

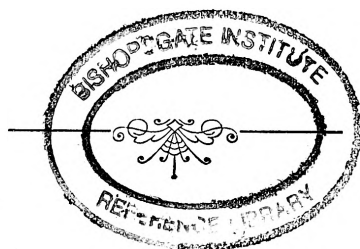
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# A FEARFUL FLOGGING.

By One who Endured It.

BASED UPON A MS. IN THE POSSESSION OF

*Saladin.*



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## A FEARFUL FLOGGING.

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A WEEK or two ago, commenting on an exceedingly polite and urbane letter addressed to me by Julia Heywood, *née* Fraser, I hinted that I had more MSS. in the strong and distinctive handwriting of her late father, and that her provoking courtesy and politeness might tempt me to publish them. I had hoped to be able to silently recede from my minatory hint, and leave the soft-spoken wife of the Rev. Mr. Heywood undisturbed by further posthumous publication of her father's MSS. I felt somewhat regretful at having published "The Agonies of Hanging" memoir of Major F——, and, in the interests of peace and amicability, I said to myself: "Poor Julia! in memory of young and happy days of auld lang syne, I cannot vex her. When I was a chubby-cheeked and callow boy, trudging to school with my leathern satchel on my back, she was to me an elder sister. When from boyhood I developed into a sentimental, romantic, dreamy, and erratic lad, and left my old haunts for roaring Glasgow and its then dingy university in High Street, it was unmistakable that she regarded me in a light more chivalrously tender than that in which sisters regard their brothers. And—shall I admit it?—when in Glasgow I wrote her letters which I should not be ashamed of even now, should she elect to disentomb and publish them. Well I know that, should she give them publicity, my readers would have many a joke, numerous sneers, and not a few laughs at

my expense; but I have got accustomed to being sneered at and innured to being laughed at, and the reading at this mature date of the letters which, in my burning adolescence, I addressed to Julia Fraser would irradiate with the glow of boyhood my now murky sky, awake the dormant throb of passion in my callous heart, scatter my now barren path with the roses and honey-suckles I was wont to twine in her hair, and fling over the thought-worn brow of middle life the romantic halo of love's young dream. But most likely Julia consigned my letters to the fire many years ago. Letters signed 'Heavenly Julia, Yours eternally, W. STEWART ROSS,' are not letters which a clergyman's wife would be likely to retain and cherish. I have taken some pains that *W. Stewart Ross* should be a name that clergymen should have little reason to love. No doubt the wife of the Rev. Mr. Heywood has destroyed my letters. Poor Julia! Many a time, over the midnight and post-midnight gas, her dear idea and her poetic vision visited me in my student's lonely room. Her face peered out from between the rolling lines of Homer; and even sines and cosines, the processes of surds and the mysteries of the calculus, were not strangers to the flutter of her skirts and the perfume and flashing radiance of her hair. Then, throwing my books aside, I would lift one of the slippers she worked for me (I never wore these slippers; they were too sacred to be soiled by my study floor) and kiss it, and—shall I own it?—bedew it with the tears of a poetic, ardent, and impetuous boy. Julia, I am sorry I published that scrap from your father's writings. I will publish no more!"

The above was my soliloquy on Monday evening last as I sat with my elbows on my desk, burying my face in my hands. My brain was full of old and tender memories, my heart replete with unwonted emotions, when my reverie was rudely broken by the sharp metallic

clack-clack! which announces that the postman is at the door, and that letters are falling into the letter-box—letters of praise and letters of blame—to the earnest if erring man who writes over the name of Saladin. The servant brought up the letters on a tray. There was one that at once arrested my eye. It was in the, to me, never-to-be-forgotten handwriting of Julia. I tore it open and read it. It will be found reproduced in another page.\* Rightly or wrongly, I cried "Damn!" struck my fist violently on the desk, and resolved to place before the public more of her father's MSS. I am to be led, but I am not to be driven; I will brook to be advised, but I will not submit to be defied by either man or woman. I reproduce "The Thrashing Machine" in defiance of the parson's horsewhip, the menace in regard to the criminal court, and the fate of them who joined in the gainsaying of Kor.

The MS., a printed copy of which I am about to subjoin, was, along with a large bundle of others, forwarded to me by Julia herself. The messenger† who carried the package is still alive. I asked him to my hotel last time I was in the North, and had a talk with him about old times. I, moreover, still possess the note Julia sent along with the packet. Since she went so far as to suggest that I *stole* the MS. I formerly published, I shall take ample care that she shall not be able to allege that I stole this one. In self-defence, I feel compelled to publish the letter which accompanied the package:—

Dunder Hall, Tuesday evening.

BELoved ROSS,‡—Herewith receive, by the hands of Andrew, a bundle of Dad's scribbles. He was a daft man, and you are a daft lad (but a dear, dear ducky all the same!), and let us hope that the

\* See Appendix.

† Andrew Edgar.

‡ She always called me Ross. I objected to being called Willie. It had been the name borne by a previous lover of hers.

daft darling will understand the daft Dad. Do whatever you like with the scribbles. Dad used nasty blue paper, and browned it all over with whiskey and snuff, or I should have used the whole clam-jawphery\* to put my hair in curls. You can light the school fire with them or light the world with them, whichever way you please. The Irvings have got a gig. I have finished Grant's "Harry Ogilvie." Glorious! The hair-comb ran a long way into my head: it was too bad of you. The ode is splendour (*sic*)—better than that you wrote to pale-faced Agg; but the fifth line won't fit the piano—nearly breaks it. Put that line right, like a dear. Caught cold sitting on that damp stone, although you put your handkerchief on it. Friday—old place—old time. It will be eternity till then. Don't bring again that devil of a dirty dog. Kisses when we meet. Don't forget your great coat and your strong boots. With sincerest love, from everlasting to everlasting,

I am, beloved Ross,

Yours,

JULIA.

