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Poetry.

Dust and Ashes.

I.

Betwixt your home and mine,
O love, there is a graveyard lying;
And every time you came,
Your steps were o'er the dead, and from the dying!

Your face was dark and sad.—
Your eyes had shadows in their very laughter,
Yet their glance made me glad,
And shut my own to what was coming after.

Your face had deeper chords
Than the Æolian harp when night winds blow;
The melancholy music of your words
None but myself may know.

And oh, you won my heart
By vows unbreathed.—by words of love unspoken;
So that, as now we part,
You have no blame to bear, and yet—'tis broken!

II.

How shall I bear this blow, how best resent it?
Ah, love, you have not left me even my pride!
Nor strength to put aside, nor to repent it,
Twere better I had died!

You came beneath my tent with friendly greeting;
Of all my joys you had the better part;
Then, when our eyes and hands were oftenest meeting,
You struck me to the heart!

No less a murderer, that your victim, living,
Can face the passing world, and jest and smile!
No less a traitor, for your show of giving
Your friendship all the while!

Well, let it pass! The city churchyard, lying
Betwixt our homes, is but a type and sign
Of the waste in your heart, and of the eternal dying
Of all sweet hopes in mine!

[*Household Words.*

Selections.

From Household Words

Green-Beard and Slyboots.

In the popular tales of Lithuania, the most important personages are robbers, who sometimes perform the functions assigned by the inventors of our ordinary fairy tales to ogres, sometimes are characterized by cunning rather than ferocity. The mere fact that a person is a robber, does not affect his moral position in the least, he may conduct himself well or ill in the predatory profession as in any other. A virtuous robber will facetiously display his shrewdness, a wicked robber can snuff "fresh meat," and delights in bloodshed even when unaccompanied by profit.

On the authority of Herr August Schleicher, who has made a collection of Lithuanian tales, or rather judging from the tales themselves, we should say, that virtuous as Lithania may be at the present day, it was once inhabited by a people whose notions of property were of the loosest. Nor does the talent displayed by the clever and less sanguinary marauders greatly excite our admiration; inasmuch as it shines less by its own brightness than by contrast with the vast expanse of dullness by which it is surrounded. Ages ago a little cunning clearly went a great way in Lithuania.

That the Lithuanian Tom Thumb was as disreputable as he was minute, might easily be supposed; for the legendary hero of short dimensions has not been remarkable for moral punctiliousness in any quarter of the globe. Like his western counterparts, the Slavonic manikin sits in the ear of the ox that draws his father's plow, and by shouting aloud urges the animal to proceed.—Having attracted the notice of a wealthy stranger, who purchases him at an enormous price, he persuades his new master to put him into the cow house, that he may guard the cattle and prevent them from being stolen. At night, while he is seated in the ear of one of the oxen, three thieves arrive, and though they see nothing, they plainly hear a voice directing them to the beasts, and offering a partnership in future enterprise. The oxen are taken away by the thieves and slaughtered in the nearest field, and the Thumbling still unseen—though, odd to say, *the night is not so dark* as to impede the slaughter of the animals—proposes to carry the entrails to a neighboring stream, and to wash them out. When he is at some distance, he is heard crying piteously: "I'm not the only one; there are three men out there, roasting the meat by the fire."

The thieves thinking that their comrade has been caught, and is betraying them to his captor, betake to their heels, whereupon the acute dwarf hastens, not to his master, but to his father, who immediately proceeds to the field in a cart, and fetches home the oxen left by the thieves. "Thus," says the historian, with great complacency, "did he have his son again, together with the purchase money, and a load of butcher's meat in the bargain!"

Enough of this dissertion on the ethical views of ancient Lithuania. We will not classify the robbers of this favored land according to their goodness or facetiousness, scowling cut-throats or merry purloiners. And from each of the two classes will we take one specimen.

Let Il Penreroso precede L'Allegro, all the world over—even in Lithuania. We begin with the thrilling tale of "Green-Beard:"

A certain merchant, who lived indefinitely in a city, was considerably annoyed when his daughter—a very charming young person—swore, or rather vowed, that she would never marry a man who was not blessed with a green beard. In vain did he tell her the story of Bluebeard, in order to counteract her absurd predilection. She simply replied that "blue was not green," and he did not feel himself justified in contradicting the truth of the assertion.

