North Carolina Gazette.

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CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

[The following is one of the most extraordinary cases of circumstantial evidence on record. It is, however, literally true, forming part of the criminal history of the State of Vermont. It is to this remarkable case that the English novelist, Wilkie Collins, is indebted for the plot and main features of his rather sensational story, "The Dead Alive."—EDS. GAZETTE.]

On the morning of the 26th of November, 1819, there appeared in the Rutland (Vt.) *Herald* the following notice:

"MURDER!—Printers of newspapers throughout the United States are desired to publish that Stephen Boorn, of Manchester, Vermont, is sentenced to be executed for the murder of Russell Colvin, who has been absent about seven years. Any person who can give any information of said Colvin may save the life of the innocent by making immediate communication. Colvin is about 5 ft. 5 ins. high, light hair, light complexion, blue eyes, and is about forty years old.

Manchester, Vt., Nov. 26th, 1819."

This communication was copied very generally by newspapers, a created much interest. Before describing events that followed, let us go back to the year 1812, to the little town of Manchester, Vermont.

Barney Boorn, an old man, had two sons, Stephen and Jesse, and a daughter Sarah, wife of Russell Colvin, a half-witted day-laborer. They were a bad lot—poor, ignorant, and in doubtful repute for honesty. Two miserable hovels served them for shelter, and a few acres of pine barrens constituted all their possessions. They raised a few potatoes and garden vegetables, and eked out a scanty living by day work for their neighbors.

In May, 1812, Colvin was at home. In June he was missing. At first this occasioned no remark; he was always a tramp, absent from home sometimes for weeks together. But this time he did not come back; as weeks grew into months, inquiries began to be made in the neighborhood about the missing man. There are no tongues for gossip like those that wag in a village. One spoke to another; excitement grew; wonder, like a contagious disease, infected everybody.

It was known that there had long existed between the old man and boys a grudge against Colvin; it was in proof that the last time the missing man was seen he was at work with the Boorns, clearing stones from a field, and that a dispute was going on; and Louis Colvin, a son of Russell, stated that his father had struck his uncle Stephen, and that he, (the boy) being frightened, ran off. Again, a Mr. Baldwin had heard Stephen Boorn say, in answer to the inquiry as to where Russell Colvin was:

"He's gone to h—ll, I hope!"

"Is he dead, Stephen?" pursued Mr. Baldwin.

"I tell you again that Colvin is gone where potatoes won't freeze."

For seven years the wonder grew; Colvin's ghost haunted every house in Bennington county. There was no proof that the Boorns were guilty, and yet everyone believed it. A button and jack-knife were found which his wife believed to have once been Colvin's; dreams, thrice repeated, were had by the old women and kitchen girls—and ten thousand stories were in circulation.

Five years after Colvin was missed, Stephen Boorn removed to Denmark, N. Y., while Jesse remained at home. After the former had left, some bones were accidentally found in the decayed trunk of a tree near his house; and, though all surgeons said to the contrary, it was universally believed that they were part of a human skeleton. Of course, then, they must be the bones of Colvin. Jesse was arrested, Stephen was straightway brought back from Denmark, and both were held for examination.

Although all the testimony, when sifted, was found to be worthless, yet the two brothers were remanded to jail, and Jesse was worked upon to make him turn State's evidence. The jailor tormented him with suggestions, which his wife followed up with womanly adroitness, and neighbors helped. Beset with directions—told that there was no doubt in anyone's mind that Stephen committed the murder—urged to make a clean breast of it, and thus save his body and soul—what wonder that the man confessed, or was alleged to have confessed, that his brother Stephen did murder Colvin?

On September 3, 1819, the grand jury found a bill of indictment against Stephen and Jesse Boorn for the murder of Russell Colvin. William Farnsworth testified that Stephen confessed that he did it, and that Jesse helped him; that they hid the body in the bushes, then buried it, then dug it up and burned it, then scraped together the remains, and hid them in a stump. On this unsupported evidence the jury returned a verdict of guilty against both prisoners, and they were sentenced to be hung January 28, 1820.

