

THE DROUTH AND THE RAIN.

THE DROUTH.

Oh, good Lawd, de earf is mighty dry,
An' de dust is er followin' o' de plow,
An' de thurst is yaller, an' de plow,
Peers like de's allus in er row,
Oh, de coon is twis'tin' up an' de cotton looks bad.
An' de truck patch is pacched till it's brown,
An' de sight o' even' thing makes us feel so bad
Dat we's gusted wid de country an' de town
We had laid off fur to lib mighty high.
As we hulled out de watermelon rine,
But de vines dat yaller an' twis'tin' an' dry—
Tough-lookin' ez er piece er hemp twine.
Oh, good Lawd, is yer gwine to let us die
Un' we didn't on' blastin' sky!
An' oh, say good Lawd, kaint yer leabe
our pain
By sendin' us down er shower o' rain?
An' we'll praise Mars Jesus,
An' we'll praise Mars Paul,
We'll praise Mars Aaron,
An' we'll praise Mars Saul.

THE RAIN.

Oh, de rain hab fell wid er hallelujah soun',
An' de coon is lippin' its head,
An' my foot sinks inter do' joyein' groun',
Ez I walks o'er de ingle bed.
De watermelon vine, since de comin' o' de shower,
Is er humpin' o' its' r'ight er long—
Teers it grows erbert er foot ebry hour—
Jis' lisunn at dat jaybird's song.
De trillin' ole raskil, he is mighty happy now,
Since de wind is er runnin' in de branch
Ho's stealthy jis' de shellin' co'n way from Tildy's cow—
Thinks bisse' de boss o' dis ole ranch.
Oh, good Lawd, yer didn't let us die
Un' er hot an' blastin' sky;
An' oh, yes, good Lawd, yer hab leabed
our pain
By sendin' us down er shower o' rain.
An' we'll praise Mars Jesus,
An' we'll praise Mars Paul,
We'll praise Mars Aaron,
An' we'll praise Mars Saul.
—Opie Rea, in Bivouac.

A NIGHT IN A CAVERN.

BY WALTER CLARENCE.

CHAPTER I.

I once found myself in that wretched position so humorously and pathetically described by Washington Irving in his "Sketch Book," viz., confined by stress of weather at a country inn. Fortunately, my "rainy day at an inn" was shared by half a dozen other travelers; and misfortune, when shared by others, loses half its sting.

It was in the days of traveling by stage, and the rain had fallen so heavily, and for so long a time, that the rivers and streams were swollen, bridges were washed away, and the coachroads rendered in many places impassable. There was no help for it, so we philosophically resolved to make ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. My companions in misfortune were, I believe, without exception, of the class known as commercial travelers, or, to give them their more vulgar appellation, "bagmen," a class of men used to the vicissitudes of the "road," and from the very nature of their occupation, courteous, accommodating, and genial in their habits and manners.

When the day closed in we seated ourselves before the ample fireplace, and having called for the best cheer the house could afford, soon became so social and cheerful that we forgot all about the weather, and ceased to vex our minds uselessly, in consequence of the unavoidable delay.

The song and jest were passed around, and as these men generally contrive to collect a fund of anecdotes in the course of their various peregrinations, the evening passed rapidly and pleasantly away. We sat up late, and I presume it was the approach of midnight which led some one of the party to turn the conversation upon the subject of ghosts. Several related stories about the appearance of ghosts which they had heard from others, but no one present asserted that he had seen a ghost himself, and all ridiculed the idea of the reality of supernatural appearances; all but one elderly man, who had remained silent while the conversation was going forward. At length he spoke.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I once, like yourself, ridiculed the idea of the appearance of ghosts. Almost everybody does, though, at the same time, many who are most persistent in ridicule would shrink from passing through a lonely churchyard at midnight, or from passing the night alone in the vaulted chambers of a ruined or deserted castle; in fact, from voluntarily placing themselves in a position where, according to tradition, apparitions are most likely to be met with."

"I said I once ridiculed the idea of the appearance of ghosts. I do not mean to infer by this that I am now perfectly satisfied of their existence; but, if you please, I will relate an adventure which befell me many years ago, and what followed it, p'edging my word that I will tell you nothing but the truth, and then leave it to yourselves to say whether or not I am justified in at least doubting, if there be not more things in heaven and earth than are known to our philosophy."

