

thus much shalt thou learn,' direct the choice to your own happiness and the happiness of the world, which, in the event of your success, you would one day certainly rule by the pure force of accumulated experience. Farewell!"

Thus the letter, which was unsigned and undated, abruptly ended.

"What do you make of that, Uncle Holly?" said Leo, with a sort of gasp, as he replaced it on the table. "We have been looking for a mystery, and we certainly seem to have found one."

"What do I make of it? Why, that your poor dear father was off his head, of course," I answered, testily. "I guessed as much that night, twenty years ago, when he came into my room. You see, he evidently hurried his own end, poor man. It is absolute balderdash."

"That's it, sir," said Job, solemnly. Job was a most matter-of-fact specimen of a matter-of-fact class.

"Well, let's see what the potsherd has to say, at any rate," said Leo, taking up the translation in his father's writing, and commencing to read: "I, Amenarais, of the Royal House of Hake, a Pharaoh of Egypt, wife of Kallikrates (the Strong and Beautiful, or the Beautiful in Strength), a Priest of Isis, whom the gods cherish and the demons obey, being about to die, to my little son Tisithenes (the Mighty Avenger). I fled with thy father from Egypt in the days of Nekt-neb, a Pharaoh of Egypt, who was a mighty river."

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Perfectly bewildered, I turned the relic over. It was covered from top to bottom with notes and signatures in Greek, Latin, and English. The first in uncial Greek was by Tisithenes, the son to whom the writing was addressed. It was: "I cannot go. To thee, my son Kallikrates."

This Kallikrates (probably, in the Greek fashion, so named after his grandfather) evidently made some attempt to start on the quest, for his entry, written in very faint and almost illegible ink, owing to their having been written on that portion of the tile which had, in the course of ages, undergone the most handling, they were nearly worn out—was the bold, modern-looking signature of one Lionel Vincoy, "Ætate suo 17," which was written thereon, I think, by Leo's grandfather. To the right of this was the initial "L. B. V." and below came a variety of Greek signatures, in uncial and cursive character, and what appeared to be some repetitions of the sentence "to thee my son," showing that the relic has been passed on from generation to generation.

The next legible thing after the Greek signatures was the word "ROMAN, A. D. C." showing that the family had now migrated to Rome. Unfortunately, however, the date of their settlement there is forever lost, for just where it had been placed a piece of the potsherd is broken away.

Then followed a dozen or more of Latin signatures, jotted about here and there, wherever there was space upon the tile suitable to their inscription. These signatures were, almost without exception, ended with the name "Vindex," or "the Avenger," which seems to have been adopted by the family after its migration to Rome as a kind of equivalent to the Greek "Tisithenes," which also means an avenger. Ultimately, of course, this Latin cognomen of Vindex was transformed, first into De Vincoy and then into the plain modern Vincoy. It is very curious to observe how the idea of revenge, inspired by an Egyptian before the time of Christ, is thus, as it were, embodied in an English family name.

A few of the Roman names inscribed upon the sherd I have actually since found mentioned in history and other records. They were, if I remember right,

MYRSIVS VINDEX
SEX. VARIUS MARCVLLVS
C. PVIDIVS C. F. VINDEX.

and
LABERIA POMPEIANA. CONVIX. MACRINI. VINDICIS.

the last being, of course, that of a Roman lady. After the Roman names there is evidently a gap of very many centuries. Nobody will ever know now what was the history of the relic during those dark ages, or how it came to have been preserved in the family. My poor friend Vincoy had, it will be remembered, told me that his Roman ancestors finally settled in Lombardy, and when Charlemagne invaded it returned with his kinsmen the Alps, and their home in Brittany, whence they crossed to England in the reign of Edward the Confessor. How he knew this I am not aware, for there is no reference to Lombardy or Charlemagne upon the tile, though, as will presently be seen, there is a reference to Brittany.

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yeo ee, on this day mondaye next folowynge after the feeste of Seynte Marye the flowren Vnrgyne yn the yere of Saluacion the flessene hundredth and fyve and fowerth."

The next and, save one, last entry, was Elizabethan, and dated 1564: "A most strange historie, and one that did cost my father his life; for in seekinge for the place upon the east coast of Africa, his pinnace was sunk by a Portuguese galloon off Lorenzo Marquez, and he himself perished.—JOHN VINCOY."

