The Story of a Crime.

[A passage from the book entitled "A Prodigious Fool," written by John C. Wallis, of Bloomfield, Pa. The book is published by Lippincott & Co. It can be procured from the publisher or from Mr. Wallis, price $1.50.]

IT was on a day in June, during one of these jaunts about town, that William Smith found himself the central figure of a group of men and boys gathered before the barroom door of the "Gentle Influence," a hotel of long standing in the village, and, perhaps by reason of its seductive name, of great popularity. The crowd, it must be confessed was mixed. It was also peculiar. There was the usual swaggering air of inferior superiority, and indifference to bare feet and torn breeches. There was the customary picturesque apparel, and want of apparel, common to those who cared little for what they wore and less for what they did or said. At the time of which I write the gift of loud speech was abundant in every small community. One could get plain, embroidered and decorated specimens on every street corner. And for glittering streaks of unique diction a choice assortment was kept in every barroom. There was therefore a generous supply of vigorous speech; and invective, and tobacco spit, flowed freely. There was, furthermore, an originality in the conversation, albeit loud and profusely copious, not often found in polite society, and the expletives with which it was fringed, embellished and ornamented gave to the otherwise plain talk a wonderful force and charm.

William stood in the midst of the crowd apparently unconscious of the din about him as he watched the face of our old friend Col. Erastus S. Swampus who was deeply interested in a newspaper. The Colonel suddenly broke forth with an execration which silenced even the crowd that stood there. He at once began a harangue, inimitable in its way, upon the prevalence of crime, the burden of which was the present deplorable scarcity of hangings. He held the newspaper in his hand and brandished it wildly by way of emphasis of his views. His attitude promised a speech, and a circle soon formed about him to enjoy the fun, for whether the Colonel was sober and indignant or drunk and excited did not clearly appear, and required always a nice and penetrating judgment to determine.

"Now here's a case," pursued the Colonel, continuing his remarks and striking the newspaper impressively with his hand, "thet illustrates, er—my position squarely, and proves,—er-in-er-conclusive manner thet mankind is bad, and womankind—er—demme—worse. Not thet I think it necessary to deplore the condition of women," deprecatingly observed the Colonel, with a frightful smile, "fur the devil will get 'em anyhow; but I—er—confess to considerable interest in the—er—fate of man. I would like to see, say one quarter of the population hanged fur the good of the three quarters left. Gentlemen, I tell you the only way to make this world good is to hang the wicked. So long as they live they will breed others like 'em, and not all the preachers on earth, though each one of 'em should be filled full of chicken up to the neck every day of his life as long as he lives, will ever be able to prevent the—er—demoralization of society,—now you hear me! This ere case," continued the Colonel, paternally, "shows I am right. Now here was a young man courtin' a female woman, a maiden of his species; he ruins the gal and—er—runs away. Then when—er—his whereabouts is discovered and she writes to him wot does he do?—Does he act fair by the woman as has trusted him? Does he stand by and protect her as has loved him? No. He does not. On the contrary,—now wot do you s'pose on the contrary he does, eh?"

The Colonel turned sharply around, and looked upon his auditory, as he asked the question, and stopped, but his sweeping glance saw only open mouthed wonder and suspense on the faces about him. Proud of a talent which met such unconscious and sincere recognition, he smiled a frightful smile, and continued,—

"Wot does he do? Why he hires a fellow to do away with the girl. He sends the fellow fifty dollars and promises him another fifty when the job is done. And the fellow is a worthy tool of his employer and sets about to do his work. The fellow goes to the girl and tells her thet he is a messenger from her lover, and thet he is to take her to see him in secret,—to take her all alone in a little boat out on the sea at night to meet him on a big ship thet he says will be there at the risin' of the moon. The girl is glad, for she believes the story and thinks she will soon see the man she loves. So the fellow takes her in the little boat and rows out through the breakers in the darkness of the night, far away from the shore and out of hearin', but no light is seen, and no ship comes, and the girl gets afraid and suspects foul treatment and begs to return home;—when the fellow crouches down in the boat and creeps and crawls along, quiet like, till he reaches her, and then he grabs her and holds her mouth shut and forces her head into the gurglin' water and holds her there, her body in the boat and her head in the sea till her struggles cease and life is stilled,—then drops the limp body, fastened to a bar of iron, into the dark deep and rows back to the shore."