However, not only the young lady's father, but likewise the captain of a band of robbers—four and twenty strong—who, as their friends said, enlivened—as their enemies said, infested, a neighboring forest—became acquainted with her views on the subject of beards. Possessed of this information—whether through the medium of the milkman or the baker, we cannot say—the captain at once called his band together, and asked the collected assemblage whether they happened to know any dye that would render beards green. A unanimous shout of "Yes!" followed the query; and was followed in its turn by a recipe universally commended for the manufacture of the desired cosmetics. Why the captain was less accomplished in practical chemistry than any of his four and twenty men, we do not pretend to inquire.

Having given his beard the required color, the gallant captain proceeds at once to the city, and as he was altogether a fine, well looking gentleman, he was much admired by the passengers in spite of his green beard. His conduct, when he reached the merchant's house was marked by the most rigid observance of the laws of etiquette. First he asked leave of the father to woo the daughter; whereupon the father, recollecting that he had a great strapping expensive girl on his hands, and could not find a suitor with a green beard every day, readily gave his consent; then he addressed the lady herself, who, finding her own ideas of human beauty actually realized before her eyes, could not do otherwise than accept the offer of his hand.

Glowing with all the delight of a fortunate suitor, the captain took his departure, having told the young lady which road she must pursue in order to reach his farmhouse on the other side of the forest. From this fact we conclude that weddings were by no means costly in ancient Lithuania, and that he who went to see a nuptial procession must have been grievously disappointed.—The gentleman proposed, and if found suitable, was accepted by the lady and friends. He then went home, and the lady went after him alone, at her own convenience. Here was a saving in bridesmaids and white favors.

The merchant's daughter, now a bride, packed up her trousseau—that is to say, caused a large cake to be baked—and thus handsomely provided, set off for the residence of her future lord. There was a bridge to be crossed, and then there was a road on the left hand to be taken, which would would lead to the abode of domestic bliss; at least so she had been told by the green-bearded Andonis, whose instructions, as far as the bridge was concerned, proved to be thoroughly correct. But, as for the road to the left, the only thing that could be called a road at all was a pathway, that led straight forward into the midst of a thick forest, and grew more and more narrow at every yard—nay, become so inconveniently narrow, that the bride was obliged to get off the horse on which she rode, and to proceed, with her cake under her arm, on foot.

Unpromising as it looked, the pathway at any rate, brought the lonely fair one to a cottage, which was not a whit more attractive in her eyes, from the fact that a lion was chained on each side of the door. However, as the beasts offered no opposition, she crossed the threshold with as much boldness as she could command, and entered a room fitted up like an armory, with a large stock of muskets. Expending but a short time in the contemplation of these interesting objects, she entered another room, from a rafter in which a cage containing a small bird was suspended.

No sooner did the bird behold the lovely stranger than it seemed bursting with information.

"Know most ill-fated of mortals," it twittered forth, "that you are in a robber's den, and what is worse, escape at the present moment is impossible, for the lions, though they did not object to your entrance, would tear you to pieces if you tried to get out."

"Then," said the poor girl, overpowered by the weight of this unpleasant intelligence, "what am I to do? How, oh feathered orator, am I to apply all the useful knowledge which you so liberally diffuse?"

"Knowledge," said the bird gravely, using a phrase since immortalized by Lord Bacon, "knowledge is power."

"That proposition may be generally correct," answered the young lady, with corresponding dignity, "but my case seems to be exceptional."

"Listen," said the bird, in a patronising tone. "Yonder bed must be your hiding place. When the robbers return they will get drunk——"

"Inebriated," suggested the young lady.

"And will then go to sleep," continued the bird, not noticing the interruption. "If you are wise, you will seize your opportunity, and issuing from the door, will throw a piece of your cake to each of the lions."

"And what am I to do then?" asked the intelligent maiden.

"Take to your heels as fast as you can of course," answered the bird, with something of contempt in its tone. "I think your own senses might have told you that."

