THE SMELL OF THE GRAVE

[Original.]

"Tom, I smell newly turned earth."

Tom Glascock and I were sitting on his porch after dinner, smoking. As soon as I had spoken I saw him turn pale.

"Take that chair over there," he said, pointing to one on the other side of the porch from which I was sitting.

"Why so?"

"Change your seat," he said impatiently, "and I'll tell you."

I changed my seat, taking plenty of time to do so, and when seated Tom said:

"A man was shot sitting exactly where you were."

"When? How? Who shot him?"

"Some one with whom he was at enmity. I never heard the whole story, but I know he spoke of smelling freshly turned earth just before he was shot."

My heart began to thump wildly. A man had smelled freshly turned earth and been shot. I had smelled freshly turned earth and had been sitting in the very spot the murdered man had sat.

"Tell me about the shooting," I said.

"You must know that, even if you don't know the story connected with it. "Maitland was his name. He owned this house. I bought it from him, or, rather, from his wife. I asked her about the story, but all I could get her to say was that exactly at this time of day he was sitting just where you were seated when he called to his wife, asking her who had been digging about the porch, to which she replied that she didn't know of any one having been doing so. A few minutes later that window over your head was raised, a shot rang out and Maitland fell over dead."

I glanced uncomfortably at the chair I had been sitting in and, sniffing, smelled freshly turned earth.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed. "There's another window on the other side to match this one."

"I never thought of that."

I heard a step in the hall and, looking, saw no one. I began to feel creepy. We had left Ed Glascock, Tom's brother; Martha, his sister, and two lady guests at the dinner table for an after dinner chat and heard a clatter of voices. I wanted to go back and join them, but did not care to show my trepidation.

"How did this man, Maitland's enemy, get into the house?" I asked, glancing furtively up at the window from which the shot had been fired.

"I think he had called to protest against the foreclosure of a mortgage on his home or something like that. He and Maitland had quarreled about it, and Maitland had left him, coming out here to get away from him. He heard nothing for some time and supposed the fellow had gone out by the side door. Then he smelled earth and spoke to his wife about it."

"And then he was shot."

"Yes."

I glanced nervously at the window above me and at the one opposite, wondering if after one had smelled earth he would be shot from the same window as Maitland.

"I didn't know that was a sign of approaching death," I said.

"What?"

"Smelling freshly turned earth."

"I didn't either."

"I suppose it's the grave being opened in advance."

"Likely it is."

"I don't like this," I said after a brief silence. "I smell earth—freshly turned earth. What's that?"

There was a sound under the porch, a sound of earth being thrown up. Tom and I both heard it, and both turned pale. We listened and heard a scratching underneath as if some one were scraping the loose earth together preparatory to tossing it out of a grave.

"I wonder what's become of them inside," said Tom, as though he would like an excuse to go in and join them.

"I haven't heard a sound from them for some time," I replied.

"There it is again!" Tom said, with a frightened look, referring the scratching.

"And the earthy smell."

By this time we were so wrought upon that no doubt we exaggerated everything. Suddenly the window above me—the window from which Maitland had been killed—opened, and a shot rang out.

I was as certain that I had received a mortal wound as I was that it was growing dark. I sank down on the porch and swooned.

When I came to myself I saw the anxious faces of those with whom I had dined. Ed Glascock's face was very white, and his brother Tom's was also livid, but there was also an angry look on it. The women appeared terribly frightened.

"Is it mortal?" I asked faintly.

"Mortal! No. Ed has been playing one of his pranks. He heard us talking out here and fired the shot to scare us."

"But I hear the gravedigging below," I moaned. My nerves were completely unstrung.

"Oh, that's Wag, our rat terrier! He's been going for rats. He's torn up every bit of earth under the porch."

"And I'm not shot?"

"No, stupid," said Ed. "You're as sound as a nut."

"Ed has made a fool of himself," said Tom. "He had no business to do it. He might have frightened you to death."

