

WASHINGTON IRVING

WOLFERT'S
ROOST, AND
MISCELLANIES

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Wolfert's Roost and Miscellanies:

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Washington Irving Wolfert's Roost and Miscellanies

TO THE EDITOR OF THE KNICKERBOCKER

Sir: I have observed that as a man advances in life, he is subject to a kind of plethora of the mind, doubtless occasioned by the vast accumulation of wisdom and experience upon the brain. Hence he is apt to become narrative and admonitory, that is to say, fond of telling long stories, and of doling out advice, to the small profit and great annoyance of his friends. As I have a great horror of becoming the oracle, or, more technically speaking, the "bore," of the domestic circle, and would much rather bestow my wisdom and tediousness upon the world at large, I have always sought to ease off this surcharge of the intellect by means of my pen, and hence have inflicted divers gossiping volumes upon the patience of the public. I am tired, however, of writing volumes; they do not afford exactly the relief I require; there is too much preparation, arrangement, and parade, in this set form of coming before the public. I am growing too indolent and unambitious for any thing that requires labor or display. I have thought, therefore, of securing to myself a snug corner in some periodical work

where I might, as it were, loll at my ease in my elbow-chair, and chat sociably with the public, as with an old friend, on any chance subject that might pop into my brain.

In looking around, for this purpose, upon the various excellent periodicals with which our country abounds, my eye was struck by the title of your work – "THE KNICKERBOCKER." My heart leaped at the sight. DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER, Sir, was one of my earliest and most valued friends, and the recollection of him is associated with some of the pleasantest scenes of my youthful days. To explain this, and to show how I came into possession of sundry of his posthumous works, which I have from time to time given to the world, permit me to relate a few particulars of our early intercourse. I give them with the more confidence, as I know the interest you take in that departed worthy, whose name and effigy are stamped upon your title-page, and as they will be found important to the better understanding and relishing divers communications I may have to make to you.

My first acquaintance with that great and good man, for such I may venture to call him, now that the lapse of some thirty years has shrouded his name with venerable antiquity, and the popular voice has elevated him to the rank of the classic historians of yore, my first acquaintance with him was formed on the banks of the Hudson, not far from the wizard region of Sleepy Hollow. He had come there in the course of his researches among the Dutch neighborhoods for materials for his immortal history. For this purpose, he was ransacking the archives of one of the most

ancient and historical mansions in the country. It was a lowly edifice, built in the time of the Dutch dynasty, and stood on a green bank, overshadowed by trees, from which it peeped forth upon the Great Tappan Zee, so famous among early Dutch navigators. A bright pure spring welled up at the foot of the green bank; a wild brook came babbling down a neighboring ravine, and threw itself into a little woody cove, in front of the mansion. It was indeed as quiet and sheltered a nook as the heart of man could require, in which to take refuge from the cares and troubles of the world; and as such, it had been chosen in old times, by Wolfert Acker, one of the privy councillors of the renowned Peter Stuyvesant.

This worthy but ill-starred man had led a weary and worried life, throughout the stormy reign of the chivalric Peter, being one of those unlucky wights with whom the world is ever at variance, and who are kept in a continual fume and fret, by the wickedness of mankind. At the time of the subjugation of the province by the English, he retired hither in high dudgeon; with the bitter determination to bury himself from the world, and live here in peace and quietness for the remainder of his days. In token of this fixed resolution, he inscribed over his door the favorite Dutch motto, "Lust in Rust," (pleasure in repose.) The mansion was thence called "Wolfert's Rust" – Wolfert's Rest; but in process of time, the name was vitiated into Wolfert's Roost, probably from its quaint cock-loft look, or from its having a weather-cock perched on every gable. This name it continued to bear, long

after the unlucky Wolfert was driven forth once more upon a wrangling world, by the tongue of a termagant wife; for it passed into a proverb through the neighborhood, and has been handed down by tradition, that the cock of the Roost was the most hen-pecked bird in the country.

This primitive and historical mansion has since passed through many changes and trials, which it may be my lot hereafter to notice. At the time of the sojourn of Diedrich Knickerbocker it was in possession of the gallant family of the Van Tassels, who have figured so conspicuously in his writings. What appears to have given it peculiar value, in his eyes, was the rich treasury of historical facts here secretly hoarded up, like buried gold; for it is said that Wolfert Acker, when he retreated from New Amsterdam, carried off with him many of the records and journals of the province, pertaining to the Dutch dynasty; swearing that they should never fall into the hands of the English. These, like the lost books of Livy, had baffled the research of former historians; but these did I find the indefatigable Diedrich diligently deciphering. He was already a sage in year's and experience, I but an idle stripling; yet he did not despise my youth and ignorance, but took me kindly by the hand, and led me gently into those paths of local and traditional lore which he was so fond of exploring. I sat with him in his little chamber at the Roost, and watched the antiquarian patience and perseverance with which he deciphered those venerable Dutch documents, worse than Herculean manuscripts. I sat with him

by the spring, at the foot of the green bank, and listened to his heroic tales about the worthies of the olden time, the paladins of New Amsterdam. I accompanied him in his legendary researches about Tarrytown and Sing-Sing, and explored with him the spell-bound recesses of Sleepy Hollow. I was present at many of his conferences with the good old Dutch burghers and their wives, from whom he derived many of those marvelous facts not laid down in books or records, and which give such superior value and authenticity to his history, over all others that have been written concerning the New Netherlands.

But let me check my proneness to dilate upon this favorite theme; I may recur to it hereafter. Suffice it to say, the intimacy thus formed, continued for a considerable time; and in company with the worthy Diedrich, I visited many of the places celebrated by his pen. The currents of our lives at length diverged. He remained at home to complete his mighty work, while a vagrant fancy led me to wander about the world. Many, many years elapsed, before I returned to the parent soil. In the interim, the venerable historian of the New Netherlands had been gathered to his fathers, but his name had risen to renown. His native city, that city in which he so much delighted, had decreed all manner of costly honors to his memory. I found his effigy imprinted upon new-year cakes, and devoured with eager relish by holiday urchins; a great oyster-house bore the name of "Knickerbocker Hall;" and I narrowly escaped the pleasure of being run over by a Knickerbocker omnibus!

Proud of having associated with a man who had achieved such greatness, I now recalled our early intimacy with tenfold pleasure, and sought to revisit the scenes we had trodden together. The most important of these was the mansion of the Van Tassels, the Roost of the unfortunate Wolfert. Time, which changes all things, is but slow in its operations upon a Dutchman's dwelling. I found the venerable and quaint little edifice much as I had seen it during the sojourn of Diedrich. There stood his elbow-chair in the corner of the room he had occupied; the old-fashioned Dutch writing-desk at which he had pored over the chronicles of the Manhattoes; there was the old wooden chest, with the archives left by Wolfert Acker, many of which, however, had been fired off as wadding from the long duck gun of the Van Tassels. The scene around the mansion was still the same; the green bank; the spring beside which I had listened to the legendary narratives of the historian; the wild brook babbling down to the woody cove, and the overshadowing locust trees, half shutting out the prospect of the great Tappan Zee.

As I looked round upon the scene, my heart yearned at the recollection of my departed friend, and I wistfully eyed the mansion which he had inhabited, and which was fast mouldering to decay. The thought struck me to arrest the desolating hand of Time; to rescue the historic pile from utter ruin, and to make it the closing scene of my wanderings; a quiet home, where I might enjoy "lust in rust" for the remainder of my days. It is true, the fate of the unlucky Wolfert passed across my mind; but I

consoled myself with the reflection that I was a bachelor, and that I had no termagant wife to dispute the sovereignty of the Roost with me.

I have become possessor of the Roost! I have repaired and renovated it with religious care, in the genuine Dutch style, and have adorned and illustrated it with sundry reliques of the glorious days of the New Netherlands. A venerable weathercock, of portly Dutch dimensions, which once battled with the wind on the top of the Stadt-House of New Amsterdam, in the time of Peter Stuyvesant, now erects its crest on the gable end of my edifice; a gilded horse in full gallop, once the weathercock of the great Vander Heyden Palace of Albany, now glitters in the sunshine, and veers with every breeze, on the peaked turret over my portal; my sanctum sanctorum is the chamber once honored by the illustrious Diedrich, and it is from his elbow-chair, and his identical old Dutch writing-desk, that I pen this rambling epistle.

Here, then, have I set up my rest, surrounded by the recollections of early days, and the mementoes of the historian of the Manhattoes, with that glorious river before me, which flows with such majesty through his works, and which has ever been to me a river of delight.

I thank God I was born on the banks of the Hudson! I think it an invaluable advantage to be born and brought up in the neighborhood of some grand and noble object in nature; a river, a lake, or a mountain. We make a friendship with it, we in a manner ally ourselves to it for life. It remains an object of our

pride and affections, a rallying point, to call us home again after all our wanderings. "The things which we have learned in our childhood," says an old writer, "grow up with our souls, and unite themselves to it." So it is with the scenes among which we have passed our early days; they influence the whole course of our thoughts and feelings; and I fancy I can trace much of what is good and pleasant in my own heterogeneous compound to my early companionship with this glorious river. In the warmth of my youthful enthusiasm, I used to clothe it with moral attributes, and almost to give it a soul. I admired its frank, bold, honest character; its noble sincerity and perfect truth. Here was no specious, smiling surface, covering the dangerous sand-bar or perfidious rock; but a stream deep as it was broad, and bearing with honorable faith the bark that trusted to its waves. I gloried in its simple, quiet, majestic, epic flow; ever straight forward. Once, indeed, it turns aside for a moment, forced from its course by opposing mountains, but it struggles bravely through them, and immediately resumes its straightforward march. Behold, thought I, an emblem of a good man's course through life; ever simple, open, and direct; or if, overpowered by adverse circumstances, he deviate into error, it is but momentary; he soon recovers his onward and honorable career, and continues it to the end of his pilgrimage.