And now the men came to their senses. They asserted their innocence; they said that they had confessed as their last hope. Some compassion began to be felt for them; they might, after all, be innocent. A petition for their pardon was presented to the Legislature. It availed only to get commutation of Jesse's sentence to imprisonment for life—no more. Stephen was to be hanged.

Let the reader now turn to another chapter of this strange history.

In April, 1813, there lived at Dover, Monmouth county, N. J., a Mr. James Polhamus. Some time in that month a way-farer, begging for food, stopped at his door. Being a handy, good-natured man, quiet and obedient, homeless and a man of weak intellect, too, he was allowed to stay. He said that his name was Russell Colvin, and that he came from Manchester, Vermont.

Not far from Dover is the little town of Shrewsbury, then a quiet hamlet, now invaded by the cottages and villas of Long Branch pleasure-seekers. Here lived Taber Chadwick, brother-in-law to Mr. Polhamus, and intimate with the family. Accidentally reading the New York *Evening Post*, he met, not with the notice of the Rutland *Herald*, but with an account of the trial. Convinced that the Russell Colvin, who was alleged to have been murdered, was the very man then living with Mr. Polhamus, he wrote a letter to the *Evening Post*, which was published December 9, 1819.

Upon the arrival of this paper at Manchester it excited little attention, as the letter was believed to be a forgery or a fraud. Had not the best people in the town long believed the Boorns to be guilty? Had not one or both of them made full confession? The bones of the murdered man, a button of his coat, his jack-knife—had not all these things been found? Had not an upright judge made a solemn charge that the evidence was conclusive, and an intelligent jury found them guilty, and the Legislature sanctioned the findings? There was no doubt of their guilt—none whatever; and therefore no benefit of a doubt had been given by jury, judge or court of appeal.

Mr. Chadwick's letter was, nevertheless, taken to Stephen's cell, and read aloud. It was so overwhelming that nature could scarcely survive the shock. The poor fellow dropped to the floor in a fainting-fit, and had to be recovered by dashes of cold water.

Intelligence came the next day from a Mr. Whelpley, formerly a resident of Manchester, that he himself had been to New Jersey, and had seen Russell Colvin. The members of the jury which had convicted the Boorns, however, hesitated to accept anything short of the man Colvin's presence, and Judge Chase, who had sentenced them, pointed to Stephen Boorn's confession.

On the third day came another letter. 'I have Colvin with me,' wrote Mr. Whelpley; 'I personally know Colvin,' swore Jno. Rempton; 'he now stands before me; it is the same Russell Colvin who married Anna Boorn at Manchester, Vt.," said Mrs. Jones, of Brooklyn, in her affidavit. But it would not answer. Pride of opinion is very stubborn. Doubt of opinion dies very hard.

However, Colvin, or Colvin's double, was on his way. As he passed through Poughkeepsie, the streets were thronged to see him. The news preceded him everywhere. His strange story was printed in all the newspapers, and told at every fireside. At Hudson cannon were fired; in Albany he was shown to the crowd on a platform; and all along the route to Troy bands of music played, and banners were flaunting, and cheers were given as Colvin passed along. Some men become famous from having been murdered; Russell Colvin was famous because he was alive.

Toward evening of Friday, December 22, 1819, a double sleigh was driven furiously down the main street of Manchester to the tavern-door. It contained Rempton, Whelpley, Chadwick and the bewildered Russell Colvin. Immediately a crowd of men, women and children gathered around, and as the sleigh unloaded its occupants, and they took their places on the piazza, cries came from the lips of scores of gazers: "That's Russell Colvin, sure enough! There is not the slightest doubt of it!" He affectionately embraced his children, asked after the Boorns, and started for the jail.

The prison-doors were unbolted, and the news was told to Stephen Boorn.

"Colvin has come, Stephen."

