THE GOD OF THE TROPICAL LAGOON.

A Tale of a Rebellion of Negroes Upon a Remote Coffee Plantation in Brazil.

BY B. AND HESKETH PRICHARD.

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In the foreground a dozen torches lit the clearing crowded on the edge of the tropical forest. Up and down the slippery broad track that wound out of the trees through the cluster of huts, with their gleaming wattle roofs, a crowd of gesticulating negroes chattered and jostled together in a spasm of feverish excitement.

Beneath them, the swamp, haunted by its night noises, fell away into a hollow, but quickly merged into forest again. Above all, the moon hung silver pale, beating in almost visible waves of light through the white exhalations of the marsh.

Inside a wattle-and-daub hovel, and chained by the ankles to a wooden bar which ran across the centre of the place, were two men, the only whites within thirty miles. One of them, gaunt, big-boned, had propped his shoulder against the antheaten rafter and survived the scene before him with, beaten resignation.

He seemed unconscious to the hideous jibes flung at him by the moving semicircle of blacks. His eyelids were bulged with fever and his shoulder bones stuck up sharply through his gray Norfolk jacket.

It was the malaria which had placed him in his present predicament. For days he had seen that there was something wrong with the negroes on the estate, and the fear of mutiny had kept him fiercely awake until nature gave way under the strain and he was taken sleeping.

Presently a horn sounded somewhere out of sight, the negroes trooped away and in the comparative silence Gordon's companion stepped from the shadow at the other side of the hut.

"Now, they've got us, they'll murder us at sunup," he said, in a hoarse, fever-cracked voice.

"We haven't a chance of escaping or of being rescued," Gordon shifted his aching shoulders against the wood. "Walters and O'Brien went down the river last week. No, we haven't the remotest ghost of a chance. It's no use blinking the matter."

"The traitors! What's wrong with them?"

"I suppose they couldn't resist the temptation the offers entiled them. These things happen periodically on these back-of-beyond plantations."

"They had no grievances?"

"No," agreed Gordon, "they hadn't. But they naturally prefer idleness to work, and that crop down by the river meant for them a full month of toil. There are thousands of arrobas there, if one."

"But what have we done to them? We've treated us hard as any of them. Beside, their emancipation would not be out today if it hadn't been for your efforts," argued Chisholm wearily.

"I'm sorry for you, Chisholm. It's hard on you, after being here only a year," said Gordon, after a pause. "You can put most of the trouble down to Emilio. Still, Emilio."

"He hates both of us. It's the touch of the tar brush in his own hide that the man resents. Honestly, he'd kill us with torture merely because we happen to have been born pure white."

"With torture?" repeated Chisholm, with a shudder. "I'm not a coward as an ordinary time, Gordon, but this swamp fever has played the devil with my nerves."

"That's about the worst of it, it always does," said Gordon. "Well, it's no use meeting sorrow half-way, but personally I wouldn't be disposed to put money on our chance of being alive in the morning."

"And now, old chap, if you don't mind, we'll drop conversation. There's a man-person away at home I'd like to think about as long as I can be sure of having any machinery left to think with."

The moon worked its way through the rifts of the marsh and threw painted shadows on the age-stained walls of the English. The shouting of the blacks came to them in longed-drawn cadences which overrode the voices of the marsh.

Mammals shunk out of the rice swamp that fringed the river, the worst scourge of Brazilian fever took visible form and shape creeping up in little spirits of vapor from the uneven, green-scummed surface of the swamp. Fireflies danced and trembled in the mouth of the forest beyond.

Gordon had closed his eyes upon the scene. Chisholm lay at full length on the floor, his head sunk in his arms, the night wore older laggingly.

For four years past Gordon had held the post of manager on a remote plantation which lay far back behind the sierras and cataracts along the banks of a mighty tributary of the Amazon. During that time the vexed question of slave emancipation, which for the last thirty years has progressed by slow stages in Brazil, was becoming more and more acute.

The negroes were intoxicated with their new freedom and a dangerous spirit was spreading and gaining every day. Of late Gordon had grown aware that the smoldering discontent might at any moment break into flame, the malingering tended more and more toward open rebellion, his orders were met with an unconcerned defiance.

A month ago, with the help of a young assistant, the manager of Senhor Da Costa's coffee and sugar estates had hardly held the turbulence of the slaves in check. But he had fought against him at the last.

Chisholm, unprovoked as he was, went down under a swamping attack of malaria, and the endless business of the plantation, including training and forest-clearing fell with tenfold weight on Gordon's shoulders. Hard at it from all day and scarcely daring to close his eyes at night, he broke down at last and awoke to find himself a prisoner.

Suddenly a sound of approaching voices reached them. Gordon put his head down between his knees and rubbed his forehead against them wearily. Then he sat up and thrust away the thoughts of the "personal" at home and stiffened himself for the coming ordeal.

"Would the manager to a greasy Portuguese coffee planter, a fellow who rakes in all the money and lives in Paris?" he asked. "It's a deadly, deadly trade!"