Excuse this rhapsody, into which I have been betrayed by a revival of early feelings. The Hudson is, in a manner, my first and last love; and after all my wanderings and seeming infidelities, I

return to it with a heart-felt preference over all the other rivers in the world. I seem to catch new life as I bathe in its ample billows and inhale the pure breezes of its hills. It is true, the romance of youth is past, that once spread illusions over every scene. I can no longer picture an Arcadia in every green valley; nor a fairy land among the distant mountains; nor a peerless beauty in every villa gleaming among the trees; but though the illusions of youth have faded from the landscape, the recollections of departed years and departed pleasures shed over it the mellow charm of evening sunshine.

Permit me, then, Mr. Editor, through the medium of your work, to hold occasional discourse from my retreat with the busy world I have abandoned. I have much to say about what I have seen, heard, felt, and thought through the course of a varied and rambling life, and some lucubrations that have long been encumbering my portfolio; together with divers reminiscences of the venerable historian of the New Netherlands, that may not be unacceptable to those who have taken an interest in his writings, and are desirous of any thing that may cast a light back upon our early history. Let your readers rest assured of one thing, that, though retired from the world, I am not disgusted with it; and that if in my communings with it I do not prove very wise, I trust I shall at least prove very good-natured.

Which is all at present, from

Yours, etc.,

GEOFFREY CRAYON.

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE KNICKERBOCKER

Worthy Sir: In a preceding communication, I have given you some brief notice of Wolfert's Roost, the mansion where I first had the good fortune to become acquainted with the venerable historian of the New Netherlands. As this ancient edifice is likely to be the place whence I shall date many of my lucubrations, and as it is really a very remarkable little pile, intimately connected with all the great epochs of our local and national history, I have thought it but right to give some farther particulars concerning it. Fortunately, in rummaging a ponderous Dutch chest of drawers, which serves as the archives of the Roost, and in which are preserved many inedited manuscripts of Mr. KNICKERBOCKER, together with the precious records of New-Amsterdam, brought hither by Wolfert Acker at the downfall of the Dutch dynasty, as has been already mentioned, I found in one corner, among dried pumpkin-seeds, bunches of thyme, and pennyroyal, and crumbs of new-year cakes, a manuscript, carefully wrapped up in the fragment of an old parchment deed, but much blotted, and the ink grown foxy by time, which, on inspection, I discovered to be a faithful chronicle

of the Roost. The hand-writing, and certain internal evidences, leave no doubt in my mind, that it is a genuine production of the venerable historian of the New-Netherlands, written, very probably, during his residence at the Roost, in gratitude for the hospitality of its proprietor. As such, I submit it for publication. As the entire chronicle is too long for the pages of your Magazine, and as it contains many minute particulars, which might prove tedious to the general reader, I have abbreviated and occasionally omitted some of its details; but may hereafter furnish them separately, should they seem to be required by the curiosity of an enlightened and document-hunting public. Respectfully yours, GEOFFREY CRAYON.

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A CHRONICLE OF WOLFERT'S ROOST

FOUND AMONG THE PAPERS OF THE LATE DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER

About five-and-twenty miles from the ancient and renowned city of Manhattan, formerly called New-Amsterdam, and vulgarly called New-York, on the eastern bank of that expansion of the Hudson, known among Dutch mariners of yore, as the Tappan Zee, being in fact the great Mediterranean Sea of the New-Netherlands, stands a little old-fashioned stone mansion, all made up of gable-ends, and as full of angles and corners as an old cocked hat. Though but of small dimensions, yet, like many small people, it is of mighty spirit, and values itself greatly on its antiquity, being one of the oldest edifices, for its size, in the whole country. It claims to be an ancient seat of empire, I may rather say an empire in itself, and like all empires, great and small, has had its grand historical epochs. In speaking of this doughty and valorous little pile, I shall call it by its usual appellation of "The Roost;" though that is a name given to it in modern days, since it became the abode of the white man.

Its origin, in truth, dates far back in that remote region

commonly called the fabulous age, in which vulgar fact becomes mystified, and tinted up with delectable fiction. The eastern shore of the Tappan Sea was inhabited in those days by an unsophisticated race, existing in all the simplicity of nature; that is to say, they lived by hunting and fishing, and recreated themselves occasionally with a little tomahawking and scalping. Each stream that flows down from the hills into the Hudson, had its petty sachem, who ruled over a hand's-breadth of forest on either side, and had his seat of government at its mouth. The chieftain who ruled at the Roost, was not merely a great warrior, but a medicine-man, or prophet, or conjurer, for they all mean the same thing, in Indian parlance. Of his fighting propensities, evidences still remain, in various arrowheads of flint, and stone battle-axes, occasionally dug up about the Roost: of his wizard powers, we have a token in a spring which wells up at the foot of the bank, on the very margin of the river, which, it is said, was gifted by him with rejuvenating powers, something like the renowned Fountain of Youth in the Floridas, so anxiously but vainly sought after by the veteran Ponce de Leon. This story, however, is stoutly contradicted by an old Dutch matter-of-fact tradition, which declares that the spring in question was smuggled over from Holland in a churn, by Femmetie Van Slocum, wife of Goosen Garret Van Slocum, one of the first settlers, and that she took it up by night, unknown to her husband, from beside their farm-house near Rotterdam; being sure she should find no water equal to it in the new country – and she was right.

The wizard sachem had a great passion for discussing territorial questions, and settling boundary lines; this kept him in continual feud with the neighboring sachems, each of whom stood up stoutly for his hand-breadth of territory; so that there is not a petty stream nor ragged hill in the neighborhood, that has not been the subject of long talks and hard battles. The sachem, however, as has been observed, was a medicine-man, as well as warrior, and vindicated his claims by arts as well as arms; so that, by dint of a little hard fighting here, and hocus-pocus there, he managed to extend his boundary-line from field to field and stream to stream, until he found himself in legitimate possession of that region of hills and valleys, bright fountains and limpid brooks, locked in by the mazy windings of the Neperan and the Pocantico.¹

This last-mentioned stream, or rather the valley through which it flows, was the most difficult of all his acquisitions. It lay half way to the strong-hold of the redoubtable sachem of Sing-Sing,

¹ As every one may not recognize these boundaries by their original Indian names, it may be well to observe, that the Neperan is that beautiful stream, vulgarly called the Saw-Mill River, which, after winding gracefully for many miles through a lovely valley, shrouded by groves, and dotted by Dutch farm-houses, empties itself into the Hudson, at the ancient drop of Yonkers. The Pocantico is that hitherto nameless brook, that, rising among woody hills, winds in many a wizard maze through the sequestered banks of Sleepy Hollow. We owe it to the indefatigable researches of Mr. KNICKERBOCKER, that those beautiful streams are rescued from modern commonplace, and reinvested with their ancient Indian names. The correctness of the venerable historian may be ascertained, by reference to the records of the original Indian grants to the Herr Frederick Philipsen, preserved in the county clerk's office, at White Plains.

and was claimed by him as an integral part of his domains. Many were the sharp conflicts between the rival chieftains for the sovereignty of this valley, and many the ambuscades, surprisals, and deadly onslaughts that took place among its fastnesses, of which it grieves me much that I cannot furnish the details for the gratification of those gentle but bloody-minded readers of both sexes, who delight in the romance of the tomahawk and scalping-knife. Suffice it to say that the wizard chieftain was at length victorious, though his victory is attributed in Indian tradition to a great medicine or charm by which he laid the sachem of Sing-Sing and his warriors asleep among the rocks and recesses of the valley, where they remain asleep to the present day with their bows and war-clubs beside them. This was the origin of that potent and drowsy spell which still prevails over the valley of the Pocantico, and which has gained it the well-merited appellation of Sleepy Hollow. Often, in secluded and quiet parts of that valley, where the stream is overhung by dark woods and rocks, the ploughman, on some calm and sunny day as he shouts to his oxen, is surprised at hearing faint shouts from the hill-sides in reply; being, it is said, the spell-bound warriors, who half start from their rocky couches and grasp their weapons, but sink to sleep again.

