticipation of what he might be now, were still contending for predominance, when I entered the room where the court was sitting. But I had no sooner come within sight of the bench and bar, than I broke my own reverie by an ungovernable burst of laughter. My outrageous merriment soon drew the eyes of the multitude, but I was wholly unable to repress it; for the sight of M' Morrow recalled so forcibly the ludicrous association connected with his character and history, that I resigned myself to the influence of early feeling, and laughed as I laughed at school, when the counsel before me was the butt of the community. An old man, with a venerable grey head, was addressing the court, and commanding the attention not only of the judges but

of all his colleagues, with the exception of a single individual. This individual was my old compeer M'Morrow. Though the lapse of years had wrought a visible effect upon both his features and his form, I instantly recognized the same air of self-complacent dignity which distinguished his countenance in youth. It was altered, indeed, by the habitual expression of professional gravity, and a look of assumed disdain occasioned by the speech to which he was listening; but all its absurdity continued undiminished. He was seated at the right hand of the speaker, and by his extraordinary stature (for even at school he was called a son of Anak) overlooked the whole assembly. Excessive height gives, even to a handsome countenance, a ridiculous expression, by suggesting the idea of disproportion, and imparting to the face, by contrast, an appearance unnaturally small. What, then, must have been its effect on the visage of M'Morrow, with its indescribable and inimitable air of conscious superiority, mingled with the indubitable indications of the extremest imbecility. His face, when he sat at ease, was held, unmoved, in a stiff position, his eye appearing to be fixed on vacancy. At intervals, however, he would stoop over the table at which he sat, and bustle among the papers which were spread before him, writing, folding, erasing, and endorsing, as if the business of the nation was laid upon his shoulders. He would then lean back with an air of dignity which seemed to say, 'who can stand before me?' I began to wonder within myself, by what strange means he had obtained even the smallest share of occupation; since I knew him too well to suppose him competent to the respectable discharge of the simplest professional duties. I turned, therefore, to a decent looking man, at whose side I had placed myself by accident, and asked him whether he could tell me how much

practice was in the hands of Mr. M'Morrow. I saw, from the half-suppressed laugh which my grave inquiry produced, that my old companion had not changed his character. The man, however, respectfully replied, "Why, I can't rightly say that he's got any, Sir—Let me see, he made a speech in the Long-meadow cause, I believe, five—no four—year, next Christmas; and another, for Dan Tomson, just three years ago; and that, I believe, is the last—all but his talk, last week, about something or other, when he got *onsuited*." This statement entirely confirmed my suspicions, and I left the court-room, satisfied that M'Morrow was still himself, and determined to visit him as an ancient friend.

I called upon him in the morning, and found him with his feet upon the chimney-piece, and a segar hanging indolently from his mouth. Neither books, papers, nor instruments of writing, were any where visible, although as I learnt from himself, it was his only apartment. He received me graciously, but with great pomp; and I fancied that I saw in the expression of his eye, a sort of disquietude which was wholly new. As I looked at him, I became more sensible of the alteration, and thought that it increased, his eye began to roll, and his lips to quiver, insomuch that I at last began to fear that some misfortune had befallen him, so wonderfully was his whole appearance changed. After forcing himself to converse with me a minute, he dropped his eyes upon a paper which he held in his hand, and appeared to have been reading. I glanced at it, and found it to be the returns of an election just concluded. I now distinctly recollected, that my quondam school-mate was among the candidates for political distinction. At the inn where I sojourned, I had heard much merriment at his expense—and was told by those whom I questioned

on the subject, that he not only had allowed himself to be proposed, but entertained no doubt of his success; not even condescending to electioneer, but relying wholly on his reputation and undisputed merits, and treating with equal contempt his rivals and the electors. Among the rest, I had heard one shrewd politician significantly whisper, that the event of this canvass would do him one favour, which his friends had never done—it would open his eyes.

"It is even so," I said, to myself, as I witnessed his change of countenance,—"he seems to be awaking from a dream, and becoming, for the first time conscious how far he has miscalculated his own merit and importance." De-

termined to know the truth, I then raised my voice and said, with assumed indifference, "By the by, M'Morrow, how many votes had you?" He started—seemed very uneasy—looked at me—dropped his eyes—turned pale—blushed—(both for the first time in his life)—then swallowed hard, as if something stuck in his throat, and answered—"Votes? When?—where? Oh—I understand—why—what did you say, Sir? Oh, yes—votes—votes—why, I believe," here he again seemed strangled, but after coughing several times, and gasping once or twice convulsively, said, with a painful effort, "ONE."

A. J. A.

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THE DECAY OF FEELING.

WHEN flowers that strew our path are bright, and all around is gay,
 And each fair joy about us shines too brilliant for decay;
 When friends are near with gladdening smile and pleasure-beaming eye,
 And rapture speaks in every glance and every half-breathed sigh:
 When nature's free and bounteous hand is opening to our sight
 New, rich, and ever-varying stores of deep and pure delight,
 What bosom e'er foresees that all these beams of golden ray,
 As the gloom of life draws slowly on, will vanish far away;
 That all the bouyant joys of youth must find an early tomb,
 And droop and wither in the shade of moments yet to come?
 Yes, young enthusiast!—all those dreams, so lovely now to thee,
 Like the rainbow's bright but transient arch, will vanish fleetingly:
 The voice of love, whose music now it thrills thy soul to hear,
 When a few short years are past, will fall unheeded on thy ear:
 And beauty's eye, and lip, and brow, so lovely to thy sight,
 Age, cruel age, will soon divest, of all that's fair and bright.
 Yes, all must fade, our dearest joys, the feelings of the heart,
 Which rise so warmly in our youth, in chilly age depart;
 Like bright and fluttering birds that come, on mirthful gaudy wing,
 And pour their song of melody amid the bloom of spring,
 When wintry winds with icy breath have borne that bloom away,
 Steer their far flight, and leave the earth to winter's chilly sway.