THE COLUMBIA SPY.

SAMUEL WRIGHT, Editor and Proprietor. "NO ENTERTAINMENT SO CHEAP AS READING, NOR ANY PLEASURE SO LASTING." $1,50 PER YEAR IN ADVANCE; $2,00 IF NOT IN ADVA

VOLUME XXXIV, NUMBER 7.] COLUMBIA, PENNSYLVANIA, SATURDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1862. [WHOLE NUMBER 1,673.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY MORNING.

Office in Carpet Hall, North-west corner of Front and Locust streets.

Terms of Subscription.

One Copy per annum, if paid in advance, $1 50
" " " if not paid within three months from commencement of the year, 2 00

4 Cents a copy.

No subscription received for a less time than six months; and no paper will be discontinued until all arrearage are paid, unless at the option of the publisher.

☞ Money may be remitted by mail at the publisher's risk.

Rates of Advertising.

quare [6 lines] one week,		$0 38
"	three weeks,	75
	each subsequent insertion,	10
[12 lines] one week,		50
	three weeks,	1 00
	each subsequent insertion,	25

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Selections.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind.

One serene, starlight evening in June a soul on which earth had borne the name of Albert de Courcelles was slowly ascending from the earth, where it had lingered long and lovingly, up into the heights above where the stars were shining in the blue heavens. Those who on earth were gazing upwards, as they beheld the luminous track of the spirtual essence of what had been a human being, thought that they gazed on distant meteors, or on some brilliant shooting star.

Still the soul ascended, and, losing sight of the earth, attained that luminous and glorious region which none but disembodied spirits have ever entered. Here, at the very gate of Paradise, the fluttering soul grew still, and, even within sight of Heaven, looked with longing, lingering affection and regret down on those it had loved and left on earth. And this is what it beheld: In the old family mansion of the Rue de Londres were assembled all that had been dear to the soul in the body. His sister, in the deepest mourning garments, knelt with streaming eyes and uplifted hands before his portrait. His aunt, who had been a second mother to him, sat in her accostomed place, all in black, murmuring, as she wept, prayers for the repose of his soul.—His brother, who had grown pale and thin, was listening abstractedly to the old family lawyer; while pale, with her eyes closed, from which the tears still streamed, leaned by one of the windows the soul's beloved, his affianced wife, exhausted, overpowered by grief, and in widow's weeds. By her side, holding one of her hands, was Gustave de Meric, the soul's most intimate friend.—He, too, was in mourning, traces of grief were visible on his features. In the enteroom, Germain, his old faithful valet, sat, the servants grouped around him, telling stories of his master's kindness and goodness, and wiping away his tears at every pause. At the same time, at the Palais de Justice, the Procureur General was making a most brilliant and touching speech to the successor of the soul—for during his lifetime the soul had occupied the distinguished position of Judge d'instruction.

And the soul paused at the very gates of Paradise and gazed wistfully once more into the old familliar home. His picture was now vailed with crape; wreaths of white immortals were hung, by all who loved him, round it, and all seemed to grow calmer.—Still the few few words that were spoken were of him.

"My brother!" said Charles—"more than brother; so generous, so talented."

"Dearest Albert," said the soul's sister, Augustine, "I must mourn eternally, for me you died."

"I am his widow evermore, though fate denied me the hapiness of being his wife," said Isabelle.

Your grief will kill you, Isabelle," said Gustave, the soul's friend. "Think of those for whom you have still to live."

"Alas!" said the aunt, "to think that he should die before me, so young, so good, so handsome."

"My poor, dear master!" said Germain; "poor Monsieur Albert! I shall never get over this."

And, as he spoke, Albert's favorite grey hound, looking up at him earnestly, gave a long, melancholy howl.

"How they grieve for me!" murmured the soul to itself; and, poised in ether, it continued to gaze down on earth.

Albert de Courcelles was, or had been, the eldest soon of a magistrate who had attained the highest distinction in his office. He had in early life, made a very rich marriage, of which Albert was the fruit, inheriting from his mother, who died in giving him birth, all her immense property. His father, in due course of time, married again. and Charles and Augustine were the children of the second marriage—by no means as rich as the first. At his death, feeling that his elder son was rich, old M. de Courcelles had left a codicil to his will, especially recommending his younger children to Albert.—The laws of France forbade his making an unequal division of his property. Still he felt that the small fortune he left would have been far better divided into two parts than into three, as the laws commanded.

Albert, however, who was at age when this death occured, fully understood his father's codicil, and, renouncing legally and formally, his paternal inheritance, bestowed his share on Charles and Augustine.

Following his father's career, he soon received the appointment of Judge d'instruction, and his abilities and exemplary conduct insured him a brilliant future either on the bench or in political life.

Possessed of a private income of over one hundred thousand frances, Albert chose to consider himself the head of the family, and placing his aunt at the head of the establishment, gave his brother and sister a luxurious and splendid home, while the sum left them by their father was allowed to accumulate till their majority.

Of a sentimental turn of mind, Albert had resolved to make none but a love match; almost further than he could remember, his love for Isabelle, the friend and companion of his sister, had sprung up in his heart.

Albert was too good a match for there to be any obstacles to this love. Isabelle's relations gladly gave their consent, and the blushing Isabelle, when all was arranged, laid her head upon Albert's shoulder and confessed her love to him.

All, therefore, was as he had wished; not one of his projects in life had ever failed. Albert was indeed a happy man. The wedding day was fixed, the apartments of the newly married pair all new furnished in the old mansion of the Rue de Londres, the settlements were all drawn up, the trousseau was complete, the family jewels were all reset, when behold comes a letter from an old French lawyer in Rio Janeiro, that for the first time interferes with a plan Albert had laid out.

This letter was no less than the copy of a will of a sister of M. de Courcelles' second wife, settled in Brazil, in which will she had left the whole of her property to her niece, Augustine, Albert's sister. The shrewd French lawyer concluded by saying that the affairs were in such confusion and the debtors so numerous and so dishonest, that unless a clever agent was sent with full powers from the legatee, the inheritance, from one million and a half of francs, its nominal value, might dwindle into nothing.

Augustine, ambitious and vain, with all a woman's ignorance, saw none of the difficulties and fancied herself all at once an heiress, but her aunt, who had the experience of a long life before her, calmed her enthusiasm.

"My dear Augustine," said she, "do not reckon on one single franc of this inheritance; the laws of Brazil are not like ours, nor are the courts incorruptible. You see the lawyer in Rio says it requires a clever and devoted agent to settle the estate—Where do you think such a one is to be found?"

"Why, my dear aunt," said Albert, "don't you think I am a clever and devoted agent?"

"You, Albert!" exclaimed Augustine.

"Do you think I, who have assumed the responsibility of the head of the family, would allow Augustine to lose this inheritance when a sacrifice on my part could save it?"

"But Isabelle"———

"Isabelle is too noble hearted not to understand me. We shall be all the happier for this sacrifice. We are both young and have a long life before us. I shall go by the next steamer to Rio Janeiro."

So by the very next steamer, the Saffo, Albert, followed by the blessings and vows of his whole family, and the assurances of eternal love and devotion, took his departure from Havre. After a prosperous voyage he reached Rio just in time to find that a more recent will had been discovered, and that, consequently, the one making Augustine an heiress was null and void. As there was nothing more to be done, Albert immediately re-embarked on board the Saffo, and thinking of Isabelle and all he loved, proceeded on his voyage homeward. But a rock was destined to be fatal to Saffo the ship, as in ancient classic days it had been to Saffo the woman; the ship, broken to pieces, was lost at sea, and all the passengers and crew, including Albert de Courcelles, lost.

It is useless to relate the consternation and grief caused by this news. When the soul looked down on earth and saw the grief of all who had loved him, he had been dead a whole year, and all had just returned from the celebration at the Madelaine of a grand mass, at which all the opera singers had sung, for the repose of his soul.

Probably owing to this, and also to a very pure record, the soul had been freed after a year's probation, not given to mortal eye to penetrate, and was now ascending to eternal bliss, when regrets for the earth and its affections had arrested him.

As he contined to gaze into the drawing-room of the Rue de Londres, he saw the lawyer take out a paper which he knew to be his will, made just before going to Rio.

"Now," said the lawyer, "the year has expired. I read this will to you on the receipt of the news of the death of M. de Courcelles; but you had still hope, and from a feeling of a delicacy I fully appreciate, refused that the will should go into effect—but now."

"Now," said Gustave, "it would be disrespectful to the deceased not to conform to his last wishes."

"Then," said the lawyer——

"In mercy," exclaimed Augustine, "do not read the will again; it breaks my heart to hear it; we all know it."

"Well, then, you know that Mlle Augustine is put in possession of three hundred thousand francs. M. Gustave has a small estate in Brien given to him. Your aunt ten thousand francs as a memorial of esteem. Mlle Isabelle the house and grounds at Montmorency.

"Where we were to have passed the first days of our union," exclaimed Isabelle, bursting into tears, and taking the smelling bottle Gustave held towards her.

"The servants have all legacies, and Germain an annuity of two thousand francs a year. All these being paid, M. Charles is residuary legatee, and becomes possessed of an immense fortune."

"I would give all, and beg my bread, to have my dear brother back," said Charles.

"And I," said Augustine.

"And I," said the aunt.

"And I," said Isabelle, would be content to die if I could but behold him once more, if but for a moment."

As for Germain, he shook his head at the mention of his annuity, and protested that he should not enjoy it long, for grief would kill him.

As he beheld all this, the soul which had shaken off love love which indeed is of heaven, longed to console so much grief, to reward so much affection.

St. Peter, who held the keys, understood at once the state of the soul he was prepared to admit.

"Still clinging to the earth," said St. Pete; "verily thou didst die too young."

"Behold how they weep," said the soul.

"Wilt thou return to earth?"

"But for a year, even a day."

"Return to earth," said St. Peter, "thy life was one of good example; go not for a year; for another life, until thou shalt say—'would that I were dead.' Then shalt thou die, and I will await thee here. Go." St. Peter extended his hand, and by a rapid descent the soul returned to earth. As it touched the stones of Paris, it instantly resumed its corporeal form, and the next minute M. Albert Courcelles, in his likeness as he lived, handsome, in good health, and just twenty-nine, knocked at the gate of the family mansion of the Rue de Londres.

The gate opened, and before the porter could speak, the grayhound, dashing along the court-yard, with joyous whines and barks, leaped upon his master.

On rushed Albert; who can describe the meeting. Augustine laughed and cried. Charles seized his brother's hand and pressed it to his lips. Gustave gazed with love and wonder at his friend. Augustine went off into hysterics. Isabelle fainted in Albert's arms. The aunt sent forth a prayer of thanksgiving; while the grayhound kept up a joyous gambol over everything and everybody, and the lawyer put the will back into his pocket.

As for Germain, he stood in the doorway, humbly thanking heaven, and imploring its blessings on his master.

As for Albert, he bent over Isabelle with ecstasy that he believed Heaven itself could not have given him. In mourning, too, widow's weeds; how she had regretted him.

This violent state of excitement could not of course last. Life resumed its usual routine, yet it was astonishing, though absent but one year, how difficult Albert found it to make a place for himself in the world, that had gone on thinking him dead and gone forever.

In the first place, the Procureur Imperial was excessively puzzled; he had given Albert's position to another. What was he to do? Albert on going to Rio had asked for leave of absence; the nomination of his successor dated from before that leave had expired. What was to be done? After mature reflection the count restored Albert to his position as judge, giving an appointment in one of the provinces to his successor. This successor loved Paris, and having a liason in which his heart was deeply engaged, the appointment was an exile to him. He wished Albert, not in paradise where he had been near going, but in another place which Albert had luckily escaped.

Although Albert had been dead but one year, the world, and even his family, had kept moving. Although Augustine had refused to receive her brother's legacy, it was very well known that he had left her a rich dowry. A marriage had been arranged, and the termination of the year of mourning had been fixed as the period at which the wedding was to take place.

One day Augustine sought her brother.

"Albert," said she, "I have decided to enter the Covent des Oiseaux; my poor, little fortune will suffice me there; here, in my position, it only makes me a brilliant beggar."

"My darling sister, what does this mean?"

"It means," said the aunt, "that Augustine was betrothed when you returned, and that"——

"That what? Why hesitate?"

"That circumstances being altered, the family have broken off the match."

"Circumstances! what circumstances?"

"Augustine was rich by your will"——

"And shall be," said Albert, comprehending all, "I will give her what the family thought she possessed."

"Oh! Albert," said Augustine, falling in his arms.

"Albert," said Charles one day to his brother, "I am come to bid you farewell."

"Farewell!" where are you going?"

"To Algiers, as a settler."

"I thought you were to enter into partnership with M. Tonfrede, and be at the head of his iron works."

"So I was, and to have married his daughter, but circumstances are altered."

"Indeed! what circumstances?"

"Why, dear Albert, thinking you were dead, (Heaven be thanked you are not,) I promised to put in a capital of three hundred thousand francs."

"Wherefore, I will pay the three hundred thousand francs."

"Oh, Albert!" said Charles, and Albert returned the pressure of his hand, but could not help thinking that his return had caused very great confusion.

Scarcely was Charles gone before Germain entered, bringing with him a bag of five franc pieces.

"Here, Monsieur Albert, is the annuity; they paid me the first year; I suppose I must not keep it now."

"Keep it, Germain; these two thousand francs will atone for my being alive."

"Oh, Monsieur Albert how can you say that? Still, you know it is a blow to an old man like me, who thought he could live in rest and idleness, to find that he has nothing to look forward to."

Albert sighed, but his aunt came in at that minute.

"When are you going to be married, Albert?" said she.

"O, immediately; as soon as Isabelle fixes the day; she seems quite overcome by the surprise and joy of my return."

"It did surprise us, I must say. Wasn't it lucky, Albert, I hadn't received my legacy? I intended to build with it a small chapel in the park of my country place; I could not have returned it."

"Nay, aunt, I don't want it; keep it, and have prayers said for me."

"Oh! Albert," said the aunt.

"Now," said Albert, "tell me why does not Gustave come here any more?"

"I cannot say; in the time of our grief he never left us."

A few days after this they were at Montmorency. Isabelle, no longer in mourning robes, but still pale and drooping, sat alone with Albert beneath the shady trees.

"Isabelle," said Abert, "before asking you to be my wife, I must tell you that I am not so rich as I was———"

"I know, I know all—your generosity; I am glad you are no longer rich."

"Dearest Isabelle."

"For then none can suspect my motives for marrying you."

"Ah! Isabelle, your love makes me so happy."

"Oh! Albert," exclaimed Isabelle, "I will not, I cannot deceive you. I did love you, Albert; the news of your death nearly killed me; but I thought you dead, and oh! forgive me, Albert, my future life shall atone for all; my duty, my esteem, my devotion shall be yours—"

"But your love———"

"Is another's; but I will sacrifice it to you; I will keep my first vows, though it should cost me my life."

Albert rose and turned away from her.—This was a bitter, heavy sorrow. Albert felt the vanity of the world and worldly affections, and he wandered forth far on into the silent woods. It was moolight when he returned. As he neared the bower where he had left Isabelle, he heard her voice; he stopped and listened, for another voice, a voice he recognized, replied to hers; it was Gustave's.

"And so you abandon me, Isabelle; you give yourself to another when your heart is mine. Think of the pangs it would be to me to know you are in his arms; but oh! Isabelle, think, loving me, what as his wife will you endure?"

"It will kill me," said Isabella; "oh! why did he return?"

Here Isabelle fell into Gustave's arms and wept. Albert, leaning against a tree, looked up into the clear, stary heavens.

"Would that I were dead," said he, and as he spoke he fell dead across the path both Isabelle and his friend must tread to gain the house.

They found him lying dead in the moonlight. Isabelle sunk by his side murmuring words of love and repentance.

He was borne to his home. The doctors declared he had died of disease of the heart. He was laid in his coffin, and the priests watched beside it. As for the family, they returned to Paris, and looked out their mourning. He was buried privately, for the heirs and family thought all grand ceremonies would seem ridiculous after all that had been done for him before. So no one watched by his grave but the poor greyhound, that refused all comfort and died on the grave, while Isabelle and Gustave arranged all for their wedding. Albert could not expect to be twice mourned in his life.

Meantime the soul winged its way rapidly to Heaven. St. Peter recognized it.

"So soon," said St. Peter.

"Ah!" said the soul," out of sight, out of mind."

And St. Peter, opening the gates of Paradise, let the soul into eternal bliss, and into oblivion of the earth, its false joys, and its hollow affections.

Spontaneous Combustion.

Instances of deaths said to have been caused by spontaneous combustion are so numerous that the most skeptical are sometimes tempted to believe in the possibility of the phenomena. The earliest case recorded, is that of a woman of Copenhagen, in 1692, who, for three years, had used spirituous liquors to excess. Having sat down one evening in a straw chair to sleep, she was consumed in the night time, so that next morning no part of her was found but the skull and the extreme joints of her fingers; all the rest of her body being reduced to ashes.

The transactions of the Royal Society of London, likewise furnish an instance of human combustion, equally extraordinary, in the case of Grace Pitt, an intemperate person, who was found on the night of the 9th of April, 1754, partially consumed; the limbs and a portion of the body being, in a measure, incinerated, "resembling heaps of coal covered with white ashes." The woman's daughter on beholding this spectacle, ran in great haste, and poured over her mother's body some water, in order to extinguish the fire; while the fetid odor and smoke which exhaled from the body almost suffocated some of the neighbors who had hastened to her assistance.

There had been no fire in the grate, and near the consumed body a paper screen and the clothes of a child were found uninjured.

Eighty years ago, Merille, a surgeon at Caen published the following account:

"Being requested by the king's officers to draw up a report of the state in which I found Mademoiselle Thuars, who is said to have been burned, I made the following observations: The body lay with the crown of the head resting against one of the andirons, at the distance of eighteen inches from the fire; the remainder of the body was placed obliquely before the chimney, nearly all being nothing but a mass of ashes. Even the most solid bones had lost their form and consistence. The right foot was found entire, and scorched at its upper junction: the left was more burned. The day was cold, but there was nothing in the grate, excepting two or three bits of wood about an inch in diameter, burnt in the middle. None of the furniture in the apartment was damaged. The chair in which Mademoiselle Thuars had been sitting was found at the distance of a foot from her, and absolutely untouched. I must here observe that this lady was exceedingly corpulent, that she was above sixty years of age, and much addicted to spirituous liquors; that on the day of her death she had drunk three bottles of wine, and a bottle of brandy; and that the consumption of the body took place in less than seven hours, though, according to appearance, nothing round the body was burned but the clothes."

A few years before the death of Mademoiselle Thuars, a woman named Mary Jauffret, wife of a shoemaker at Aix, in Provence, was reported to have died from spontaneous combustion, and a full account of the case, written by the surgeon Murian, was put in the "Journal de Medicine."

Le Cat, in his pamphlet on Spontaneous Combustion, mentions several remarkable instances, among the most remarkable of which is the following:

"M. Boineau, cure of Pierquier, near Dol, wrote to me the following letter, dated February 22, 1749:—Allow me to communicate to you a fact which took place a fortnight ago. Madame de Boiseon, eighty years of age, exceedingly meagre, who had drunk nothing but spirits for several years, was sitting in her elbow chair before the fire, while her waiting maid went out of the room for a few moments. On her return seeing her mistress on fire, she immediately gave an alarm, and some people having come to her assistance, one of them endeavored to extinguish the blaze with his hands, but in vain, the flames having the appearance of brandy or oil on fire. Water was brought and thrown on the lady in abundance yet the fire appeared more violent, and was not extinguished until she was consumed. Her skeleton, exceedingly black, remained entire in the chair, which was only a little scorched; one leg only and the two hands detached themselves from the rest of the bones. The lady was in the same place in which she sat every day, and there was no extraordinary fire in the grate. What makes me suppose that the use of spirits might have produced this effect is, that I have been assured that, at the gate of Dinan, an accident of the like kind happened to another woman under similar circumstances."

The Countess Cornelia Bandi, a native of Cesena, Italy, had reached the age of 62 without any kind of infirmity. One night her attendants observed that, contrary to her usual habits, she appeared rather heavy and sleepy immediately after supper; but she nevertheless sat up three hours talking with her maid, and then said her prayers, and went to bed. The next morning her maid, alarmed at not being summoned by the Countess, long after the ordinary hour, entered her chamber and called to her. Hearing no answer, and fearing something had happened, she opened the shutters, and was horror-stricken at seeing the body of her mistress in the state we are about to describe:—Not more than a yard from the bed was a heap of ashes in which lay two legs—entire from the foot to the knee—and two arms. The head was between the logs t All the rest of the body had been converted into ashes, which when touched left. a greasy and fetid humidity on the fingers. On the floor was a small lamp without oil, and on the table stood two candlesticks, the candles of which had lost all their tallow, but the wicks remained unburnt. The bed was uninjured, the clothes lying as they usually do when a person has risen; all the hangings of the bed were covered with a grayish soot, which had even penetrated into some drawers and soiled the linen they contained. This soot had also found its way into an adjoining kitchen, and covered the walls, furniture and utensils. The bread in the safe was also covered with it, and when offered to several dogs they would not touch it. In the chamber over the Countess' room the lower part of the windows were soiled with a fatty, yellow fluid. The whole atmosphere around was impregnated with an indescribable and sickening smell, and the floor of the chamber was coated with a thick, clammy, and extremely adhesive moisture. The Countess had apparently been consumed by an internal fire. Dr. Bianchi, a physician of the town, who has published a pamphlet on the case, thinks that the fire began in the lungs, and was developed during sleep; that the Countess being awakened by the dreadful pain, had no doubt risen to get air, perhaps intending to open the window, but had only been able to leave her bed when she sank under the fire that was devouring her.

This last mentioned case occured many years ago, and the record lies before me in an old magazine, though it has lately been going the rounds of the press as a recent event. The countess Bandi was not known to have been intemperate, but she had been accustomed to bathe her body freely with camphorated spirit of wine.

It is a noticeable fact that all the cases of spontaneous human combustion on record, are of persons either of intemperate habits or accustomed to use alcoholic washes freely, and nearly all of these women. For the truth of the above accounts, I respectfully refer to the original chronicles, as I am not by any means prepared to vouch for them myself. It is true that Dickens, in one of his novels, chooses this very convenient mode of ridding himself and his readers of a troublesome character, but whether the incident be founded on *fact* or not I cannot say. It is a wonder that his example has not been followed by some of our modern novel writers of whose glowingly depicted heroes and heroines it would be a very appropriate mode of disposal. To tell truth, it would be no very great public calamity if the phenomenon were to break out as an epidemic among the novels themselves.

The Metamorphoses of Matter.

Lady, a word with you. You are as great as great can be, and I, what am I? Nobody. Nobody! I smile; the Scytheman smiles. Nobody! Yes, I am a body, or I have a body, put the case as you will. Lady, calmly let us see what will become of your body, and what will become of my body.

When you die, some fashionable undertaker will solder your 150 pounds of bone and blood and flesh into a leaden coffin, and pack the leaden coffin away into another coffin, decking the second out with velvet and gewgaws as befits your superior station. Then to the vault you shall be borne, earth must not hold you. The cloistered charnel is your resting place, there to defy all elemental change:—braving dissolution.

Alas, my lady, if you could but see, as I by the light of chemistry can see, that festering wreck of poisonous corruption seething within that leaden box of yours in twelve short months or less! Your flesh, instead of dissolving harmlessly into thin air, or crumbling little by little to mother earth, thence passing into trees and flowers, a part of their very being, the elements of your body will have fretted to poisonous compounds, the veriest breath of which bursting free, as some day it must, will speed about pestilence-breeding. There's no avoiding the common lot, my lady, none. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust: thus it is written and thus it shall be! Material elements know their destiny, and must follow it. To move on, combining and recombining, idle never, that in their destiny: and—typical enough of what we see in life—if their energies be restrained, if honest fields of energy be barred, they take to mischief.

Your 150 pounds (more or less) of bodily material are only lent, my lady, hold on the frailest of tenures. They are not freehold, or even leasehold. The holding is not yearly, monthly, weekly—not even daily. Asleep or awake, Dame Nature puts her physical forces into possession, and takes your very substance in kind every moment of your existence, and when the God of nature despatches death to garner in the fruits of dissolution, think you to escape the common lot? Oh, no, my lady. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust: thus it is written and thus it must be.

Fair one, this much of you, and now of me. When I die, a plain elm coffin awaits me, and that for decency's sake. Nobody will deem it worth the while to solder me up in lead or pewter. Living humanity will have had enough of me: my elements will be free to pass on. And the spirit—if spirit it be that thinks within me now—would never trouble any one who helped the dissolution, liberating the elements by some process more rapid than decay. It matters not, save for the sentiment of it—but sentiment may be the spirit-life within, for aught we know—it matters not, but I fancy mine would be an unhappy ghost, could it but look down—or up, as the case might be—and contemplate the noxious forms that matter can assume whilst striving to be useful according to its destiny. This even when no repressive agency is at work, the grave willing, ay ready, to resign its burden, nature caressingly luring the pure elements struggling from corruption to join in her life-long revelry of change and travel, dance and rout,—a life-long masquerade. The nitrogen of my substance,—nature wants it: she will make ammonia of it, and, as smelling salts, would not a ghost, looking on, be gratified to see the pungent salt, in crystaled bottled, nestled in the soft recess of a lady's bosom, or warming her delicate nose? Ay, and think of my carbon too: what destinies await it! Diffusing sweet odours, perhaps, from the petals of a rose. Tended gently by fair hands, helping to make up a floral love-token: why not? In some form of life and action my carbon must be passing on. Many years must roll by, and many an accident of flood and field must happen, ere that element would be likely to find a resting-place awhile in pit-coal, limestone, marble, charcoal, or the diamond: as one who, tired of dancing or the chase, has gone to sleep awhile, waiting for the dawn. And yet perchance it might happen sooner than assumed. The charcoal-burner might lop off some wooden stem in which the carbon of my dissolution was busy at life work. Charcoal, next to its fair allotropic sister the diamond, is perhaps the most indestructible thing in creation, nature's slow agencies alone regarded. Century after century water can flow over it, without effecting one touch of dissolution. Whether free in the air or buried in the earth, charcoal never decays. Touched by fire, charcoal wakes out of its resting sleep, indeed assumes an invisible form, and fleets about ready for other duties. More lasting is the diamond, though far from meriting the designation, *adamas* which formerly it won. Heat them enough, and diamonds burn, vanishing into thin air. Can my disembodied spirit ever hope to see the carbon elements of that bodily frame which yielded her up in death, glittering, consolidated, transformed in the most beautiful of all gems?—*Temple Bar.*

CONSANGUINEOUS MARRIAGES.—The danger of consanguineous marriages, and their influence in multiplying deaf and dumb cases among children is the subject of a paper presented to the Academy of Science at Paris by Mr. Boudin. It supplies matter for grave consideration. Taking the whole number of marriages in France, the consanguineous represent 2 per cent., while the proportion of deaf and dumb births is, at Lyons, at least 25 per cent; at Paris 28 per cent; at Bordeaux, 30 per cent. The nearer the consanguinity of parents, the more does this proportion increase; and if we represent by 1 the danger of begetting a deaf and dumb child from an ordinary marriage, it would have to be represented by 18 in marriages between cousins-german; by 37 in marriages between uncles and nieces; and by 70 in marriages between nephews and aunts. It will surprise some readers to hear the subject is one in which the religious element is involved: Protestantism is more favorable to consanguineous marriages than Roman Catholicism is; and it appears by a return from Berlin, that the proportion of deaf and dumb children in 10,000 Catholics in that city was 31; in 10,000 of other Christian sects, mostly Protestant, it was 6; and among Jews, 27 in 10,000. A similar result comes out in other circumstances. By a census taken in the territory of Iowa in 1840, there were found 23 deaf and dumb in 10,000 whites; 212 deaf and dumb in 10,000 blacks (slaves), or 91 times more than among the whites. In this case, the habits of the blacks were favorable to the increased result. It is found that where intermarriages is in some sort a necessity, from geographical position, there is an immense increase in the proportion of deaf and dumb births. For the whole of France, the proportion is 6 in 10,000; in Corsica, it rises to 14 in 10,000, in the High Alps, to 23; in the Canton of Berne, to 28. In Iceland it is 11. The whole number of the deaf and dumb in Europe is estimated at 250,000; and when we consider that infirmities of a very serious character, including idiocy, are distinctly traceable to consanguineous marriages, we are led to inquire, what are the means by which relatives may be persuaded not to marry one another? Is it not a question which Social Science Associations, might take up and discuss with advantage?

STORKS.—The Moors hold storks in extreme veneration, because, according to one of their legends, a troop of Arabs, who used to plunder the pilgrims to Mecca, were metamorphosed into these birds at the prayer of Mohammed.

In Africa, there is a gigantic species of stork, called the marabou, which is of a domestic turn, and easily tamed. Smeathman gives an account of one of these birds, who used to walk into the house at dinner time and take his meal with the family; but he was rather apt to help himself in defiance of the ordinary rules of politeness, and one day he stuck his bill into a whole boiled fowl; and bolted it before it could be rescued from his devouring beak. On another occasion, he behaved still worse, for in a fit of voracity, he was so barbarous as to swallow the cat, treating that feline pet even worse than Care is proverbially said to do.

Storks are of immense service to mankind, especially in warm countries, from the quantity of reptiles and vermin of all kinds which the destroy; field mice snakes, lizards, worms frogs, and even toads—nothing seems to come amiss to them. The Thessalians were so highly impressed with their utility, that according to Pliny, they made it a capital offence to kill a stork. Some tribes in Africa do not seem to have so much veneration for the stork; at least, there is shewn at Basle a stuffed stork with an African arrow right through his body. This little inconvenience had by no means prevented the bird from migrating as usual, only that he flew awkwardly (we can well believe it), and appeared to be balancing himself on a pole, like an aerial Blondin. A Swiss *savant* shot him out of curiosity, wishing to ascertain what the stork was carrying under his wings.