"Yes, it's a murderous business," agreed Chisholm. "I haven't been free of fever since I came here. It makes me sick to think of old Da Costa enjoying himself in Paris while we . . ."

The sentence reached no conclusion, for a thin, undersized mulatto rose up out of the wet growth before them.

"So," he said, "it is annoying to think of your master, the Senhor Da Costa, enjoying himself in Paris. But not easy, he will not be pleased when he hears of to-night's doings, although I am afraid neither you nor gentlemen will live to have the pleasure of narrating them to him."

The mulatto raised his nose and gave another little laugh.

"What are you going to do with us?" demanded Gordon.

"Ah, that is interesting, is it not?" said the man, mockingly. "You will have a fair trial. Be sure of that."

A fierce retort rose to Gordon's lips. He detested this half-breed of his, and, further, he strongly suspected him of being the originator and ringleader of the revolt among the negroes.

Richardson had the words back. It seemed futile to say anything.

"Yes," continued Emilio, "you shall have justice. Yes, I will see to that. You shall have a fair trial and I will be judge. I only undertake the office at the request of my friends over there," he indicated the group of negroes who were waiting on the path at some distance. "You, Gordon, have taught me the meaning of justice, you shall have a specimen of it yourself."

"To be frank," said Gordon, "I can very well understand that it would not do to let us go free, but I can hardly see for what we are to be tried. A prisoner is generally accused of something."

The half-caste called up a negro with a torch, which he stuck in a cleft of the old wood and sent the man away. Then he looked at Gordon for some moments in silence.

The lurid, smoky glare lit up his face, the fine hollows and yellow prominences grooved with hate. As he looked his dark lip trembled and drew back in a snarl from his teeth.

"You Inglese devil!" he said, and stopped as if it choked him to say more. "You low down white! Is it nothing that from the day you came here you would not consort with me, you would not eat with me, you drove me to find companionship with the blacks."

"If I could tell you how I have waited, how I have borne with your contempt only to pay you back! I despise the negroes, but I hate you!

"To-night I am going to revenge myself on you both. Killing two birds with one stone, as you English say. You will be tried and sentenced, and there will be two white men the less, thank the saints!"

"When Capt. O'Brien comes back he'll make you a smart for this," said Gordon, indifferently.

The careless tone of superiority stung Emilio afresh.

"Don't comfort yourself with that notion. When Capt. O'Brien hears of it I shall be gone, and your friends can do what they like with those blacks beasts.

"When he hears what's happened to you he'll leave his mark on some of them. If there's law in Brazil, they will have use for it here when they hear how the fine white manager of Da Costa's estate died!"

Gordon glanced at Chisholm, who still lay motionless in his old position. He saw the unconscious . . . of . . .

"Get back to your half brothers," he said insultingly, "and leave us. Yellow men pollute the air. Go!"

The taunt frenzied the mulatto. It literally swept him off his feet with rage. He drew his knife and flew at Gordon with screaming fecundity. He was within an ace of ending the man, when some thought caught and checked him.

"A good trick, you cunning beast!" he cried, still panting with passion, "but to kill you now would be a mercy, how great a mercy you have no notion of—yet. But, just to keep you civil, take that, and that!"

He dug his knife twice into Gordon's cheek, then, as if afraid to trust his self-control longer, he rushed down the track.

"The devil!" said Chisholm, hoarsely. "He means business. If he had knifed us, I wonder how much pain it would have saved?"

II

Men face to face with death are rarely talkative, they have too much to think about. No other word passed between the Englishmen.

Gordon mopped his bleeding cheek as best he could on his knee and shoulder, while Chisholm, leaning upon one elbow, found himself tugging at something the buttons on his leggings.

Yet they were peculiarly active, alive with the alertness of every sense which only at such time comes to man. The faint sounds reaching the chattering of bats in the roof, the rustling leaves in the thicket behind, seemed to pierce through the fabric of the swamp, but a forest fire, wiped in the heavy and sickly air with which the stream of blacks passed to and from them to have the intensity of an engine's . . . seat of Emilio.

Gordon they dared to attempt, but Chisholm, who was literally too weak to walk, they dragged and carried through the lots and along the damp path toward the front of the Englishmen, where a great fire lit up the scene, a cone of red and black set in the white enchantment of the night.

Emilio was seated in mockery in a long chair, his legs unobtrusively stretched out. For a while he appeared to take no notice of the prisoners, but an anxious twitching flickered at the corners of his mouth.

When at length he cleared silence the circle gathered deeply in.

"Gentlemen," began Emilio, addressing the crowd. He was keeping a strikingly hard mask himself, but at the word he stopped, for Gordon, looking around the ring of black faces and gleaming eyes smiled.

"Look at him, look at the tyrant, he is sneering at you."

"We know how tyrannical he has been in his treatment of the injured gentlemen, of these estates. He has pretended to give you freedom, but what have you gained?"