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*MAJOR F——'s MS.*

Ever since my boyhood I have busied myself in humanitarian pursuits. Even when I was a little fellow in the sixth form I went out one evening and saw two broad-haunched, broad-shouldered, rosy-faced, yellow-haired, spanking huzzies driving home the cows of a neighbouring farmer. They were the very sort of lassies who had borne sons for Bannockburn. Either of them could have taken the ordinary Cockney clerk and bent him over her knee as easily as a Cockney clerk would bend a hazel wand. On went the cows before and the girls behind. The former lowed as they had done in Bashan or Arcadia three thousand years before, and the latter sang—sang as the angels sang when the world was newly born, and before singing-masters, or even crotchets and quavers, had yet been invented. The Ettrick Shepherd's songs had just begun to take root in his native

\* A wrongly-spelt word of Northern etymology, and with little or no meaning.

land, and it was one of his songs that his two country-women sang as, with loose hair and swinging step, and their petticoats kilted to their knees, they strode up the loaning behind the cows :—

“ ’Tis not beneath the burgonet,  
 Nor yet beneath the crown ;  
 ’Tis not on couch of velvet,  
 Nor yet on bed of down ;  
 It is beneath the spreading birk,  
 In the glen without a name,  
 Wi’ a bonnie, bonnie lassie,  
 When the kye come hame.  
 What is the greatest bliss  
 That the tongue o’ man can name ?  
 ’Tis to woo a bonnie lassie  
 When the kye come hame.”

I am not sure but it was on that occasion I first fell in love. The odorous breath of the cows, the fragrance which the zephyr wafted from the valley below where the bean was in bloom, the solemn hush of the twilight hour, and that idyllic song of the milk-maids warmed me and charmed me till I wandered far away from the school to the byre into which the cows and the lassies disappeared. I, too, went into the byre, the lassies taking little notice of me, doubtless thinking me too young to engage their serious attention in any way.

“ Jenny,” at last faltered I timidly to the lassie that had charmed me most ; “ Jenny, I love you ;” and, in the words of the refrain of a song that ran in my head, and will you “ meet me by moonlight alone ?”

Jenny set down her milk-pail from her lap, and, flinging back her wealth of unkempt hair, looked up at me with her beaming, healthy, happy, and innocent face, and said, with a bewitching smile, “ Yes, little boy, I will meet you ; but who is to milk the cows ? If you can invent something to milk the cows, I will meet you.”

“ Thank you, dear Jenny,” said I ; and I timidly

kissed the upturned face of the milk-maid. "I will not, Jenny," quoth I, waving my hand in adieu; "I will not return till I have invented something to milk the cows while we are gone."

With the vague uneasiness of premature love, I wandered back through the dewy grass and through the bean fields, and arrived at the school too late for evening prayers, but not too late to receive a sound thrashing for being absent without leave. I was packed off to bed sobbing and supperless, and lay nearly all night awake thinking about Jenny, and planning the invention for milking the cows while she should "meet me by moonlight alone." All next day I had a practice sum on the one side of my slate and plans for a milking-machine on the other. Whenever an usher came near I pretended to be working at the practice sum; but I was really engaged upon the milking-machine. At the end of three days I had struck upon a plan which I felt sure would work. All that was now wanted was to get the proper materials together, and the little box of tools which my father had put into my school trunk, guided by my mechanical ingenuity, would do the rest. My father had always believed me to be possessed of mechanical talent. I was now developing that talent in a direction he little dreamt of, and for a purpose of which I could hardly venture to hope he would approve. All I needed by way of material was some pieces of wood, an india-rubber tube, a piece of rope, a penny-worth of tin-tacks, and seven stripes of leather. During the play-hours, extending over a week, I hid myself in a deserted barn and constructed my machine, ever dreaming of yellow haired Jenny, and humming to myself:—

"What is the greatest bliss  
That the tongue o' man can name?  
'Tis to woo a bonnie lassie  
When the kye come hame,



When the kye come hame,  
When the kye come hame,  
'Tis to woo a bonnie lassie  
When the kye come hame."

At length, duly equipped with my milking-machine, I strode off to the byre, regardless of discipline and flogging and extra task and everything sublunary save Jenny. I felt proud I had suffered for her sake, and I was prepared to suffer again. I reached the byre, got behind Jenny who was milking, and triumphantly set down my milking-machine, which, to tell the truth, looked a queer cross between a three-legged stool and a sou'-wester, and a baby-jumper and a sausage-machine. Jenny turned round and looked at me, and glanced at the machine, and then held her sides and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. The other milk-maid caught up the tune and laughed almost as immoderately.

Drawing myself up to my full height, "Jenny," said I sternly, "I am here in redemption of my promise, and to demand of you the fulfilment of yours. I guarantee that this machine will milk the cows, and I claim of you that you 'meet me by moonlight alone.'"

"Great God," said the other milk-maid, "the boy is clean cracked!"

"Madam," rejoined I fiercely, "I am a gentleman, and I did not come here to be insulted. This lady made a vow to me, and by heaven she shall redeem it, or I shall know why."

The two milk-maids opened their mouths at me as well as their eyes, and stared at me in incredulous bewilderment.