Piqued by the slur thus indirectly cast upon her understanding, the young lady sharply asked: "Why may I not give the cake to the lions at once, and run away now, instead of waiting for the return of the abominable robbers?"

"Because," replied the bird drily, "you will be sure to meet them on the pathway. Your own experience must have already informed you whether that is exactly the sort of road on which an unprotected female would like to meet four-and-twenty robbers."

The convinced damsel crept, shuddering, under the bed indicated by the sagacious bird, and had not been long in her hiding place when the robbers returned, bringing with them a female captive. Their first act was to sit down and consume a very substantial supper; their next act——

[Here our Lithuanian tale grows so very horrible that we advise readers of delicate nerves to skip all that follows, and be satisfied with the brief statement, that the lady did effect her escape from the robber's den. For the sake of the strong-nerved students alone, we proceed circumstantially:]

Their next act was to mince the female captive into ridiculously small pieces, the first operation being a detachment of her little finger.

"Oh!" gasped the merchant's daughter, paralized with horror.

"What's that?" said the Captain.

"Nothing," said the bird, winking at his protegee; and the robbers continued their hideous work.

No less thick in head than savages in heart, these atrocious ruffians, instead of removing a valuable ring from the doomed little finger, allowed finger and ring to roll together under the bed, where they were instantly pocketed by the concealed lady.—The mincing process being completed, and some unpleasant observations having been made respecting a pie that was to be prepared on the following morning, the robbers lulled their consciences—if they had any—with such deep potations, that they were soon senseless.

"Now then!" cried the bird.

To start from under the bed, to rush from the door, to toss a lump of cake to each of the lions, was but the work of an instant on the part of the merchant's daughter who, scampering along the pathway as fast as she could, fortunately found her horse where she had left him, and galloped home looking as white as a sheet. Nor was her haste at all superfluous; for the cake did not last very long in the lions' mouths, and the roar that immediately followed its consumption brought all the robbers out into the wood. What they had lost they did not precisely know, but felt convinced they had lost something or somebody.

Some chance wind or other had, perhaps, conveyed to the mind of the robber captain the story of the Forty Thieves. At all events he shaved off the beard which he had taken such pains to dye; he loaded a great wagon with barrels, in each of which he stowed four of his men. (which proves that Lithuanians pack close) and, assuming the character of a traveling dealer, he set off for the merchant's residence, actually guessing that his bride had paid him a visit, and had made discoveries so far from pleasant, that unless he would forgo her society altogether, he must contrive some new device for her recovery.

The removal of the green beard proved sufficient to prevent his recognition by the merchant, and he was allowed to put his barrels in the yard, while he himself received an invitation to dinner. But the robbers in the barrels would not hold their tongues; a servant in the establishment, who overheard them, informed his master of their loquacity, and the merchant accordingly engaged four sturdy fellows to manage matters in the yard, and two still more sturdy to set at the table by the disguised Captain. The production of the amputated finger in the course of the meal, proved to the Captain that he was discovered, and this incident was soon followed by a triumph of the sturdy fellows over him and his men. They were all put to death of course; but the reader will be far more anxious to know what became of the animals, who are such important personage in the tale. The bird became the domestic pet of the young lady, and the lions were kept as curiosities by the merchant. The rest of the property in the robbers' house was sold for the benefit of the poor, the house itself was burnt to ashes; and—there is one thing more—the young lady entirely abandoned her predilection for green beards.

With pleasure we quit this grim, green-bearded villain, this plagiarist, conscious or unconscious, of the captain of the Forty Thieves—this uncouth ruffian, who had probably stored his mind with the Lithuanian fable of the Cat and the Sparrow, which is expressly directed against good manners, and which we may as well recount here.—A sparrow was once caught by a cat, who was about to devour him on the instant, but was checked by the bird's remark that no gentleman ever ate his breakfast without having previously washed his mouth, and who, setting his prisoner down, began to rub his lips with his paw. Thereupon the sparrow flew away, and the enraged cat vowed that he would never again be a gentleman for the rest of his days. All this by way of parenthesis. With pleasure we quit the grim greenbearded villain, to seek the society of the pleasant, kindly, murder-hating little thief, who is immortalized in Lithuanian folklore by the name of Sly Youth, and whose history shows what an inestimable figure may be made by a robber.

