FROM PALACE TO HOVEL.

The Strange Story of Victoria Tregear, Friend of Charles Dickens.

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BROOKLYN, N. Y., June 17.—Snugged warmly down in a south looking gulch at the foot of the last range of outlying hills that rise back of Brooklyn there lies a little hut. To the traveler as he crosses over the crest of the bluff it is entirely hidden from view, but as he proceeds down the southern declivity a slender thread of smoke curls up out of the cleft, suggesting the smoldering reveries of a subterranean gnome. As you descend the slope, however, a small gray hut gradually peers out at the bottom of the bluff, in front of which spreads a large pond. All around this quaint, lonely little hut in the hollow show the "sods" of the squatters, against the sides of the steep, interspersed here and there with small wooden structures of a more pretentious character, owned by the more aristocratic of the "pleb," who have put their money into property rather than punch. The precise spot on which this dwarfed, dilapidated little haberdashery stands, on unsurveyed grounds, would if laid out be known geographically as Park Place, corner Saratoga avenue. Formerly the whole section was venomously infested by the very worst characters, whose shades in a sort of stubborn heredity of habitat invariably haunt the suburbs of a great city.

As the writer of this article wound round the steep in front of Snug Lake shanty a strange spectacle met his eye. On the dark green water of the pond a fleet of fine geese sailed, doffing their regards obsequiously to some one near the hut. All about the hut itself lay piles of driftwood, huge cages filled with garrulous parrots, revolving squirrels and sobered birds. All sorts of shaggy dogs ran out at us as we approached the spot and barked lustily, as if to inform us that the name by which the little shanty was known (viz.), "The Hounds' Retreat," was something more than a mere fanciful nomenclature. The environs of the hut were a strange congerie of confusions.

At the loose sagging gate sat a man on a box, smoking a pipe and dreamily following with his eye the slowly ascending vapor as the reveries of the smoke-rings did and undid their fantastic quirls curiously in the air, that jealously wined them out one by one as fast as they formed.

At the door of the hut sat an aged woman nursing her face with her hands, as she bent obviously over some manuscripts which she held on her lap. Her face as she raised it at length looked the very opposite of that of the man at the gate. It was strong, striking and dashed with haggard gleams of what had once been an expressive, but what was now a crucial countenance. Suffering had left its lines in every look and care had caverned her eye, branded her brow and bitten her cheek. A spider cancer on her neck was on its way up to her brain and flashes of pain shot their hot twinges through her face intermittently. To one skilled as a charactery her visage was a peculiarly interesting one. Sarcasm lay witheringly curled about her lips. A cold, icy defiance lurked around her firm mouth that melted away at a kind word.

The hut itself was a truly idiosyncratic specimen of architecture. It was built by the husband of the woman about twelve years ago. It contained one room only, which served as kitchen, bedroom, dining-room, sitting-room, reception-room, washroom, storeroom, spareroom, pantry and parlor. Two or three one-legged chairs, a tipsy table, a bed that nearly choked the whole dormitory, a miniature stove, an old hairy trunk, a writing desk and a few sundries were the furnitures that graced Snug Lake shanty. The floor was bare. Indeed until lately it was earth. The walls were stuccoed with ingenious caricatures. The only screen that interposed between the occupants of the hut and the storms of winter, or the scorching flaunts of summer was a single siding of weatherboards with knotholes as ventilators. It has only one window. It is only 12x12 feet, but it holds a history of two continents.

Accosting the oracle at the little gate the writer ventured some tranquilizing remark to him, suited to the peculiarly serial, at-peace-of-mind-with-all-the-world mood that he was in. Gradually as he spoke in profound platitude the clucking chickens one by one gathered silently and reverentially around him, queering their heads ominously as if fearful they might lose a word. The furious demand stopped barking and lay down at his feet. The pigeons settled near him on the old rookery in eaves-dropping silence. The fine-round squirrel stood stock still on his hind legs in mute astonishment, with one leg laid like a finger on his lip. The old woman at the door who had looked up for an instant as the writer spoke, buried her face once more in her hands, apparently lost in thought as before.