"Of course, of course," at length spake Jenny, with an arch smile; "I will 'meet you by moonlight alone,' according to my promise, if you will make that *thing* [pointing to the machine] milk the cows while we are gone."

"That *thing*," said I with pride and firmness, "will do the work while we are gone."

"Set it to its work, then," answered Jenny, still with wild bewilderment on her sun-burnt but honest and happy countenance.

"*The lady is won*," murmured I in triumph; and I lifted my machine and proceeded to attach it to the udder of the cow. The animal resisted my attentions, and seemed to have somewhat set her face against vaccine innovations. I succeeded, nevertheless, in attaching the machine to her udder.

"Now!" exclaimed I; and I gave the leather a tug and the rope a pull, and set in motion the fly-wheel which I had taken off a disused grindstone. The tug and the pull and the wheel were more than the cow could stand—perhaps more than any cow before or since has been expected to stand. She ventured one mad stare at myself and the apparatus, and then lashed out devilishly with her feet. I was lifted clean off the ground and dashed up against the opposite wall, and the milk-pail and my most ingenious machine were kicked to shivers and scattered over and around me. I staggered up with a fractured skull and a broken arm, and, observing the thick milk lying white all around me, I took it to be the whole of my brains, or mayhap my immortal soul, scattered over the pavement; and, with a despairing cry, I fell back insensible.

When I recovered my senses I found myself in my own bed at school, with my father standing over me. He had been sent for, and had come more than three hundred miles. The doctor was also there, and an old chrone of a nurse, besides a great number of basins and bowls and medicine bottles and poultices and jugs with flowers, and wet towels. When I was sufficiently recovered to receive it, and when my father was gone, quite in the interests of the school, I got my ever-

memorable thrashing, that the discipline of the establishment might be vindicated. That thrashing fructified into incalculable good : it set me to planning and devising my thrashing machine, the greatest invention since Napier invented logarithms. It is of this thrashing machine, God willing, I propose to speak. But I may just mention that, as regards my first and incipient venture, the milking-machine, the splinters and fragments of it were picked up carefully ; but a piece of leather belonging to it, and as large as a shoe-sole, was never found—neither were two of my front teeth. My firm impression is that both that piece of leather and my two front teeth were knocked down my throat, and that they remain somewhere inside my person till the present day. A German surgeon I once met at Baden-Baden (a Herr Pulvermacher) inclines to the same opinion. He placed some curious acoustic contrivance of his own upon my naked back, and, applying his ear to it, assured me that he heard distinctly the two teeth biting away at the piece of leather. I have a strange pain in the part, and, on a very quiet night, when I have had enough whisky, but not too much, I myself have heard a sound appallingly like the two teeth biting the leather. But let that pass, and let this serve as prolegomena to the conception, process, and completion of the triumph of my life, THE THRASHING MACHINE.

I found I was in for a terrific hammering. It seems that, in my unconscious state, I had two or three times every day risen up in bed and whispered, "Jenny, my love," kissed a viewless form, and then sang :—

" See yonder pawky shepherd  
That lingers on the hill ;  
His yowes are in the fauld,  
And his lambs are lyin' still ;  
But he downa venture hame,

For his heart is in a flame  
 To meet his bonnie lassie  
 When the kye come hame,  
 When the kye come hame,  
 When the kye come hame,  
 'Tween the gloamin' and the mirk,  
 When the kye come hame."

These recurring outbursts of love and song had, the surgeon alleged, made me much worse. On one occasion, as I got enthusiastic in the refrain of my bucolic melody, it seems I had torn the bandage from my head and flung it right in the face of Mrs. Fergusson, the principal's wife. My wounded scalp bled afresh, and I fell back in a state of syncope; but Mrs. Fergusson did not stay to attend to me. One or two drops of blood from the bandage had lighted upon her face. She rushed out of the room screaming, and vehemently advised her husband, Dr. Fergusson, that I was "a horrid little pig," that I had assaulted her, and that she would not live in the same establishment with me.

"Thrash," screamed she; "thrash the insubordinate and cracked little blockhead, and send him home. He is not fit to be in the school."

The Doctor, if he had not had a wife, would not have been a bad sort of fellow: he was a scholar, a pedant, but on the whole a gentleman; albeit an act of juvenile indiscretion on his part had made it necessary for him to marry a village dressmaker. Dr. Fergusson governed the school, and this quondam dressmaker governed Dr. Fergusson.

"My dear, it shall be done," said Dr. Fergusson submissively, as he wiped away the blood-drops off his wife's face with his snuffy handkerchief. "I agree with you; he is *monstrum nullâ virtute redemptum a vitiis*. I will thrash him."

If the Doctor had not promised "I will thrash him," I strongly suspect he would have got thrashed himself.

All the boys remembered the day he came into the school minus one of his side whiskers. It was no joke to disobey the impetuous caprices of the quondam dressmaker who was now Mrs. Fergusson.

In a day or two I was considered well enough to get thrashed. I was, with shabby solemnity, arraigned before the entire teaching staff and all the boys in the school. Mrs. Fergusson sat by her husband's side, busy hemming an apron : she surmised that her presence was necessary to give him the essential constancy, courage, and *cruelty*.