"It's you who have been making a fool of yourself," retorted Ed, "harping on that story to every guest that comes into the house. I concluded to teach you a lesson."

BRUCE PARKER.

Lincoln and His Beard.

It was a child who persuaded Abraham Lincoln to wear a beard. Up to the time he was nominated for president he had always been smooth shaven. A little girl living in Chautauqua county, N. Y., who greatly admired him, made up her mind that he would look better if he wore whiskers and with youthful directness wrote and told him so. He answered her by return mail:

Springfield, Ill., Oct. 19, 1860.
Miss Grace Bedell:

My Dear Little Miss—Your very agreeable letter of the 15th is received. I regret the necessity of saying I have no daughter. I have three sons—one seventeen, one nine and one seven years of age. They, with their mother, constitute my whole family. As to the whiskers, never having worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affectation if I were to begin it now? Your very sincere wellwisher,

A. LINCOLN.

Evidently on second thought he decided to follow her advice. On his way to Washington his train stopped at the town where she lived. He asked if she were in the crowd gathered at the station to meet him. Of course she was, and willing hands forced a way for her through the mass of people. When she reached the car Mr. Lincoln stepped from the train, kissed her and showed her that he had taken her advice.—St. Nicholas.

The Arabs' Hasheesh.

"Intoxication from eating a dish of liver was once my portion," said an orientalist. "It happened in the Sahara. I was spending the winter at El Kantara. In February I made a caravan trip over the desert along the great caravan route that runs from Biskra to Timbuktu. The third day out we reached an oasis of date palms. We got coffee at the baked mud cafe. We dined on red fish and gazelle steak, and for an entree was served this infernal liver. It was liver powdered with kiff. Kiff is hasheesh. It is made of hemp, and it makes you drunk. The Arabs mix it with their tobacco, and they bread liver with it, and they drop it in coffee. Thus they eat, drink and smoke their kiff. I ate their kiff and imagined my arm to be a mile long. I thought my foot as big as a mountain. My voice, when I spoke, sounded in my ears like the roar of a thousand thunders. In a word, I was kiff drunk, and it was two days before I was fit to resume my journey across the gold colored sands."

Little Economies.

"I once made up my mind," said a London man, "that I would become the possessor of a good gold watch. I saved up the money for it in this way: When I felt like eating a shilling luncheon, as I often did, I kept it down to tenpence. I put the twopence saved toward my watch fund. You will hardly believe me, but with little economies like this I had in less than six months saved enough to buy my gold watch." "But," said a listener, "where is your gold watch? You are wearing a poor little gun metal thing." "Well," was the reply, "when I found how easily I could get along without shilling luncheons I concluded I could get along with a ten shilling watch instead of a ten pound one. So that the watch fund grew until it purchased for me my own house."—London Mail.

Duststorms That Bury Forests.

Travelers in Tibet describe the wonderful storms of dust that occur in Kashgaria, near the foot of the Kuen Lun mountains. The dust in the air is sometimes so dense that complete darkness prevails. Occasionally rain falls during such a storm, but the raindrops evaporate during their descent, and the dust carried with them falls in lumps. Entire forests of poplar trees are buried in dust hillocks forty feet high. These deposits of dust are afterward moved on by the wind, but the trees that have been buried die, even after their disinterment.

A Beheading Stone.

The old beheading stone at Stirling, England, was protected in 1887 by public subscription, raised at the instance of the Stirling Natural History and Archaeological society. It was then inclosed in an iron cage. There is another relic of public execution in Stirling in the museum of the Smith institute in that city. It is the bowl which the public executioner used when he went around the market taking a measure of meal from every farmer's sack.

Impossible Diagnosis.

"The boy has evidently been eating too much between meals," said the doctor.

"Nonsense!" replied the boy's father. "A boy can't eat in his sleep."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that each of his meals begins when he gets up in the morning and ends when he goes to bed."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Happy Days.

