Myths And Legends Of Our Own Land, v2

Charles M. Skinner

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Vol. 2. THE ISLE OF MANHATTOES AND NEARBY

DOLPH HEYLIGER

New York was New Amsterdam when Dolph Heyliger got himself born there, a graceless scamp, though a brave, good−natured one, and being left penniless on his father's death he was fain to take service with a doctor, while his mother kept a shop. This doctor had bought a farm on the island of Manhattoes away out of town, where Twenty−third Street now runs, most likely and, because of rumors that its tenants had noised about it, he seemed likely to enjoy the responsibilities of landholding and none of its profits. It suited Dolph's adventurous disposition that he should be deputed to investigate the reason for these rumors, and for three nights he kept his abode in the desolate old manor, emerging after daybreak in a lax and pallid condition, but keeping his own counsel, to the aggravation of the populace, whose ears were burning for his news.

Not until long after did he tell of the solemn tread that woke him in the small hours, of his door softly opening, though he had bolted and locked it, of a portly Fleming, with curly gray hair, reservoir boots, slouched hat, trunk and doublet, who entered and sat in the arm−chair, watching him until the cock crew. Nor did he tell how on the third night he summoned courage, hugging a Bible and a catechism to his breast for confidence, to ask the meaning of the visit, and how the Fleming arose, and drawing Dolph after him with his eyes, led him downstairs, went through the front door without unbolting it, leaving that task for the trembling yet eager youth, and how, after he had proceeded to a disused well at the bottom of the garden, he vanished from sight.

Dolph brooded long upon these things and dreamed of them in bed. He alleged that it was in obedience to his dreams that he boarded a schooner bound up the Hudson, without the formality of adieu to his employer, and after beottom of the garden, he vanished from sight.

Dolph brooded long upon these things and dreamed of them in bed. He alleged that it was in obedience to his dreams that he boarded a schooner bound up the Hudson, without the formality of adieu to his employer, and after being spilled ashore in a gale at the foot of Storm King, he fell into the company of Anthony Vander Hevden, a famous landholder and hunter, who achieved a fancy for Dolph as a lad who could shoot, fish, row, and swim, and took him home with him to Albany. The Heer had commodious quarters, good liquor, and a pretty daughter, and Dolph felt himself in paradise until led to the room he was to occupy, for one of the first things that he set eyes on in that apartment was a portrait of the very person who had kept him awake for the worse part of three nights at the bowerie in Manhattoes. He demanded to know whose picture it was, and learned that it was that of Killian Vander Spiegel, burgomaster and curmudgeon, who buried his money when the English seized New Amsterdam and fretted himself to death lest it should be discovered. He remembered that his mother had spoken of this Spiegel and that her father was the miser's rightful heir, and it now appeared that he was one of Heyden's forbears too. In his dream that night the Fleming stepped out of the portrait, led him, as he had done before, to the well, where he smiled and vanished. Dolph reflected, next morning, that these things had been ordered to bring together the two branches of the family and disclose the whereabouts of the treasure that it should inherit. So full was he of this idea that he went back to New Amsterdam by the first schooner, to the surprise of the Heer and the regret of his daughter.

After the truant had been received with execrations by the doctor and with delight by his mother, who believed that spooks had run off with him, and with astonishment, as a hero of romance, by the public, he made for the haunted premises at the first opportunity and began to angle at the disused well. Presently he found his hook entangled in something at the bottom, and on lifting slowly he discovered that he had secured a fine silver porringer, with lid held down by twisted wire. It was the work of a moment to wrench off the lid, when he found the vessel to be filled with golden pieces. His fishing that day was attended with such luck as never fell to an angler before, for there were other pieces of plate down there, all engraved with the Spiegel arms and all containing treasure.

By encouraging the most dreadful stories about the spot, in order to keep the people wide away from it, he accomplished the removal of his prizes bit by bit from their place of concealment to his home. His unaccounted absence in Albany and his dealings with the dead had prepared his neighbors for any change in himself or his condition, and now that he always had a bottle of schnapps for the men and a pot of tea for the women, and was good to his mother, they said that they had always known that when he changed it would be for the better,—at which his old detractors lifted their eyebrows significantly—and when asked to dinner by him they always accepted.