As the Colonel paused a shudder passed through the crowd and no one spoke. It seemed as if each one saw the murdered girl as she hung over the edge of the little boat and sank in the cruel sea. The Colonel glanced at his newspaper a moment and then went on,—

"The job had been so well done thet no one suspected thet the girl was—er—drown*ded* and murdered; it was thought she had gone to seek her lover or to visit friends in another town. The fellow was not suspected, and he went about his usual business secure and safe. But, somehow, his—er—conscience troubled him,—although he got the extra fifty dollars, which ought have eased a conscience such as he possessed—and he couldn't sleep, and he became afraid of the sea, and turned colors when people looked at him, and started when they talked to him and looked behind him as if some one was followin' him until one night he—er—disappeared from the settlement."

The Colonel paused to take a fresh chew of tobacco, and with teeth closely pressed upon the quid, continued,—

"It might have bin a month or so afterward, thet a lot of sailors were splashin' round in a ship's yawl off the coast a fishin' fur sharks, when one of 'em spied somethin' afloat,—somethin' sort o' water logged, part out of and part under water—on the waves. Comin' closer they saw it was a human body, a drown*ded* woman, and they hauled it aboard. The clothes was still a clingin' to the slight and willowy figure, and a rope was tied about her waist and was sort of gnawed off like at the end as if it had bin broken from an iron bar; and there was a letter in her pocket, and a ring on her finger and a handkerchief in her belt with her name on it, '*Julia*.' When the sailors got to shore her parents came down to the beach among the crowd and recognized ther dead child and wept and took her home sorrowing. But even then no one knew thet she hed bin murdered. The letter in her pocket was from *him*. The letter promised her fair, and offered her money to support her child and spoke of old times, and love and sich like d——d nonsense, and it was believed thet out of disappointment and remorse she had gone and drown*ded* herself. The loss of a little skiff sometime before gave some probability to this—er—natural conjecture. She hed a grand funeral, fur she hed always bin a good girl and the people loved her, wherefore this ere newspaper says thet there in her beautiful southern home close to the soundin' sea they made her grave and laid her in it, herself the fairest flower of all thet flowery land, and all the people wept fur the poor dead mother bearin' her unborn babe."

And the Colonel paused again, this time to wipe a tear from the end of his nose. He scratched his beard reflectively and changed his quid to the other cheek before he proceeded,—

"Lemme think,—it was shortly after the findin' of the corpse thet the lover and the fellow wot hed drown*ded* the girl met in New York. It was a stormy meetin', and roused bad blood in both of 'em. 'D——n you and your money!' said the fellow when the lover offered to pay him for his silence. 'Nothin' can keep me silent. The whole world shall know of it. What do I care fur punishment!—no sufferin' can be greater than I now feel, no punishment severer than I now bear,—even hangin' I believe would be a relief to me'—in which opinion I cordially agree with the fellow:—no sir," parenthetically mused the Colonel, "it *couldn't* hev bin worse. The fellow wouldn't hev suffered more in bein' hanged and it would hev bin a condemned sight better fur the world at large," and the Colonel smiled widely. "Well, as I was a sayin', they hed a meetin'. It was in the private rooms of the lover, who hed a sort of position in a bank in New York, and was a livin' in good style, and sported round like a handsome young fellow as he was—"

William started. "What was his name?" he asked, without attempting to conceal his deep interest.

Everybody turned at once to look at the man who dared to interrupt the speaker, but the Colonel, for once, affected not to hear the interruption and coolly went on with his tale.

"I was about to say, gentlemen, thet they hed a meetin' and quarreled, and the lover pulled a pistol on the fellow, but afore he could discharge it the fellow—er—knocked him flat with a slung shot and immediately left. The lover was badly hurt and it was a miracle he didn't die fur he hed a dreadful cut in the skull,—a three cornered cut near the left temple which ought hev killed him. But wot does he do?"