However varied the courses of our life, whatsoever the phase of pleasure and ambition through which it has swept along, still, when in memory we would revive the times that were comparatively the happiest, these times will be found to have been the calmest.—Bulwer Lytton.

Giving and Receiving.

Hall Porter (to person soliciting a favor at a ministry)—The minister receives from 10 o'clock to midday—

"All right," says the other, "but at what hour does he give?"—Paris Figaro.

Low and Loud.

He—A woman, I notice, always lowers her voice to ask a favor. She—Yes—and raises her voice if she does not get it.—Illustrated Bits.

He that helps the evil hurts the good.—Socrates.

Spanish Politeness.

It has been said that the French are the most polite people in the world, writes our lady correspondent in San Sebastian, but I do not think any one who really knows them will agree. However, they have some charming little ways, and when they are rude it is because they are deep down thoroughly selfish. My personal opinion is that the Spaniard is about the most delightfully polite person one can possibly encounter. If you ask your way in the street of some ordinary woman, she will almost certainly go out of her way to accompany you down the street and to carefully put you on the right road. They are very cheerful and gay, but they are never vulgar, as we understand the word in England. Even the men in the streets who stand and frankly stare at a pretty girl do it in a light hearted, pleasant way which does not give offense. As to the manners of Spanish men belonging to the best society, they are almost perfect. Watch a Spaniard of distinction address his mother or any elderly lady and you will see a manner which is tender and caressing and at the same time exquisitely protective.—London Tribune.

An Unexpected Owner.

Nearly all the giddy youth of the neighborhood attended the charity bazaar, and one by one they drifted to a stall where a tiny, shapely, scented gray kid glove reposed on a satin cushion. Attached to the cushion was a notice written in a delicate feminine hand, which ran, "The owner of this glove will, at 7:30 this evening, be pleased to kiss any person who purchases a sixpenny ticket beforehand."

Tickets were purchased by the score, and at 7:30 a long row of sheepish, not to say doggish, young bloods were assembled outside the stall.

Then, punctual to the moment, old Tom Porson, the local pork butcher, who weighs twenty stone and is almost as beautiful as a side of bacon, stepped to the front of the stall.

"Now, young gents," he said in his best "buy, buy, buy," tones, "this 'ere glove belongs to me. I bought it this morning. Now I'm ready for you. Come on. Don't be bashful. One at a time!"

But nobody came on.—London Telegraph.

Hard Water.

A farm woman in Pennsylvania once said to me, "I never hear any one sing 'The Old Oaken Bucket' without a shudder." For fifteen years she had done the cooking and washing for a family of six with no other water supply than what she had hauled out of a well nearly thirty feet deep by means of a bucket. Baths in winter were almost out of the question, and even in the summer they were regarded as an occasion of more than ordinary importance, for which preparations had to be made hours ahead of the great event. A cubic foot of water weighs sixty-two and a half pounds, and in all these years the number of tons this woman had lifted had made poetical allusions to "iron bound" and "moss covered" buckets a good deal like saying "rope" to a man about to be hanged.—Farming.

Johnson on Actors.

Although he wrote plays, Johnson claimed not to be fond of players. When Boswell suggested that we might respect a great actor Johnson cried: "What, sir, a fellow who claps a hump on his back and a bump on his legs and cries, 'I am Richard III?' Nay, sir; a ballad singer is a higher man." No doubt Boswell had Garrick in mind when, after hearing Johnson say that he looked on players as no better than dancing dogs, he timidly suggested, "But, sir, you will allow that some players are better than others." "Yes, sir, as some dogs dance better than others."

A Black Mast.

Most trading steamers which wish to study economy and effect have their aft mast painted black. If they did not the mast would soon be sullied by smoke and would look very dirty in consequence. The smoke from the vessel's funnel is carried backward by the forward motion of the vessel, and the mast would look grimy if it was painted any other color than black.

Let Him Right In.