"Is it cooler? Don't you sweat and toil just as you have always done?

"The difference is only in name. Yet he expects you to be grateful. The laws of Brazil were not made for us, but for the tyrants. But now that you are free you have the right to make laws for yourselves.

"I say your rights, then, and judge this Gordon and the other as you please. Who can prevent you?"

"He is telling you lies," Gordon struck in. "You will be punished heavily for tonight's work. Have you forgotten what the Government did to the people on the Bagumba plantation?"

Emilio shrieked an order to silence him.

"Into the intricacies of that black trial there is no need to go. Vociferous blacks, men and women, elbowed and curvelled each other in their eagerness to leap up a mass of accusation. False witnesses were at a premium, and whenever the prisoners attempted to speak they were silenced at the instance of Emilio by a dwarf negro, who beat them on the mouth with a club.

"At last the long and, to the court, delightful business came to an end. The prisoners were each found guilty.

"Have you anything to say for yourself?" asked Emilio.

Gordon, standing stark and tall, began to make answer, but he was not allowed to go very far, for he spoke of the vengeance which would inevitably follow and fall, and he spoke of it in such a manner as to produce a visible effect on the black faces that surrounded him.

At length came the moment for the pronouncement of the sentence, and Emilio arose from his chair and spoke.

"You know, children of the forest and swamp, that you are doing right," he said, in a high-pitched voice, "for has not the great Waterspirit shown himself to his people after so long a time?

"It is a sign. He will make you successful in your struggle for liberty. Fear nothing, therefore, but make ready to give him what he asks for. And besides"—his tones dropped to a persuasive cunning—"who will blame?

"We have seen one of them die—of fever. The other will have been lost—probably some accident in the forest.

"Make ready, then, for the night is passing, and when the sun rises your god will arise also and come forth."

Several negroes at this got round Gordon, and the confusion was deafening. Emilio seemed to be arguing out some point, and finally he got his way, for a procession was roughly formed.

"Say farewell to your friend," he said, coming up to Gordon.

"What are you going to do with him?" Gordon asked.

Emilio shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows? We must leave him behind. Perhaps he will die now. No matter. To-night we intend to devote to you."

He turned away to give some orders, and Gordon, kneeling down beside Chisholm, saw he was moving a little.

"Goodby, old chap," he whispered, but his only answer was the monotonous raving of the sick man.

The preparations for departure continued, and, very much mystified as to what was in store for him, Gordon was placed at the head of the little procession with Emilio by his side. In his order, with the rabble following at their heels, they returned along the path, past the huts and returned along the path, past the huts and the place where he and Chisholm had been kept prisoners, and so entered the forest.

Here twenty-three men were sent ahead to clear the way. From this Gordon concluded that he was to be taken toward the river, which in part of its course spread out through miles of unexplained swamp and virgin forest. Also, he noticed that the procession moved with increasing caution.

The usual loquacity of the negroes was replaced by silence, a touch passing from one to another indicated a change of direction or a danger to be avoided. To Gordon the distance seemed interminable, and still the stealthy, uncanny procession held on its way.

"Come." Emilio suddenly took the Englishman's arm and led him round through a deeper density of forest.

Gordon found himself at the head of a little game track which wound down to the lagoon, where a great tree overhung against the pale light.

"Now, Señor, can you guess the manner in which you are to leave us for the next world?" Emilio hissed softly in his ear.

Gordon's eyes ranged down the little trail to the great tree branch that crossed it above and so beyond to the lagoon, which was but a deep backwater of the river. The lagoon lay in oily black smoothness and shot as a silk with silver where the moonlight fell upon it in delicate tracery.

Through the gloom of the forest they could hear the hollow gulp and gurgle of the falling river. The night was overburdened with a wet heat, and the chorus of bullfrogs seemed to grow louder.

"You know now?"

"Upon my word, no," Gordon answered aloud.

A knife pricked him sharply in the side.

"Be silent. This Señor is in the nature of an experiment as far as I am concerned, but the people know more about these things.

"You see the branch over the track, the moon just catches it. Along that the great water serpent lies and waits. Our justice have watched a long time, but only lately has he been discovered."

"An anaconda, well?"

"You see, we would not wish to give you a common death, but this one to wait through the long hours for the great serpent and then to feel his coils drop upon you."

"What do you think? Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed under his breath. "We will leave you tied there under the tree, and to-morrow, till the heat of the day, for it is often not until the heat of the day that the Water God comes."

"After that we will return and look at you. The great snake, which these black fools worship, may or may not see fit to attend to your affair.

"If he does, well, there is an end of you. If not, why, we shall continue to come and look at you day by day.

"You will be very near the water, Señor, and I dare say you will be thirsty, so that whether the snake comes or not it will be all the same this day week. These idiots will pray that the god of the lagoon may swallow you, as an omen, you understand. Antonio, Jose, bring the ropes."