The conquest of the Pocantico was the last triumph of the wizard sachem. Notwithstanding all his medicine and charms, he fell in battle in attempting to extend his boundary line to the east so as to take in the little wild valley of the Sprain, and

his grave is still shown near the banks of that pastoral stream. He left, however, a great empire to his successors, extending along the Tappan Zee, from Yonkers quite to Sleepy Hollow; all which delectable region, if every one had his right, would still acknowledge allegiance to the lord of the Roost – whoever he might be.²

The wizard sachem was succeeded by a line of chiefs, of whom nothing remarkable remains on record. The last who makes any figure in history is the one who ruled here at the time of the discovery of the country by the white man. This sachem is said to have been a renowned trencherman, who maintained almost as potent a sway by dint of good feeding as his warlike predecessor had done by hard fighting. He diligently cultivated the growth of oysters along the aquatic borders of his territories, and founded those great oyster-beds which yet exist along the shores of the Tappan Zee. Did any dispute occur between him and a neighboring sachem, he invited him and all his principal sages and fighting-men to a solemn banquet, and seldom failed of feeding them into terms. Enormous heaps of oyster-shells, which encumber the lofty banks of the river, remain as monuments of

² In recording the contest for the sovereignty of Sleepy Hollow, I have called one sachem by the modern name of his castle or strong-hold, viz.: Sing-Sing. This, I would observe for the sake of historical exactness, is a corruption of the old Indian name, O-sin-sing, or rather O-sin-song; that is to say, a place where any thing may be had for a song – a great recommendation for a market town. The modern and melodious alteration of the name to Sing-Sing is said to have been made in compliment to an eminent Methodist singing-master, who first introduced into the neighborhood the art of singing through the nose. D. K.

his gastronomical victories, and have been occasionally adduced through mistake by amateur geologists from town, as additional proofs of the deluge. Modern investigators, who are making such indefatigable researches into our early history, have even affirmed that this sachem was the very individual on whom Master Hendrick Hudson and his mate, Robert Juet, made that sage and astounding experiment so gravely recorded by the latter in his narrative of the voyage: "Our master and his mate determined to try some of the cheefe men of the country whether they had any treacherie in them. So they took them down into the cabin and gave them so much wine and aqua vitae that they were all very merrie; one of them had his wife with him, which sate so modestly as any of our countrywomen would do in a strange place. In the end one of them was drunke; and that was strange to them, for they could not tell how to take it."³

How far Master Hendrick Hudson and his worthy mate carried their experiment with the sachem's wife is not recorded, neither does the curious Robert Juet make any mention of the after-consequences of this grand moral test; tradition, however, affirms that the sachem on landing gave his modest spouse a hearty rib-roasting, according to the connubial discipline of the aboriginals; it farther affirms that he remained a hard drinker to the day of his death, trading away all his lands, acre by acre, for aqua vitae; by which means the Roost and all its domains, from Yonkers to Sleepy Hollow, came, in the regular course of trade

³ See Juet's Journal, Purchas Pilgrim.

and by right of purchase, into the possession of the Dutchmen.

Never has a territorial right in these new countries been more legitimately and tradeably established; yet, I grieve to say, the worthy government of the New Netherlands was not suffered to enjoy this grand acquisition unmolested; for, in the year 1654, the local Yankees of Connecticut – those swapping, bargaining, squatting enemies of the Manhattoes – made a daring inroad into this neighborhood and founded a colony called Westchester, or, as the ancient Dutch records term it, Vest Dorp, in the right of one Thomas Pell, who pretended to have purchased the whole surrounding country of the Indians, and stood ready to argue their claims before any tribunal of Christendom.

This happened during the chivalrous reign of Peter Stuyvesant, and it roused the ire of that gunpowder old hero; who, without waiting to discuss claims and titles, pounced at once upon the nest of nefarious squatters, carried off twenty-five of them in chains to the Manhattoes, nor did he stay his hand, nor give rest to his wooden leg, until he had driven every Yankee back into the bounds of Connecticut, or obliged him to acknowledge allegiance to their High Mightinesses. He then established certain out-posts, far in the Indian country, to keep an eye over these debateable lands; one of these border-holds was the Roost, being accessible from New Amsterdam by water, and easily kept supplied. The Yankees, however, had too great a hankering after this delectable region to give it up entirely. Some remained and swore allegiance to the Manhattoes; but,

while they kept this open semblance of fealty, they went to work secretly and vigorously to intermarry and multiply, and by these nefarious means, artfully propagated themselves into possession of a wide tract of those open, arable parts of Westchester county, lying along the Sound, where their descendants may be found at the present day; while the mountainous regions along the Hudson, with the valleys of the Neperan and the Pocantico, are tenaciously held by the lineal descendants of the Copperheads.

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The chronicle of the venerable Diedrich here goes on to relate how that, shortly after the above-mentioned events, the whole province of the New Netherlands 'was subjugated by the British; how that Wolfert Acker, one of the wrangling councillors of Peter Stuyvesant, retired in dudgeon to this fastness in the wilderness, determining to enjoy "lust in rust" for the remainder of his days, whence the place first received its name of Wolfert's Roost. As these and sundry other matters have been laid before the public in a preceding article, I shall pass them over, and resume the chronicle where it treats of matters not hitherto recorded:

Like many men who retire from a worrying world, says DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER, to enjoy quiet in the country, Wolfert Acker soon found himself up to the ears in trouble. He had a termagant wife at home, and there was what is profanely

called "the deuce to pay," abroad. The recent irruption of the Yankees into the bounds of the New Netherlands, had left behind it a doleful pestilence, such as is apt to follow the steps of invading armies. This was the deadly plague of witchcraft, which had long been prevalent to the eastward. The malady broke out at Vest Dorp, and threatened to spread throughout the country. The Dutch burghers along the Hudson, from Yonkers to Sleepy Hollow, hastened to nail horseshoes to their doors, which have ever been found of sovereign virtue to repel this awful visitation. This is the origin of the horse-shoes which may still be seen nailed to the doors of barns and farmhouses, in various parts of this sage and sober-thoughted region.

The evil, however, bore hard upon the Roost; partly, perhaps, from its having in old times been subject to supernatural influences, during the sway of the Wizard Sachem; but it has always, in fact, been considered a fated mansion. The unlucky Wolfert had no rest day nor night. When the weather was quiet all over the country, the wind would howl and whistle round his roof; witches would ride and whirl upon his weathercocks, and scream down his chimneys. His cows gave bloody milk, and his horses broke bounds, and scampered into the woods. There were not wanting evil tongues to whisper that Wolfert's termagant wife had some tampering with the enemy; and that she even attended a witches' Sabbath in Sleepy Hollow; nay, a neighbor, who lived hard by, declared that he saw her harnessing a rampant broomstick, and about to ride to the meeting; though others presume it

was merely flourished in the course of one of her curtain lectures, to give energy and emphasis to a period. Certain it is, that Wolfert Acker nailed a horse-shoe to the front door, during one of her nocturnal excursions, to prevent her return; but as she re-entered the house without any difficulty, it is probable she was not so much of a witch as she was represented.⁴

After the time of Wolfert Acker, a long interval elapses, about which but little is known. It is hoped, however, that the antiquarian researches so diligently making in every part of this new country, may yet throw some light upon what may be termed the Dark Ages of the Roost.

The next period at which we find this venerable and eventful pile rising to importance, and resuming its old belligerent character, is during the revolutionary war. It was at that time owned by Jacob Van Tassel, or Van Texel, as the name was originally spelled, after the place in Holland which gave birth to

⁴ HISTORICAL NOTE. – The annexed extracts from the early colonial records, relate to the irruption of witchcraft into Westchester county, as mentioned in the chronicle:"JULY 7, 1670. – Katharine Harryson, accused of witchcraft on complaint of Thomas Hunt and Edward Waters, in behalf of the town, who pray that she may be driven from the town of Westchester. The woman appears before the council... She was a native of England, and had lived a year in Weathersfield, Connecticut, where she had been tried for witchcraft, found guilty by the jury, acquitted by the bench, and released out of prison, upon condition she would remove. Affair adjourned."AUGUST 24. – Affair taken up again, when, being heard at large, it was referred to the general court of assize. Woman ordered to give security for good behavior," etc.In another place is the following entry:"Order given for Katharine Harryson, charged with witchcraft, to leave Westchester, as the inhabitants are uneasy at her residing there, and she is ordered to go off."

this heroic line. He was strong-built, long-limbed, and as stout in soul as in body; a fit successor to the warrior sachem of yore, and, like him, delighting in extravagant enterprises and hardy deeds of arms. But, before I enter upon the exploits of this worthy cock of the Boost, it is fitting I should throw some light upon the state of the mansion, and of the surrounding country, at the time.

The situation of the Roost is in the very heart of what was the debateable ground between the American and British lines, during the war. The British held possession of the city of New York, and the island of Manhattan on which it stands. The Americans drew up toward the Highlands, holding their headquarters at Peekskill. The intervening country, from Croton River to Spiting Devil Creek, was the debateable land, subject to be harried by friend and foe, like the Scottish borders of yore. It is a rugged country, with a line of rocky hills extending through it, like a back bone, sending ribs on either side; but among these rude hills are beautiful winding valleys, like those watered by the Pocantico and the Neperan. In the fastnesses of these hills, and along these valleys, exist a race of hard-headed, hard-handed, stout-hearted Dutchmen, descendants of the primitive *Nederlanders*. Most of these were strong whigs throughout the war, and have ever remained obstinately attached to the soil, and neither to be fought nor bought out of their paternal acres. Others were tories, and adherents to the old kingly rule; some of whom took refuge within the British lines, joined the royal bands of refugees, a name odious to the American ear, and occasionally

returned to harass their ancient neighbors.

In a little while, this debateable land was overrun by predatory bands from either side; sacking hen-roosts, plundering farm-houses, and driving off cattle. Hence arose those two great orders of border chivalry, the Skinners and the Cowboys, famous in the heroic annals of Westchester county. The former fought, or rather marauded, under the American, the latter under the British banner; but both, in the hurry of their military ardor, were apt to err on the safe side, and rob friend as well as foe. Neither of them stopped to ask the politics of horse or cow, which they drove into captivity; nor, when they wrung the neck of a rooster, did they trouble their heads to ascertain whether he were crowing for Congress or King George.