A minister, addressing a meeting of the London Bible society, of which the Marquis of Anglesey was president, said that St. Peter refused to admit the marquis as a peer or as Wellington's old officer or lord lieutenant of Ireland or the leader of the Horse guards at Waterloo, but let him right in as soon as he knew that he was president of the Bible society.

Be First In Attack.

An old Scotch drillmaster, so the story goes, taught his pupils the art of thrusting with the saber until they were quite proficient.

"Now teach us to parry," said they.

"Oh," said he, "you must do the thrusting and let your enemy do the parrying."

Her Opportunity.

Wife—I had better take that hat for 45 shillings. Husband—But I've only got £2 with me now. I'll have to owe them the odd 5 shillings. Wife—Oh, then, I'll take this one for 3 guineas. Five shillings is too insignificant a sum to owe.

What Saved Him.

Miss Opper—I will never marry you. Denkelsen—Oh, heavens, I would blow my brains out if we were not in the midst of the busy season and I have so much to do!—Fliegende Blatter.

If a chameleon becomes blind it no longer changes color, but remains of a blackish hue.

THE PILOT'S .....STORY

[Original.]

"I was in the late onpleasantness," said the Mississippi pilot, "and it's my opinion that all this thing called heroism depends on circumstances. When a brave man's cornered he ain't any better 'n a coward. I've butted up ag'in fortifications, and I've legged it to get out o' the way o' shot and shell."

The boat was moving swiftly down with the stream, and the pilot was now pulling the wheel with all his strength, then letting it fly around like a Fourth of July pinwheel.

"But I don't have to draw on myself for an argyment. I was a stars and bars boy myself. I'll take one o' your fellers, as brave a man as ever fought under the stars and stripes. D'ye see that bank over thar? I remember a day when there was a good deal doin' on that bank. It was about fou' years after the close of the war, and the carpetbag business was humpin'. The gineral idee of a carpetbagger, both north and south, was a low down cuss without any decency whatever. Some of 'em was. But Major MacEnery was a different sort. He had risen from the ranks in the Union army, and when the war was over, bein' only twenty-seven years old, he concluded to settle in the south and grow up with the country after its new birth. There was a lot of no'the'n officers tuk that fever, and I reckon they all come to grief.

"The major bought a plantation over thar. He didn't pay much fo' it, fo' it wasn't wo'th much. His neighbors tried to drive him out in var'us ways, but he was good pluck and refused to be driv. One day when I was pilot o' the Talladega we come floatin' down yere just as we're doin' now, and, roundin' to, puttin' her nose upstream, we tied up at a wha'f boat over thar to deliver the mail. I wanted to git some tobaccer, so I tole the cap'n I'd take the mail bag up. He tole me to go ahead, and, rollin' it under my arm—fo' thar wasn't much in it—I struck out. I found a big crowd on the bluff, and they follered me to the postoffice. I handed in the mail bag, and just then in walked Major MacEnery. There was one letter in the bag, and that had the major's name on it. The postmaster handed it out to him.

"That made the crowd mad. One man said that yo' couldn't expect nothin' better from a Yankee gov'ment than to deliver only letters fo' Yankees. The major, who had seen all the fightin' he wanted in the late war, tuk his letter and went out, or, ruther, he was goin' out when one of the crowd put out his foot and tripped him. The major stumbled, but didn't say nothin'. He knowed it was intentional, but if he said anything there he'd have to fight for his life. There was a man he had on his plantation in the crowd and two or three south'n Unionists that had settled thar to be under the major's wing. When the man that had tripped the major saw it didn't move him to give 'em a chance to kill him he roared out:

"'Yo' Yankee carpetbagger, what d' yo' mean by carryin' off the mail with yo'? We don't want no hogs down yere!'

"The major whipped out a revolver and stuck it under the man's nose so quick that the feller fell back, and the major went out. He hadn't been gone more'n a few minutes when they jammed the man that wo'ked on his plantation ag'in the wall, and he hit one of 'em on the head. The Union men tried to get at him to get him out o' their way, and pretty soon it was a stand off between the two factions. I got out o' the way o' the flyin' bullets. As I was makin' off a heavy man that had been shot fell on me and knocked me down. It occurred to me that it would be well fo' me to lay whar I fell—leastways there wouldn't be no use to kill a dead man, an' I concluded I'd be dead fo' awhile, till the shootin' was over.