At length the sage turned reflectively, tipped his Peter Tony out on the gate post and said in a hollow sepulchral tone as he emptied the sparkless contents of the pipe on the flags:

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. That's all there is in it from last to first."

Suddenly the woman looked up.

"Pray be seated, sir," said she, rising and pointing to the old chair which she had just occupied, with a peculiarly graceful and courteous gesture of the hand. "Don't, I beg of you, stand for the sake of any uncomfortable politeness."

We looked at the woman in amazement. "Uncomfortable politeness." Remarkably good phrase, certainly. And then, "I pray you," and "I beg." No "pleb" about that. And then, too, that fine Delsarean wave of the hand with which, suiting the action to the word, she gestured to that empty chair.

"Take your seat, my good madam," said the writer as the woman half reluctantly resumed her infirm chair.

"Fine poultry and pigeons, madam," I remarked.

The woman laid aside her old faded manuscripts and fixing her gray eyes on me talked with remarkable intelligence and polite intonation about her fowls and pets. Here was a woman in a hut who, as she sat on that old rheumatic chair, creaking with pain in every joint, was evidently a person of great cultivation whose every word betrayed refinement and a story of better days; a woman in squalor, yet even in her unpremeditated delineations of a rookery, a woman whose fine seizures of diction, whose play and sparkle of wit, whose knowledge of natural history, whose whole ensemble, instantly and incontestibly betrayed the fact that she was no ordinary individual. And all this long continued conversation without so much as the slightest suspicion of ungrammar.

Before proceeding with this strange story of two continents let us anticipate in nature res.

People will read the story and say with a shrug of the shoulders and a shake of the head:

"Improbable, to say the least!"

To all such the answer is simply this:

The adventure was purely accidental. The picture is a fact, drawn true to life at every touch and carefully verified by trustworthy witnesses. The hut stands just in the place described. The woman answers for herself. The cuts that appear in these columns are drawn by her own hand, for a cleverer caricaturist there is not in Brooklyn. The marriage certificate is in her possession and has been seen and may be seen again by any one who goes to that hut. The manuscripts in her own handwriting, which is that of a highly educated woman, have been in a score of hands.

"My good madam," said the writer, thoroughly convinced of her cleverness by this time, "will you pardon me if I ask what that pile of manuscript at your side means? What are you writing?"

Turning contemplatively toward the heap of old yellow MSS. mingled with papers of a more recent date, she mused reflectively upon them for a moment and then exclaimed:

"Chats with Charles Dickens."

The writer started.

"Snug Lake shanty. The Hound's Retreat. Brooklyn. Liverpool street, London. Charles Dickens."

Just gods! What a gap! What long covered bridge had this woman come over? What sad secret lay hidden in her history? What strange story was locked beneath those iron lips? What yellowing years had turned those papers? What wierd, thrilling romance had been so long mysteriously buried in that little hut in the hollow?

"Have you never been approached by newspaper men?" continued the writer when he had sufficiently recovered his senses.

"Plenty of them. I have been a character in the courts."

"Have you never said anything to anyone about those manuscripts before?"

"Never."

"Why?"

"Because nobody ever happened to see them before. You are the first one, sir, to whom I have ever spoken on the subject, except to William," she replied, pointing as she spoke to her husband, who, with the same unspeakably imperturbable expression of countenance, sat reclining at ease against the post of the gate, fast asleep.

"Will you talk?"

"What about?" rejoined the woman, quizzically, "and what for?"

"For print. And what about? About yourself, about Dickens, and especially about your relations to Dickens as disclosed in your chats with him."

The woman hesitated, reflected a moment and finally said:

"If I can so as to say anything that will

VICTORIA TREGEAR'S HUSBAND ASLEEP.
(As seen by our Artist.)

interest anybody concerning my early relations with Mr. Dickens and at the same time not encroach too much upon my forthcoming book, I will do so."

"You may do just that. Please tell what you are willing to in your own way."

"Very well," said she. "Write down just what I say. I'll talk print."