While this marauding system prevailed on shore, the Great Tappan Sea, which washes this belligerent region, was domineered over by British frigates and other vessels of war, anchored here and there, to keep an eye upon the river, and maintain a communication between the various military posts. Stout galleys, also, armed with eighteen-pounders, and navigated with sails and oars, cruised about like hawks, ready to pounce upon their prey.

All these were eyed with bitter hostility by the Dutch yeomanry along shore, who were indignant at seeing their great Mediterranean ploughed by hostile prows; and would occasionally throw up a mud breast-work on a point or promontory, mount an old iron field-piece, and fire away at the

enemy, though the greatest harm was apt to happen to themselves from the bursting of their ordnance; nay, there was scarce a Dutchman along the river that would hesitate to fire with his long duck gun at any British cruiser that came within reach, as he had been accustomed to fire at water-fowl.

I have been thus particular in my account of the times and neighborhood, that the reader might the more readily comprehend the surrounding dangers in this the Heroic Age of the Roost.

It was commanded at the time, as I have already observed, by the stout Jacob Van Tassel. As I wish to be extremely accurate in this part of my chronicle, I beg that this Jacob Van Tassel of the Roost may not be confounded with another Jacob Van Tassel, commonly known in border story by the name of "Clump-footed Jake," a noted tory, and one of the refugee band of Spiting Devil. On the contrary, he of the Roost was a patriot of the first water, and, if we may take his own word for granted, a thorn in the side of the enemy. As the Roost, from its lonely situation on the water's edge, might be liable to attack, he took measures for defence. On a row of hooks above his fire-place, reposed his great piece of ordnance, ready charged and primed for action. This was a duck, or rather goose-gun, of unparalleled longitude, with which it was said he could kill a wild goose, though half-way across the Tappan Sea. Indeed, there are as many wonders told of this renowned gun, as of the enchanted weapons of the heroes of classic story.

In different parts of the stone walls of his mansion, he had made loop-holes, through which he might fire upon an assailant. His wife was stout-hearted as himself, and could load as fast as he could fire; and then he had an ancient and redoubtable sister, Nochie Van Wurmer, a match, as he said, for the stoutest man in the country. Thus garrisoned, the little Roost was fit to stand a siege, and Jacob Van Tassel was the man to defend it to the last charge of powder.

He was, as I have already hinted, of pugnacious propensities; and, not content with being a patriot at home, and fighting for the security of his own fireside, he extended his thoughts abroad, and entered into a confederacy with certain of the bold, hard-riding lads of Tarrytown, Petticoat Lane, and Sleepy Hollow, who formed a kind of Holy Brotherhood, scouring the country to clear it of Skinner and Cow-boy, and all other border vermin. The Roost was one of their rallying points. Did a band of marauders from Manhattan island come sweeping through the neighborhood, and driving off cattle, the stout Jacob and his compeers were soon clattering at their heels, and fortunate did the rogues esteem themselves if they could but get a part of their booty across the lines, or escape themselves without a rough handling. Should the mosstroopers succeed in passing with their cavalcade, with thundering tramp and dusty whirlwind, across Kingsbridge, the Holy Brotherhood of the Roost would rein up at that perilous pass, and, wheeling about, would indemnify themselves by foraging the refugee region of Morrisania.

When at home at the Roost, the stout Jacob was not idle; but was prone to carry on a petty warfare of his own, for his private recreation and refreshment. Did he ever chance to espy, from his look-out place, a hostile ship or galley anchored or becalmed near shore, he would take down his long goose-gun from the hooks over the fire-place, sally out alone, and lurk along shore, dodging behind rocks and trees, and watching for hours together, like a veteran mouser intent on a rat-hole. So sure as a boat put off for shore, and came within shot, bang! went the great goose-gun; a shower of slugs and buck-shot whistled about the ears of the enemy, and before the boat could reach the shore, Jacob had scuttled up some woody ravine, and left no trace behind. About this time, the Roost experienced a vast accession of warlike importance, in being made one of the stations of the water-guard. This was a kind of aquatic corps of observation, composed of long, sharp, canoe-shaped boats, technically called whale-boats, that lay lightly on the water, and could be rowed with great rapidity. They were manned by resolute fellows, skilled at pulling an oar, or handling a musket. These lurked about in nooks and bays, and behind those long promontories which run out into the Tappan Sea, keeping a look-out, to give notice of the approach or movements of hostile ships. They roved about in pairs; sometimes at night, with muffled oars, gliding like spectres about frigates and guard-ships riding at anchor, cutting off any boats that made for shore, and keeping the enemy in constant uneasiness. These mosquito-cruisers generally kept aloof by day,

so that their harboring places might not be discovered, but would pull quietly along, under shadow of the shore, at night, to take up their quarters at the Roost. Hither, at such time, would also repair the hard-riding lads of the hills, to hold secret councils of war with the "ocean chivalry;" and in these nocturnal meetings were concerted many of those daring forays, by land and water, that resounded throughout the border.

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The chronicle here goes on to recount divers wonderful stories of the wars of the Roost, from which it would seem, that this little warrior nest carried the terror of its arms into every sea, from Spiting Devil Creek to Antony's Nose; that it even bearded the stout island of Manhattan, invading it at night, penetrating to its centre, and burning down the famous Delancey house, the conflagration of which makes such a blaze in revolutionary history. Nay more, in their extravagant daring, these cocks of the Roost meditated a nocturnal descent upon New York itself, to swoop upon the British commanders, Howe and Clinton, by surprise, bear them off captive, and perhaps put a triumphant close to the war!

All these and many similar exploits are recorded by the worthy Diedrich, with his usual minuteness and enthusiasm, whenever the deeds in arms of his kindred Dutchmen are in question; but though most of these warlike stories rest upon the best of

all authority, that of the warriors themselves, and though many of them are still current among the revolutionary patriarchs of this heroic neighborhood, yet I dare not expose them to the incredulity of a tamer and less chivalric age, Suffice it to say, the frequent gatherings at the Roost, and the hardy projects set on foot there, at length drew on it the fiery indignation of the enemy; and this was quickened by the conduct of the stout Jacob Van Tassel; with whose valorous achievements we resume the course of the chronicle.

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THIS doughty Dutchman, continues the sage DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER, was not content with taking a share in all the magnanimous enterprises concocted at the Roost, but still continued his petty warfare along shore. A series of exploits at length raised his confidence in his prowess to such a height, that he began to think himself and his goose-gun a match for any thing. Unluckily, in the course of one of his prowlings, he descried a British transport aground, not far from shore, with her stern swung toward the land, within point-blank shot. The temptation was too great to be resisted; bang! as usual, went the great goose-gun, shivering the cabin windows, and driving all hands forward. Bang! bang! the shots were repeated. The reports brought several sharp-shooters of the neighborhood to the spot; before the transport could bring a gun to bear, or land a boat, to

take revenge, she was soundly peppered, and the coast evacuated. This was the last of Jacob's triumphs. He fared like some heroic spider, that has unwittingly ensnared a hornet, to his immortal glory, perhaps, but to the utter ruin of his web.

It was not long after this, during the absence of Jacob Van Tassel on one of his forays, and when no one was in garrison but his stout-hearted spouse, his redoubtable sister, Nochie Van Wurmer, and a strapping negro wench, called Dinah, that an armed vessel came to anchor off the Roost, and a boat full of men pulled to shore. The garrison flew to arms, that is to say, to mops, broom-sticks, shovels, tongs, and all kinds of domestic weapons; for, unluckily, the great piece of ordnance, the goose-gun, was absent with its owner. Above all, a vigorous defence was made with that most potent of female weapons, the tongue. Never did invaded hen-roost make a more vociferous outcry. It was all in vain. The house was sacked and plundered, fire was set to each corner, and in a few moments its blaze shed a baleful light far over the Tappan Sea. The invaders then pounced upon the blooming Laney Van Tassel, the beauty of the Roost, and endeavored to bear her off to the boat. But here was the real tug of war. The mother, the aunt, and the strapping negro wench, all flew to the rescue. The struggle continued down to the very water's edge; when a voice from the armed vessel at anchor, ordered the spoilers to let go their hold; they relinquished their prize, jumped into their boats, and pulled off, and the heroine of the Roost escaped with a mere rumpling of the feathers.

The fear of tiring my readers, who may not take such an interest as myself in these heroic themes, induces me to close here my extracts from this precious chronicle of the venerable Diedrich. Suffice it briefly to say, that shortly after the catastrophe of the Roost, Jacob Van Tassel, in the course of one of his forays, fell into the hands of the British; was sent prisoner to New York, and was detained in captivity for the greater part of the war. In the mean time, the Roost remained a melancholy ruin; its stone walls and brick chimneys alone standing, blackened by fire, and the resort of bats and owlets. It was not until the return of peace, when this belligerent neighborhood once more resumed its quiet agricultural pursuits, that the stout Jacob sought the scene of his triumphs and disasters; rebuilt the Roost, and reared again on high its glittering weather-cocks.