“Donald Fraser,” began the Doctor sternly, “you are unworthy, sir, of the attention of my staff and myself ; unworthy of the kindness of your more than mother, Mrs. Fergusson [here the lady referred to laid down her seam, took off her spectacles, and wiped her eyes] ; unworthy of the young gentlemen who have been polluted by being doomed to associate with you ; unworthy, sir, of these benches ; unworthy of this ancient academy, which has been the *alma mater* of many who have subsequently been ornaments to the Army, the Church, and the Law. [Here Mrs. Fergusson beat the floor with her heel by way of applause ; and all the boys, with the single exception of myself, battered the boards with their feet, and hurrahed, and kicked up such a cloud of dust that, in my weak state, I felt choking and faint.] It is not for your sake, Fraser, that I put myself to the trouble of administering a flagellation. Before me lies a task, not a pleasure. *Virtute non armis fido*. Your offence has been inexpressibly flagrant. Twice you have been absent without leave—absent for a purpose which I would describe as diabolical if it were not that I have an impression that you are of unsound mind. You were found in a cow-house four miles away, lying in a cataplasm of cow's milk and fool's blood, the staves of a broken milk-pail, and the shivered fragments of an idiotic

contrivance of yours. In the name of omnipotent God, sir, what were you doing there? How, sir, did you dare to drag the reputation of this ancient seat of learning over the filthy floor of a cow-house? How, sir, did you come to exchange expressions of precocious amativeness with an unlettered woman of the people? No boy who has the privilege to attend a seat of learning like this, august with the classic memories of nearly half a century, but should sing from the bottom of his heart the noble ode which opens, *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo*. Even with the oldest of you it is time enough to think of ladies; but, when the time comes, look only and alone to a lady bred and a lady born [here Mrs. Fergusson primmed her mouth, straightened her hands, perked back her head, and posed as "a lady bred and a lady born"], and speak to no other woman whatever, unless it be to command her to wash your shirt or blacken your boots."

"Hear, hear!" cried Mrs. Fergusson.

"But," continued the Doctor, "you have actually gone and compromised me and the school, and your family and yourself, by precocious advances to a miserable plebeian of the feminine gender. In your delirium you spoke of *Jenny*. Jenny is not such a name as should be in the mouth of any youth who has walked through the classic groves of this establishment, sir. Phyllis, or Chloris, or Calpurnia, or Clytemnestra, are such names as alone should escape your lips. *Jenny* is vulgarity and desecration. [His own wife's name was Mary Ann.] Then, sir, you kept humming a ditty written by a shepherd, and fit only for plough-boys. You sang:—

‘To woo a bonnie lassie  
When the kye come hame’—

provincial drivel, sir, with which you have polluted your mouth and contaminated the atmosphere of this classic

establishment. Your stripes, sir, which shall be many, would have been few if, in your delirium, you had sung:—

*'Supprime jam lacrymas, non est revocabilis istis,  
Quem semel umbrifera navita lintre tulit.'*

Sir, you shall be beaten with many stripes in vindication of the outraged reputation of this seat of learning, and then you will be forever and ignominiously expelled, *a mensâ et thoro*. Divest yourself of the garment that envelopes the part of your somatic entity upon which, from time immemorial, flagellation has been conventionally laid."

At this point Mrs. Fergusson pretended to turn her eyes away, and many of the smaller boys began to sob audibly, for an expulsion flogging at Angel Turret in the good old days was something you would carry the memory, and perhaps the marks, of to your grave. I let the curtain fall over the sickening details of how I was stripped, strapped, and flogged till I fainted; and how, next morning, I was stuffed inside the schoolmaster's lumbering carriage, my boxes being on the top, and driven to the mail coach, that I might be despatched *en route* for home.

My father was neither to hold nor to bind. He took me into the library, and examined my stripes carefully with a candle, muttering strange oaths as each blue weal, red line, or yellow star revealed itself to his indignant scrutiny. He rushed out to the stables and instructed the coachman to get ready the carriage at once. My mother met him in the hall, and asked anxiously, "Where are you going, dear? Whatever is the matter?"

"Going!" rejoined he, angrily; "do you know that that snuffy old rascal at Angel Turret—the Devil's Turret they should call it—has all but murdered your boy? I start to-night to punch his infernal old head. I'll teach the pedantic old compound of snuff and Latin and

barbarity what it is to print the American flag with a stick upon the foundation of any boy of mine. I'll twist the truculent old savage's neck for him."

"No, you won't," said my mother; "you won't do anything of the kind;" and she placed her arm in his and endeavoured to lead him back to the dining room, for she was well aware that, if he were permitted to visit Dr. Fergusson, he would be likely, by his choleric temper and heavy hand, to get himself into serious if not insuperable difficulties.

"Come with me," she murmured persuasively, gently drawing him in the direction of the dining room. But he was in an ungovernable rage, all the more deep-seated and determined and dangerous because it was not particularly demonstrative; and he shook my mother off as if she had been a viper, and simply said, with an inflexible firmness: "Woman, I have made up my mind, and go I shall."

My mother waxed pale with dread, and, with the utmost exertion of her persuasive force, induced him to go into the parlour and have a cup of tea, previous to his setting out on his journey, which she was apprehensive might end in murder. Grimly he sipped a cup of tea. "Now I am in for anything from pitch and toss to manslaughter," muttered he through his teeth; but beyond this he uttered not a word. A servant announced that the carriage was ready. He set down the tea-cup with a clank and sprang to his feet. But, on the instant, somehow, and from somewhere, a brass kettleful of boiling water was upset upon his feet, almost filling his Hessian boots. He uttered a roar of pain, and, without opening the glass door, crashed through it, and in an instant was upon the lawn. Here he swore like a fiend and jumped mountain high with agony. For an instant he stood on the margin of the fish-pond. It struck me like an inspiration that, if he could get some cold water



introduced into the boiling water in his boots, all would be well with him. There was not a moment to lose. I made a short and mad race, and came up against him like a battering ram ; and he was, in what I conceived to be mercy, knocked heels over head into the fish-pond.