Gathering up her pile of yellow papers at the door of the little hut, she told this startling story, refreshing her memory as to dates, places and names from time to time by referring to her manuscript. "I was born in the heart of busy, bustling London, at 96 Cheapside, opposite old Bow church, corner Lawrence lane, in the year 1831. My father was Gabriel Shire Tregear, the famous metropolitan picture merchant of London, formerly alderman of the city. My mother was Ann McLean, the sister of the four McLean brothers, Thomas, Edward, Charles and Hector, so well known in London. They were married in 1827. The name Tregear is a noble one. The Tregears originally came from a town named after themselves in Normandy, France. The full name of the family was Raymondo de la Tregair, the word Tregair at that time being spelt with an air instead of an ear, as it afterward was. Even after Queen Elizabeth's reign the name was not Tregear, but Raymondo de la Tregear, as stated by several historians. When the family first came from Normandy they settled in Cornwall on a tract of land which they called Tregear, about five miles from Truro.

"The great London emporium was a perfect exhibition in itself. My father, sir, was a famous publisher. Sir Edwin Landseer was a great friend of my father and a frequent visitor to his house. It was a noted rendezvous of all the great wits, artists and authors of London. Thackeray, Tennyson, Mark Lemmon, Hood, Thornton Hunt, Edmund Yates, Hoolahan O'Brien, Ernest Jones, Carlyle and men of that literary ilk.

"My father was a very clever caricaturist himself, and I inherit his faculty to drawing. I have always been in the habit of instantly sketching all the peculiar people I met. My father was rich and reared us all in affluence. I have often seen him come into my mother's room and fling a thousand pound note into my mother's lap, exclaiming as he kissed her, that is for you. I have just made it out of the sale of a picture.

"I was born on the anniversary of the queen's birthday, and named after her royal highness, Victoria. I was one of thirteen children. I was educated, as were my sisters, by private masters. During certain intervals of my life I also attended certain celebrated schools, notably that of Miss Wilmhurst's at Maldon, and afterward at Cromwell house. I learned to dance, draw, paint, poetize and play piano, organ and violin. I was educated in all the romantic arts. I was especially fond of poetry. Here," said she, drawing out of the manuscripts an old sheet of yellow paper, tanned by time, "here is one of my sonnets, if you want it, I have many more." The writer took it, read it hurriedly and then transcribed it as follows:

A DREAM IN EPPING FOREST—CHARITY.

O charity, sweet charity divine!
Greatest of all the three of learn; 'tis thine
To pour thy healing balm on human ills,
An[illegible] calm this sea of wind, tempestuous strife,
To bid the storm of angry passion cease,
And whisper to the troubled spirit—peace.
How prone, alas, is man in erring pride,
His own sin in another to deride.
Doth it become, forsooth, the christian's name,
Harshly to censure, darkly to defame?
Alas! sweet charity, how great, how grand,
And yet how little heeded thy command,
Carved be thy truth in one immortal line,
To err is human, to forgive, divine.

The woman who wrote that sonnet would command, to say the least, the respect of all true poets, had she never written another word. That sonnet will immortalize her.

"My father and mother lived a most happy life. If ever a couple deserved the flitch of bacon they did. He was an esteemed officer in old Bow church. Alas for the day when those chimes rang out his funeral. The great business went to pieces after that. Changes came. Consequent upon the unhappy dissipation of a great estate squandered by unscrupulous parsons, a loving wife and mother was consigned to the indignity of want, and children who had never known a wish beyond a theater box or a carriage, found themselves suddenly thrown out into the cold world to starve and struggle for themselves. Then it was that I realized the power of education. I was for a time governess to the family of the duke of Norfolk, and my sisters were governesses in the houses of Russian princes. At length I married the man whom you see asleep against that post. Kind soul! I don't think he has ever really waked up once since he first married me. But all honor to him; he has tried to support me, at least in a way.

"Will you look at that man?" she exclaimed.

"I looked at the man.

He was hardly visible. The dog had laid his neck on his foot. The chickens had gone to roost on his knees. The pigeons had settled on his shoulders. The cat lay in his lap.

"He is so fond of pets, you know," she said.