A general desire was expressed to hear the old gentleman's story, and, after sitting silent for some moments, as if to collect his thoughts, he commenced as follows:

CHAPTER II.

"When I was a young man of nineteen or twenty, I paid a visit to a friend who resided at a town on the sea-coast. It was most romantic spot; beyond the town a lofty range of cliffs stretched for miles both to the right and left. The sea, at high water, dashed against the base of these cliffs with a thundering sound which could be distinctly heard in the town, and which, until I became accustomed to it, prevented me from sleeping; but, at low water, there was a narrow strip of sandy beach between the base of the cliffs and the sea. These cliffs were precipitous as well as lofty, rugged crags in some places jutting over in such a manner as to terrify strangers, and lead them to imagine that the rocks were about to fall and crush them. The constant action of the weather had worn these rocks into every conceivable shape; and in many places there were huge, cavernous openings in the sides of the cliffs, which appeared as if they might penetrate to a considerable distance, though all that could be discerned from the shore was the dark, gloomy opening. To ward off the sea-wards resorted to the cliffs in great numbers, and, after whirling for several minutes in circuitous flight, uttering the while the most discordant screams, they would disappear into these caves, where, doubtless, they had their nests. Even as a boy, I was fond of fine scenery, whether of a domestic or romantic character, and nothing pleased me better than to stroll along the seashore beneath these battlement precipices; or, when the tide was high, to ram along the rugged pathway on their summit, and listen to the surf which dashed them, sometimes seeming to cause them to tremble with its mighty force, and often sending the salt spray in showers, to the height at which I stood and gazed.

"I have observed that I was and am fond of beautiful scenery; but I have a fancy of my own that different descriptions of scenery require different conditions of the weather in order to be seen to perfection. The fields, and woods, and pasture-lands, and the country village, situated in the fertile valley, with the pointed spire of the church, towering above the surrounding trees; the farm-house, with its barns and out-houses, and granaries—in a word, domestic scenery of every description—can only be seen to advantage in fair weather, when it is gilded by the bright, warm sun-shine; but the lofty mountain range, with the jagged pinnacles towering above the clouds, and capped with perpetual snow, or the rugged, precipitous cliffs which gird the sea-shore, alike romantic and terrible, should be seen when the wind is high and the sky is lowering.

"The hole into which I had crept evidently increased in size as it penetrated into the rock, though I could only perceive that this was the case when a flash of lightning lit up the side of the precipice. The momentary glare of light did me no further service, for, after en-

tering a few feet, the cavern ran downward, and turned sharply to the right of the aperture.

"I usually chose a dark, dull, gloomy day for my rambles on the coast, and, on one occasion, having started earlier than usual, I prolonged my walk to a greater distance than ever I had done before. A keen southeasterly wind was blowing, and a misty rain was falling when I set out. I shivered as I drew my cloak more closely around me; but, by walking rapidly, I soon acquired sufficient warmth, and when I reached the seashore, and stood watching the angry waves rising and foaming, and rolling onward in ever-increasing billows, until they broke upon the beach with a noise like thunder, and dashed the seething surf against the rocky precipices, while the sea-birds, frightened from their nests, rushed out with discordant screams, and circling round seemed like the spirits that guided the storm, I felt that was well repaid for my pains in coming.

"It was low tide, and though the water, in consequence of the high wind, washed up to the base of the cliff, it left, in receding, a wide strip of sandy beach on which I could walk with ease, since I had taken the precaution to wear my sea-boots, and, therefore, I had no cause to fear wetting my foot; so I descended from the summit of the cliff, where I had been standing, and walked along close to the water's edge, though sometimes, when a sea heavier than usual broke, it came rushing toward me so rapidly that I stood nearly knee-deep in water, and was obliged to exert all my strength to keep my foot-hold.