Gordon, brave man as he undoubtedly was, could not repress a shudder at the thought of the horrible fate in store for him. He remembered the hints and rumors he had heard from time to time of the secret meetings of the blacks on the plantation, and in connection with these there were flashed across his memory sinister tales of the hereditary rites which the forefathers of these peoples were said to have imported with them from the shores of Africa.

Everything became plain to him now, the strange god of which Emilio spoke, to whom the negroes would give the praise of their successful revolt. He saw with what cunning the mulatto had turned their grotesque superstitions to serve his own purposes.

He remembered how the darkskin all the world over looks to the snake for the marvelous, how it turns the mucous tissue which he supports to his virtue. The Australian spirit of each Zulu takes the form of a snake, his Eidolon.

The Hindoo worships the cobra, the Hayrah Vandoo worship for their tutelary sacrifices to the animal they regard. Further, he knew that the African has no mortal restraint in the matter.

He would offer up his own flesh and blood, and he thinks himself blessed in doing so. How much more then would those living negroes sacrifice him to their fetish.

There was a bad complexity in the whole plot. By means of the presence of the great water snake Emilio had incited the negroes to this foolish rising.

He had doubtless encouraged them by pointing out that they were certainly under the protection of the father of serpents, and the crudely moulded minds of the newly emancipated slaves turned immediately toward a congenial god.

Gordon fell to the foot of the tree, overcome by the sight of the . . . for his own efforts in a great . . . negroes saved their lives, they would tread him, and the brute to whom they had decided to sacrifice him, their emancipator!

III

At last he was alone. The negroes had trooped away quickly. For a time Gordon's breath came in gasps that saluted Heaven, one in his own ears. The man's thoughts were terribly concentrated at his danger.

The falling river, sighs gulped in the far darkness, the moon had left the tropic heavens dark and star stabbed. A clock sounded now and again from the depths of the forest, but the . . . still. The minutes lengthened . . . natural length.

Lashed upright and motionless to a stake under the great tree, Gordon's mind wrangled in a narrowing circle of imaginings. He might have many hours to live before death came to him, for the anaconda does not have the river now until the sun has warmed his basking place.

Death is kept alive in the body, and in spite of everything Gordon toiled to free himself. His mouth was parched with effort, his eyes were wide, and acting, cramps catch upon him, and he was made up the endless sequence of his agonies.

A weak man would have dropped all effort and resigned himself, but to a man such surrender would have been suicide. It was outside his nature to give up the battle.

By what he would the man's eyes turned and turned again through all those awful hours of darkness to the faint glimmer of wood beneath him. For Emilio, as a last addition to the torture, had bethought him of leaving a knife upon the ground in front of his victim, within reach of a free arm, but impossible for bonds.

His view was terminated in front by a cane swamp, and above both the great tree spread like the frame of some gigantic fan, over which, writhed a network of fantastic creepers.

The day found him still battling with his bonds. Slowly the full sunshine penetrated the forest. The monkeys ceased their gambols and their chatter.

He had worked his left arm almost loose when he was aware that an uncanny hush had dropped over the forest. Then the hush merged into a swish of reeds and the shuffling, hissing sound of a great body moving.

His struggles waned to rigidity. He could not see, his only view was the cane swamp, now all dimmed and bloodspotted through the anguish of his vigil. He forced his neck round until he saw the knotted ends of the branch and he knew he was a bare ten feet from the monstrous presence above. He was waiting, and the intensity of his compelled stillness ached and throbbed.

The distant sounds of the swamp grew farther away, and farther yet. His whole world was compressed into the shadow of the creeper-hung tree.

The voice of the river droned and then it ceased altogether from his ears. His senses were dead to anything outside his own agony. He drew up his shoulders to protect his head and the moment seemed to stay with him forever.

Then he heard the sound like the crackling and grinding of coffee beans in a mill, a hiss drilled in upon the silence, as the great bulk of the snake unloosed and whipped through the leafy gloom above him. The impact of the whirling coils carried him and the broken stake to the ground together.

The breaking of the stake partially released Gordon, his arm was free, and in falling he snatched at the knife as he was swept into the crushing battle.

All feeling passed from his lower limbs in the swelling of pain, the fetor of the snake's breath struck him like a blow as the flickering tongue darted about his cheek. In swing the head, and the painting jaws and pebblings of its impact and danced before his eyes.

He was not afraid now. He slashed at it with the knife, missed, then caught, and he thrust it in and in.

The cane swamp receded into distance, the great tree above seemed to climb mountainously into heaven and then swoop down upon him. A lizard by its hole changed into all the colors of the rainbow and settled into a deep glowing scarlet.

* * * * * * *

He awoke to the crack of a rifle and a confused shouting. His chest seemed bursting under a great weight and as he opened his eyes the world swayed about him.

"Here he is!" shouted a voice. "By Jove, he's alive. Here, Gordon, old man."

"For heaven's sake, O'Brien, take me out of this!" he groaned.

"Here, catch hold of me," said O'Brien. "You're all right. I've just shot that mulatto foreman of yours. He seemed to deserve it."