She never confessed it, but I have a strong suspicion that my mother upset that kettle by *preconcerted accident*, in order to circumvent a journey that she apprehended would end in manslaughter, if not indeed in murder. Be that as it may, my father was in bed for a fortnight in a raging fever. I had indeed taken him out of hot water and cooled him down a bit ; but, as it turned out, the cooling had been all too suddenly effected. By the time he had fairly recovered he had apparently given up all idea of visiting Dr. Fergusson and Angel Turret ; he never again mentioned them, nor referred to them in any way.

During the time my father was confined to bed with burnt feet and fever I had leisure to attend to and meditate upon the many stripes on my person, the outward and visible signs of an inward grace which I fear I did not possess. I was seized with an overpowering desire to behold with my own eyes the stripes by which the honour of Dr. Fergusson and his academy had been vindicated. My father had examined these stripes, and had compared the part on which they were inflicted to a representation of the American flag, the glorious gonfalon of the stripes and stars. I *must* behold these stripes by which the honour of Angel Turret had been vindicated and my own moral redemption secured. I twisted myself round like an acrobat ; and, if I could only have twisted myself round two inches further, I believed I could have had a full view ; but, as it was, I had no view at all. It occurred to me that, if I kept trying on from day to day, I would gradually overcome

that difficulty about the two inches. I, however, tried and tried three days in succession, but without success, and on the third day I took cramp while I was in the very acme of my distorted attitude; and, unable to screw myself back to my normal position, for over five minutes I yelled with pain. My cries brought my mother and the scullery-maid to my bed-room door; but I had taken the precaution to lock it before I commenced my experiments, or these two persons would have found me in an exceedingly awkward predicament. As soon as the cramp relaxed its grasp I straightened myself up, hurriedly redressed myself, and opened the door with a bland smile.

"Donald, Donald, in the name of heaven," exclaimed my mother, "what is the matter with you? Your cries were heartrending."

"Oh, nothing the matter with me, mother—all right—I was experimenting," stammered I, with some confusion of manner.

"Experimenting!" cried my mother, "your screams were as terrible as if you had, all of a sudden, tumbled into hell. What kind of experiment requires yelling of that kind?"

"Well, you see I was experimenting on the acting of 'Hamlet.' That scene where the Dane leaps into the grave of Ophelia, in my opinion, requires fearful yelling."

"Boy, you are clean cracked. First you did some abominable thing at school—Lord knows exactly what it was; next you attempt to drown your own father; and then, in your attempt at acting 'Hamlet,' you bid fair to burst your own wind-pipe and shout the whole of us deaf;" and my mother slammed the door and hurried downstairs.

I was still determined to behold the stripes for which I was indebted to the strong right arms of Dr. Fergusson and his principal assistant. I tried ingenious combina-

tions of double mirrors and triple mirrors, and I, by this means, succeeded in seeing all parts of my body except the very part I desired to examine. Discomfiture! But I was still determined, ingenious, and resourceful. Sitting on the top of the garden wall was a tom-cat engaged in his toilet. Now, when a cat sponges himself with his tongue he sponges himself all over, from the very hat-crown to the boot-heel, as it were. One toilet attitude the tom-cat struck gave me a wrinkle. Like the ancient Greek geometer, I exclaimed "Eureka!" I apprehended that my task could be accomplished if I could only place my heel on the back of my neck. Then an astonishing field of view would open before my prying and intelligent vision. Sir Isaac Newton had struck upon the law of gravitation from seeing an apple fall; I, the product of a later and more go-ahead age, had, from observing a cat at his toilet, struck upon the law by which I could survey the stripes which the learned Dr. Fergusson had inflicted that the *prestige* of Angel Turret might be vindicated and my own moral regeneration secured.

Preparatory to my new experiment I stripped myself and sparred and attitudinised before a mirror, and, without egotism, it really did appear to me that I was an exceptionally handsome lad, and peculiarly suggestive of a Greek athlete or agonistes. I arrayed myself in a pair of bathing drawers and sat down upon the hearth rug in order to experiment in the way of placing my heel behind my neck, that, with mortal vision, I might behold the stripes with which my moral iniquities had been healed. At the first trial I managed to put my great toe in my mouth. At the end of half-an-hour I succeeded in making the said great toe touch my ear. Eldorado was all but reached! I became inordinately excited and I resolutely determined to succeed. One desperate duck till my neck cracked, and one reckless

wrench upward of the leg till knee and pelvis cracked in chorus—and the deed was done! My heel was placed firmly and solidly on the back of my neck! But no undiscovered worlds and unexplored hemispheres or American or other flags met my adventurous vision: the *drawers* were there—frightful oversight, irreparable blunder! I felt in a state of distress and blindness, and hastened to remove the heel which I had placed upon my neck. I was utterly powerless to do so. In a short time I had not even the power to *try* to remove my heel. I tumbled sidewise upon the hearth-rug, and lay moaning in absolute misery. I felt I was dying—dying a martyr to research after a certain fundamental truth; dying, un lamented, deserted, unappreciated, and no one would ever divine the cause in which I had perished. No marble tomb for me, and a brilliant name among the world's great discoverers, and those who passed through the furnaces of tribulation to the throne of the immortals. In my deadly distress I remembered the words of young Norval:—

“Cut off from Nature's and from Glory's course,  
Which never mortal was so fond to run.