"This, however, I enjoyed, and walking along here less of the passing time, I found at length that if I wished to get back before the now fast-rising tide should bar my passage, I must make use of the speed I could. I had, it soon appeared, miscalculated my distance and I discovered that to return to the beach was out of the question. I therefore looked out for a convenient spot whereupon to scale the cliffs, and again to gain the summit from which I had descended. This was not so easy as I expected; I could find no easy place of access. The cliffs were like perpendicular walls, in some places even leaning outward, while the slimy seaweed, with which they were covered, would have rendered it extremely difficult to maintain a foothold, even at a considerable angle shoreward. But there was no time to lose; already the incoming waves rose to the height of two feet, while they dashed against the solid rock with such force as to send the salt spray with a roar to the summit. I was wet to the skin, and at intervals, each minute growing less distant, blinde'd and half-suffocated by the showers of spray. With desperate energy I sprang upon a jutting ledge, about four feet high, and clinging to the seaweed, sometimes tearing it out by the roots, and digging my nails into the interstices of the rock, I succeeded at length in gaining such a height as enabled me to keep clear of the spray save when a wave broke against the cliff with more than ordinary force. It was now quite dark, and my situation was critical in the extreme, but, fortunately, I chanced to discover one of those narrow, zigzag, natural ledges by which the coast-guardmen, used to the cliffs from childhood, may be seen clambering like cats, apparently without foothold, up the steepest precipices. At another time I should have shrunk from making the attempt to reach the summit of the cliffs in this manner, for the slightest stumble would have sent me sprawling on the rocky beach, and death would have been inevitable. But necessity served me with courage, and clinging with desperate tenacity to the slimy weed, and to every jutting point of rock, I managed to ascend several yards, when the ledge became wider, and the ascent more easy.

CHAPTER III.

"I must explain why it is that the coast-guardmen, of whom I have spoken, risk their lives, according to the ideas of landsmen, in ascending the cliffs in the reckless manner I have described; for it is not to be supposed that even these hardy, gallant men attempt these feats of agility without a motive. I know, then, that the caverns I have alluded to, worn into the rock by the action of the weather during many successive ages, and probably, in many instances, enlarged and deepened by artificial means, occasionally serve as temporary storerooms, for smuggled goods, until opportunity arrives to remove them to a more commodious place of storage.

"In that part of the seacoast almost everybody, who is not connected with the existing coast-guard, is a smuggler. Most of the men of property have acquired it by the successful pursuit of smuggling in early life; and it was well known that the then Mayor of the neighboring town, though too respectable to countenance contraband dealing, now that he had secured a fortune, had, for many years, been captain and owner of a smuggling lugger. From the summit of the cliffs they let themselves down by the aid of ropes, held by their comrades, to the level of the cavern, and a sufficient force assembling, ropes are again let down from the cavern to the beach beneath, to which bales and barrels are attached, and dragged up into the primitive places of storage.

"This desper-rats method of 'running' contraband goods, as it is technically termed, is rarely resorted to, except the smugglers are hardly pressed by the revenue cutters out-side, and they usually succeed, by this hazardous method, in safely securing their hard-earned booty. Sometimes, however, the place of concealment is discovered by the no less hardy and daring coast-guard, who as soon as the smugglers have retired, assemble in sufficient force to render any attempt at resistance vain, and, climbing up as I have described, they secure the booty to the crown.

"I had no doubt that the ledge on which I now had safe footing would conduct me to one of these caverns, and as I perceived that the cliff over-head, near the summit, jutted over so far out of the perpendicular as to render any attempt to scale it in this place out of the question, I thought it would be the wiser plan to make the cavern, if cavern I could find, my abiding place until daylight would enable me to reconnoiter.

"To spend a cold, stormy night in a dark, damp hole in the side of a rock was by no means a pleasing prospect; but I was young and strong, and having often heard of but never having seen one of these natural caverns, the spice of romance in my disposition caused me to regard it rather as a pleasant adventure than otherwise. I thought how my friends would wonder what had become of me, and how I would surprise them in the morning when I made my appearance, and told my story, and what a capital story it would be to relate in after years.

"As I had anticipated, after scrambling, sometimes on my hands and knees, and nearly losing my foothold, and winding, and ascending, and descending for nearly a quarter of an hour, I at length stumbled upon a cavern, into which I crept with much delight and thankfulness as if I had been entering my bedroom at the house of my friend, for the storm had increased with fearful rapidity since I had commenced the perilous ascent. The wind howled, the sea roared beneath me, the rain fell in torrents, while a thunderstorm that had long been brewing now burst over me in awful sublimity, each heavy peal of thunder reverberating among the cliffs, and seeming to shake them to their foundation, while the flashes of lightning in rapid succession lit up rock and sky and sea with a lurid glare of light which rendered the darkness between twilights perfectly awful in its contrast. During the last five minutes I had been in constant apprehension that I should be carried by the sheer force of the wind over into the foaming sea beneath; and the cavern, rude, cold, damp, dark, and desolate as it was, I hailed with the delight with which the storm-tossed mariner hails a haven of security after having felt for hours that his life hung upon a thread, and expecting every moment that his ship would strike the rocks and become a wreck.