"Has he? Where is he?"

"Here I am, Stephen," exclaimed his brother-in-law. "What are those on your legs?"

"Shackles!"

"What for?"

"They said I murdered you."

"You never hurt me in your life," replied Colvin.

The sequel is soon told. Stephen and Jesse Boorn were released from prison, and Russell Colvin returned to New Jersey. But the judge who suffered an innocent man to be convicted of murder by the admission of extra-judicial confessions—the jury who deliberated but one hour before agreeing upon a verdict of guilty, upon proof which should not hang a dog—the deacon and church members who urged confession—the ninety-seven members of the Legislature who refused a re-hearing of the evidence—what of them?

THE LITTLE WORLD OF LONDON.—Here are some curious statistics about London, from one of the papers issued by the London City Mission:—It covers within the fifteen miles' radius of Charing Cross nearly 700 square miles. It numbers within those boundaries 4,000,000 inhabitants. It comprises 1,000,000 foreigners from every quarter of the globe. It contains more Roman Catholics than Rome itself, more Jews than the whole of Palestine, more Irishmen than Dublin, more Scotchmen than Edinburgh, more Welchmen than Cardiff, and more country-born persons than the counties of Devon, Warwickshire, and Durham combined. It has a birth in it every five minutes, a death in it every eight minutes, and seven accidents every day in its 7,000 miles of streets. It has on an average twenty-eight miles of new streets opened and 9,000 new houses built in it every year. It has 1,000 ships and 9,000 sailors in its port every day. It has 117,000 habitual criminals on its police register, increasing at an average of 30,000 per annum. It has as many beer-shops and gin palaces as would, if placed side by side, stretch from Charing Cross to Portsmouth, a distance of seventy-three miles. It has as many paupers as would more than occupy every house in Brighton. It has an influence with all parts of the world, represented by the yearly delivery in its postal districts of 238,000,000 letters.

The man who undertakes to live two lives will find that he is living but one, and that one is a life of deception. Causes will be true to their effects. That which you sow you will reap. If you live to the flesh, to the passions, to the corrupt inclinations, you may depend upon it that the fruit, which is in store for you, will be that which belongs to these things. There can be no doubt as to what your harvest will be. If you think that, after your day's business is done, you can shut the blinds and carry on your orgies in secret with your evil companions; if you think you can serve the devil by night, and then go forth and look like a sweet and virtuous young man that goes in the best society, and does not drink, nor gamble, nor commit any vices, then the devil has his halter about your neck, and he leads you, the stupidest fool of all the crowd. You deceive nobody but yourself. There is an expression in the eye that tells stories. Passions stain clear through. A man might as well expect to take nitrate of silver—whose nature is to turn him to a lead color—and not have the doctor know it, as to expect that he can form evil habits and pursue mischievous courses, and not have it known. It does not need a sheriff to search out and reveal the kind of life that you are living. Every law of God in nature is an officer after you. It does not require a court, judge or jury to try and condemn you. All nature is a court room, and every principle thereof is a part of that court, which tries and condemns you. Do not think that there can be such a monstrous mis-adjustment of affairs as that you can do the work of the devil and have the remuneration of an angel.

FEMALE SOCIETY.—All men who avoid female society have dull perceptions, and are stupid, and have gross tastes, and revolt against what is pure. Your club swaggerers, who are sucking the buts of billiard-cues all night, call female society insipid. Poetry is uninspiring to a yokel; beauty has no charms for a blind man; music does not please a poor beast, who does not know one tune from another; but, as a true epicure is hardly ever tired of water, sauce and brown bread and butter, I protest I can sit for a whole night talking to a well regulated, kindly woman about her daughter Fanny or her son Frank, and like the evening's entertainment.

One of the greatest benefits a man can derive from woman's society is that he is bound to be respectful to her. The habit is of great good to your morals, men, depend upon it. Our education makes us the most eminently selfish men in the world, and the greatest benefit that one has is to think of somebody to whom he is bound to be constantly attentive and respectful.