Moreover, they made merry when the day came round for his wedding with the little maid of Albany. They likewise elected him a member of the corporation, to which he bequeathed some of the Spiegel plate and often helped the other city fathers to empty the big punch−bowl. Indeed, it was at one of these corporation feasts that he died of apoplexy. He was buried with honors in the yard of the Dutch church in Garden Street.

THE KNELL AT THE WEDDING

A young New Yorker had laid such siege to the heart of a certain belle— this was back in the Knickerbocker days when people married for love— that everybody said the banns were as good as published; but everybody did not know, for one fine morning my lady went to church with another gentleman—not her father, though old enough to be—and when the two came out they were man and wife. The elderly man was rich. After the first paroxysm of rage and disappointment had passed, the lover withdrew from the world and devoted himself to study; nor when he learned that she had become a widow, with comfortable belongings derived from the estate of the late lamented, did he renew acquaintance with her, and he smiled bitterly when he heard of her second marriage to a young adventurer who led her a wretched life, but atoned for his sins, in a measure, by dying soon enough afterward to leave a part of her fortune unspent.

In the lapse of time the doubly widowed returned to New York, where she met again the lover of her youth. Mr. Ellenwood had acquired the reserve of a scholar, and had often puzzled his friends with his eccentricities; but after a few meetings with the object of his young affection he came out of his glooms, and with respectful formality laid again at her feet the heart she had trampled on forty years before. Though both of them were well on in life, the news of their engagement made little of a sensation. The widow was still fair; the wooer was quiet, refined, and courtly, and the union of their fortunes would assure a competence for the years that might be left to them. The church of St. Paul, on Broadway, was appointed for the wedding, and it was a whim of the groom that his bride should meet him there. At the appointed hour a company of the curious had assembled in the edifice; a rattle of wheels was heard, and a bevy of bridesmaids and friends in hoop, patch, velvet, silk, powder, swords, and buckles walked down the aisle; but just as the bride had come within the door, out of the sunlight that streamed so brilliantly on the mounded turf and tombstones in the churchyard, the bell in the steeple gave a single boom.

The bride walked to the altar, and as she took her place before it another clang resounded from the belfry. The bridegroom was not there. Again and again the brazen throat and iron tongue sent out a doleful knell, and faces grew pale and anxious, for the meaning of it could not be guessed. With eyes fixed on the marble tomb of her first husband, the woman tremblingly awaited the solution of the mystery, until the door was darkened by something that made her catch her breath— a funeral. The organ began a solemn dirge as a black−cloaked cortege came through the aisle, and it was with amazement that the bride discovered it to be formed of her oldest friends,—bent, withered; paired, man and woman, as in mockery—while behind, with white face, gleaming eyes, disordered hair, and halting step, came the bridegroom, in his shroud.

“Come,” he said,—let us be married. The coffins are ready. Then, home to the tomb.”

“Cruel!” murmured the woman.

“Now, Heaven judge which of us has been cruel. Forty years ago you took away my faith, destroyed my hopes, and gave to others your youth and beauty. Our lives have nearly run their course, so I am come to wed you as with funeral rites.” Then, in a softer manner, he took her hand, and said, “All is forgiven. If we cannot live together we will at least be wedded in death. Time is almost at its end. We will marry for eternity. Come.” And tenderly embracing her, he led her forward. Hard as was the ordeal, confusing, frightening, humiliating, the bride came through it a better woman.

“It is true,” she said, “I have been vain and worldly, but now, in my age, the truest love I ever knew has come back to me. It is a holy love. I will cherish it forever.” Their eyes met, and they saw each other through tears. Solemnly the clergyman read the marriage service, and when it was concluded the low threnody that had come from the organ in key with the measured clang of the bell, merged into a nobler motive, until at last the funeral measures were lost in a burst of exultant harmony. Sobs of pent feeling and sighs of relief were heard as the bridal party moved away, and when the newmade wife and husband reached the portal the bell was silent and the sun was shining.