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tering a few feet, the cavern ran downward, and turned sharply to the right of the aperture.

"Wet, hungry, weary, and cold as I was, I would have given all I possessed at that moment for the means of lighting a fire, or even of procuring a stationary light, and yet a certain sensation of delight was mingled with my weary wretchedness. A sort of 'Dirk Hatterick' feeling came over me. Countless stories flashed through my mind of deadly midnight boat-fights, of smugglers, pistol in hand, keeping watch over stores of spirits and tobacco, and rich silks and laces of inestimable value, ready, at the first flash of danger of capture, to blow themselves and their foes, and the place of their retreat, to shivers; and, as if in consonance with my thoughts, every moment the scene grew wilder and more terrible.

"Each flash of lightning, as I stood in comparative security at the mouth of the cavern, disclosed black bowlders and huge masses of rock, amid which the livid glare played fantastically for an instant, and then left me and them in Cimmerian gloom, as if an extinguisher had suddenly been placed over all. The wind, which had increased to a hurricane, roared into the mouth of the cave more loudly than if it had swept through the branches of a thousand forest trees, and the waves beneath me lashed their white manes furiously amidst the dark masses of rock and seaweed. I had never, I thought, seen such lightning nor such thunder before, though the sound was no doubt increased tenfold in volume by the reverberating echoes. The solid adamant above, and beneath me seemed to vibrate with each successive shock; the sky, the rocks, the sea, the atmosphere itself, appeared wrapped in livid blue flame, and the rain fell like shot upon land and water in an incessant torrent.

"Had my position been less terrible—had the scene been less awful—I should, doubtless, have felt my discomfiture intolerable. As it was, I lost all sense of everything but the sublimity of the storm. How long I had stood under partial shelter, at the mouth of the cave, I can not say. A blinding flash of lightning suddenly drove me backward as if I had been not, and, for some minutes, I feared that I had lost my sight forever. However, I recovered, and fearful of a repetition of the shock, I resolved, at all hazards, to penetrate deeper into the cavern.

"I groped my way for, perhaps, ten feet, through what seemed to be a narrow, vaulted passage, with uneven floor, and I could just touch the sides with my extended arms. Then it widened, evidently, very considerably, but, to what extent, I can not say, for the darkness became impenetrable even to the lightning's glare; and how far the cave extended was mere matter of conjecture. Certain fissures, however, in the walls, too methodical to be natural, attracted my attention as I touched them with my extended fingers; and, still groping my way onward, I at length fairly started with surprise as my hand came in contact with a piece of cold iron, which I soon made out to be a large ringbolt, apparently covered with rust.

"It was now evident that the place had been used by man—probably by smugglers. I became greatly excited. 'What,' I thought, 'if I have stumbled upon some cavern long disused and forgotten, perhaps filled with treasure as rich as that discovered by Ali Baba of Arabian story?' What would I not have given for a light? I fancied that I was surrounded by a magazine of costly fabrics, by chests of gold and silver coin, by bags of Spanish doubloons, by treasures incalculable! I gave the rein to my ever too vivid imagination, and forgot my cold, hunger, and fatigue, forgot the actual peril of my position, and revelled in the wild fancies—all suggested by the discovery of a rusty ringbolt fastened to the wall of rock.

"A light! a light!" I exclaimed aloud, and with frantic energy. Richard, at Bosworth Field, shouted not for a horse more frantically than did I for a light to explore my newly discovered domain.

"I must have advanced considerable distance into the cave, though it is impossible to say how far, since in the thick, palpable darkness, the way may have seemed longer than it really was; but amidst the darkness, and a sort of indescribable grave-like stillness, I could distinctly hear the howling of the wind and the pealing of the thunder without, while the solid wall of rock, seemed to come beneath where I stood. In one of the lulls of the tempest I heard the church clock in the neighboring town strike ten, and also the peal of bells which were always rung at that hour.