"I didn't see nothin' more—I didn't want to—but the major, hearin' the fracas, went back, and he and his little gang kep' the fire eaters at bay fo' some time. Then most of the major's backers was killed. As I was tellin' yo', I didn't see nothin' that was goin' on till there was nothin' but a few stray shots left near me; then I got up and made tracks fo' the boat.

"Everybody on board had left the wha'f boat, and some of 'em had locked themselves in staterooms. The deck hands had all tumbled into the hold, and the cap'n had hid in the pilot house. I run aboard and, seein' no one, run out to the wha'f boat ag'in and unloosed the cables. We drifted off, and, yankin' the engineer out of his hidin' place behind the engine, I tole him to be ready for signals as soon as I got to the pilot house. In half a minute I was at the wheel. Her stern was just touchin' the shore when I rung to go ahead, and we steamed out into deep water.

"Puttin' her nose downstream, I looked back at the scene of the fight and saw the major comin' on the dead run with a crowd an eighth of a mile behind him, all firin' at him. I signaled to stop her and would 'a' sent a boat fo' him, but there was no one to send. When he got opposite us he took to the water, and when he reached us one of the hands pulled him in.

"He was the wo'st used up man I ever saw. He stood on deck lookin' back at his plantation, where he had all his funds invested, realizin' that they were gone.

"'I was in "the hornets' nest" at Shiloh,' he said, 'but I didn't feel like I did when that gang was a-tryin' to murder me. In the one case it was an even fight; in the other it was one to twenty.'

"That's why I don't count on no man's bein' brave under all circumstances." EDWARD MORRISON.

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His Sorrow.

Maud (newly married)—You look very melancholy, George. Are you sorry you married me? George—No, dear, of course not. I was only thinking of all the nice girls I can't marry. Maud—Oh, George, how horrid of you! I thought you cared for nobody but me? George—Neither do I. I wasn't thinking of myself, but of the disappointment for them.

Happiness.

Things are so arranged in this world that happiness as a profession must ever be a failure. It cannot be found by seeking it. It is a reflex action. It is incidental, a product which comes from doing noble things. It is impossible for a person to be really happy by making pleasure a profession.—Success Magazine.

Some of Them Do.

The master had been giving a class of youngsters some ideas of adages and how to make them. Presently he said:

"Birds of a feather—do what?"

"Lay eggs," piped a small boy before anybody else had a chance to speak.

The Leading Part.

Twynn—I hear that Skidmore has led the Widow Weeds to the altar. Triplet—That is what it is called for politeness' sake, but from my post of observation it looked as though the widow were a neck ahead of him all the way up the aisle.

Garrick as Author.

Writing of Garrick's literary efforts, I suppose not every one knows that he was the author of such well known lines as:

Their cause I plead, plead it in heart and mind:
A fellow feeling makes one wondrous kind.

Or this again:

Let others hail the rising sun;
I bow to that whose course has run.

Or again:

Hearts of oak are our ships,
Hearts of oak are our men.

But I suppose every one knows his epigram on Goldsmith, "who wrote like an angel and talk'd like poor Poll," an epigram that conveyed only half the truth, as Garrick would have been one of the first to admit.—London Sphere.

Habit.

Habit is one of the world's controlling influences. More men are swayed by force of habit, unconsciously perhaps, than any other motive. The habit of doing certain things in a certain way grows from beginnings so small as to be scarcely noticeable until it forms a chain that can scarcely be broken. The habit of right or wrong doing becomes a master, and a more exacting master could not be found.—Brockton Times.

This is the law of benefits between men: The one ought to forget at once what he has given and the other ought never to forget what he has received.—Seneca.