THE LAZY DAUGHTER.—Among the worst features of a badly-minded daughter, we would first single out indolence, or to use the rough and more expressive English word, laziness. A lazy, sofa-lolling, lie a-bed late in the morning young woman is an affront to her sex, and in her own family more a curse than a blessing. To her mother she is a burden, and to her father an object of contempt. She is also a great promoter of domestic strife, and a shocking example to her younger sisters Such a being crawls, instead of walking with tripping alacrity, through life. She dwadles instead of works, her speech is vulgar, and altogether her ways are very bad indeed; and, to add to her misdeeds, her health suffers through her folly, and thus she wantonly imposes a grievous tax on the purse and patience of her parents. For a girl to be idle in the flush of her youth is to invite any and all kinds of calamities to befall her with blistering anguish; and, depend upon it, the downward career of most afflicted women may be primarily traced to this early and wicked habit, for it is nothing else, it being as easy for a young woman to be industrious as the reverse.

Judge Myrick of California has decided that a man undergoing an imprisonment for life is civilly dead and his wife a widow.

A woman sixty years old was recently convicted of murder in the midland circuit in England for killing her husband, aged ninety-nine.

PLAIN TALK FROM A JUDGE.

At Rome, Ga., recently, four young lawyers, who had just passed an examination, were addressed as follows by Judge Underwood:

"Young gentlemen, I want to say a word or two to you. You have passed as good an examination as usual, perhaps better; but you don't know anything. Like those young fellows just back to their homes from their graduating college, you think you know a great deal. That is a great mistake. If you ever get to be of any account, you will be surprised at your present ignorance. Don't be too big for your breeches. Go round to the justices' court. Try to learn something. Don't be afraid. Set off upon a high key. You will, no doubt, speak a great deal of nonsense, but you will have one consolation—nobody will know it. The great mass of mankind take sound for sense. Never mind about your case—pitch in. You are about as apt to win as lose. Don't be ashamed of the wise-looking justice. He don't know a thing. He is a dead-beat on knowledge. Stand to your rack, fodder or no fodder, and you will see daylight after awhile. The community generally supposes that you will be rascals. There is no absolute necessity that you should. You may be smart without being tricky. Lawyers ought to be gentlemen. Some of them don't come up to the standard, and are a disgrace to the fraternity. They know more than any other race generally, and not much in particular. They don't know anything about sand-stones, carboniferous periods, and ancient land animals known as fossils. Men that make out they know a great deal on these subjects don't know much. They are humbugs—superb humbugs. They are ancient land animals themselves, and will ultimately be fossils. You are dismissed with the sincere hope of the court that you will not make asses of yourselves."

HEALTH AND TALENT.—It is no exaggeration to say that health is a large ingredient in what the world calls talent. A man without it may be a giant in intellect, but his deeds will be the deeds of a dwarf. On the contrary, let him have a quick circulation, a good digestion, the bulk, thews and sinews of a man, and the alacrity and unthinking confidence inspired by these; and, though having but a thimbleful of brains, he will either blunder upon success or set failure at defiance. It is true, especially in this country, that the number of centaurs in every community—of men in whom heroic intellects are allied with bodily constitutions as tough as those of horses—is small; that, in general, man has reason to think himself well off in the lottery of life if he draws the prize of a healthy stomach without a mind, or the prize of a fine intellect with a crazy stomach. But of the two, a weak mind in a Herculean frame is better than a giant mind in a crazy constitution.

A pound of energy with an ounce of talent will achieve a greater result than a pound of talent with an ounce of energy. The first requisite to success in life is to be a good animal. In any of the learned professions a vigorous constitution is equal to at least fifty per cent. more brain. Wit, judgment, imagination, all the qualities of the mind attain thereby a force and splendor to which they could never approach without it. But intellect in a weak body is "like gold in a spent swimmer's pocket." A mechanic may have tools of the sharpest edge and highest polish; but what are these without a vigorous arm and hand? Of what use is it that your mind has become a vast granary of knowledge if you have not strength to turn the key?