Reverting once more to the woman, somewhat impatiently be it confessed, in view of the fact that before my very eyes all this time had been one who had according to her own account been on familiar terms with Dickens, ate with him, rambled with him, rollicked with him, discoursed with him, sympathized with him, known him as few ever knew him, intimately, the writer pressed the question:

"My good madam, will you state just here just when and where you first met Dickens, how well you knew him, and some of your recollections of him?"

"Certainly," said the woman.

"I first met Charles Dickens when a mere child of 9 years of age at my father's house. The interview save to my happy little heart was utterly inconsequential. He tossed me up in the air, kissed me, told me stories, and finally gave me a copy of 'Old Curiosity Shop,' because, he said, I had long curls like little Nell, and the organ grinder had dogs and he knew I was fond of animals and would rather play with a puppy than a doll.

"The next time I met Dickens was when I was a gay, impulsive, facetious girl of 16. I met him at my Uncle Hector McLean's house. Hector McLean and Dickens, as everybody knew in London, were great friends. Dickens was constantly at my uncle's house.

"I was constantly at my uncle's house, for I was his favorite niece, so you see Dickens and I were continually thrown together. My uncle Hector lived in a splendid mansion upon Bloomsbury square. That house was famous for its fine libraries, its imported furnitures and above all its multiplying pier mirrors. I played whist with Dickens there often. I remember a set of chessmen with which I played chess with Dickens and which he particularly admired. The tessellated table across which we played was made of carved mahogany with the chessboard let in in variegated squares. The chess men were carved out of solid ivory, one half scarlet, the other white. The kings, queens, bishops and castles were ten inches high. The pawns, a little lower, were warriors on horseback. They were kept under glasses. They were subsequently disposed of at my uncle's death for a fabulous sum. I frequently played chess with Dickens across this rare Indian table for hours at a time and occasionally till midnight. I was very fond of chess and had made a study of the gambits and variations. I was also fond of problems, 'chestnuts' as Dickens used to call them. I think we played a pretty even game. Perhaps he footed up the most to his score in the long run. He was always annoyed when I beat him and invariably wanted to play another game. I shall never forget how once at midnight Charles Dickens faced me across the board at the end of a play.

"The game was drawn.

"'Well,' said Dickens, somewhat resignedly, 'why not? Man and woman represent an equation after all. Discriminate as you will in favor of either, they are, when their mutual traits come to be considered, equals.'

"'That is certainly a very ingenious way of defining a draw,' I said.

"A little of Uncle Hector's choice port soon put him into a loquacious mood and we chatted over the chess board merrily.

"'Yes,' continued Dickens, 'the woman who grows up with the idea that she is simply to be an amiable animal, to be caressed and coaxed is invariably a bitterly disappointed woman. A game of chess will cure such a conceit forever. The woman who knows the most thinks the most, feels the most, is the most. Intellectual affection,' said Dickens, 'is the only lasting love. Love that has a game of chess in it can checkmate any man and solve the problem of life.'

"Dickens moved very deliberately and only after careful thought. I moved, as a general rule, quickly. Then when a hard move came, as it often did, I added up all the spare time to my credit and moved slowly.

"There was one peculiarity about Dickens as a chess player. He always wanted me to move first. He followed my play and accepted all my variations. It was just so in his novels. He lets a character take a lead and then he simply follows it, studies it, exhausts it. He never created a character.

"Ah me. Wait a minute," said the woman, as rising slowly from her seat and entering the door of the hut she groped her way to an old chest, and reaching her hand down into it, drew out something that visibly affected her as she resumed her place.

Holding it up in her hand as the light shone on it I saw that it was a beautiful little watch.

"That was a philopena from Dickens. He never would eat almonds with me after that, she said. Through those girlish years of my life from 16 up he made me many a kindly little present, though he was not as a rule in the habit of making presents to people.

"'But then,' he said, 'a girl who can play chess with me, Hector, as Vic can, deserves all the signs of appreciation that a man can give her.'