\* \* \* \*

Some noble spirits, judging by themselves,  
May yet conjecture what I might have been.”

In the collapse of my previous experiment I was able to scream; but *now* that last solace of the sufferer was denied me. My chin was pressed firmly down upon my throat, and I could make only a low, croaking noise, resembling the jeremiad of a frog, rather than the wail of a human being. My plight was terrible. Nobody would miss me now till supper time, if even then; and by that time I should be beyond the reach of mortal assistance. By the merest accident, the maid had neglected to “make” my bed at the proper time; and, before I had lain five minutes—which, however, seemed

an eternity—in my helpless and desperate condition, she entered the chamber to “make” the bed. She stared at me, uttered a scream, and hurried out of the room.

“O ma’am,” she said to my mother, in breathless excitement, “the young master is in his room, and has made himself into a Isle of Man halfpenny, with feet all round ; and he is groaning horrible. O ma’am, I have got quite a scunner. I never see’d the like. Come, ma’am ; he is a-dyin’ by inches.”

My mother rushed up the stairs three steps at a time, and, beholding my extraordinary plight, she held up her hands in bewildered horror, and exclaimed :

“What next ? What part of the play of ‘Hamlet’ can *this* be meant to represent ? What have I done that divine providence should give me a son like this ? He is knees and elbows all over, like an octopus. He will drive me cracked !” and she rushed out of the room and sent for the parson and the doctor. The former prayed for me, while the latter, by main force, extracted my heel from the back of my neck. Then they two retired to my father’s bedroom, where he was still lying, bad with burnt feet and fever ; and all three got drunk together. You may think all this unimportant ; but it is not. It all had its bearing upon the *magnum opus* of my life, THE THRASHING MACHINE, and that you shall see before many more lines have proceeded from my gifted pen.

I was not even yet defeated. Every fresh repulse I sustained served only to render me the more determined to behold and study the stripes with which my moral delinquencies had been healed. These stripes, still sharply painful, should I inadvertently forget they were there and sit down all of a sudden, were all that remained to me to hallow the memory of far-off Jenny

and the literal shattering of my idol which the cow had so irreverently kicked to splinters. But Jenny and the milking-machine alike became half-obliterated in my wild and all-absorbing desire to read the primitive hieroglyphy which Dr. Fergusson and his principal assistant, a B.A. of Oxford, had written upon me with rods. They were two learned men. I *must* see what, in their wisdom, they had written with sticks, using my skin for parchment. The results of their labour, I determined, should not be lost to the world.

I, with the unconventional and rare ingenuity which has ever been my distinguishing trait, sat down upon a large plate of salt, that I might learn and note from the spasms and yanks of pain the particular directions and crossings and re-crossings and notches and stars and scars of the stripes with which my morals had been so learnedly, if not humanely, healed. I went down to the pantry when the butler happened to be out; and I filled my pockets with finely powdered salt, and concealed as best I could under my coat a large silver tray. With the salt and the tray I retired to my bedroom. I filled the tray full to the brim with the salt, and levelled it off beautifully with a comb. Then down I sat with a jerk; but, by the King of Heaven, up I rose with another jerk! I uttered a savage yell, and ran tearing across the floor as if all the fiends had been behind me. I had had my arm broken, my skull fractured, and my two teeth kicked down my throat; but, in insufferable pain, this salt experiment beat all my previous experiences hollow. I beg humbly to recommend its adoption by the Great Spiritual Enemy of Mankind as something worthy of the liveliest corner in the Infernal Pit. Into the room rushed my mother and her maid.

“Donald, Donald dear, in the name of all that is sane, what is the matter now?”

“‘Hamlet’ again, mother!” exclaimed I bitterly, hardly

knowing what I said ; for the pain, although subsiding, was still intense.

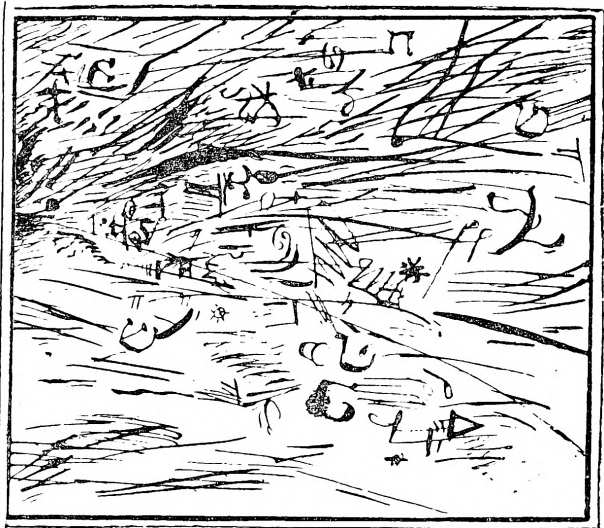
"But you gag 'Hamlet' horribly," rejoined she, half in literal earnest and half in pitying irony ; "I distinctly heard you cry out, 'O Almighty thunder ! I cannot read the writing with the stick ! I have sat down on *hell*, and here am I !' What part of 'Hamlet' is that ? It is not to be found in Shakespeare's version."

I explained that Hamlet was *mad*, and that, in my contemplated representation of the character, I should give a rendering which would astonish the world.

"Astonish the world ! I should think so," rejoined my mother curtly, and left the room.

I had managed to place a pillow over the tray with the salt, or I might not have been able to give my explanations so readily, or to have got rid of her so easily.