Does any one want further particulars of the fortunes of this eventful little pile? Let him go to the fountain-head, and drink deep of historic truth. Reader! the stout Jacob Van Tassel still lives, a venerable, gray-headed patriarch of the revolution, now in his ninety-fifth year! He sits by his fireside, in the ancient city of the Manhattoes, and passes the long winter evenings, surrounded by his children, and grand-children, and great-grand-children, all listening to his tales of the border wars, and the heroic days of the Roost. His great goose-gun, too, is still in existence, having been preserved for many years in a hollow tree, and passed from hand to hand among the Dutch burghers, as a precious relique of the revolution. It is now actually in possession

of a contemporary of the stout Jacob, one almost his equal in years, who treasures it up at his house in the Bowerie of New-Amsterdam, hard by the ancient rural retreat of the chivalric Peter Stuyvesant. I am not without hopes of one day seeing this formidable piece of ordinance restored to its proper station in the arsenal of the Roost. Before closing this historic document, I cannot but advert to certain notions and traditions concerning the venerable pile in question. Old-time edifices are apt to gather odd fancies and superstitions about them, as they do moss and weather-stains; and this is in a neighborhood a little given to old-fashioned notions, and who look upon the Roost as somewhat of a fated mansion. A lonely, rambling, down-hill lane leads to it, overhung with trees, with a wild brook dashing along, and crossing and re-crossing it. This lane I found some of the good people of the neighborhood shy of treading at night; why, I could not for a long time ascertain; until I learned that one or two of the rovers of the Tappan Sea, shot by the stout Jacob during the war, had been buried hereabout, in unconsecrated ground.

Another local superstition is of a less gloomy kind, and one which I confess I am somewhat disposed to cherish. The Tappan Sea, in front of the Roost, is about three miles wide, bordered by a lofty line of waving and rocky hills. Often, in the still twilight of a summer evening, when the sea is like glass, with the opposite hills throwing their purple shadows half across it, a low sound is heard, as of the steady, vigorous pull of oars, far out in the middle of the stream, though not a boat is to be descried. This I

should have been apt to ascribe to some boat rowed along under the shadows of the western shore, for sounds are conveyed to a great distance by water, at such quiet hours, and I can distinctly hear the baying of the watch-dogs at night, from the farms on the sides of the opposite mountains. The ancient traditionists of the neighborhood, however, religiously ascribed these sounds to a judgment upon one Rumbout Van Dam, of Spiting Devil, who danced and drank late one Saturday night, at a Dutch quilting frolic, at Kakiat, and set off alone for home in his boat, on the verge of Sunday morning; swearing he would not land till he reached Spiting Devil, if it took him a month of Sundays. He was never seen afterward, but is often heard plying his oars across the Tappan Sea, a Flying Dutchman on a small scale, suited to the size of his cruising-ground; being doomed to ply between Kakiat and Spiting Devil till the day of judgment, but never to reach the land.

There is one room in the mansion which almost overhangs the river, and is reputed to be haunted by the ghost of a young lady who died of love and green apples. I have been awakened at night by the sound of oars and the tinkling of guitars beneath the window; and seeing a boat loitering in the moonlight, have been tempted to believe it the Flying Dutchman of Spiting Devil, and to try whether a silver bullet might not put an end to his unhappy cruisions; but, happening to recollect that there was a living young lady in the haunted room, who might be terrified by the report of fire-arms, I have refrained from pulling trigger.

As to the enchanted fountain, said to have been gifted by the wizard sachem with supernatural powers, it still wells up at the foot of the bank, on the margin of the river, and goes by the name of the Indian spring; but I have my doubts as to its rejuvenating powers, for though I have drank oft and copiously of it, I cannot boast that I find myself growing younger.

GEOFFREY CRAYON.

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SLEEPY HOLLOW

BY GEOFFREY CRAYON, GENT

HAVING pitched my tent, probably for the remainder of my days, in the neighborhood of Sleepy Hollow, I am tempted to give some few particulars concerning that spell-bound region; especially as it has risen to historic importance under the pen of my revered friend and master, the sage historian of the New Netherlands. Beside, I find the very existence of the place has been held in question by many; who, judging from its odd name and from the odd stories current among the vulgar concerning it, have rashly deemed the whole to be a fanciful creation, like the Lubber Land of mariners. I must confess there is some apparent cause for doubt, in consequence of the coloring given by the worthy Diedrich to his descriptions of the Hollow; who, in this instance, has departed a little from his usually sober if not severe style; beguiled, very probably, by his predilection for the haunts of his youth, and by a certain lurking taint of romance whenever any thing connected with the Dutch was to be described. I shall endeavor to make up for this amiable error on the part of my venerable and venerated friend by presenting the reader with a more precise and statistical account of the Hollow; though I am

not sure that I shall not be prone to lapse in the end into the very error I am speaking of, so potent is the witchery of the theme.

I believe it was the very peculiarity of its name and the idea of something mystic and dreamy connected with it that first led me in my boyish ramblings into Sleepy Hollow. The character of the valley seemed to answer to the name; the slumber of past ages apparently reigned over it; it had not awakened to the stir of improvement which had put all the rest of the world in a bustle. Here reigned good, old long-forgotten fashions; the men were in home-spun garbs, evidently the product of their own farms and the manufacture of their own wives; the women were in primitive short gowns and petticoats, with the venerable sun-bonnets of Holland origin. The lower part of the valley was cut up into small farms, each consisting of a little meadow and corn-field; an orchard of sprawling, gnarled apple-trees, and a garden, where the rose, the marigold, and the hollyhock were permitted to skirt the domains of the capacious cabbage, the aspiring pea, and the portly pumpkin. Each had its prolific little mansion teeming with children; with an old hat nailed against the wall for the housekeeping wren; a motherly hen, under a coop on the grass-plot, clucking to keep around her a brood of vagrant chickens; a cool, stone well, with the moss-covered bucket suspended to the long balancing-pole, according to the antediluvian idea of hydraulics; and its spinning-wheel humming within doors, the patriarchal music of home manufacture.

The Hollow at that time was inhabited by families which had

existed there from the earliest times, and which, by frequent intermarriage, had become so interwoven, as to make a kind of natural commonwealth. As the families had grown larger the farms had grown smaller; every new generation requiring a new subdivision, and few thinking of swarming from the native hive. In this way that happy golden mean had been produced, so much extolled by the poets, in which there was no gold and very little silver. One thing which doubtless contributed to keep up this amiable mean was a general repugnance to sordid labor. The sage inhabitants of Sleepy Hollow had read in their Bible, which was the only book they studied, that labor was originally inflicted upon man as a punishment of sin; they regarded it, therefore, with pious abhorrence, and never humiliated themselves to it but in cases of extremity. There seemed, in fact, to be a league and covenant against it throughout the Hollow as against a common enemy. Was any one compelled by dire necessity to repair his house, mend his fences, build a barn, or get in a harvest, he considered it a great evil that entitled him to call in the assistance of his friend? He accordingly proclaimed a 'bee' or rustic gathering, whereupon all his neighbors hurried to his aid like faithful allies; attacked the task with the desperate energy of lazy men eager to overcome a job; and, when it was accomplished, fell to eating and drinking, fiddling and dancing for very joy that so great an amount of labor had been vanquished with so little sweating of the brow.

Yet, let it not be supposed that this worthy community was

without its periods of arduous activity. Let but a flock of wild pigeons fly across the valley and all Sleepy Hollow was wide awake in an instant. The pigeon season had arrived. Every gun and net was forthwith in requisition. The flail was thrown down on the barn floor; the spade rusted in the garden; the plough stood idle in the furrow; every one was to the hillside and stubble-field at daybreak to shoot or entrap the pigeons in their periodical migrations.

So, likewise, let but the word be given that the shad were ascending the Hudson, and the worthies of the Hollow were to be seen launched in boats upon the river setting great stakes, and stretching their nets like gigantic spider-webs half across the stream to the great annoyance of navigators. Such are the wise provisions of Nature, by which she equalizes rural affairs. A laggard at the plough is often extremely industrious with the fowling-piece and fishing-net; and, whenever a man is an indifferent farmer, he is apt to be a first-rate sportsman. For catching shad and wild pigeons there were none throughout the country to compare with the lads of Sleepy Hollow.

As I have observed, it was the dreamy nature of the name that first beguiled me in the holiday roving of boyhood into this sequestered region. I shunned, however, the populous parts of the Hollow, and sought its retired haunts far in the foldings of the hills, where the Pocantico "winds its wizard stream" sometimes silently and darkly through solemn woodlands; sometimes sparkling between grassy borders in fresh, green meadows;

sometimes stealing along the feet of rugged heights under the balancing sprays of beech and chestnut trees. A thousand crystal springs, with which this neighborhood abounds, sent down from the hill-sides their whimpering rills, as if to pay tribute to the Pocantico. In this stream I first essayed my unskilful hand at angling. I loved to loiter along it with rod in hand, watching my float as it whirled amid the eddies or drifted into dark holes under twisted roots and sunken logs, where the largest fish are apt to lurk. I delighted to follow it into the brown accesses of the woods; to throw by my fishing-gear and sit upon rocks beneath towering oaks and clambering grape-vines; bathe my feet in the cool current, and listen to the summer breeze playing among the tree-tops. My boyish fancy clothed all nature around me with ideal charms, and peopled it with the fairy beings I had read of in poetry and fable. Here it was I gave full scope to my incipient habit of day dreaming, and to a certain propensity, to weave up and tint sober realities with my own whims and imaginings, which has sometimes made life a little too much like an Arabian tale to me, and this "working-day world" rather like a region of romance.