"That's the way, Chisholm! We have him safe. He'll pull through. We came over to borrow some paradox cartridges and found hold up, Walters! Now shove the beast off him."

The great reptile dropped listlessly away from Gordon's body into the slime below him, and for a period he almost wished they had left him to die, as the blood began to return to his compressed limbs with great throbs.

"You got him just on the spot," Walters kicked the snake's head over. "Just where the backbone meets the structure of the head."

Gordon pushed his wet hair from his pain-weary eyes. The blossoms of the creeper glowed in the light filtering down from above, the disturbed and disgusted monkeys chattered again in the branches, the forest life fell back into its usual channels.

They lifted Gordon into a sling hammock borne by four sullen negroes, and the little group paddled heavily away.

A HOME RUN.

Last of a Great Game That Made Baseball Unpopular at Freeboro.

"Did I ever tell you about the one occasion on which I went outside the legitimate world of sport?" began the Colonel. To the colonel racing, poker, cock fighting and an occasional lynching composed the recreative spheres of a gentleman. "I thought not.

"It was back in '82 when the firemen's tournament was held here in Freeboro. At that time every town in Jones county had a volunteer fire company and the yearly drills and exhibitions were of greater importance than the circus. The meetings lasted a week and consisted of team races, hose squirting contests, baseball games and some other indoor games.

"The rivalry between the ball teams was intense. Every one expected a closer contest than usual that year. The Lightfoot Lilies were the popular favorites, but the Ringfield Roarers had a stronger team than usual and their friends were pretty confident.

"The previous year Freeboro had not entered the contest and her new team was not considered formidable by the leaders. As a matter of fact the team was not organized until a week before the contest.

"As I was the only man of affairs in the village who was not a member of the fire company, I was elected manager. The last manager had disappeared in company with the gate receipts, and the team decided to take no chances.

"Well, I advanced the necessary money and the team practised every day for a week. They hardly took time for meals. They certainly were a fine lot, and on the last day of practice they showed up so well that the betting dropped from long odds to about 3 to 1.

"Much to the surprise of the outsiders the Freeboro boys sent through the contest with an unbroken string of victories. There were just two games between them and the championship, and on the day before the close of the tournament they defeated the Ringfield Roarers by a big margin. This made people think, and the supporters of the Lightfoots began to look for a chance to bet.

"Never in the history of the tournament had such a crowd been seen as gathered to see the final struggle. The stand was packed to the roof and the field along the base lines was a mass of excited humanity.

"At the end of the eleventh inning the score was even at two runs apiece. From the beginning it seemed as if the Lilies had all the best of it.

"You see that the competing fire companies had parked their engines in the outfield, and the Lilies' backers had turned their hose on the field and soaked it. At first we thought this would hinder their fielders as much as it did ours, but these farmers kept their feet in the mud as if they were used to it, while our boys found it almost impossible to get under a fly.

"We managed nevertheless, to shut them out in the first of the twelfth and they killed the first two men who came up in our half of the inning. It looked as if we might make it a tie, but nobody dared to hope for more than that.

"Finally their pitcher got tired and gave two bases on balls. We were quick to see our chance, and yelled with delight. The next man up for us was Hi Giles, the heaviest hitter on either team.

"Our most ardent supporters were the Lateesville Hose. They had won the hose squirting contest and had bet all the prize money on our winning.

"When Hi came to bat the boys jumped up and manned their double-expansion hand engine. We did not understand just what they were up to, but we soon found out.

"When their centrefielder saw who held the stick he got sort of scared and ran back till he was right in front of the Lateesville engine. The first ball pitched was a straight one and Hi hit it with all his strength.

"It was the longest ball ever hit on the Lateesville lots. It began to work their engine like mad. It was a beautiful fly and the fielder judged it to perfection.

"The ball was coming down right in his hands, it seemed to take ages for the ball to drop. The suspense was awful.

"When the ball was within ten feet of the man's hands and we were about to shut our eyes a queer thing happened. The fielder was right under it and was beginning to lift his hands when a stream from the Lateesville engine hit the ball and threw it twenty feet in the air.

"When the ball came down the stream hit it again and over it went. Well, sir, you've seen those fountains in shooting galleries that keep a ball in the air for you to shoot at? Well, that's just what those chaps from Lateesville did.

"And in the meantime Hi Giles was going round the bases like a whirlwind. When he reached the plate they gave the ball a final squirt and threw it over the fielder's head.

"Of course the umpire did not live the night out and baseball has never been popular here since. We did not have a hospital here then and altogether it was almost too strenuous, but it certainly was a great game."

AN EMERGENCY NAVAL BASE

To Be Established on Culebra Island as Quickly as Possible.

WASHINGTON, July 26. Just to see how quickly a naval base in the West Indies can be prepared in the event of a hostile emergency, the Navy Department has begun the experiment of establishing such a base on Culebra Island, near Porto Rico. A big supply of coal is to be sent there right away and a supply ship, loaded with material for constructing necessary buildings and wharves is to be sent off as soon as she can be made ready.