SPARKS THAT MAY KINDLE.—Over every grave, even though tenanted by guilt and shame, the human heart, when circumstantially made acquainted with its silent records of suffering or temptation, yearns in love or in forgiveness to breathe a solemn *Requiescat*.

Luxurious ease is the surest harbinger of pain, and the dead lulls of tropical seas are the immediate fore-runners of tornadoes.

It is a truth of the largest value that the dominion of woman is potent, exactly in that degree that the nature of woman is exalted. Such as woman is will man forever be; the one sex being essentially the antipode and adequate antagonist of the other, woman cannot be other than depressed where man is not exalted. Never yet was woman in one stage of elevation, and man (of the same community) in another. Therefore, daughter of God and man, all potent woman! reverence thy own ideal; and in the wildest of the homage that is paid thee, as well as in the most real aspects of thy wide dominion, see no trophy of idle vanity, but a silent indication, whether designed or not, of the possible grandeur enshrined in thy nature. Realize it to the extent of thy power,

"And show us how divine a thing
A woman may become."

"TOTE."—The Mobile *Register* resents an imputation cast upon a legitimate Southern word, saying: "The other day a Georgia paper said that Mr. A. H. Stephens could not have made a certain remark, because he understood the English language too well to make use of such a slang word as 'tote.' We cling to 'tote' as the Anglo Saxon nation clings to Magna Charta. It reminds us of our descent from a liberty-loving people, and preserves the memory of justice. The writ by which a peasant aggrieved in the Baron's Court was enabled to carry *(tollere)* his case up to the County Court was known as the writ of 'tolt,' pronounced commonly 'tote.' This privilege which the humble farmer had of toting his case from his own landlord to a less prejudiced court was dear to every Englishman. The people of the South will not surrender that word. It is as dear to our yeomen as the common law itself."

There is a story related of Jarvis, the distinguished painter, to the effect that, walking down Broadway one day, he saw before him a dark-looking foreigner bearing under his arm a small red cedar cigar-box. He stepped immediately into his "wake," and whenever he met a friend (which was once in two or three minutes, for the popular artist knew everybody), he would beckon to him with a wink to "fall in line" behind. By and by the man turned down one of the cross streets, followed close by Jarvis and his "tail." Attracted by the measured tread of so many feet, he turned round abruptly, and, seeing the procession that followed in his footsteps, he exclaimed: "What for de debbil is dis! What for you take me, eh? What for you so much come after me, eh?" "Sir," exclaimed Jarvis, with an air of profound respect, "we saw you going to the grave alone with the body of your dead infant, and we took the opportunity to offer you our sympathy, and to follow your babe to the tomb." The man explained, in his broken manner, that the box contained only cigars, and he evinced his gratitude for the interest which had been manifested in his behalf, by breaking it open and dispensing them very liberally to the mourners.

A DANCE WITHOUT A SMILE.—They have a singular kind of a dance conducted on the greens of country villages in Russia. The dancers stand apart, a knot of young men here, a knot of maidens there, each sex by itself, and silent as a crowd of mutes. A piper breaks into a tune, a youth pulls of his cap, and challenges his girl with a wave and a bow. If the girl is willing she waves her handkerchief in token of assent, the youth advances, takes a corner of the handkerchief in his hand, and leads his lassie round and round. No word is spoken and no laugh is heard. Stiff with cords and rich with braids, the girl moves heavily by herself, going round and round, and never allowing her partner to touch her hand. The pipe goes droning on for hours in the same sad key and measure; and the prize of merit in this "circling," as the dance is called, is given by the spectators to the lassie who, in all that summer revelry has never spoken and never smiled!