The great gathering-place of Sleepy Hollow in those days was the church. It stood outside of the Hollow, near the great highway, on a green bank shaded by trees, with the Pocantico sweeping round it and emptying itself into a spacious mill-pond. At that time the Sleepy Hollow church was the only place of worship for a wide neighborhood. It was a venerable edifice,

partly of stone and partly of brick, the latter having been brought from Holland in the early days of the province, before the arts in the New Netherlands could aspire to such a fabrication. On a stone above the porch were inscribed the names of the founders, Frederick Filipsen, a mighty patroon of the olden time, who reigned over a wide extent of this neighborhood and held his seat of power at Yonkers; and his wife, Katrina Van Courtlandt, of the no less potent line of the Van Courtlandts of Croton, who lorded it over a great part of the Highlands.

The capacious pulpit, with its wide-spreading sounding-board, were likewise early importations from Holland; as also the communion-table, of massive form and curious fabric. The same might be said of a weather-cock perched on top of the belfry, and which was considered orthodox in all windy matters, until a small pragmatistical rival was set up on the other end of the church above the chancel. This latter bore, and still bears, the initials of Frederick Filipsen, and assumed great airs in consequence. The usual contradiction ensued that always exists among church weather-cocks, which can never be brought to agree as to the point from which the wind blows, having doubtless acquired, from their position, the Christian propensity to schism and controversy.

Behind the church, and sloping up a gentle acclivity, was its capacious burying-ground, in which slept the earliest fathers of this rural neighborhood. Here were tombstones of the rudest sculpture; on which were inscribed, in Dutch, the names and

virtues of many of the first settlers, with their portraitures curiously carved in similitude of cherubs. Long rows of grave-stones, side by side, of similar names, but various dates, showed that generation after generation of the same families had followed each other and been garnered together in this last gathering-place of kindred.

Let me speak of this quiet grave-yard with all due reverence, for I owe it amends for the heedlessness of my boyish days. I blush to acknowledge the thoughtless frolic with which, in company with other whipsters, I have sported within its sacred bounds during the intervals of worship; chasing butterflies, plucking wild flowers, or vying with each other who could leap over the tallest tomb-stones, until checked by the stern voice of the sexton.

The congregation was, in those days, of a really rural character. City fashions were as yet unknown, or unregarded, by the country people of the neighborhood. Steam-boats had not as yet confounded town with country. A weekly market-boat from Tarry town, the "Farmers' Daughter," navigated by the worthy Gabriel Requa, was the only communication between all these parts and the metropolis. A rustic belle in those days considered a visit to the city in much the same light as one of our modern fashionable ladies regards a visit to Europe; an event that may possibly take place once in the course of a lifetime, but to be hoped for, rather than expected. Hence the array of the congregation was chiefly after the primitive fashions existing in

Sleepy Hollow; or if, by chance, there was a departure from the Dutch sun-bonnet, or the apparition of a bright gown of flowered calico, it caused quite a sensation throughout the church. As the dominie generally preached by the hour, a bucket of water was providently placed on a bench near the door, in summer, with a tin cup beside it, for the solace of those who might be athirst, either from the heat of the weather, or the drouth of the sermon.

Around the pulpit, and behind the communion-table, sat the elders of the church, reverend, gray-headed, leathern-visaged men, whom I regarded with awe, as so many apostles. They were stern in their sanctity, kept a vigilant eye upon my giggling companions and myself, and shook a rebuking finger at any boyish device to relieve the tediousness of compulsory devotion. Vain, however, were all their efforts at vigilance. Scarcely had the preacher held forth for half an hour, on one of his interminable sermons, than it seemed as if the drowsy influence of Sleepy Hollow breathed into the place; one by one the congregation sank into slumber; the sanctified elders leaned back in their pews, spreading their handkerchiefs over their faces, as if to keep off the flies; while the locusts in the neighboring trees would spin out their sultry summer notes, as if in imitation of the sleep-provoking tones of the dominie.

I have thus endeavored to give an idea of Sleepy Hollow and its church, as I recollect them to have been in the days of my boyhood. It was in my stripling days, when a few years had passed over my head, that I revisited them, in company with the

venerable Diedrich. I shall never forget the antiquarian reverence with which that sage and excellent man contemplated the church. It seemed as if all his pious enthusiasm for the ancient Dutch dynasty swelled within his bosom at the sight. The tears stood in his eyes, as he regarded the pulpit and the communion-table; even the very bricks that had come from the mother country, seemed to touch a filial chord within his bosom. He almost bowed in deference to the stone above the porch, containing the names of Frederick Filipsen and Katrina Van Courtlandt, regarding it as the linking together of those patronymic names, once so famous along the banks of the Hudson; or rather as a key-stone, binding that mighty Dutch family connexion of yore, one foot of which rested on Yonkers, and the other on the Groton. Nor did he forbear to notice with admiration, the windy contest which had been carried on, since time immemorial, and with real Dutch perseverance, between the two weather-cocks; though I could easily perceive he coincided with the one which had come from Holland.

Together we paced the ample church-yard. With deep veneration would he turn down the weeds and brambles that obscured the modest brown grave-stones, half sunk in earth, on which were recorded, in Dutch, the names of the patriarchs of ancient days, the Ackers, the Van Tassels, and the Van Warts. As we sat on one of the tomb-stones, he recounted to me the exploits of many of these worthies; and my heart smote me, when I heard of their great doings in days of yore, to think how heedlessly I

had once sported over their graves.

From the church, the venerable Diedrich proceeded in his researches up the Hollow. The genius of the place seemed to hail its future historian. All nature was alive with gratulation. The quail whistled a greeting from the corn-field; the robin carolled a song of praise from the orchard; the loquacious catbird flew from bush to bush, with restless wing, proclaiming his approach in every variety of note, and anon would whisk about, and perk inquisitively into his face, as if to get a knowledge of his physiognomy; the wood-pecker, also, tapped a tattoo on the hollow apple-tree, and then peered knowingly round the trunk, to see how the great Diedrich relished his salutation; while the ground-squirrel scampered along the fence, and occasionally whisked his tail over his head, by way of a huzza!

The worthy Diedrich pursued his researches in the valley with characteristic devotion; entering familiarly into the various cottages, and gossiping with the simple folk, in the style of their own simplicity. I confess my heart yearned with admiration, to see so great a man, in his eager quest after knowledge, humbly demeaning himself to curry favor with the humblest; sitting patiently on a three-legged stool, patting the children, and taking a purring grimalkin on his lap, while he conciliated the goodwill of the old Dutch housewife, and drew from her long ghost stories, spun out to the humming accompaniment of her wheel.

His greatest treasure of historic lore, however, was discovered in an old goblin-looking mill, situated among rocks and

waterfalls, with clanking wheels, and rushing streams, and all kinds of uncouth noises. A horse-shoe, nailed to the door to keep off witches and evil spirits, showed that this mill was subject to awful visitations. As we approached it, an old negro thrust his head, all dabbled with flour, out of a hole above the water-wheel, and grinned, and rolled his eyes, and looked like the very hobgoblin of the place. The illustrious Diedrich fixed upon him, at once, as the very one to give him that invaluable kind of information never to be acquired from books. He beckoned him from his nest, sat with him by the hour on a broken mill-stone, by the side of the waterfall, heedless of the noise of the water, and the clatter of the mill; and I verily believe it was to his conference with this African sage, and the precious revelations of the good dame of the spinning-wheel, that we are indebted for the surprising though true history of Ichabod Crane and the headless horseman, which has since astounded and edified the world.

But I have said enough of the good old times of my youthful days; let me speak of the Hollow as I found it, after an absence of many years, when it was kindly given me once more to revisit the haunts of my boyhood. It was a genial day, as I approached that fated region. The warm sunshine was tempered by a slight haze, so as to give a dreamy effect to the landscape. Not a breath of air shook the foliage. The broad Tappan Sea was without a ripple, and the sloops, with drooping sails, slept on its grassy bosom. Columns of smoke, from burning brush-wood, rose lazily from

the folds of the hills, on the opposite side of the river, and slowly expanded in mid-air. The distant lowing of a cow, or the noontide crowing of a cock, coming faintly to the ear, seemed to illustrate, rather than disturb, the drowsy quiet of the scene.

I entered the hollow with a beating heart. Contrary to my apprehensions, I found it but little changed. The march of intellect, which had made such rapid strides along every river and highway, had not yet, apparently, turned down into this favored valley. Perhaps the wizard spell of ancient days still reigned over the place, binding up the faculties of the inhabitants in happy contentment with things as they had been handed down to them from yore. There were the same little farms and farmhouses, with their old hats for the housekeeping wren; their stone wells, moss-covered buckets, and long balancing poles. There were the same little rills, whimpering down to pay their tributes to the Pocantico; while that wizard stream still kept on its course, as of old, through solemn woodlands and fresh green meadows: nor were there wanting joyous holiday boys to loiter along its banks, as I have done; throw their pin-hooks in the stream, or launch their mimic barks. I watched them with a kind of melancholy pleasure, wondering whether they were under the same spell of the fancy that once rendered this valley a fairy land to me. Alas! alas! to me every thing now stood revealed in its simple reality. The echoes no longer answered with wizard tongues; the dream of youth was at an end; the spell of Sleepy Hollow was broken!

I sought the ancient church on the following Sunday. There it

stood, on its green bank, among the trees; the Pocantico swept by it in a deep dark stream, where I had so often angled; there expanded the mill-pond, as of old, with the cows under the willows on its margin, knee-deep in water, chewing the cud, and lashing the flies from their sides with their tails. The hand of improvement, however, had been busy with the venerable pile. The pulpit, fabricated in Holland, had been superseded by one of modern construction, and the front of the semi-Gothic edifice was decorated by a semi-Grecian portico. Fortunately, the two weather-cocks remained undisturbed on their perches at each end of the church, and still kept up a diametrical opposition to each other on all points of windy doctrine.