*Labor omnia vincit.* The gate of hell itself cannot prevail against the unconquerable might of the human will. Even the fiery fury of the trayful of salt had not burnt out of me the indomitable resolution to read the cryptograms which the learned Dr. Fergusson and his assistant, Morris, had written with sticks. The gardener was an exceedingly intelligent young man. Pencil and compasses were hardly ever out of his hands. His business was to design flower-beds, rockeries, and fountains ; but he could draw nearly anything that is in heaven above, on earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. I would take him into the summer-house and engage him to produce, on a sheet of drawing-paper, a *fac-simile* of the stripes with which my moral delinquencies had been healed. I hastened out to the garden, gave my instructions, and, within three hours from the inception of the idea, it was a consummated fact. The annexed cut is, accurately, but on a reduced scale, and without colours, a copy of the document, plan, map, or what you will, with which the gardener furnished me :—



Never did panting lover read a missive from his mistress, never did young poet read his first verses in type, with more ecstatic rapture than warmed and thrilled me now that I had the stick-writing of a great seat of learning unrolled before me in all its mysterious splendour. I admit it was utterly incomprehensible. Would to heaven I could interpret its esoteric lines, its occult angles, and its mysterious stars! But I knew that Dr. Fergusson was a learned and earnest man, who would not write flippantly or in vain; and that, therefore, in that mystic scribble, which had been subsequently retraced by the flame-pen of the salt, lurked the key to unlock that problem in ontology, the Origin of Evil, and the sword with which to cut the Gordian Knot of Evil's Final Eradication. I gazed on the map-document with that absorbing dream-worship with which we regard that which at once awes our senses and baffles our reason.



Although I could not read the inscription now that I had it before me, the consciousness of possessing it was to me a profound, if inexplicable, pleasure. What could be the portentous significance of that blue fading away into that green ; of that umbre black losing itself in that flaming yellow ; of that ominous  $\Psi$ , and that fearful  $\Upsilon$  ?

I would be at the bottom of all this, or perish in the attempt. I worked at the problem till I felt the wheels of my brain cracking and the belts giving way. But, at last, an inspiration as magnificent as that which had impelled me to employ the gardener to make the copy of the cryptogram now struck me with the divine impulse to employ a certain servant of the Most High to translate it. About six miles distant from my father's house, Dunder Hall, lived a man of God and Learning such as the world has all too seldom seen. He had preached himself out of his kirk, and all but preached himself into a lunatic asylum, for it is with a lunatic asylum the world rewards all possessors of mental energy and moral force which cannot be weighed or measured in the bushel of vulgar common sense or yoked into the mill of commonplace to grind out half-crowns.

I begged two guineas from my ever-indulgent father and enclosed them, along with the inscription, to the learned and pious, albeit impecunious, servant of the Most High. I explained to him that I was anxious to have a translation. I made him aware that the cryptogramic hierogram was the work of two elegant scholars, James Fergusson, M.A. of Edinburgh and LL.D. of Yale, and Arthur Morris, B.A., of Brazenose College, Oxford, and editor of an approved edition of Thucydides. I permitted the learned and reverend servant of the Most High\* to infer that the copy I sent him, and which the

\* The Rev. Dr. Hamilton, author of "Key to the Apocalypse" and "The Contents of the Seven Phials."

gardener had made, was the original. I, somehow, had not the face to take him the original and lay it before him. Thank heaven I had just taken the copy in time, for, under the influence of a salve made of bees-wax, fern roots, and alum, the original was rapidly becoming illegible and passing away, leaving only a *tabula rasa* behind.

Within a week from the day I sent off the inscription a messenger from the scholar handed it back to me *with the translation thereof!* I rushed upstairs to my room, locked the door from the inside, and eagerly tore open the scholar's packet. A guinea tumbled out upon the floor. I set my foot upon it till I had time to lift it. I had now before me a prize grander than a Dijon pyramid of guineas. A private note ran thus :—

The Cottage, Thursday morning.

*Donald Fraser, Esq.\**

DEAR SIR,—The writing with a sight of which you honoured me, although exceedingly important at this crisis of the Church, is not at all difficult to decipher. I devoted to it only one day of prayerful reading and one day of philological synthesis and analysis. I got at the key to the cryptogram all the readier as the whole inscription bore a striking resemblance to that upon an Assyrian tile which Dr. Ravenstein brought from the Land of Moab seven months ago. Having had to devote only two days to the translation, it would be avaricious on my part to retain the two guineas you were generous enough to enclose; but, as I am not abundantly blessed with the world's wealth, I have taken the liberty to retain one of the guineas, and I sincerely trust that you will not consider the fee for the trifling service it has been my privilege to render you exorbitant.

With prayers that the translation may be blessed to the saving of your soul and the souls of those who are of your household,

I am, Dear Sir,

Your most respectful, humble servant,

JAMES HAMILTON.

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\* The Rev. Dr. Hamilton had evidently thought that the inscription had been sent him by my father.