TOILETS OF THE NOTABILITIES IN THE BOIS DE BOULOGNE.—Lucy Hooper, in her last Paris letter, describes the notabilities in the Bois de Boulogne of an afternoon, when all the fashionables are out for a drive. The display of toilets is always magnificent. Mlle. Croisette, the actress, always attracts all eyes as she drives past in her dashing low victoria. One lady, who always dresses very elegantly, and whose equipage is as elegant as her attire, always sits with her eyes shut while she drives; whether she is asleep or shamming to attract attention it is hard to decide. In a superb low carriage, driven by a coachman in the picturesque costume of a Russian Istrostchik, the black horses tossing their heads proudly under the weight of a harness glittering with gold, sits the heroine of the Russian diamond scandal, the beautiful Mrs. Blackford, or Mrs. Feenix, or whatever other name she may call herself. Beautiful both in form and face, exquisitely dressed and thoroughly distinguished looking, it is no wonder that every eye follows her as she passes down the drive. Next comes a superb open barouche, lined with brown satin, the coachman and footman in elegant liveries, the horses worthy of drawing the carriage of a prince, and with one solitary occupant, a woman—no longer young, but tall and stylish in figure, with a hard, haggard face, dyed yellow hair pulled low on her forehead, and round, parrot-like eyes—a woman who never in her best days could have been a beauty. Yet, since she first seized upon the shadowy sceptre of the *demi-monde*, kings have been dethroned, empires have passed away, the face of Europe itself has changed, and here she sits, secure in her evil royalty. It is Cora Pearl, and, look around the Bois de Boulogne as you will, you will find no equipage more faultlessly appointed, no toilet more elegant and tasteful than hers.

Mr. James O——, of Cincinnati, who had just arrived at the Grand Hotel in Paris, called the other day on one of the principal Parisian embalmers, to whom he said: "I have just come direct from Cincinnati, attracted by your reputation, in order to be embalmed by you." "But sir," replied the man, "to be embalmed one must—" "You are going to say," interrupted Mr. O——, "it is necessary to be dead. I have provided for that. In this envelope you will find your fees, some other money, and directions about sending my body home." Thus saying, Mr. O—— took a bottle of laudanum from his pocket, and was only prevented from swallowing the poison by the quickness of the embalmer. The American was taken into custody and the authorities have written to his friends.

THE DUCHESS' WATCH.—When Queen Victoria was about thirty years younger than she is now, she was inclined to be very exact in the way of business, and more especially in the way of promptness to appointed times and places. Seven years a queen; four years a wife; and three years a mother, she felt probably a more weighty dignity resting upon her than she has felt since. And yet, no crust of dignity or royal station could ever entirely shut out her innate goodness of heart. At the time of which we speak, the Duchess of Sutherland held the office of mistress of the robes of the British queen, and on public occasions her position was very near her royal person, and deemed of great importance. A day and an hour had been appointed for a certain public ceremony in which the queen was to take part. The hour had arrived, and of all the court the duchess alone was absent, and her absence retarded the departure. The queen gave vent more than once to her impatience, and at length, just as she was about to enter the carriage without her first lady of honor, the duchess, in breathless haste, made her appearance, stammering some faint words of excuse. "My dear duchess" said the queen, smiling, "I think you must have a bad watch." And as she thus spoke she unloosed from her neck the chain of a magnificent watch she herself wore, and passed it around the neck of Lady Sutherland. Though given as a present, the lesson conveyed with it made a deep impression. The proud duchess changed color, and a tear which she could not repress, fell upon her cheek. On the next day she tendered her resignation, but it was not accepted. It is said that ever afterwards she was, if anything, more punctual than the queen herself.

WATCHING ONE'S SELF.—"When I was a boy," said an old man, "we had a schoolmaster who had an odd way of catching the idle boys. One day he called out to us: 'Boys, I must have closer attention to your books. The first one that sees another idle I want him to inform me, and I will attend to the case.'

"'Ah!' thought I to myself, "there is Joe Simmons, that I don't like. I'll watch him, and if I see him look off his books, I'll tell.