The harbor of Culebra, which will hold eleven big battleships comfortably, is to be buoyed and wharves for landing marines and supplies are to be constructed in a hurry. A careful account of the time consumed in doing this work is to be kept, and the Navy Department hopes to gain valuable suggestions from the information obtained. The experiment is to be conducted principally as a practical preparation for assembling Admiral Dewey's big fleet in the vicinity of Culebra next winter.

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DICKENS AS SEEN AT HOME.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A GENTLEMAN WHO KNEW HIM WELL.

Visitors at Gadshill Dickens a Play Dickens and Bulwer A Visit to the Latter How the Gadshill Place Came Into Dickens's Hands Edmund Yates and Anthony Trollope.

SECOND PAPER.

Wilkie Collins was much with Dickens in those days, and I met him often at Tavistock House and Gadshill. He had been at work at authorship ten years, his first volume, issued in 1848, was a life of his father, William Collins, a celebrated painter of rural scenes and rustic figures. Reviewers of the time said of it that his description of his parent's pictures had a color and glow as bright as the works themselves. In 1850 he published an ambitious novel called "Antonina," its characters moving against a tremendous historic background, none other than the overthrow of Rome by that prodigious rascal and disturber of the world's peace, Alaric. Each year thereafter till 1858, when I first met him, he had given to the press a new novel, the last one, the "Dead Secret," perhaps as well remembered as any in the long line of his productions, kept up for almost forty years. That one and "After Dark," which preceded it, were contributed to *Household Words* while Dickens edited it, and this professional and literary relation may have had something to do in establishing their social intimacy. They were very unlike.

Dickens was one of the most active of men, doing his work under a high but steady pressure of energy which he also carried into his recreations and pastimes. He never did anything languidly. If it was a romp with his great dog Sultan or any of the smaller ones, for he always kept several, his share in it was quite as lively as that of the participating animal. When we played bagatelle in the evening, on a small table with small balls, sockets and pegs—the details of the equipment somewhat dim now—I remember how earnest he was about it as if great things, beyond the half crown wager, depended on whether his ball hit a particular peg or found its way into the right socket. It was a little field for a great genius to disport itself on, to say nothing of the smaller ones who assisted, but he filled it with high gallantry if it had been an arena spacious as the lists at Camelot, he could not have entered it with a finer show of resolution. It was the same with whatever part he might take in other games and impromptu dramatic shows and these were frequent in all his houses. When he was cast for the villain he was the most tremendous villain ever heard of, beating Cartouche or Bluebeard. Nothing in real life could ever have equalled him. I remember to have seen him once in the character of headman in a little parlor pantomime, using a fire shovel as the axe and there was a wonderfully vigorous realism in the performance.

It so happened that Wilkie Collins was the victim on this occasion, and after the ritual was over he made repeated and vigorous experiments with his head, twisting it to and fro and rocking it this way and that to make sure that it was still securely on his shoulders. The Primate of Harry the Eighth's order of executioners could not have put more conscience into any piece of work set him to do.

Dickens's fellow novelist, and guest, on the other hand, was slow moving, indolent of habit, spectacled, deep in snuff, and had in any form of physical exercise only an interest of curiosity. He would look on not unapprovingly while others performed it and may thus have taken in some of its invigorating influences. But such a walk as Dickens took every day was beyond his conception as a normal possibility, as if there must be trick and sorcery in it and the right-foot fairies helped him. The mount of a tassed gentle or the flight of a homing pigeon was not more beyond his own powers or intentions. But he was a pleasant talker in spite of occasional gout, a placid and interesting listener and a sensible, good-natured, cheerful man.

In "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices" Dickens has described a holiday journey in which himself and Collins were companions. The title no doubt reflects well enough the latter's share in the itinerary, but not that of his comrade, unless he had for this occasion laid aside all his familiar ways of the example of remaining midsummer indoors, which the spectacular displayed, if one not, in all likelihood, after the manner of the dandy's trousers, take two to show the pattern. One of disciplined and specialized competency like Collins was equal to that, leaving to Dickens all his customary exploits of activity. These were a part of every day's business wherever he might chance to be, at home, in Italy, in provincial France, in America, if one place in which his accessorie might abandon him. I used to think at times that he might be overdoing the business of work and play and exercise, with his daily rate of writing, whatever befell, his frequent readings, his shrieking colloidal duties to say nothing of others, private and public, and they seemed indifferentable with his strenuous athletic performances, heaped on the top of all else, and it still seems to me that if he had gone a little closer his years might have been longer in the land, gliding into venerated old age with all that should accompany it, as home, love, cheerfulness, groups of friends, but he saw, Pan-like, would have it otherwise, and, in fact, meted out to him a better fate than they did to Scott, whose magic lamp was to be inherited.