"I have kept that little gold watch," continued the woman brokenly, "through all the agony of my life. I clutched it from my breast when the bull tossed me at Brixton. I held it in my mouth when I was overboard in the British channel in a shipwreck. I sewed it up in my dress seams when I slept alone in Epping forest. I saved it when everything else went to the pawnshop. I still refused to part with it when I landed at Castle Garden, and was obliged to sacrifice all I had in order to get my menagerie through the gates, but I shall always keep that dear little Dickens watch," said the woman, lifting the tiny gold sphere to her lips with much emotion, "as a souvenir of other days when I was happy and unsuspecting and—rich—when I wore clothes that made people look round and rode in a carriage like a countess to Buckingham palace many a time, for my mother's father was jeweler to the royal family."

"Yes," she added, with a sigh, "those were rare old days in my Uncle Hector's house, and now here I am in this little hut.

"A little bit of bread and no cheese."

There was something inexpressibly sad in it all.

Desiring to change the conversation and comfort the miserably clad woman the writer asked:

"In your chats with Charles Dickens did you ever say anything that made him laugh?"

Dickens as a Dry Humorist.

"Many and many a time, sir."

"Tell us some of these things."

"I remember once how late at night I told him in answer to several inquiries about my school days, of the old fat lady who took a header in the snowdrift when the stagecoach on the way to Maldon upset and came dangerously near being lost sight of and buried in the snow, and how nothing could be seen of her but a pair of legs sticking up out of the snow, and how angry she was when they dragged her out because they took hold of her by the feet upside down and dragged her out, and she a decent woman, when there was nothing else to take hold of the way she was stuck. And then everybody went and looked down on the great hole she had made as if it had been a crater, and then looked at the crater that had come out of it.

"Although he seldom laughed save when exhilarated by convivial hilarity he did lie back in his chair at that story and laugh out loud again and again.

"After that story he always called me 'Waggy.'

"Dickens was fonder of a funny story than anything else on earth.

"I shall never forget how he seemed to enjoy an answer of mine once when he asked me what I had found the most difficult thing in painting.

"'I said, the management of chiaro scuro in some instances.'

"'Give an instance,' said Dickens.

"'A stale piece of boarding-school bread scratched faintly with a shadow of butter.'

"Dickens appreciated the fine distinction and laughed heartily.

"I remember, too, that he laughed when I told him how when Sir Edwin Landseer was first presented to the king of Portugal, he (the king) acknowledged the introduction, and shaking hands with Sir Edwin said, in his half broken English: 'I am most happy to make your acquaintance, Sir Edwin Landseer. I am so fond of beasts.'

"But Dickens, as a rule, was not a laughing man. He was a stern, cold, formal man who had a cynical curl of dry humor about his mouth, but whose sense of an excessively funny situation, in my judgment, was not at all remarkable. He was not fine enough to be exquisitely sensitive, and not sensitive enough often to get beyond dry drollery. When Dickens was first introduced to me by Uncle Hector he tried to be cold to me, but I wouldn't have it. I remorselessly joked him at every angle, till at last whenever he saw me his stern face would invariably relax into a broad smile because, I take it, he liked the change from 'grave bores' to a rollicking schoolgirl's fun."

THE TREGEAR SISTERS. 1. VICTORIA. 2. KATE. 3. SARAH. 4. FANNY. 5. SEPTIMA.

Dickens' Peculiarities.

"Had Dickens any peculiarities that you remember that struck you as being particularly interesting?"

"Decidedly," said the Tregear. "There never was——"

The sentence at this point was suddenly interrupted by a loud clatter above our heads that sounded as if the devil and his imps were dancing a hornpipe or Highland fling on the old loose shingles of the little thatched hut that ran down on one side to a low shed.

Catching up a broom as she threw down the Dickens MSS., she ran out from under the shed where we had been sitting, and, looking up at the ridged roof of the shanty, exclaimed:

"Whoosh, you silly rig, and get away," at the same time furiously brandishing her broomstick, as if to bewitch the air.

My curiosity being aroused to the highest pitch I stepped out to where the woman stood and looked up.

Imagine my amazement when I beheld on top of the roof two frisky billy goats, one white and the other black, standing on either side of the ridgepole with their horns locked over it, executing a series of bolts and breaks that served plainly in my mind to make the doctrine of evolution utterly hopeless, and at the same time that of involution, so far as the roof was concerned, highly probable. At every sharp rap of their hoofs as the unseemly satyrs danced on the old brown shingles, the loose thatch flew in every direction. It is needless to say that during this performance the whole menagerie had waked up and pandemonium choked the air.