"It was not long before I saw Joe look off his book, and immediately I informed the master.

"'Indeed?' said he, 'how did you know he was idle?'

"'I saw him,' said I.

"'You did? And were your eyes on your book when you saw him?'

"I was caught, and I never watched for idle boys again."

If we are sufficiently watchful over our own conduct we shall have no time to find fault with the conduct of others.

"PECULIAR PEOPLE."—People who, at this period of our commercial prosperity, when writing paper costs next to nothing, cross their letters.

People who have no poor relations.

People who always know where the wind is.

People who send conscience money to the Secretary of the Treasury.

People who take long walks before breakfast.

People who spend an income on flowers for the buttonhole.

People who like paying income tax.

People who go to hot, uncomfortable theatres.

People who buy early and costly asparagus; nine inches of white stalk to one of green head.

People who give large parties.

People who lavish their money on the heathen abroad, and leave the heathen at home to take care of themselves.

People who have the ice broken to enable them to take a cold bath in winter.

People with no prejudices, weaknesses, antipathies, hobbies, crotchets or favorite theories.

People who hold their tongues.

CAST A LINE FOR YOURSELF.—A young man stood listlessly watching some anglers on a bridge. He was poor and dejected. At last, approaching a basket filled with wholesome looking fish, he sighed: "If, now, I had these, I would be happy. I could sell them at a fair price, and buy me food and lodging."

"I will give you just as many and just as good fish," said the owner who chanced to overhear his words, "if you will do me a trifling favor."

"And what is that?" asked the other, eagerly.

"Only to tend this line till I come back. I wish to go on a short errand."

The proposal was gladly accepted. The old man was gone so long that the young man began to be impatient. Meantime the hungry fish snapped at the baited hook, and the young man lost all his depression in the excitement of pulling them in; and when the owner returned, he had caught a large number.

Counting out from them as many as were in the basket, and presenting them to the young man, the old fisherman said:

"I fulfill my promise from the fish you have caught, to teach you, whenever you see others earning what you need, to waste no time in fruitless wishing, but to cast a line for yourself."

Correspondence.

FOR THE GAZETTE.

Reminiscences of a Sojourn of Many Years in the Principal Empires and Kingdoms of Europe.

NUMBER LXXVI.

[ERRATA.—In last week's issue two errors occurred in "Voyageur's" communication:—We said that the streets of "Pisa" were superior to any we had seen in Europe, except those of Tuscany and small portions of some in Trieste, Austria; but we should have said that the streets of "Florence" were superior to any we had seen in Europe, except those of "Pisa," Tuscany, etc. Again we said that the mosaic "factories" are to be found in the shops on Vecchio bridge and in the jewelry shops near by; we should have said the "work" of these mosaic factories was to be found in these shops, and not the factories, as they are very extensive establishments.]