There was once a rich merchant, an inhabitant of the town, who had a wretchedly poor brother resident in the country.—Strange to say, the man of wealth, far from forgetting his miserable kinsman, had the horses put to his sledge one fine winter's day, and paid him a fraternal visit. Education was evidently more esteemed than bravery of apparel among the Lithuanian peasantry, for while on the one hand, the poor man's wife would not show herself on account of the scantiness of her wardrobe, his sons were likewise invisible because they were at school. However they soon came home, and highly delighted they were when their kind uncle gave them each a suit of new clothes that had been made in the town; and still more delighted, when he took them out for a ride in his sledge.

They were all smart intelligent youths, and took a world of interest in the different objects that presented themselves on the road. "There's a big ash-tree," shouted the first. "What a nice table it would make!—capital oaks for cart-wheels!" cried the second. "A splendid thicket that, for thieves to hide in!" bellowed the third.—"What," said the uncle, with a pleased smile,, "would you like to be a joiner my little man?—and you a wheelwright, my second little man?—and you a thief, my third little man?" "Very much!" "Amazingly!" and "wouldn't I rather?" were the three answers to the questions. Of all three answers the good uncle took note.

Now the merchant was not merely a man of words, but he really meant to do his duty to his humble relation. Bidding an adieu to his brother, he took the three boys with him to town, where he in the first place sent them to school, and when their education was complete, placed them in the professions of their choice. The young connoisseurs of ash and and oak were respectively bound 'prentices to a joiner and wheelwright; and as the merchant was on kindly terms with a robber, who lived with his band in a cave near the city, there was no difficulty in providing for the third nephew according to his wish. As a friendship founded on reason is of all friendships the most estimable, it is worth mentioning that the respect entertained by the robber for the merchant was based on the good offices of the latter towards the former. When other merchants left the town with their goods, the robber was apprised of the circumstances by his commercial friend, and took measures accordingly. Thus, while the Damon of the heath filled his vaults with plunder, the Pythias of the town got rid of dangerous competitors.

Though the youth found much to admire in the robber band of which he had become a member, there were certain peculiarities repugnant to his better nature. The robbers had the bad habit of murdering people after they had plundered them, and this practice struck him as not only barbarous but absurd. He therefore wished to work a a moral reform. "If you kill people for the sake of what they have," he urged, "you act as wise robbers ought to act, and no sensible man could object to the proceeding; but surely when a poor devil is stripped of everything, it is as well to let him go." The robbers shook their heads and answered according to their several temperaments, The more sentimental said they would never abandon the principles bequeathed by their fathers; the sagacious alluded to the practical inability of dead men to tell tales; the sarcastic talked about milksops. "Well," said the young man, "to prove that craft is better than violence. I will undertake to steal a goat three times over, and sell it twice."

"Humph!" said the robers in chorus.

The intelligent youth, who for brevity's sake we call Slyboots, proceeding to a town where a fair was held, took his station at the gate, and waited for the arrival of the countryfolk with their goats. Presently an old man appeared with a fine white animal, which he offered to sell for three dollars.—Slyboots agreed to the price, proposed to seal the bargain with a social glass at a neighboring public house, and while the old man was absorbed in the contemplation of his liquor, skipped out of the back door into a neighboring cornfield, where he ingeniously spotted the goat's hide with black. This operation effected, he boldly returned to the town, and the first person he met was the old man, who of course, failed to recogizne him. For Lithuanian cunning to have a fair play, it must have Lithuanian dullness to work upon.

"Is that goat for sale, worthy youth?"

"Of a truth it is, good father, and any one will give ten florins for the same."

"Marry, I will buy it; for lo, when I came to town this morning I had with me a white goat, of which a scurvy knave hath robbed me. I may say 'robbed' with a good grace; for though I gave him the poor beast with my own hands, he never paid me the price I demanded, but vanished like a thing of nought."