In vain the broomstick was frantically hurled at the aeronauts. The more they were stormed at the harder they danced and the thicker flew the shingles.

"William! William!" cried the woman. Get up, get up I say, the goats are tearing off the roof."

The sage of Snug Lake shanty, after a protracted apple tree shaking, suddenly started up.

As he did so he put his hands to his back and stiffening in his position exclaimed: "Oh! Oh, my!"

"What's the matter?" said the woman. "Does it hurt you to wake up?"

"I—I—I've got a crick in my back," gasped the oracle.

"Well, if you don't drive those goats away they'll be tumbling through the roof."

"Car'line," said the sage, "never do that again. Never wake anybody up suddenly. It's liable to give 'em fits. Always wake a man up gradually."

"But look at those goats. Just hear them. Quick! William, quick!"

"Car'line," rigidly rejoined the oracle, "you say quick and I say crick. I tell you you don't understand the nature of a goat. You can't scare a goat. You've got to reason with him, see!"

Just then a thatch with a rusty nail sticking in it flew off the roof from under the sharp rap of a hoof and took William right in the eye. He came very near never seeing again.

Whether due to a sense of suddenly awakened pride, or, whether smarting under the sting of pain that dissipated pungently the idea of optical delusion, or, whether, as is still more probable, on the theory of counter irritants, the blow had cured the crick; it is due to the hitherto imperturbable stoic of the porch to say that thereupon, with a muttered imprecation on those "pesky critters" as he styled them, he rose from his box, mounted the dog kennel, surmounted the chicken coop, climbed the cow shed, ascended the roof and with a long clothes pole scattered the goats at one prodigious sweeping stroke down the sides to the ground.

Descending to the ground with all the air of a victorious hero he sat down and and as he sopped his bleeding eye-lid with his variegated 'kerchief.

"Umph! A peculiar coincidence, terru-hl!"

"Yes," quoth his tart spouse, "Dickens never had any peculiarities as marked as that."

Disorderly order once more settled on the environs of Snug Lake shanty. The woman resumed her seat by the door, and after consulting her manuscript said:

"Poor William, he spoke more truly than he knew after all. A peculiar coincidence, indeed! See these, sir. Just read."

I read: "The story of an English gentlewoman, being a thread broken from the life of Charles Dickens." "That was, as you see, sir, the original title of my book. I have changed it several times. Now let us take up the thread once more where it was so abruptly broken."

Nibbling and Browsing.

"I strolled out into the country on several occasions with Dickens. He took me with him, as he said, 'because I had a faculty for seeing everything at a ridiculous angle.' Dickens wanted to make the world laugh; to make it happy, not miserable. I noted this invariable peculiarity in him. He never let a wagon loaded with fresh hay pass by him on a country road without going up to it and pulling out a piece of hay and nibbling at it. It was the same way with shrubs, trees, barks and roots. He chewed them, browsed on them. He

VICTORIA TREGEAR'S PRESENT HOUSE.
[From an instantaneous photograph.]

loved nature and took a good many lessons from her. He loved the deep, dark woods. He loved water in all its forms. He talked to me most exquisitely about water. He loved to skirt along by the edge of a cool gurgling stream and eat cresses and chew mint and thyme. He was particularly fond of the sassafras root. He loved these natural objects for themselves, but sought them largely for fresh touches for his books. You see them sprinkled all through. He was inordinately fond of trees. I shall never forget his remark to me once about a tree. The wind touched it and a single leaf quivered. He said, 'see that tree smile.' The wind stirred it and all its leaves contagiously shook. He said again, 'Just see that tree laugh.' The wind rose in it and as it writhed in a gust he said, 'Waggy, that was positively a convulsion.' I used to take a little book with me and jot down whatever he said that struck me and these manuscripts are full of them. I once said to him, 'Mr. Dickens, I have enough bright things jotted down that you have said to make a most interesting book.'