Then came the last entry, apparently, to judge by the style of writing, made by some representative of the family in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was the well-known quotation by Hamlet, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio."

"Well," I said, when I had read these paragraphs out, at least those of them that were still legible, and to the conclusion of the whole matter, Leo, and now you can form your own opinion on it. I have already formed mine."

"And what is it?" he asked, in his quick way.

"It is this. I believe that potsherd to be perfectly genuine, and that, wonderful as it may seem, it has come down in your family since the fourth century before Christ. The entries absolutely prove it, and therefore, however improbable it may seem, it must be accepted. But there I stop. That your remote ancestress, the Egyptian Princess, or some scribe under her direction, wrote that which we see on the tile I have no doubt, nor have I the slightest doubt but that her sufferings and the loss of her husband had turned her head, and that she was not right in her mind when she did write it."

"How do you account for what my father saw and heard there?" asked Leo.

"Coincidence. No doubt there are plenty of bluffs on the coast of Africa that look something like a man's head, and plenty of people who speak bastard Arabic. Also, I believe that there are lots of swamps. Another thing is, Leo, and I am sorry to say it, but I do not believe that your poor father was quite right when he wrote that letter. He had met with a great trouble, and also he had allowed this story to prey on his imagination, and he was a very imaginative man. Anyway, I believe that the whole thing is the most unmitigated rubbish. I know that there are curious things and forces in nature which we rarely meet with, and when we do meet them, cannot understand. But until I see it with my own eyes, which I am not likely to, I never will believe that there is any means of avoiding death, even for a time, or that there is or was a white sorceress living in the heart of an African swamp. It is bosh, my boy, all bosh."

"What do you say, Job?"

"I say, sir, that it is a lie, and if it is true, I hope Mr. Leo won't meddle with no such things, for no good can't come of it."

"Perhaps you are both right," said Leo, in a quiet voice. "I express no opinion. But I say this. I am going to set the matter at rest once and for all, and if you won't come with me, I will go by myself."

That day three months we were on the ocean, bound for Zanzibar.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

TESTING FIREMEN.

The Fire Department of the city of New York has long been recognized both at home and abroad as among the best in the world as to efficiency, activity, system, apparatus, and progressiveness. It has escaped more than any other department the vicious influence of party politics, even at the time when the influence of the party was at its height.

The reason for this is not very far to seek. It lies in the fact that this department, more than any other in the city, comes under the direct and vigilant inspection of a body of active and intelligent citizens who have a strong and immediate pecuniary interest in its efficiency.

It happened, therefore, that when the act of May, 1854, brought the Fire Department within the range of the Civil Service Law, there was less to be done than anywhere else to secure its application. Nevertheless the reform system has been of great advantage to this, that it has perfected and systematized the methods already in use, has added new features, and has given them permanence and authority.

For instance, certain physical tests were already in use. Before full appointment to the "uniformed force," as it is officially called, men were put into an auxiliary branch of the service, and at once trained and tested for the severer duties of the permanent service. This plan is still continued, but there is a practical and severe physical examination before any appointment, which thoroughly sifts the applicants.

Among the special tests the applicants are required to climb a long post reaching to the ceiling, using their arms, hands, and legs the best they can—an exercise in which the fellows who have had the advantage of nutting as a sport in boyhood notably excel. Then the men are asked to walk the edge of a plank some eight or ten inches from the floor, and are given three trials, account being taken of their quickness and security. Then they must pass along suspended from a horizontal ladder, taking the rings with their hands. Then one of the men lies down inert, and each applicant is required to pick him up and carry

"Another thing that makes me fix the date of this entry at the middle of the eighteenth century is that I have an acting copy of Hamlet, written about 1740, in which these two lines are misquoted almost exactly in the same way, and I have little doubt that the Emperor who wrote them on the potsherd may have heard them so misquoted at that date. Of course the lines really run:

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

him a certain distance in a manner which is carefully explained to them. They are then asked to lift dumb-bells or weights of from 50 to 250 pounds, in prescribed positions, testing the strength of the arms, of the legs, and of the back and trunk, and to raise their own weight slowly by one foot placed at a height a little above that of an ordinary chair. It is obvious that these tests, with even a very moderate minimum of requirement, are sure to weed out from the applicants who have passed the ordinary medical examination about all who are physically unfit for the work of firemen. It is equally plain that they give an excellent basis for choice among those who pass the minimum, and that both these results are very substantial benefits.