ROISTERING DIRCK VAN DARA

In the days when most of New York stood below Grand Street, a roistering fellow used to make the rounds of the taverns nightly, accompanied by a friend named Rooney. This brave drinker was Dirck Van Dara, one of the last of those swag−bellied topers that made merry with such solemnity before the English seized their unoffending town. It chanced that Dirck and his chum were out later than usual one night, and by eleven o'clock, when all good people were abed, a drizzle set in that drove the watch to sleep in doorways and left Broadway tenantless. As the two choice spirits reeled out of a hostelry near Wall Street and saw the lights go out in the tap−room windows they started up town to their homes in Leonard Street, but hardly had they come abreast of old St. Paul's when a strange thing stayed them: crying was heard in the churchyard and a phosphorescent light shone among the tombs. Rooney was sober in a moment, but not so Dirck Van Dara, who shouted, “Here is sport, friend Rooney. Let's climb the wall. If the dead are for a dance, we will take partners and show them how pigeons' wings are cut nowadays.”

“No,” exclaimed the other; “those must perish who go among the dead when they come out of their graves. I've heard that if you get into their clutches, you must stay in purgatory for a hundred years, and no priest can pray you out.”

“Bah! old wives' tales! Come on!” And pulling his friend with him, they were over the fence. “Hello! what have we here?” As he spoke a haggard thing arose from behind a tombstone, a witchlike creature, with rags falling about her wasted form and hair that almost hid her face. The twain were set a−sneezing by the fumes of sulphur, and Rooney swore afterwards that there were little things at the end of the yard with grinning faces and lights on the ends of their tails. Old Hollands are heady. Dirck began to chaff the beldam on her dilapidation, but she stopped his talk by dipping something from a caldron behind her and flinging it over both of her visitors. Whatever it was, it burned outrageously, and with a yell of pain they leaped the wall more briskly than they had jumped it the other way, and were soon in full flight. They had not gone far when the clock struck twelve.

“Arrah! there's a crowd of them coming after,” panted Rooney. “Ave Mary! I've heard that if you die with witch broth being thrown over you, you're done for in the next world, as well as this. Let us get to Father Donagan's. Wow!”

As he made this exclamation the fugitives found their way opposed by a woman, who looked at them with immodest eyes and said, “Dirck Van Dara, your sire, in wig and bob, turned us Cyprians out of New York, after ducking us in the Collect. But we forgive him, and to prove it we ask you to our festival.”

At the stroke of midnight the street before the church had swarmed with a motley throng, that now came onward, waving torches that sparkled like stars. They formed a ring about Dirck and began to dance, and he, nothing loth, seized the nymph who had addressed him and joined in the revel. Not a soul was out or awake except themselves, and no words were said as the dance went wilder to strains of weird and unseen instruments. Now and then one would apply a torch to the person of Dirck, meanly assailing him in the rear, and the smart of the burn made him feet it the livelier. At last they turned toward the Battery as by common consent, and went careering along the street in frolic fashion. Rooney, whose senses had thus far been pent in a stupor, fled with a yell of terror, and as he looked back he saw the unholy troop disappearing in the mist like a moving galaxy. Never from that night was Dirck Van Data seen or heard of more, and the publicans felt that they had less reason for living.

THE PARTY FROM GIBBET ISLAND

Ellis Island, in New York harbor, once bore the name of Gibbet Island, because pirates and mutineers were hanged there in chains. During the times when it was devoted to this fell purpose there stood in Communipaw the Wild Goose tavern, where Dutch burghers resorted, to smoke, drink Hollands, and grow fat, wise, and sleepy in each others' compaay. The plague of this inn was Yan Yost Vanderscamp, a nephew of the landlord, who frequently alarmed the patrons of the house by putting powder into their pipes and attaching briers beneath their horses' tails, and who naturally turned pirate when he became older, taking with him to sea his boon companion, an ill−disposed, ill−favored blackamoor named Pluto, who had been employed about the tavern. When the landlord died, Vanderscamp possessed himself of this property, fitted it up with plunder, and at intervals he had his gang ashore,—such a crew of singing, swearing, drinking, gaming devils as Communipaw had never seen the like of; yet the residents could not summon activity enough to stop the goings−on that made the Wild Goose a disgrace to their village. The British authorities, however, caught three of the swashbucklers and strung them up on Gibbet Island, and things that went on badly in Communipaw after that went on with quiet and secrecy.