The bargain was again concluded over a glass, and again did Slyboots escape without paying, into the corn-field, where he painted the goat black all over. Returning once more to the town the first person he met was again the old man, who failing to recognize him, again purchased the goat for ten florins. Little docile as he had hitherto been to the instructions of experience, the old man on this occasion, refrained from crowning the bargain with a social glass, and walked straight home.

First he put the blackened goat into the stable, the door of which he neglected to lock; then he proceeded to the house and told his wife that he had preformed a series of intricate commercial operations, the ultimate result of which was the exchange of the white goat for a black one. The old lady listened with small admiration, and when on visiting the stable with her thick-headed spouse, she found no goat whatever, her rage knew no bounds. Nay she vociferously stated her conviction, that the money obtained by the sale of the white goat had been expended on tap-room luxuries, and that the commercial operations so circumstantially narrated were but the creations of a brandy-heated brain. The old gentleman answered the accusation by setting off immediately in search of the missing animal, and as he soon heard a bleating in his vicinity, he proceeded in the direction of the sound. A veritable ignis fatuus was that unfortunate bleat. It led the pursuer to a marsh; and it induced him to step into the marsh, and it caused him to cast off a considerable portion of his habiliments that he might go deeper into the marsh. But the goat was never found; the clothes disappeared from the spot in which they had been laid; and the old gentleman went home a sadder, and colder, and we trust a wiser man.

When the robbers heard from Slyboots the narration of these facts; when they heard him describe how, without change of attire, he had passed for three several persons in the eyes of one individual, and robbed that individual three times over; how he had followed the dupe to the stable, and observing the unlocked door, had abstracted the goat; how lastly, he had led the old gentleman into the marsh, by pinching the goat's tail as he carried it in his arms, and had thus become the possessor of a wardrobe in addition to the previous booty; the stern ruffians murmured applause, and stating their opinion that the time of apprenticeship should be regulated by degress of proficiency, not by length of service, declared that Slyboots had now fully served his time. He therefore bade them farewell and proceeded to his kind uncle, who rejoicing to find that he had fully realized the promise of his youth, at once placed in his hand a large sum of money, that he might start in business with capital as well as talent.

How is life regulated by accident! Scarcely had Slyboots left his uncle's home, than an event occurred which caused him to abandon the profession in which he had hoped to make so brilliant a figure. Stopping at a public house to take a glass of beer, his bag of gold attracted the eyes of the respectable widow by whom the business of the establishment was conducted. She at once explained to him that a male superintendent would give an improved turn to her affairs, and that if he would marry her daughter, and take the management of the public house into his own hands, he would confer a real obligation. Slyboots jumped at the offer, and abandoning all thoughts of the heath and the forest, espoused the blushing maiden, and employed his capital "in the public line."

His old friend's the robbers soon heard of his whereabouts, and two of them determined to pay him a visit. Like many other persons who are not robbers, they contrived to make their call at a time when they were sure not to find their friend at home, and entering the house with an easy air, coolly told the ladies that they were the brothers of mine host, respectively belonging to the gentle crafts of joiner and wheel-wright.—They were very sorry their brother was out, but really they could not stop, and so they departed, followed by the courtesies of the ladies, but not until they had observed a huge fatted hog hanging up in the carthouse. This they removed at the earliest opportunity, and when Slyboots, returning heard of these brothers and missing the hog, he at once bethought him of his comrades on the heath.

Immediate pursuit was resolved upon, and Slyboots plunging into the neighboring forest, soon overtook the robbers. One had set down to rest while the other, with the hog on his back, was groping his way through the darkness.

"Let me have a turn now comrade," said Slyboots to the foremost robber, "thou hast carried that load long enough."

"Thou wast ever a kind comrade," was the answer of the robber, who of course thought that he was addressing his companion, and without hesitation, he placed the hog on the shoulders of Slyboots, who at once set off in a homeward direction.

When the hindmost robber had overtaken the foremost one, a little conversation revealed the true state of affairs; and they both cried out with wrath not unqualified by admiration: "Slyboots is still Slyboots after all!" However no time was to be lost, so at once there and then, the two robbers disguised themselves as women, and putting their best feet foremost, were enabled to meet Slyboots at the entrance to his own premises. The source of the female attire thus rapidly put on, is not recorded in Lithuanian history; but the disguise must have been most efficient, as it caused even the shrewdest Slyboots to take one of the robbers for his mother-in-law, and the other for his wife.