"'Make them,' said Dickens, 'you have certainly furnished me, Waggy, with more than one humorous character for my books.' And he used them, too. I can pick them all out. I little thought then that I should ever carry out my literary threat, but I have made up my mind that I can write a book of recollection about the great novelist that nobody else can.

"I have said he loved water in all its forms. So he did, but most of all when it mirrored some object. He loved to look down into a clear transparent spring at the white pebbles lying on the bottom. I remember such a spring. I remember how he pointed down to it and said: 'There, Waggy, that is what I mean by clearness. I insist on it as the first trait of style. Speech is only a transparent medium through which you should be able to see the thought clearly that underlies it as you see those pebbles in the spring.'

"I told him afterward that I had often thought of that remark and that it had done me a great deal of good.

"'Well, Waggy,' he replied, 'I am glad for once that I have done you good in something that I have said to you, for I must confess you are a pretty incorrigible girl.'

"On the same principle was his passion for mirrors. He loved them like lucent water for what they clearly showed. He was always raving about clearness. He used to say that 'glass was only frozen water and water only fluent glass.' He contracted his first passion for mirrors in my Uncle Hector's house, as he himself told me. He used to walk about those spacious rooms whose walls were lined here and there from top to bottom with multiplying pier mirrors. And as he saw himself reflected severally in each glass he would turn to me and say:

"'See, in each mirror I am the same man, and yet at the same time in each a totally different man. And so I am the same individual in all my different moods and yet as many times different.'

"Dickens had another peculiarity. He would spend whole days in minutely and microscopically studying some apparently insignificant object. I once saw him sit in my Uncle Hector's garden for hours watching a toad catch flies. It seemed to amuse him beyond description. On another occasion I found him on his hands and knees bending over a bug in a spider's web that had just been caught. Dickens watched the whole subsequent movement of that spider for two consecutive days till the bug was eaten. The process as he afterward described it to me, was wonderful.

"I trust I shall not be considered presumptuous if I say," continued the Tregear, "that Mr. Dickens and I never agreed about genius. Dickens swore by Buffon, I by Ruskin. Dickens said with the great Frenchman, 'Genius is Patience;' I said, and I still say, with Ruskin in that great sentence of his, 'Genius does a great thing and does it without an effort.' Dickens had the genius of industry, not the genius of spontaneity. He went over and over his work, again and again, and it was only by accretion that his best works rose up like coral islands. Dickens once said to me, 'What would you rather be than anything else.' I replied, 'a great musician.' 'And what would you rather be than anything else, Mr. Dickens, pray,' I asked.

"'A great poet,' he replied disappointedly.

"'Well, you never will be,' I said.

"That was the only time, I think, that Dickens was ever annoyed by me or angry with me.

"He looked at me sharply and said:

"'Waggy, you're the sauciest girl that I ever knew.' But his good sense came back to him almost instantly, and he said:

"'But I suspect very likely you're right about it after all,' and changed the subject immediately."

The Breach Interposes.

"That's what I say," interposed the Sage of Snug Lake shanty; "Dickens wasn't no poet in a crick-hic-hic-crickical sense. Why he's away off. Just take that line he thought so fine, see, I can't help rhyming," said the sage, "just take that line on which they say his reputation rests, I guess it'll rest there. Won't go no further.

"A rare old p'ant is the ivy green.

"Rare, why bless my soul, it's the commonest plant that grows. Just stick it down in the middle of winter and it'll grow anywhere from one of his slips."

"That's one of his slips, William," gently retorted the old lady of the Lake View house.

"Slips, I guess; yes, and here's another of them:

"They told him gently she was dead.

"How in thunder would they tell him? Tell at him. What's the use of putting gently there? I'm speaking crick-hic-hickally of course. Why, I can beat that."

"In these 'chats' with Mr. Dickens," I asked the lady, "did he ever disclose to you any of his methods of getting information?"

"Often. Here is a remarkable occurrence which he once told me of. He happened to be at Euston station just as a group of sailors with their 'kits' in their hands got aboard the car. He had no overcoat on, although it was in the deep of winter, but the group of jolly tars still pitching about, not having shaken their sea legs off, held for him a life study that was his capital, and go he could and go he did, though the coach was a third-class one, all the way to Newcastle-on-Tyne, a distance of 200 miles and more, where they all together with other emigrants got out. He drank with them, smoked with them, talked with them and got their little secret and came home. I know his account was correct, for I afterward met a gentleman who was unexpectedly obliged to take the same train and rode in his company all the way. That is only one instance.