MESSRS. EDITORS:—One of the most interesting places in Florence to visit is what is called the Museum of Natural History. The botanical department is extensive, and that of mineralogy is very fine, but the zoological department is not so full as I have seen elsewhere. The anatomical department (in wax) was gotten up by Clement Susini, an Italian Catholic priest. It is the largest and most varied collection I have ever seen, consisting of all kinds of fruit and flowers, birds, fish, frogs, snakes, and, in fact, everything—and all as natural and life-like as it is possible to conceive. There are two fowls—male and female; two ducks—male and female; two rabbits, two cats, and a vast number of other things in wax. The fowls, ducks, cats and rabbits were all opened, and looked as fresh as if they had just been killed, and, as there were splotches of red wax here and there, in imitation of blood, many were under the impression that they were really natural. All the internal portions of these objects were visible, so that the curious might examine and learn their construction. I was particularly interested in the contents of two glass coffins:—one consisted in one-half (the left half) of a very handsome young man, who was split down through the spine, dividing him exactly into halves; the other was the right side of a most beautiful young girl, or at least that is what one-half of the face indicated. There are brass rails around these coffins, so as to prevent any one from touching them. Men and women (but no children) are admitted to these departments, consisting of forty great halls; but there is one room to which no ladies are admitted, and but few gentlemen. There were six of us, and we made the usher up a sum and at last prevailed on him to admit us. He took out his key, unlocked the door, and we all slipped in as cautiously as possible. After you leave this room, you enter a department that is filled with various things that have been turned to stone by some petrifying process. The name of the man who discovered this wonderful art was Sergarto, and he was the only man who has ever been able to turn flesh to stone. But, poor fellow, he was doomed to persecution, because the Bible says we return to dust, and if we should be turned to stone we could not become dust. He was hounded by the church, imprisoned and maltreated, until the poor fellow died from the effects, and was so provoked that he allowed his secret to die with him. And now, when it is too late, everything has been done to discover the secret. Several attempts have been made since by others, and the results of their labors are there—to show that they are a miserable failure. All the samples of flesh on exhibition by those who made these miserable failures are to this day of a clammy feeling, and when struck with a key have a dead sound, not unlike the sound that a bladder of snuff has when thumped. The appearance is worse than dead, looking somewhat like badly tanned leather. The work of Sergarto is perfect:—there are frogs, lizards, snakes, pieces of human flesh and hundreds of human specimens that I cannot now call to mind. I remember seeing the head and neck of a man, with the hair still upon it. To say that it looks natural would not be true—it is stone, perfect stone. There are also the head and neck of a young woman, whose hair hangs down in a mass behind her ears, to her shoulders. When any of Sergarto's work is struck with a key or any other piece of metal, it gives forth a ringing sound. A correspondent of the Newark *Sentinel*, writing from Florence, speaks of this petrifaction with great admiration. I will quote from him, as I am not prepared to appreciate Sergarto so highly. He says: "There was at the exhibition one specimen of modern invention—a petrified human hand! A Florentine physician and naturalist, named Sergarto, who accompanied Champollion on the Egyptian expedition, soon after his return produced specimens of petrified flesh, and thus preserved the bust of a young woman, who was killed in an insurrection here, so beautifully and so perfectly that it seems like the bust of one just dead. At the anatomical museum attached to the hospital Sergarto was connected with, are to be seen tables made of petrified human viscera. It seems mosaic work, the tables are so beautiful. A great variety of things made of different parts of human bodies are also exhibited. Sergarto is supposed to have discovered the secret in Egypt, and he promised to leave it behind; but being piqued with the indifference which had been shown him by the government he never communicated it. He died a few years after his return. * * Great pains have since been taken to discover the process by which he produced such wonderful effects, and so far have these succeeded that the hand exhibited at the fair was the result; but it comes far short, in perfectness, of the human petrifactions made by Sergarto, and is so different in appearance as to prove that his secret died with him. The loss of such a sure method of preserving specimens of natural history—for loss indeed it is to the scientific world—may thus be attributed to the neglect of the Grand Duke to patronize art and science."

It is very well for one to be pleased with what he sees; but to say that the bust of that girl is so beautiful and so perfect that it looks like one who has just died, is a great piece of affectation. Sergarto's discovery was truly wonderful, and he did what he proposed to do, turn flesh into stone, and so did the Egyptians succeed in turning their dead into mummies; but who has ever seen a beautiful mummy? The fact is, the more the dead are worked with the worse they look. The process he used—whatever that may have been—had the effect to kill anything like color, or any thing that could remind one of a human being. The substance looked dead—dead like wood more than stone, though it is stone. And as for the lady's work tables, work boxes and snuff boxes inlaid with flesh and viscera, everyone knows that neither viscera nor the flesh contain any beautiful colors, and, therefore, cannot resemble mosaics, for mosaics require bright, vivid colors, and these are dull, dead colors; in fact they are negatives. In the same room I saw one thing, which, though shocking, was wonderful, and which I will allude to in my next.

VOYAGEUR.