"Well hast thou got the hog?" said the more strapping of the two.

"Marry have I, mother-in-law," responded Slyboots.

"Then give it us and we'll take it in doors, while thou lockest up everything outside," was the artful suggestion, which was answered by another transfer of the hog.

When Slyboots had locked up every gate and door he walked into the house, and not perceiving the hog, asked his wife where she had put it.

"The hog," said she, "did'st thou get it then!"

"Of course I did," said he.

"I," said she, "have never clapped eyes on it."

"Come, come, no nonsense," said he, "I gave it into thine own hands at the gate yard."

"Why, by my halidom, I have never crossed the threshold of the door."

The acute mind of Slyboots was not long in divining the truth; and as he had been rather caustic in his remarks, when the ladies had allowed the prize to be carried off by the robbers in the first instance, he set out in pursuit of the marauders with even more than his wonted rapidity in order to avoid infliction of the lex talionis.

When he reached the forest he found that the luxurious rascals had lighted a fire to broil a ham which they had cut already from the hog. As the fire had got low, they were searching for wood, each in a different direction, and his mode of operation was at once decided. Taking a stick in his hand he administered a hearty thrashing to the stump of a tree, shouting all the time in piteous tones, "I won't do it again!" Each robber hearing the sounds and the cries, concluded that his comrade was overpowered, on this hypothesis both ran away. But Slyboots took up the hog and went home.

Chance brought the robbers once more together.

"In good troth thy hue must be of the blackest and the bluest!" said the first, with a derisive kind of pity.

"Nay, rather look to thine own skin; for a short while ago thou didst howl an it were a whipped cur."

"Whipped cur thyself, when thou didst frighten all the birds in the wood with thine unmanly wailings."

This interchange of sharp remarks led to a mutual explanation and the result of the mutual explanatin was the united shout of both the robbers: "Slyboots after all!"

Resolved not to be outdone, they returned to the residence of their crafty acquaintance. To their agreeable surprise, though the outhouses were locked up, the window of the one room was open, and close to the sill, by the dim light of a rushlight might be seen the lifeless form of the hog, with the broiled ham laid upon it.

"Marry," quoth the first robber, "this is not like Slyboots, and to light a candle that one may find the way to it."

"Too much good fortune hath blunted his wits at last," said the second robber. And he laid his hand upon the ham. At that very instant Slyboots, whose wits were as keen as ever, and who was standing beside the window with a sword in his hand, struck off the most prominent finger at a blow.

"Phew!" said the second robber, "the ham is still hot."

"Out upon the dullard," growled the first robber. "How could the ham keep hot, after being carried all the way from the forest. It won't burn me, I'll watrant thee." So saying he thrust in his hand, when down came the sword, and off went a finger.

"By the mass, I am a finger the poorer," shouted the robber.

"Serve thee right, for a hard-hearted churl," said the second; "that is my case too, only thou would'st give me no pity."

"Humph," retorted the first, and they both looked at each other for some minutes, at the end of which they both exclaimed, with one voice, "Slyboots is still Slyboots after all!"

So they went their way, and were never heard of more.

Who was the Thief.

About ten years ago, I was a jolly sub in a regiment of Bengal native infantry. We were ordered to a remote station, and on arriving there, in the beginning of the hot weather, I found bungalows scarce and dear, and was only too glad to meet an old friend, who offered to sell me half his, which offer I gladly accepted. We were of course cut off from all the amusements and amenities of civilized life, and therefore my chum, whose name was Caldwell, and I, took to studying the black classics, Persian and Hindustani, relieving our literary labors with various intellectual amusements, such as slaying squirrels and lizards with the pellet-bow, educating our dogs and monkeys, destroying wasps' nests by squibs attached to the end of a bamboo, and hunting mungooses. Our zeal for study lasted all through the hot weather and rains, but with the cold weather, a change came over the spirit of our amusements. Our time was now divided between shooting and fishing excursions, rifle matches and pigeon-shooting, besides which we taught the sepoys cricket, and played officers and men of right wing against those of left wing. This afforded capital sport, and, unlike most other amusements, cost little—a small subscription from each defrayed the expenses of bats, balls, levelling the ground, &c. I was requested to receive and collect this, which I did on pay day, the only time when cash transactions take place.