## PROLEGOMENAL CLAVIS.

(1) *The lines have all a tendency from east to west. They are simply the rays of the sun-god, Σωτήρ, Mises Saotès, &c., &c. I give due weight in detail to their respective ray-weight and deflection from the horizontal.*

(2) *The distinctive marks are all grammalogoi, Phallic symbols (crux ansata), signs of the Zodiac, oriental, ancient Egyptian, and Ptolemaic, Hebrew characters, in which Ψ and Ν are conspicuous, and π, which, with its indication of the relation of the diameter of a circle to its circumference, affords, in the hands of esoteric erudition, a key to the whole position.*

(3) *The great character to the left is of course אלה, which, taken with ♍ (the virgin) and ♋ (the crab) and ♊ (the twins), all of which are readily discernible in the inscription, render the solution easy to the occultist scholar.*

## TRANSLATION.

BY THY LEFT HAND, O AMMON, GREETING. GREAT STAR, VINDEMIATRIX, ARISE IN THE EAST. THERE WAS SILENCE IN HELL ABOUT THE SPACE OF HALF AN HOUR. WO, WO, SON OF POMPONIOUS MELA, WITH THE IRON IN THE GROIN AND THE FOUNDATIONS BEATEN LIKE AN ANVIL OF MULCIBER. THE RAYS THEREOF FLEW. Zeus Αμην STRUCK THE NETHER HEEL; THE MOUTH WAS THAT OF A LION, THE FEET WERE THOSE OF A SHE-BEAR, AND THE TAIL THAT OF A FROG. FOR 𐤃 SHALL JUDGE AMONG THE NATIONS, AND AT THE END OF A TIME AND THREE TIMES AND ONE-EIGHTH OF A TIME THE EARTH SHALL HOWL AS THE MOON DROPS DOWN UPON IT IN BLOOD. HOWL FOR THE CIVET, CRY ALOUD FOR THE MUSTARD PLANT. FOR THE CRAB AND THE VIRGIN AND THE TWINS MOURN WITH TAMMUZ IN BAAL-PEOR. THE HERON AND THE WEAZEL LAMENT IN BACTRIA FOR ANUBIS AND RA AND SET-TYPHON AND SEKRU AND TUM AND PHTHAH.

MOURN, FOR THE LEGS AND THE TEETH ARE BROKEN. MISES HARMACHIS AND OANNES COME ; THE GRAVES OPEN ; THE WORLD ENDS. GLORY TO יהוה ! BEAT THE WIND WITH RODS, 121 CUBITS, AND FOR DAYS AND YEARS 9,999.

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My countenance fell. The original, even as I sat upon the salt, was nearly as intelligible as the translation that now lay before me. What could possibly be the use of James Fergusson, M.A., and Arthur Morris, B.A., troubling in my interest to write with sticks, didactics, and apothegms utterly beyond the range of my scholarship and the scope of my intelligence ? Of the "foundations beaten like an anvil" I had a vivid comprehension ; while "beat the wind" was intelligible, but rather vague ; and "rods" of "121 cubits" were certainly a great deal too long for actual, practical flogging. And could they not, at Angel Turret, have flogged a boy like me without referring me to, as far as I was concerned, such unknown monsters as Ra and Set-Typhon and Tum and Phthah ? No wonder the thrashing did me no good ! No wonder that I felt quite as wicked as ever ! I resolved to devote some years to deep meditation on the philosophy of flogging. And any one who is privileged to follow the coruscations of my gifted pen may have the glory to find out for himself the magnificent result at which I ultimately arrived.

*(To be continued, if Julia—Mrs. Heywood—  
should see fit to again provoke Saladin.)*

## APPENDIX.

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### ANOTHER LETTER FROM MRS. HEYWOOD.

SIR,—I have read your vile paper. I took the tongs, and with them carried it out at arm's length to the dust-bin. I feel defiled. I shall ask my husband, a feeble but earnest servant of God, to appoint a day of humiliation and prayer throughout his parish. Then I shall ask him, if he loves me, the wife of his bosom, to horse-whip you to within one inch of your life. He is strong in the arm of the flesh, and will thrash you as if you were a rat ; and the God of Jacob, the mighty one of Israel, has, in answer to my prayer, promised to assist him. You shall perish in the gainsaying of Kor. My father never hanged himself with the — of any creature. You forged the whole infamous thing, and you have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger. I shall be at you at the criminal court. I never saw you save once, and I wish I had never seen you. The devil tempted me, and I tattooed on my left arm—

#### **I Love Ross Alone and Forever.**

My husband has seen the inscription two or three times, and has each time kicked up a dust and preached in a way that has emptied the church and drawn upon him the displeasure of the bishop. I have tried to take out the tattooing with poultices of vaccine excrement, black soap, and steel filings ; but it will not come out. I shall have my arm amputated rather than bear about with me your accursed name. Last time the Rev. Mr. Heywood saw it he hurled a heavy clasped Bible at my head. The holy book, glory be to God, missed my head ; but it knocked down Jesus Christ and three of the saints, and it took £4 5s. 3d. to repair them. I enclose you the account, and, if you have a soul in your body, you will pay it.

My father, whose memory you foul with burlesque and whose grave you desecrate, would not have trusted you with a brass sixpence, far less with his Julia's honour. Beware of the curse of Hiel the Bethelite ! There shall be a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea, for you stole my father's

MS. and then forged it. I will yet number you and your readers in Telain, when the mighty one cometh from Teman and Ur of the Chaldeans. I am my father's daughter, you viper. You say he was hanged with a murderer's intestines, which is a falsehood ; and I pray God that you may yet see the day when you will be hanged with his daughter's garters, which she weareth under the knees thereof (*sic*). My husband shall chastise thee with whips, and the Lord shall rain down upon thee hail-stones and coals of fire. Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah and the trumpet in Ramah : cry aloud at Beth-aven !—Yours, with loathing and contempt,

JULIA HEYWOOD (*née* FRASER).

The Vicarage, Sunday evening.

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P.S.—You may insert this or not, as you like ; but, if you do not, the husband of my bosom has made arrangements to have the whole matter of your vile slander published in the *Church Times* and the *Christian World*, and also brought into the police-court.—J. H., *née* F.