JOHN ESTEN COOKE.

JOHN ESTEN COOKE, the son of JOHN ROGERS COOKE and MARIA PENDLETON COOKE, was born at Winchester, Frederick County, Virginia, on November 8, 1850, and died on September 28th, of typhoid fever, at his home, "The Briars," near Boyce, Clarke County, Virginia.

His father, a lawyer of distinction, imposed his profession upon his two boys, the first-born of whom, PHILIP PENDLETON, was fourteen years older than JOHN ESTEN, whose early years were passed at Lexington, the country-seat of his father, near Frying-Pan, where he remained until the destruction of the house by fire in his ninth year, when the family removed to Richmond. At the age of sixteen he left school, and studying law with his father, was admitted to the bar, as his brother had been before him. Where his earliest writings were published we are not told, but probably in the *Virginia Herald* of the time, and without doubt in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, which for years was the only Southern magazine. Like his brother he wrote verse, specimens of which will be found in the old editions of *Grissold's Poets of America*. His calling, however, was prose, and his was the prime rose path of fiction. That he wrote easily, but without incurring the condemnation which SKERDAN pronounced upon easy writing, was evident from the rapidity with which his stories succeeded each other; for in four years (1854-8) he produced six, to say nothing of his miscellaneous writing in different periodicals. Their titles were *Leather Stocking and Silk*, *Youth of Jefferson*, *Virginia Comedians*, *Ellice*, *a Human Comedy*, *Last of the Foresters*, and *Henry St. John, Gentleman*. That he was a voluminous contributor to the periodicals I infer from the list of his writings in the index to one HANCOCK'S MAGAZINE—where nineteen are specified. He was one of the few authors whom I have known who was always happy when he sat at his desk, with paper before him and pen in hand, jotting down his thick-coming fancies; he wrote from the pure love of writing.

But one day he dropped the pen, like so many of the literary guild at the South, and the North too, for fighting blood was running then in the veins of every American man, and girding on his sword, rode away to the battle-field. All who knew JOHN ESTEN COOKE knew on which side he would be found when the irrepressible conflict began, for, Southern to his heart's core, the love which he bore his native State, and which was entwined with every fibre of his being, was a passionate adoration that expressed itself in deeds, not words. This young Virginia gentleman went out of the Union with Virginia. It was as an author, not as a soldier, that I knew Cooke, so I will not speak of him in his militant character except to say that he served in the Confederate ranks on the staff of that dashing leader General J. E. B. STUART, was present at most of the battles in Virginia, and at the surrender at Appomattox Court House, where, to have been glad to breathe his sword and return to his pen.

His later writings consist of a *Life of Stonewall Jackson*, a *Life of General Lee*, and upward of twenty novels, only two or three of which I have read. I liked them less than his earlier stories, which have, I think, a charm that is to be found in the stories of the great American writer—the charm of elegant comedy, the pathos of pastoral tragedy, sparkles of wit, flashes of humor, and everywhere the amenities of high breeding. They are romantic, poetic, delightful.

R. H. STODDARD.

WAIFS AND STRAYS.

A Georgia farmer has for years protected his chickens from hawks and owls by means of a scythe blade attached, edge up, to a perpendicular pole. The hawks and owls light upon the blade, the farmer says, and straightway their toes are shaved off, so that they are unable to carry away the fowls. It never seems to occur to him to have his owls outside of Georgia to stop and roost for a spell on the edge of a sharp scythe.

A citizen of Philadelphia complains in the *Ledger* that his little daughter, who attends a grammar-school in that city, was recently required to give the meanings of, and to employ properly the words, "abbreviation, abstraction, aberrance, aberrant, aberrate, and aberration."

It is safe to say that these words were unknown to Solomon, or to the Seven Wise Men of Greece.

Two Western girls having heard that if any one counted seven stars on seven consecutive nights, and on the seventh night also had a dream, the dream would surely "come to pass," were perplexed and horrified on comparing notes after the observance and occurrence of everything precisely in accordance with the rule, to learn that one of them was to be married to the Emperor of New Jersey, and that the other was to be made into wine jelly for a picnic, and run into moulds representing Bunker Hill Monument and the Central Park Obelisk.

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