On entering the church the changes of time continued to be apparent. The elders round the pulpit were men whom I had left in the gamesome frolic of their youth, but who had succeeded to the sanctity of station of which they once had stood so much in awe. What most struck my eye was the change in the female part of the congregation. Instead of the primitive garbs of homespun manufacture and antique Dutch fashion, I beheld French sleeves, French capes, and French collars, and a fearful-fluttering of French ribbands.

When the service was ended I sought the church-yard, in which I had sported in my unthinking days of boyhood. Several of the modest brown stones, on which were recorded in Dutch the names and virtues of the patriarchs, had disappeared, and had been succeeded by others of white marble, with urns and

wreaths, and scraps of English tomb-stone poetry, marking the intrusion of taste and literature and the English language in this once unsophisticated Dutch neighborhood.

As I was stumbling about among these silent yet eloquent memorials of the dead, I came upon names familiar to me; of those who had paid the debt of nature during the long interval of my absence. Some, I remembered, my companions in boyhood, who had sported with me on the very sod under which they were now mouldering; others who in those days had been the flower of the yeomanry, figuring in Sunday finery on the church green; others, the white-haired elders of the sanctuary, once arrayed in awful sanctity around the pulpit, and ever ready to rebuke the ill-timed mirth of the wanton stripling who, now a man, sobered by years and schooled by vicissitudes, looked down pensively upon their graves. "Our fathers," thought I, "where are they! – and the prophets, can they live for ever!"

I was disturbed in my meditations by the noise of a troop of idle urchins, who came gambolling about the place where I had so often gambolled. They were checked, as I and my playmates had often been, by the voice of the sexton, a man staid in years and demeanor. I looked wistfully in his face; had I met him any where else, I should probably have passed him by without remark; but here I was alive to the traces of former times, and detected in the demure features of this guardian of the sanctuary the lurking lineaments of one of the very playmates I have alluded to. We renewed our acquaintance. He sat down beside

me, on one of the tomb-stones over which we had leaped in our juvenile sports, and we talked together about our boyish days, and held edifying discourse on the instability of all sublunary things, as instanced in the scene around us. He was rich in historic lore, as to the events of the last thirty years and the circumference of thirty miles, and from him I learned the appalling revolution that was taking place throughout the neighborhood. All this I clearly perceived he attributed to the boasted march of intellect, or rather to the all-pervading influence of steam. He bewailed the times when the only communication with town was by the weekly market-boat, the "Farmers' Daughter," which, under the pilotage of the worthy Gabriel Requa, braved the perils of the Tappan Sea. Alas! Gabriel and the "Farmer's Daughter" slept in peace. Two steamboats now splashed and paddled up daily to the little rural port of Tarrytown. The spirit of speculation and improvement had seized even upon that once quiet and unambitious little dorp. The whole neighborhood was laid out into town lots. Instead of the little tavern below the hill, where the farmers used to loiter on market days and indulge in cider and gingerbread, an ambitious hotel, with cupola and verandas, now crested the summit, among churches built in the Grecian and Gothic styles, showing the great increase of piety and polite taste in the neighborhood. As to Dutch dresses and sun-bonnets, they were no longer tolerated, or even thought of; not a farmer's daughter but now went to town for the fashions; nay, a city milliner had recently set up in the village, who threatened to

reform the heads of the whole neighborhood.

I had heard enough! I thanked my old playmate for his intelligence, and departed from the Sleepy Hollow church with the sad conviction that I had beheld the last lingerings of the good old Dutch times in this once favored region. If any thing were wanting to confirm this impression, it would be the intelligence which has just reached me, that a bank is about to be established in the aspiring little port just mentioned. The fate of the neighborhood is therefore sealed. I see no hope of averting it. The golden mean is at an end, The country is suddenly to be deluged with wealth. The late simple farmers are to become bank directors and drink claret and champagne; and their wives and daughters to figure in French hats and feathers; for French wines and French fashions commonly keep pace with paper money. How can I hope that even Sleepy Hollow can escape the general inundation? In a little while, I fear the slumber of ages will be at end – the strum of the piano will succeed to the hum of the spinning-wheel; the trill of the Italian opera to the nasal quaver of Ichabod Crane; and the antiquarian visitor to the Hollow, in the petulance of his disappointment, may pronounce all that I have recorded of that once favored region a fable.

* * * * *

THE BIRDS OF SPRING

BY GEOFFREY CRAYON, GENT

My quiet residence in the country, aloof from fashion, politics, and the money market, leaves me rather at a loss for important occupation, and drives me to the study of nature, and other low pursuits. Having few neighbors, also, on whom to keep a watch, and exercise my habits of observation, I am fain to amuse myself with prying into the domestic concerns and peculiarities of the animals around me; and, during the present season, have derived considerable entertainment from certain sociable little birds, almost the only visitors we have, during this early part of the year.

Those who have passed the winter in the country, are sensible of the delightful influences that accompany the earliest indications of spring; and of these, none are more delightful than the first notes of the birds. There is one modest little sad-colored bird, much resembling a wren, which came about the house just on the skirts of winter, when not a blade of grass was to be seen, and when a few prematurely warm days had given a flattering foretaste of soft weather. He sang early in the dawning, long before sun-rise, and late in the evening,

just before the closing in of night, his matin and his vesper hymns. It is true, he sang occasionally throughout the day; but at these still hours, his song was more remarked. He sat on a leafless tree, just before the window, and warbled forth his notes, free and simple, but singularly sweet, with something of a plaintive tone, that heightened their effect. The first morning that he was heard, was a joyous one among the young folks of my household. The long, deathlike sleep of winter was at an end; nature was once more awakening; they now promised themselves the immediate appearance of buds and blossoms. I was reminded of the tempest-tossed crew of Columbus, when, after their long dubious voyage, the field birds came singing round the ship, though still far at sea, rejoicing them with the belief of the immediate proximity of land. A sharp return of winter almost silenced my little songster, and dashed the hilarity of the household; yet still he poured forth, now and then, a few plaintive notes, between the frosty pipings of the breeze, like gleams of sunshine between wintry clouds.

I have consulted my book of ornithology in vain, to find out the name of this kindly little bird, who certainly deserves honor and favor far beyond his modest pretensions. He comes like the lowly violet, the most unpretending, but welcomest of flowers, breathing the sweet promise of the early year.

Another of our feathered visitors, who follows close upon the steps of winter, is the Pe-wit, or Pe-wee, or Phoebe-bird; for he is called by each of these names, from a fancied resemblance

to the sound of his monotonous note. He is a sociable little being, and seeks the habitation of man. A pair of them have built beneath my porch, and have reared several broods there for two years past, their nest being never disturbed. They arrive early in the spring, just when the crocus and the snow-drop begin to peep forth. Their first chirp spreads gladness through the house. "The Phoebe-birds have come!" is heard on all sides; they are welcomed back like members of the family, and speculations are made upon where they have been, and what countries they have seen during their long absence. Their arrival is the more cheering, as it is pronounced, by the old weather-wise people of the country, the sure sign that the severe frosts are at an end, and that the gardener may resume his labors with confidence.

About this time, too, arrives the blue-bird, so poetically yet truly described by Wilson. His appearance gladdens the whole landscape. You hear his soft warble in every field. He sociably approaches your habitation, and takes up his residence in your vicinity. But why should I attempt to describe him, when I have Wilson's own graphic verses to place him before the reader?

When winter's cold tempests and snows are no more,
Green meadows and brown furrowed fields re-appearing:
The fishermen hauling their shad to the shore,
And cloud-cleaving geese to the lakes are a-steering;
When first the lone butterfly flits on the wing,
When red glow the maples, so fresh and so pleasing,
O then comes the blue-bird, the herald of spring,

And hails with his warblings the charms of the season.

The loud-piping frogs make the marshes to ring;
Then warm glows the sunshine, and warm glows the weather;
The blue woodland flowers just beginning to spring,
And spice-wood and sassafras budding together;
O then to your gardens, ye housewives, repair,
Your walks border up, sow and plant at your leisure;
The blue-bird will chant from his box such an air,
That all your hard toils will seem truly a pleasure.

He flits through the orchard, he visits each tree,
The red flowering peach, and the apple's sweet blossoms;
He snaps up destroyers, wherever they be,
And seizes the caitiffs that lurk in their bosoms;
He drags the vile grub from the corn it devours,
The worms from the webs where they riot and welter;
His song and his services freely are ours,
And all that he asks is, in summer a shelter.

The ploughman is pleased when he gleams in his train,
Now searching the furrows, now mounting to cheer him;
The gard'ner delights in his sweet simple strain,
And leans on his spade to survey and to hear him.
The slow lingering school-boys forget they'll be chid,
While gazing intent, as he warbles before them,
In mantle of sky-blue, and bosom so red,
That each little loiterer seems to adore him.