William again started and trembled.

"Why he leaves his lodgins' the same night and disappears. And when the officers came fur him next day he was nowhere to be found. Fur, you see, the fellow hed tried to give him into custody, and hed made oath thet he was 'accessory before the fact' to murder, and meant to hev him hang, even if he hed to hang long side of him on the same gibbet. P'raps it was as well thet he didn't implicate himself jist then or he might hev hanged himself and the lover would never hev bin found and hanged—which would hev bin a condemned insufferable pity. Well, the lover escaped, and must hev changed his name and appearance fur he has never bin found, and it's thought he has gone to furrin' parts. But this 'ere newspaper goes on to say—all this wot I'm tellin' you happened four years ago—to say thet a month ago jist, the fellow wot drown*ded* the girl dies, and before he dies he makes a confession in which he tells the whole story of the crime,—tells how he was induced to do the job, and how the poor girl plead and struggled fur life, and how every night of his life since thet day he dreamt of going through the horrid business of drownding thet girl, and——"

A wild peal of laughter came from the barroom followed by a striking set of profane remarks which were suddenly chopped off by a closing door. The crowd soon investigated the cause of the disturbance while the Colonel temporarily suspended his remarks. It was not difficult to discover. Some wag had secretly put a drop of croton oil in the barkeeper's grog and that worthy young gentleman's nimble and expeditious movements as he departed produced a scene which was extremely enlivening, and which even the name of the hotel, mild though it was, tended rather to intensify than calm.

"Now that's a 'gentle influence,' ain't it?" sarcastically observed a citizen with irony on his lips and a red patch on his trousers.

But William knew nothing of what had happened. He stood there rooted to the spot unable to stir. He heard nothing save confused sounds, saw nothing but the red bearded face of the Colonel on whom his eyes were bent as if fascinated. When the Colonel again took up the thread of his narrative it seemed to him as though an inexorable fate was weaving a sure web in which to entangle his old friend and forging a thunderbolt to strike him dead. The question, can it be Ashleigh? wearily dinned in his brain, and the answer came, fiendlike, into his ears, Yes, it is Ashleigh! The words of the Colonel mingled confusedly with the sounds in the street, and seemed to come from afar as he spoke.

"In thet confession as I was tellin' about," blandly pursued the Colonel, "the fellow describes this ere lover. He says thet Edwin Parker was a handsome——"

"Parker?"

"A handsome man of heavy build and fine figure; a young man of p'raps twenty-five, pale faced, noble bearin' and brown curly haired——"

"Brown? You mean black?"

"Brown curly haired; smooth faced and havin' fine black eyes which sparkled in excitement like a Turk's."

Perhaps by reason of his interruption the Colonel paused here with his keen eye bent upon William. He went on, addressing his words to him and looking him straight in the eye.

"The sing'larist thing is thet the fellow remembers jist where he hit Parker with thet three cornered slung shot. He describes the spot exactly. It is on the left temple jist back two inches from the frontal bone of the forehead and an inch and a half above and forward of the ear. The wound made was three cornered and measured a half-inch along each side of the cut. It is like so," and the Colonel illustrated it by a diagram on the corner of the paper rapidly drawn with a lead pencil, "and thet wound ought to be found now—jist about right here"—(walking swiftly up to William, striking off his hat and placing his long bony forefinger on the supposed spot on his head)—"as I live I almost expected to find thet mark on your head, young man, you looked so scared. You've bin away a good while and might hev been the man. Mebbe you know the man? I ain't frightened you, hev I, eh? Why, thet mark 'll find thet man wherever he may hide in the world, and I shall see him hanged yet, demme if I shan't! What? Get some water, quick!"

William had fainted and fallen to the earth.

An Intelligent Dog.