Charles Collins, a brother of Wilkie, a few years later married Miss Katie Dickens, the youngest daughter of the novelist. The was a new bond between the families. Charles Collins died, his brother, cultivated literature, but died early, produced little, his best work probably being "A New Sent mental Journey," which was published in the early numbers of Dickens's weekly periodical, *All the Year Round*, now, I think, gave him his title and hints for Sterne's book gave him his title and hints for his plan. Of his work he might have said with modest candor as he is reported to have done, "I never expected it to equal have done." "I never expected it to equal its namesake, and it didn't." But I remember it as a sprightly and interesting description of a little journey beyond the channel with pretty pictures of provincial life and average people in houses and wooden shoes, all polite and cheerful, though they looked poor and overworked, as if they were born to those conditions and had no hope of ever getting out of them.

Young Collins was a quick and keen observer and a clever writer, and if he had lived long enough might have come down to posterity with a larger collection of volumes under his arm. Miss Katie Dickens, who in her married, looked like the picture of the lady in Milais's celebrated painting of the Huguenot Lovers, and I have heard that she was its original. Everybody knows, or may know, this famous picture, and a look at the delicate upturned face of the lady, held between her lover's hands, as he gazes fondly down upon it, they have met in a secret trysting place and are swiftly to be again sundered, will to this day permit any one to see with how sweet and generous a countenance in these maiden days the second daughter of the great novelist looked forth on life and all its rosy and alluring morning promises. Some years after Collins's death she married the distinguished painter, Perugini, like the Rossettis, of an Italian family turned English and still lives in London, her sister, Mary, the only other daughter of the Dickens house, having died a few years ago.

The twenty-first birthday of the latter took place during my visit, and was signalized by a dinner given at Tavistock House, in which family and guests, twenty-one persons, participated. Charles Lever, home from la Spezia consulate for a flying visit, made one, and I had the honor of being seated near him. He was a large, jolly man, full of odd anecdotes, and as hearty and convivial a laugher as Dickens himself. In those days, not to mention others of the novelist's merry crew, everybody knew Harry Lorrequer, that jovial, dashing, hard-drinking, hard-riding, duelling of an Irish dragoon, if he was that, for I have no thought of him since the Civil War and may have got his military alignment wrong, had for several years contributed to the gayety of several nations, and the humor of that rattling character was everywhere a man of mark and notice. I only saw him on this occasion, in the gracious Muse of memory, more compliant in his case than some others, places him even yet quite distinctly before me. He seemed the genius of good nature, with the most generous and humane outlook on life and might have walked out of the pages of almost any of his story books.

He interrogated me a good deal about America, was proud of his vogue there, hoped he might some time visit us, but did not know. He used to live in the Continent with G. P. R. James, who had sojourned among us, became property owner and a farmer here, if not a citizen, and wrote novels of scenery and manners covering the whole Continent and drifting one after another on its unresisting inhabitants, thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallambrosa, where he Evermore shades high overstretched embowers. There he had thought that he could take up his abode with us in the James manner, with the respectable pretension of growing something and paying taxes, a scheme which seemed to have for him the familiar captivation of the untried. But it was too late in the day now. Lever's early history is not set down by his biographers in terms of indisputable clearness. They find themselves floundered now and again, his story dips into and emerges from fields of cloud like a floating balloon. But the rumor of him ran that he had come last in America, in far-off days of the early 30s, while his young Irish blood was in its heyday, that he had lived with the Indians, adopted their costumes, and to some extent, their customs, though it was not hinted that he had ever scalped anybody. Traces of this aboriginal experience are thought to reveal themselves in some of his early books, "Con Cregan" and "Arthur O'Leary" among them. So, maybe, the tale of it is real, but I did not ask him to verify it.

He had before him about ten more years of life and work. His best little more and in 1872 he died in Trieste, his consulate having been shifted to that point from his former post at Spezzia. Quite a formidable array of books stand to his credit in the catalogues, though one hears little about them in these days, the current generation going well toward a monopoly of its own story telling. But he may be read any time with advance. However virtuous his characters, there are cakes and ale galore and the fragrance of all vintages and liquors, and the hum of merry laughter goes with the early run of them like an atmosphere threaded and the place with the music of mirth as if there were hardly a sombre note in all life's sounding octaves.

I had recently visited Bulwer at Knebworth and Dickens was interested to hear of his fellow novelist. I told him of my dismay when I discovered on first meeting this famous man at the ancient doorway of his stately ancestral home that he was deaf as the deafest gargoyle which may have adorned its eaves.

He put his hand up to his ear and I repeated my salutation. We had had no correspondence and my visit was of course by invitation. He heard a little and gave me a cordial welcome, led me through the great hall "into a high, bright room overlooking a flower garden in special with summer bees and birds." Pretty soon I could make him hear better than I at first expected and without making the effort to do so too apparent. My visit was purely on business. He told me of the situation of his literary affairs at the time, and after a little said that perhaps I might wish to take a walk about the grounds. He conducted me through the gardens and across the broad lawns where a . . . of . . . aggressive and self-assertive peacocks . . . us today greeting, and we then entered the woods beyond which, though not of great extent, seemed wild enough to shelter Robin Hood and his merry men and the herds of speckled deer which they pursued. He told me something of the history and legend of Knebworth, ancient seat of the Lytttons, a family whose roots ran deep in British story, going by rail the wars of the Roses and the crusades, and its generations, we may surmise, linked with deeds of emprise and the exquisites of valor and of courtliness no less.