The happiest bird of our spring, however, and one that rivals the European lark, in my estimation, is the Boblincon, or Boblink, as he is commonly called. He arrives at that choice portion of our year, which, in this latitude, answers to the description of the month of May, so often given by the poets. With us, it begins about the middle of May, and lasts until nearly the middle of June. Earlier than this, winter is apt to return on its traces, and to blight the opening beauties of the year; and later than this, begin the parching, and panting, and dissolving heats of summer. But in this genial interval, nature is in all her freshness and fragrance: "the rains are over and gone, the flowers appear upon the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land." The trees are now in their fullest foliage and brightest verdure; the woods are gay with the clustered flowers of the laurel; the air is perfumed by the sweet-briar and the wild rose; the meadows are enamelled with clover-blossoms; while the young apple, the peach, and the plum, begin to swell, and the cherry to glow, among the green leaves.

This is the chosen season of revelry of the Boblink. He comes amidst the pomp and fragrance of the season; his life seems all sensibility and enjoyment, all song and sunshine. He is to be found in the soft bosoms of the freshest and sweetest meadows; and is most in song when the clover is in blossom. He perches on the topmost twig of a tree, or on some long flaunting weed; and as he rises and sinks with the breeze, pours forth a succession of rich tinkling notes; crowding one upon another, like the

outpouring melody of the skylark, and possessing the same rapturous character. Sometimes he pitches from the summit of a tree, begins his song as soon as he gets upon the wing, and flutters tremulously down to the earth, as if overcome with ecstasy at his own music. Sometimes he is in pursuit of his paramour; always in full song, as if he would win her by his melody; and always with the same appearance of intoxication and delight.

Of all the birds of our groves and meadows, the Boblink was the envy of my boyhood. He crossed my path in the sweetest weather, and the sweetest season of the year, when all nature called to the fields, and the rural feeling throbbed in every bosom; but when I, luckless urchin! was doomed to be mewed up, during the livelong day, in that purgatory of boyhood, a school-room. It seemed as if the little varlet mocked at me, as he flew by in full song, and sought to taunt me with his happier lot. Oh, how I envied him! No lessons, no tasks, no hateful school; nothing but holiday, frolic, green fields, and fine weather. Had I been then more versed in poetry, I might have addressed him in the words of Logan to the cuckoo:

Sweet bird! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy note,
No winter in thy year.

Oh! could I fly, I'd fly with thee;
We'd make, on joyful wing,

Our annual visit round the globe,
Companions of the spring!

Farther observation and experience have given me a different idea of this little feathered voluptuary, which I will venture to impart, for the benefit of my school-boy readers, who may regard him with the same unqualified envy and admiration which I once indulged. I have shown him only as I saw him at first, in what I may call the poetical part of his career, when he in a manner devoted himself to elegant pursuits and enjoyments, and was a bird of music, and song, and taste, and sensibility, and refinement. While this lasted, he was sacred from injury; the very school-boy would not fling a stone at him, and the merest rustic would pause to listen to his strain. But mark the difference. As the year advances, as the clover-blossoms disappear, and the spring fades into summer, his notes cease to vibrate on the ear. He gradually gives up his elegant tastes and habits, doffs his poetical and professional suit of black, assumes a russet or rather dusty garb, and enters into the gross enjoyments of common, vulgar birds. He becomes a bon-vivant, a mere gourmand; thinking of nothing but good cheer, and gormandizing on the seeds of the long grasses on which he lately swung, and chaunted so musically. He begins to think there is nothing like "the joys of the table," if I may be allowed to apply that convivial phrase to his indulgences. He now grows discontented with plain, every-day fare, and sets out on a gastronomical tour, in search of foreign

luxuries. He is to be found in myriads among the reeds of the Delaware, banqueting on their seeds; grows corpulent with good feeding, and soon acquires the unlucky renown of the ortolan. Whereever he goes, pop! pop! pop! the rusty firelocks of the country are cracking on every side; he sees his companions falling by the thousands around him; he is the *reed-bird*, the much-sought-for tit-bit of the Pennsylvanian epicure.

Does he take warning and reform? Not he! He wings his flight still farther south, in search of other luxuries. We hear of him gorging himself in the rice swamps; filling himself with rice almost to bursting; he can hardly fly for corpulency. Last stage of his career, we hear of him spitted by dozens, and served up on the table of the gourmand, the most vaunted of southern dainties, the *rice-bird* of the Carolinas.

Such is the story of the once musical and admired, but finally sensual and persecuted Boblink. It contains a moral, worthy the attention of all little birds and little boys; warning them to keep to those refined and intellectual pursuits, which raised him to so high a pitch of popularity, during the early part of his career; but to eschew all tendency to that gross and dissipated indulgence, which brought this mistaken little bird to an untimely end.

Which is all at present, from the well-wisher of little boys and little birds,

GEOFFREY CRAYON.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ALHAMBRA

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE SKETCH-BOOK

During a summer's residence in the old Moorish palace of the Alhambra, of which I have already given numerous anecdotes to the public, I used to pass much of my time in the beautiful hall of the Abencerrages, beside the fountain celebrated in the tragic story of that devoted race. Here it was, that thirty-six cavaliers of that heroic line were treacherously sacrificed, to appease the jealousy or allay the fears of a tyrant. The fountain which now throws up its sparkling jet, and sheds a dewy freshness around, ran red with the noblest blood of Granada, and a deep stain on the marble pavement is still pointed out, by the cicerones of the pile, as a sanguinary record of the massacre. I have regarded it with the same determined faith with which I have regarded the traditional stains of Rizzio's blood on the floor of the chamber of the unfortunate Mary, at Holyrood. I thank no one for endeavoring to enlighten my credulity, on such points of popular belief. It is like breaking up the shrine of the pilgrim; it is robbing a poor traveller of half the reward of his toils; for, strip travelling of its historical illusions, and what a mere fag you

make of it!

For my part, I gave myself up, during my sojourn in the Alhambra, to all the romantic and fabulous traditions connected with the pile. I lived in the midst of an Arabian tale, and shut my eyes, as much as possible, to every thing that called me back to every-day life; and if there is any country in Europe where one can do so, it is in poor, wild, legendary, proud-spirited, romantic Spain; where the old magnificent barbaric spirit still contends against the utilitarianism of modern civilization.

In the silent and deserted halls of the Alhambra; surrounded with the insignia of regal sway, and the still vivid, though dilapidated traces of oriental voluptuousness, I was in the stronghold of Moorish story, and every thing spoke and breathed of the glorious days of Granada, when under the dominion of the crescent. When I sat in the hall of the Abencerrages, I suffered my mind to conjure up all that I had read of that illustrious line. In the proudest days of Moslem domination, the Abencerrages were the soul of every thing noble and chivalrous. The veterans of the family, who sat in the royal council, were the foremost to devise those heroic enterprises, which carried dismay into the territories of the Christians; and what the sages of the family devised, the young men of the name were the foremost to execute. In all services of hazard; in all adventurous forays, and hair-breadth hazards; the Abencerrages were sure to win the brightest laurels. In those noble recreations, too, which bear so close an affinity to war; in the tilt and tourney, the riding at the ring, and the

daring bull-fight; still the Abencerrages carried off the palm. None could equal them for the splendor of their array, the gallantry of their devices; for their noble bearing, and glorious horsemanship. Their open-handed munificence made them the idols of the populace, while their lofty magnanimity, and perfect faith, gained them golden opinions from the generous and high-minded. Never were they known to decry the merits of a rival, or to betray the confidings of a friend; and the "word of an Abencerrage" was a guarantee that never admitted of a doubt.

And then their devotion to the fair! Never did Moorish beauty consider the fame of her charms established, until she had an Abencerrage for a lover; and never did an Abencerrage prove recreant to his vows. Lovely Granada! City of delights! Who ever bore the favors of thy dames more proudly on their casques, or championed them more gallantly in the chivalrous tilts of the Vivarambla? Or who ever made thy moon-lit balconies, thy gardens of myrtles and roses, of oranges, citrons, and pomegranates, respond to more tender serenades?

I speak with enthusiasm on this theme; for it is connected with the recollection of one of the sweetest evenings and sweetest scenes that ever I enjoyed in Spain. One of the greatest pleasures of the Spaniards is, to sit in the beautiful summer evenings, and listen to traditional ballads, and tales about the wars of the Moors and Christians, and the "buenas andanzas" and "grandes hechos," the "good fortunes" and "great exploits" of the hardy warriors of yore. It is worthy of remark, also, that many of these

songs, or romances, as they are called, celebrate the prowess and magnanimity in war, and the tenderness and, fidelity in love, of the Moorish cavaliers, once their most formidable and hated foes. But centuries have elapsed, to extinguish the bigotry of the zealot; and the once detested warriors of Granada are now held up by Spanish poets, as the mirrors of chivalric virtue.

Such was the amusement of the evening in question. A number of us were seated in the Hall of the Abencerrages, listening to one of the most gifted and fascinating beings that I had ever met with in my wanderings. She was young and beautiful; and light and ethereal; full of fire, and spirit, and pure enthusiasm. She wore the fanciful Andalusian dress; touched the guitar with speaking eloquence; improvised with wonderful facility; and, as she became excited by her theme, or by the rapt attention of her auditors, would pour forth, in the richest and most melodious strains, a succession of couplets, full of striking description, or stirring narration, and composed, as I was assured, at the moment. Most of these were suggested by the place, and related to the ancient glories of Granada, and the prowess of her chivalry. The Abencerrages were her favorite heroes; she felt a woman's admiration of their gallant courtesy, and high-souled honor; and it was touching and inspiring to hear the praises of that generous but devoted race, chanted in this fated hall of their calamity, by the lips of Spanish beauty.

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