"Dickens once said to me at Uncle Hector's:

"'Old Curiosity Shop is London.' And it meant a great deal. It meant that he had explored, and that as he once told me often at the risk of his life every nook and crook in the city, and drawn his pictures from life. His life as a reporter taught him that.

"He was very fond of going to Benham's place, the great sculptor, and drinking his pot of stout.

"He often went to Chalk Farm, so famous for its cock fights and sprinting matches.

"He often might be seen with a crowd of noted literary men at the Elephant and Castle or Hen and Chickens, as the famous old Coach Inn was called that stood at the fork of the seven roads.

"He didn't often go to church. He hated ministers as a general rule, and despised both their bigotry and their methods. Yet he respected the church, and revered sacred things.

"He was everywhere," said the Tregear, "what he was in that car—a shadower, a detective. Nothing escaped him. He was subtle in his observation, and often was looking at you when he was looking away from you. He brought those traits with him from below, not above. He was a man of ordinary birth, with little of the sympathy of which he talked, spoiled as to his simplicity somewhat by flattery, though not corrupted by it enough, be it said to his honor, to take a proffered title.

"How often I have seen that little old woman in 'Bleak House' with the reticule walking up and down Chancery Court square, and how often I had studied elocution with the famous Graham of Scotland. I used to imitate her walk and gestures and mumbling, absent-mindedness and grotesquerie till Dickens laughed and laughed and said:

"'There is only one Waggy.'

"Ah me!" she sighed, "how little did he dream as I used to play the piano for him and dance around those spacious parlors and tell him funny stories that a day would come in this far-off land when his once gay and rollicking 'Waggy' would say, 'I have wept far more than I have laughed since then.'"

"If Dickens could see me now," continued the Tregear, "how long do you think he would let me live in this hut?"

The woman had hardly finished this pathetic remark when suddenly, "crack, crack," went a volley of sounds again on the roof of the hut that startled up the menagerie and roused the fury of the mistress of Snug Lake shanty, whose liege lord reclined against the gatepost fast asleep once more.

"It's those goats again, the pests."

On going out, however, what was her astonishment to see a group of boys standing on the bluff deliberately throwing stones at the shanty.

"Stop that, you brats," shrieked the Tregear.

"English Mary! English Mary! English Mary!" rang out of a score of throats.

Just at this juncture a fat Irish woman, the mother of the catapultists, appeared on the scene, shaking her fist violently at the old woman as she spoke disparagingly of her Tipperary neighbor and shrieking out to the consternation of the whole neighborhood.

"I've 'ad a better brungin' up than you 'arve. I wuz brought up fer ter tend the dure and swape the flure and sich and not to play on the pie-any. If you lays a finger on thim byes I'll rid the hill of the likes of yez. I will, so I will, ye spalpeen, ye."

This classic effusion encouraged the boys, who, much to the enjoyment of the mother, threw a fresh volley of stones at the little shanty.

At that moment the Tregear drew a pistol from her pocket loaded with rock salt, and pointing it at the boys said:

"Scatter or I'll shoot."

They scattered.

"That's a sample of the doin's of Dog Hollow," said the woman, resuming her seat.

"How do you support yourself, my good woman?" I asked.

"My husband does all he can to help me," said the lady, "and I do all I can to help us both. I teach music and have quite a sprinkling of scholars."

"You know," she said archly, "it's so easy to please country people."

"To be sure William's poetry has never paid as yet, but then there's no telling," she signed as she rose, bowed and went into the hut.

Thanking this remarkable denizen of Dog Hollow for her book-shadowings, the writer left the hut, treaded his way out through the huddled yard, escaped the ire of the watted turkey cock, climbed the crest of the bluff, and took off his way toward the city.

As he went he turned and looking back saw the two goats gone to roost on the ridge pole, side by side, on top of "The Hounds' Retreat." MILLER HAGEMAN.