This was the material side of his nature, the other was of equal elevation, and his militant father had been one of the group of generals set to roll back the tide of Napoleonic invasion, which didn't come after all, though threatened early in the century.

He said he had always hoped that he might some time visit America, but had now given up any such expectation. He would like to see Niagara and the prairies, and of the Indian inhabiting the latter he said that he had not yet found his hatchet, as his fellow of the woods had in Cooper, of the latter he said that "he had a new race and a virgin world for his material and listening mankind for his audience and had built the best and probably the most enduring fabric of literature which our country had yet to show."

He spoke admiringly of Irving and Poe and Longfellow, of Prescott, who had recently died, took note of the heroism which pierced through his noble work under the suffocating cloud of partial blindness, spoke of Motley, the latest literary lion out of the young, vigorous Dutch history just published, and said that its fine literary style could not be too highly praised.

In truth, he was very civil to and about America. I told him that his name was a household word from one end of that country to the other and that if he thought he might ever have a large number of readers there that at home he would be pleased. He at this, the sight of first pirating American publishers had treated him badly, taken his work without a . . . much as saying "by your leave," but in later years the ways of that business changed and were somewhat ameliorated, and they had been paying him considerable and on the whole satisfactory sums as royalty. My errand to Lever was to see if they publishers' proposals which he received liberal and received with every mark of pleasure.

Dickens spoke of his fellow novelist, for whom one of his sons was named, with the greatest esteem and admiration. His early career, he said, was full of small, crafty squabbles and bickerings. His sensitive, sentimental early style easily lent itself to parody, his young fellow writers thought him an intolerable prig and outcomed thought his style under all its pretension, pure and elevated thin, while he, the high-born heir of the Lyttons and the Bulwers, their long backward line, according to the thunders in its index going as far into the old historic deep as generations of Alfred and Athelstan, perhaps farther, what could he do, one thought, but, as quite Street backs, writing in garrets, gorging at shilling orthanbers and no more knowing the flavor of a meth than Cassius.

Why should such fellows presume to come between the wind and his nobility? But all these things had passed away, Bulwer's long after had . . . his place and it was secure. Everybody recognized it. His old adversaries, the squibs of his curled and perfumed dandyhood were long since pleased. They had become his friends, found him a great . . . and could not . . . to attack that . . . technics of his . . . at least he was an unimpeachable master. I felt they should him of old as "Pelham" Bulwer thought of a certain Lady of Bitterness whom he knew, as possessing of the cheerful . . . kitchen poker except it was . . . That was all changed now. They . . . him as the towering . . . their observation a sympathetic . . . heart-to-heart, equal to his craft and peerless men, and they all came to him as Irving daily . . . about books and . . . and . . . dinners of which Douglas Jerrold said, for the sake of the joke and his . . . the hamper . . . bore the . . . tokens of the host's known frugality. I wish he would give us more of his carving and less of his gouging. There were no more skirmishes with his fellow workers as a pagan host outside, but all was peace and happy concord between them.

Bulwer in those days was Colonial Secretary under Lord Derby, filling the . . . which Chamberlain is now . . . The difference between them was like the difference between a gentle but still quite ambitiously assertive dove, with the changing iris of self approval and confidence flickering all over its neck and a golden eagle winging its . . . gateways of the Sun. But, no doubt, he was . . . equal to the less pressing . . . of a less . . . political time.

His Balaclava . . . in the air, though . . . waited six further years for it. Dickens said that when it came it would be with conferred . . . coming . . . gracious . . . He was entitled to it on grounds of . . . of political services and literary performances. . . . family sought honors, . . . gave the family, and Bulwer's . . . the . . . his memory . . . in . . . country to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, . . . after fifty . . . years abrogated . . . and . . . to his . . . in . . . Baron Dalling . . . in 1871, only a year before his death.

A . . . might have been Dickens's for the asking, but he told me that if there had been another . . . it . . . his fortune was unequal to . . . a . . . Gadshill was . . . Dickens possessed, he had bought it . . . two years before. In his . . . he had lived for some years in the . . . Rochester, his father . . . Pay Department . . . the Naval Pay Department . . . the . . . hill with its . . . and its crowning . . . and the . . . scenery around it that Dickens . . . almost as long as he . . . remembered anything. The story . . . his father . . . walking up the hill toward the old square, respectable old house, with its crowning cupola, the proud design of the lot extravagant pride, that if he was a good boy and very, very . . . he might some time come to have a house like that. But it was new to me when Dickens rehear