Being late in the evening when I received it, I placed the amount, about sixty rupees, in my writing desk, which always remained open on my table; and as I believed my servants to be honest, and thought no one saw me put it there, I considered it safe enough for the present. On looking for it next moring, the cash was gone, and along with it a few trinkets and all the papers in the desk, some of which were of great consequence to me. It was quite evident that a servant or some one well acquainted with the house had taken it, as an ordinary thief would have taken desk and all without waiting to abstract its contents; besides which, he would doubtless have left other traces of his visit, as a pair of valuable pistols and a silver match-box lying on the same table would have excited his cupidity. My suspicions lit upon a cock-eyed bearer of Caldwell's, to whom I had a strong objection.—He certainly was a most sinister looking individual, and, if not a rogue, his countenance lay open to an action for defamation of character.

Caldwell, on the other hand, felt quite sure that my *dhobie* was the thief, as all the servants declared he was the only person who had entered the room that evening, when he brought in the clean clothes. I don't like speaking in an unknown tongue, but that word *dhobie* is an indubitable and unmitigated staggerer; it means a "male washerwoman," and I know of no word in the English language which expresses that. We were both so positive that, for the first time in our life, we had an angry discussion about it. At length we decided on calling our servants together—about twenty in all—and telling them we were certain the thief was one of themselves, and that we would accordingly deduct the entire amount stolen proportionably from their wages.—They were at once assembled in the verandah, and I made them a short speech, announcing our determination. This was touching them on the tenderest point, and all were in the midst of loud protestations of their innocence, when in walked Ajudiah. He was a small spare man, but being a high-caste Brahmin, and having held the office of regimental pundit for a quarter of a century, he was greatly respected by the men. He had the reputation of being very learned, and had scraped together a large sum of money, as, in addition to his regimental salary, he levied large contributions from the sepoys in his priestly capacity, and gave instructions in Hindoo and Sanscrit. Caldwell and I had been pupils of his, and he now came ostensibly to make salam, but really to remind us that we owed him a small balance. Only learning the state of affairs, he said: "Defender of the poor! protector of the oppressed! it is easy to pronounce judgment, but between judgment and justice a wide difference exists. It cannot be concealed from the light of your penetrating mind, that if you act as you propose, all your servants will suffer equally with the guilty one: I have no doubt, if such be your pleasure, that, with the aid of my own skill and your good fortune, I can discover the individual who has been faithless to his salt." I have always had a most profound contempt for the Brahmins and their transparent humbug; but thinking that fear of detection might induce the culprit to confess, I gravely assented, and said I should feel much obliged by his coming next morning soon after sunrise, to make his investigation.

I had not the slightest expectations that it would be successful, but I thought it might be some amusement, and at mess that evening I mentioned it to my brother officers, and invited them to come and see the fun.

We were hardly seated at coffee the next morning when Ajudiah made his appearance, and asked permission to commence his experiments. This being graciously accorded, he began by seating all the servants on a raised platform of masonry, in front of the bungalow. He then seated himself in the middle, with a brass dish containing undressed rice at one side, and a pair of small scales and weights at the other. After murmuring a few prayers and stretching out his hands several times over the rice with the palms open and the knckles uppermost, like a person warming his hands at a fire, he commenced operations by doling out to each servant a rupee's weight of the dry rice. As each man's portion was weighed out, it was placed on a piece of plantain leaf, about six inches square, and deposited in his lap by a young Brahmin, who was Ajudiah's disciple. When all had received their quantum, he stood up, and stretching out his hands to the four quarters of heaven, as if invoking the judgement of the Deity, desired them to commence, whereupon all hands took their portion of rice in their mouths, and began chewing away vigorously. While this was going on, the Brahman took up his rosary, made of the beautiful brown berries of the *Melia Azedorachta*, and appeared, quite absorbed in prayer and meditation, though I have no doubt the cunning old rogue kept a sharp look out all the time.