"As my excitement died away, my weariness increased. I felt an overpowering sense of drowsiness; and, feeling about me, I discovered something which I believed to be a sailor's large chest. Upon this I seated myself, and cold, wet, and hungry as I was, I fell sound asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

"I awoke with a sensation of numbness, and a thorough chillness pervaded my frame from having slept in wet clothing, I presume. I had no idea of the time. It was still, of course, perfectly dark in the cavern, but for aught I knew it might be broad daylight outside. The storm appeared to have considerably subsided, and I stretched myself with a shudder, my teeth chattering with cold, and was about to rise and grope my way back to the entrance, when I heard the church clock strike again. I counted the strokes. It was midnight. After all, I had slept but two hours. All the romance of my position was gone now. I sighed to think how many hours I had yet to wait till daylight, and reclining back on the chest, I was on the point of trying to compose myself to sleep again, when I perceived a faint, bluish glow a short distance from me, which resembled the light of a lucifer match just kindled. I fixed my eyes upon it with a sort of amazement and indefinable terror. It grew larger and brighter, and I soon perceived that it was the glare of a flame shot on the floor of the cave from an aperture in the wall of rock about ten feet from me. The light it gave was soon sufficient to enable me to scan the dimensions and appearance of the cavern in which I was seated. I judged it to be twenty feet square and six feet in height. At one end I perceived the narrow passage by which I had entered; the walls were damp and covered with a slimy mildew, and the only article the place contained was the chest on which I sat. While I was making this survey, the light had grown brilliant and steady, but all remained still as the grave save the monotonousplash of water, as it were, far down beneath me, and now and again the sound of a gust of wind louder than usual—the last effort of the subsiding tempest. My ears, intent even to pain, caught no sound within the cave but the beating of my own heart. My first thought was to retrace my steps as silently as possible, and so gain the open air, for I was fearful, if the light had been kindled by smugglers in an adjoining cavern, I might, if discovered, be taken for a spy from the excise or coast-guard, and be put to death before I could make any explanation; but in spite of my fears, curiously had a firm hold of me, and I crept softly to the aperture and peeped through.

"No sooner had I done so, than I was struck powerless with astonishment and terror. The light came from a quaint, old-fashioned horn lantern, with fantastic figures painted on its semi-transparent sides, which was suspended from the roof of a cave very much larger than that in which I stood. This cave was literally loaded with spoil. Boxes, bales, and barrels—all of a shape differing materially from those of the present day—were piled one on the top of another, high up against the walls, all around it. Within these, again, were boxes and caskets, such as are used to hold specie and jewels, and by all were of a grotesque and old-fashioned make; while stacked in stands were a complete armory of ancient firelocks, pistol, cutlasses, and battle-axes.

"I saw all this in the glance of a moment, for now my gaze was riveted upon the figures of two men, of gigantic stature, who were re-

clining in a half sitting posture on a mass of rock, apparently sleeping. Beside one of them lay an old-fashioned night telescope, such as I recollect having seen once at a museum, where it was described as being a specimen of the earliest attempts at the manufacture of these instruments.

"Presently one of these men yawned, shook himself, and rose to his feet, and then woke his comrade, who rose also. Both must have stood at least six feet six inches high, and both were attired in a similar fashion, such as I had nowhere seen save when worn by the conventional smuggler, pirate, and robber of the melodrama. Ponderous sea-boots, with immense funnel-shaped tops, reached to mid-thigh, and their bodies were clad in garments of coarse canvas, shaped somewhat like a Highlander's kilt. White pott coat trousers appeared beneath this kilt, which were tucked into the boots. Each wore a broad belt, studded crossways from the shoulder, from which a huge hanger depended, and each carried a pair of heavy, clumsy pistols in a narrower belt which combed their waists.

"Presently the one who carried the spyglass placed it through a small round hole in the rock, which I had no doubt afforded a view of the sea, and he then peered through the tube long and intently. I could discern little of the features of either, for grizzled beards and whiskers, and shaggy, grizzled hair almost covered their faces. Presently the one on the lookout uttered an exclamation, or rather a grunt of satisfaction, and rising from his stooping posture, he closed the glass and whispered something to his comrade.

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"The hands of the male captive were bound behind his back, and he and the young woman were ordered to seat themselves on some bales at the far end of the cavern. The men now gathered in a circle around the man who had held the night telescope, who seemed to have command over the entire party.

"A barrel of liquor was rolled out, and the barrel taken from it, and each man produced a tin pannikin. As yet no words, save the brief command to the captives to seat themselves, had been uttered; but now the leader said in a tone of voice which, harsh and grating as it was, had a strange, unearthly sound: