

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY H. WEBB.

Volume VI.

BLOOMSBURG, COLUMBIA COUNTY, PA. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1842.

Number 19.

OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRAT
OPPOSITE ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, MAIN-ST

TERMS:
The COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT will be published every Saturday morning, at TWO DOLLARS per annum, payable half yearly in advance, or Two Dollars Fifty Cents, if not paid within the year. No subscription will be taken for a shorter period than six months; nor any discontinuance permitted, until all arrearages are discharged.

ADVERTISEMENTS not exceeding a square will be conspicuously inserted at One Dollar for the first three insertions, and Twenty-five cents for every subsequent insertion. A liberal discount made to those who advertise by the year. LETTERS addressed on business, must be post paid.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE DAGGER, AND THE GOBLET OF WATER.

'Have you heard of the affair that has just happened at Cambridge?' asked Col. Craudock of Lady Laura Hargreave, during a morning call upon the latter at her hotel in the Rue St. Honore.

'Not a word of it.'

'What! not know the story of the dagger and the goblet of water? It is in all the newspapers.'

'We rarely see an English newspaper; but tell us all about it, Colonel,' said Lady Laura.

'Dr. Everingham will laugh at me.'

'I—Colonel—for what reason? I shall probably be more likely to shudder at some fresh example of the direction so prone to be taken by the minds of our youth of the present generation; pray proceed.'

'I will relate as closely as my memory serves me the extraordinary circumstances that have given rise to rigid magisterial investigation, the result of which the accused have thought proper to avoid by flight. An inquest now pending seems likely, by the evidence already adduced, to terminate by finding a young student guilty of murder, effected by practising witchcraft, I suppose I must term it; having for his accomplice a certain juggling gipsy-girl.'

'How revolting!' exclaimed the doctor.

'Hush! I am dying to hear the story; and Lady Laura raised her finger to forbid further interruption.

'I am distantly related to the family of the young man who figures in this unhappy business,' returned the Colonel; 'but as the real name has not yet transpired in the public prints, I feel sure that you will excuse me divulging it at present.'

'No matter,' rejoined her ladyship.

'You have all heard, doubtless, of a gipsy girl who for some two or three years past has been accustomed to attend the different race-courses, especially those of Epsom and Ascot, and attained wide notoriety by the success of her predictions; she goes by the name of Nathea.'

'Good heavens, that's my gipsy!' exclaimed a young lady present.

'Is she in Paris?' exclaimed the Colonel.

'In Paris!—she told my fortune but a few days since.'

'This young student, then, who it seems was in residence at the university, although the vacation had already commenced, was walking one evening in the environs of Cambridge; he had proceeded alone and for some distance in a musing mood, along the Huntingdon-road, when having nearly reached Croxton Heath, he struck into a secluded lane which he had never traversed before, and ere advancing more than a few hundred paces, was suddenly overtaken by a heavy shower of rain. He hurriedly sought shelter in a small hovel built of mud and thatch, apparently constructed for temporary abode only, under a huge oak tree, the lowermost branches of which formed the rafters of the roof. The rude structure was in fact part of a gipsy's encampment, and served as a refuge to several ill-looking fellows of that vagabond race, as well as a woman, whom they treated as their mistress of the miserable domicile. Her features possessed that species of wild beauty and intelligence peculiar to many of these women, and as she ostensibly sold beer and spirits, the young man, heated with walking and drenched to the skin by the storm, called for a glass of the latter, seating himself at the same time on a stool.

'The men's conversation, which had been momentarily interrupted by the arrival of the stranger, was again continued aloud, un mindful of his presence; the subject, at which he felt inclined at first to smile, by degrees excited his curiosity, and some of the details ultimately caused him

avid astonishment; it was upon the occult sciences, and the power wherewith certain individuals are encowd of disposing at will of the powers of nature. The curious, but still incredulous student, perfectly confident in his own judgment, did not hesitate to enter into the conversation with a view to refute victoriously, in his own opinion, the arguments of his adversaries. He contended that belief in the marvellous power, whose possession was boasted of by certain individuals, was a remnant of the superstition peculiar to the dark ages; urging that, formerly the science of physics was a mystery, but that now, increase of knowledge having exploded the mystery, the light of science had forever dispelled the shadowed spells of sorcery. In fine, he discoursed upon the subject as logically and practically as our worthy doctor here would have done; if not quite so learnedly, at least to the same effect.

'The discussion was prolonged, and ended as such discussions generally are, by leaving each party more firmly strengthened in his own way of thinking.

'The storm had finished, and the men after finishing their several potations, having one by one disappeared, the student was about to retrace his steps towards the university, through a night of pitchy darkness, when the woman, now his only companion, approached at his request to receive payment for the glass of spirits he had drunk.

'You interest me much,' said she; 'you are young, eloquent, and above all firm in your own opinion upon the fallacy of occult science; but what would you say, were I this very night to convince you of your error?'

'I should say . . . why, nothing; for whatever you might be enabled to show me, that only would give credence to which I should be enabled to comprehend, there might be the mere effect of illusion, of a prestige which I should decidedly attribute to your skill, without you are able to make me concede that there exist individuals capable of deranging the immutable order of things.'

'The woman fixed a penetrating look upon him, and her countenance assumed for a moment a terrific, but not menacing expression.

'Are you a courageous man?'

'Why that question?'

'Have you a stout heart?'

'As every man of honor has.'

'Braver than the common order of men?'

'I hope so.'

'Well, then! follow me.—but, no, you will not dare.'

'I dare—if you will give me your pledged word as a gipsy, for such I perceive you are, not in any way to entrap me.'

'I will give you my pledged word, as a gipsy, not to bring you into contact with aught save the powers of nature.'

'The student, whose curiosity was now raised to the highest pitch, and whose armour propre, like that of most young men, by being dared, becoming somewhat piqued, promised to follow the gipsy and submit himself to whatever proof she might require.

'Throwing a cloak over her shoulders, she stepped forth a few paces, saying, Follow me then; but, halting on the threshold of the door, added—

'Drink another glass.'

'Not another drop— I do not need it.'

'No matter, you require, and will be the better for one more glass.'

'Thus pressed, the student emptied the glass presented to him, and they then together quitted the hut.

'They walked at a rapid pace through the bye lanes in the direction of the university, guided by the distant flashes of lightning which at intervals vividly illuminated their path; and on approaching Cambridge, crossed the high road which skirts the rear of the river side colleges, then followed for some moments the line of hedge bounding the walks of Clare Hall & King's College, until the woman stopped before the large iron entrance gate of the latter.—

A blaze of lightning discovered the woman in the act of applying a key, attached to a bunch at her waist, to the lock, and in an instant afterwards they stood within the walls of King's College. The gipsy crossed the cycloid bridge, took the direction of the chapel, passed through the side gate leading to Clare Hall, and again stopped before the ancient ivy colored gate-way of the now uninhabited and ruinous old court of King's College. An owl, scared by the creaking of the rusty hinges of the postern by which they gained the deserted area, strewn here and there with heaps of stones and rubbish, screeched ominously across their path as they entered.

'Where am I?' said the young man.

'In the old court of King's College.'

'I know the college very well; indeed, I

know two or three members of it; but I have never seen these ruins.'

'It is the most ancient portion of the original buildings still standing, but it has been long untenanted, and all the access closed; you were, therefore, not likely to have visited it.'

'The young man followed in anxious silence the footsteps of the gipsy. The half crumbled walls were pierced by pointed stone-shafted windows of various dimensions, now dismantled of their glazed lattices, and the embattled towers of the entrance gates astonished him by their massive proportions; as his eye glanced upwards at the lofty turrets of which they were flanked, his gaze was arrested by a light dimly streaming through a narrow loop-hole cut in the highest story of the edifice. The next movement his companion suddenly bade him enter a low and narrow arched door-way, evidently leading to some subterranean passage.'

'The young man must have been a simpleton, to say the least,' exclaimed Dr. Everingham, unable to resist interrupting the Colonel; 'who but an insensate would have followed a woman of suspicious character, and a total stranger to him, into such a place?'

'I would!' cried the young lady who had before borne a part in the conversation; 'I would have followed her to the centre of the earth!'

'Go on,' said Lady Laura, whose ever-juvenescence imagination was captivated by a narrative so attractive in its commencement.

'The gipsy lighted a dark lantern, which she drew forth from a hole in the wall, and both continued their way in silence along this damp and deep labyrinth, arrived at the base of a spiral staircase, they commenced its ascent, and continued with considerable difficulty to mount the decayed stairs, obstructed as they were by fallen fragments of stone and mortar, frequently finding some half broken, others wholly wanting, which compelled them to leap the void space, while the looser fragments rolled from under their feet, and fell echoing below. At length, after a long and fatiguing ascent, the student, breathless and exhausted, perceived that he had reached the summit of the turret; a narrow passage presented itself, terminated by a low door which admitted them into a vast stone-vaulted apartment. As they entered the door closed behind them. A sepulchral looking lamp hung flickering from the centre of the roof, beneath which stood a circular table covered with antique embossed letter, having a hole sufficiently large to admit a man's head in the middle and which aperture was enclosed to the flooring by folds of the same material covering the table. Near the edge of this species of tunnel were placed a goblet filled with water, and a sharp pointed dagger, around these several open books were strewn, written in strange looking characters of vellum. As the student's gaze wandered round their dreary chamber, he perceived it was destitute of any other article of furniture save that just described, but the walls were garnished with utensils of quaint forms, the uses of which it would have been difficult rightly to divine.— Having contemplated in silence all this paraphernalia—

'Well! what next have you to show me?'

'You are over hasty, my young gentleman.'

'My impatience is natural enough, I should think.'

'True—you are a brave man, and your coolness deserves to be rewarded; place your head over that hole in the table and tell me what you see therein.'

The young man obeyed without making reply. A moment afterwards he rose from his stooping posture seemingly astounded.

'What have you seen?' inquired the gipsy.

'Most singular,' he replied; 'I have seen—but no! 'tis impossible.'

'Well?'

'I saw the abode of my cousin, Julia, in London, and my brother and a party in wedding attire assembled in the drawing room, ready to celebrate a marriage.'

'You love your cousin?'

'Alas! yes; but I am a younger son, and she has rejected my suit in favor of my brother, for he is wealthy.—I now perceive the reason for my father keeping me here during vacation time. At this very hour they are about to be united, and knowing the despair it would cause me, and the disapproval of another party of the family, have chosen the night time for the ceremony, the better to insure its privacy.'

Then looking at his watch, he exclaimed, in great agitation—

'Half-past eleven!'

'The colonel here momentarily interrupted his narration to address a French lady

present. 'Perhaps, madame, you are not aware,' said he, 'that it is by no means unusual in England to marry at night. It is a usage, however, exclusively confined to the wealthy, who obtain for the purpose what we call a special license.' Begging pardon for the digression, I resume my story.

The young student, utterly astonished continued—

'But how came you acquainted with all this?'

'I know nothing of it—it is the knowledge of a spirit. Are you now convinced?'

'Of what?—of the existence of a supernatural power accorded to certain individuals! No, I can never believe in sorcery, but I am totally unable to explain what I have just seen.'

'You are very incredulous, replied the gipsy with considerable acerbity, as she riveted her dark eyes gloomily upon the student: 'take care, young man, obstinacy is an evil counsellor—nothing is done in this world, either of good or evil, by stiff-necked stubbornness, heaven and hell alike love submission.'

'I will never submit to that against which my reason revolts.'

'Let's try again; gaze once more through the aperture.' The young man obeyed unhesitatingly, stooped over the centre of the table, and started back.

'Look at it attentively,' exclaimed the gipsy.

'A fearful trepidation had seized upon him, and he trembled in every limb; but he still continued gazing through the aperture, whilst his features became painfully distorted; a profuse perspiration trickled from his forehead, and he appeared ready to swoon.

'Well, what have you seen this time?'

'It is all over; they are married, and misery is irremediable.'

'Now that you no longer remain doubtful of my power, follow, at least, the advice that—'

'Your power!' scornfully exclaimed the young man, goaded by his despair: 'your power is all a farce—the whole affair is a despicable piece of jugglery—the chance which has made me accurately guess that which most interests you in the world, you, whom I have never seen before, and whose name has not even been pronounced in my hearing? How happens it that I show you here, that which occupies your thoughts and takes place fifty miles distant from us? Do you not perceive that I have made use of your soul by way of a guide, and that I can act upon spirit, as the uninitiated upon the body?'

'I see nought of the kind; if you have nothing further to show me, suffer me to retire and collect myself for I am not in the humor at this moment to become a convert to witchcraft, or have its existence proved to me.'

'So much the worse for you,' replied the gipsy; 'you shall, however, be enlightened thereupon, in spite of your credulity—that I am resolved.'

'I defy you to shake my conviction,' retorted the young man. 'True, I cannot explain to myself that which I have seen; but does chance ever explain itself?'

'I will prove to you, too surely, ere we part,' continued the Pythoness, 'that I can at will invert the natural order of things.'

The expression of her countenance as she said this, became sinister and forbidding in the extreme; every feature was contracted, she foamed at the mouth, and her lips trembled in silence. She approached the table; seized the dagger, and traced a few signs with its point along the surface of the water with which the goblet was filled.

'I have only this means of persuading you remaining, she continued, with an air of increased gloom; 'but I ought to warn you of the serious nature of the proof: it is a terrible one. One may not sport with impunity with supernatural power.—this proof is, indeed, a terrible one, I repeat, and the physiognomy of the woman became horribly convulsed, her voice sepulchral in its tones, and her eyes flashed wildly. This proof consists in firmly striking with the dagger's point the water contained in the goblet which stands on the table; can you strike the blow without flinching? Are you bold enough to do this?'

'What is to hinder my doing it? It will not be the first or the last time of my striking with steel.'

'You will repent of this jest for the remainder of your life; strike, then, and confess the power of—'

The young man struck, a piercing shriek from a man's voice rang in his ears—the student answered with a groan. I felt flesh at the bottom of the goblet,' he exclaimed with horror, as he flung the dagger from his hand. He cast a glance at the goblet—

it was filled with blood! He fell to the ground in a swoon.

'The unhappy young man was wholly ignorant of the length of the time he had remained in a state of unconsciousness, but on regaining his senses he found himself extended on the pavement of a narrow lane in Cambridge adjacent to his own college. In the stupor that succeeded this interval of insensibility, he could scarcely believe either what he had seen or done to induce it. 'What a horrible dream!'

was his repeated exclamation. His first impulse was to seek the old dismantled gateway by which he had gained access to the ruined court of King's College; but he found the wicket fast, and all around buried in silence. Not only did he believe that he had been dreaming, but that he was still so; his brain grew dizzy, his ideas wandered and terrified at what he felt, he regained his college, and flung himself upon his bed, exclaiming, 'I am about to lose my reason, if indeed, I am not mad already.'

He slept soundly until mid-day, but found himself so fatigued on awakening that he could not rise. In the course of the afternoon a letter was brought him, which had arrived express from London. It was from his father, and was to the following purport:—

'My dear son.—An inexplicable event has just spread consternation and dismay in our family: last night, at a quarter to twelve o'clock, the marriage of your cousin was solemnized in the drawing room of your uncle in—Square. Immediately after the ceremony, the newly married pair took leave of us to enter their traveling carriage which stood at the door, to convey them to their seat.—Park. Your sister-in-law whom we conducted as far as the hall door, after receiving embrace stepped into the carriage, followed closely by her husband, who had already placed one foot upon the step of the vehicle when an agonizing shriek filled us all with terror. I rushed out of the house and sprang down the door-steps: judge of my astonishment & horror at beholding your brother extended lifeless upon the pavement. 'What has happened?' I cried, but nobody could answer the question: all eagerly hastened

that the emotion of the moment had brought on a fainting fit from which he would quickly recover; but, having conveyed him within doors, on closer examination I perceived that his clothes were stained with blood—he had been stabbed to the heart. No one had seen the weapon by which he had been murdered or the arm that dealt the blow. Such, my dear son, is the issue of a marriage formed under the happiest auspices; who could have foreseen so lamentable a catastrophe? All search to discover the author of the crime has hitherto proved vain. Return to us so soon as you receive this: I have no longer, alas, any motive for keeping you away from home and your sisters, whose despair is truly pitiable, and who have need of your presence. Your cousin Julia, now a nearer and dearer relation is with us; her grief is more calm in its expression than that of the rest of us; for she alone has never lost her presence of mind. Come, then, I shall expect to see you this very night; all are anxious for your return. You are now the eldest of my children; your father would embrace you with an almost broken heart.

At the receipt of this astounding intelligence, the unhappy student rose, and aided by the strength imparted by a high state of fever, ran direct to the residence of a magistrate. He related, in all its minutest details what you have just heard from my lips; notwithstanding the strangeness of his disposition he was listened to with attention but he could give no exact description of the woman whose infernal art appeared to have deranged his intellect. Ultimately, however, it occurred to him that he had met with her before elsewhere; at first he could not recollect when or where, or even be certain of the fact, but on taxing his memory deliberately, he thought she could be no other than Nathea, the famous gipsy, whom he had met some months back on Epsom race-course.'

'At the very same time that I saw her there!' exclaimed the young lady, who had previously spoken of the gipsy, and whose attention had been wound up to the highest pitch of excitement by the colonel's story.

'And I also,' rejoined the latter, but neither you nor I, madam, I am happy to say, paid so dearly for the interview as did my young friend the student.

'Who knows?' sighed she in a low melancholy tone of voice, as her head drooped upon her bosom, whilst the colonel thus concluded his narrative:—

'An instant pursuit was made after the gipsy, but on the police searching the hovel in which Nathea had last been seen, no trace of her could be discovered, and the only tidings that have been gathered respecting her, merge in a supposition that she had sought refuge in Paris.'