A Beech street family are the owners of two dogs—a large one and a small one—that occasionally go on excursions through the country. A few weeks ago the little dog was missed. The big dog appeared to be uneasy, and one of the members of the family noticed that after being fed he invariably carried all the larger bones away. No one gave the matter any attention until one afternoon, when two young ladies who had been in Sampson's woods gathering autumn leaves incidentally remarked that that they saw a little black dog lying along the fence as though sick and at the point of death. The utterance was overheard by the little girl whose dog was lost, and she at once concluded that the unwell canine was her property. On the following day she proceeded to the spot described by the young ladies. The large dog led the way, barking and wagging his tail. Arriving at the woods she discovered her pet dog, almost famished, and tied to a huge stone with a chain, evidently the work of some mischievous boys. The half-starved dog was so weak that it could not stand. It was surrounded by the bones that had been carried to it by its large and faithful companion, and they were as clean of meat as though they had been boiled. Had the big dog not carried food to the little one, it probable would have died of starvation.—*Pottstown Chronicle.*

A Joke on a Horse.

ONE of the commission houses on Market street, Philadelphia, has a horse which was the terror of every pedestrian who got within three feet of his head. The animal has teeth like a shark, and up to a few days ago he'd bite everything within reach except a pile of grind stones. Whipping had no effect, and he would get rid of muzzles as fast as they were put on. The firm had paid out considerable money to settle for his bites, and was wondering what they could sell him for, when along came a man who guaranteed a cure for five dollars. He was told to go to work, and his first move was to get an old suit of clothes and stuff it with straw. The horse was driven down the street, and the suit tied to a hitching post with the back to the street. A full pound of Cayenne pepper was then rubbed into and sprinkled over the garments and the straw stuffing, and the joke was ready.

The horse came jogging back, and the driver left him standing within six feet of the man of straw. The old biter's eyes had a twinkle as he saw a fine chance to use his teeth, and as soon as left alone he began edging toward the post. When ready for business he made a sudden plunge and caught the man by the shoulder. The old horse meant wickedness, but there was a surprise in store for him. As he lifted the figure off its feet and gave it a shake it fell apart, and his mouth, nose and eyes were filled with the smarting powder. Great tears rolled down his long nose, he sneezed and snorted and coughed, and he was just as chagrined at the general laugh on him as a man would have been. He backed away from the remnants, opened his mouth to cool it, and hung his head in shame. He did not cease weeping for half a day, but when he got so that he could look the public square in the face he was a changed horse. Anybody can pull his ears or rub his nose with impunity. In fact, he courts caresses where he defied them, and on the approoch of a stranger will shut his eyes and mouth as if fearful of another dose.

A Bitter Pill.

ON one occasion, when I was ill, the General called Dr, Hunt, his family physician. The doctor was a tall, lank, ugly man—"as good as gold," but none of the graces that are supposed to win young ladies; yet he was married to one of the loveliest young creatures I ever knew. General Jackson accompanied him to my room, and after my pulse had been duly felt and my tongue duly inspected, they drew their chairs to the fire and began to talk. "Hunt," suddenly exclaimed the President, "how came you to get such a young and pretty wife?" "Well I'll tell you," replied the doctor, "I was called to attend a young lady at the convent in Georgetown. Her eyes were bad, she had to keep them bandaged. I cured her without her ever having a distinct view of me. She left the institute, and a year afterward she appeared here in society, a belle and a beauty. At the ball I introduced myself, without the slightest ulterior design, as the physician who had restored her sight, although I supposed she had never really seen me. She instantly expressed the most heartfelt gratitude. It seemed so deep and genuine that I was touched. That very evening she informed me she had a severe cold, and that I must again prescribe for her. Well, it don't look reasonable, but I did it. I wrote my name on a bit of paper, folded it and handed it to her, telling her she must take that prescription. She read it and laughed, "'tis a bitter pill," she said. But whether it was bitter or not we were married.

☞The ladies who some time since were unable to go out, have taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, are quite recovered, and have gone on their way rejoicing. 132t

ESTATE NOTICE.—Notice is hereby given that Letters of Administration on the estate of William F. Miller late of Watts township, Perry county, Pa., deceased, have been granted to the undersigned residing in the same township.

All persons indebted to said estate are requested to make immediate payment, and those having claims to present them duly authenticated for settlement to

EMORY B. MILLER, Administrator

Feb. 8, 1881 pd] [WILSON LUPFER, Att'y.