The pirate and his henchmen were returning to the tavern one night, after a visit to a rakish−looking vessel in the offing, when a squall broke in such force as to give their skiff a leeway to the place of executions. As they rounded that lonely reef a creaking noise overhead caused Vanderscamp to look up, and he could not repress a shudder as he saw the bodies of his three messmates, their rags fluttering and their chains grinding in the wind.

“Don't you want to see your friends?” sneered Pluto. “You, who are never afraid of living men, what do you fear from the dead?”

“Nothing,” answered the pirate. Then, lugging forth his bottle, he took a long pull at it, and holding it toward the dead felons, he shouted, “Here's fair weather to you, my lads in the wind, and if you should be walking the rounds to−night, come in to supper.”

A clatter of bones and a creak of chains sounded like a laugh. It was midnight when the boat pulled in at Communipaw, and as the storm continued Vanderscamp, drenched to the skin, made quick time to the Wild Goose. As he entered, a sound of revelry overhead smote his ear, and, being no less astonished than in need of cordials, he hastened up−stairs and flung open the door. A table stood there, furnished with jugs and pipes and cans, and by light of candles that burned as blue as brimstone could be seen the three gallows−birds from Gibbet Island, with halters on their necks, clinking their tankards together and trolling forth a drinking−song.

Starting back with affright as the corpses hailed him with lifted arms and turned their fishy eyes on him, Vanderscamp slipped at the door and fell headlong to the bottom of the stairs. Next morning he was found there by the neighbors, dead to a certainty, and was put away in the Dutch churchyard at Bergen on the Sunday following. As the house was rifled and deserted by its occupants, it was hinted that the negro had betrayed his master to his fellow−buccaneers, and that he, Pluto, was no other than the devil in disguise. But he was not, for his skiff was seen floating bottom up in the bay soon after, and his drowned body lodged among the rocks at the foot of the pirates' gallows.

For a long time afterwards the island was regarded as a place that required purging with bell, book, and candle, for shadows were reported there and faint lights that shot into the air, and to this day, with the great immigrant station on it and crowds going and coming all the time, the Battery boatmen prefer not to row around it at night, for they are likely to see the shades of the soldier and his mistress who were drowned off the place one windy night, when the girl was aiding the fellow to escape confinement in the guard−house, to say nothing of Vanderscamp and his felons.

MISS BRITTON'S POKER

The maids of Staten Island wrought havoc among the royal troops who were quartered among them during the Revolution. Near quarantine, in an old house,—the Austen mansion,—a soldier of King George hanged himself because a Yankee maid who lived there would not have him for a husband, nor any gentleman whose coat was of his color; and, until ghosts went out of fashion, his spirit, in somewhat heavy boots, with jingling spurs, often disturbed the nightly quiet of the place.

The conduct of a damsel in the old town of Richmond was even more stern. She was the granddaughter, and a pretty one, of a farmer named Britton; but though Britton by descent and name, she was no friend of Britons, albeit she might have had half the officers in the neighboring camp at her feet, if she had wished them there. Once, while mulling a cup of cider for her grandfather, she was interrupted by a self−invited myrmidon, who undertook, in a fashion rude and unexpected, to show the love in which he held her. Before he could kiss her, the girl drew the hot poker from the mug of drink and jabbed at the vitals of her amorous foe, burning a hole through his scarlet uniform and printing on his burly person a lasting memento of the adventure. With a howl of pain the fellow rushed away, and the privacy of the Britton family was never again invaded, at least whilst cider was being mulled.

THE DEVIL'S STEPPING−STONES

When the devil set a claim to the fair lands at the north of Long Island Sound, his claim was disputed by the Indians, who prepared to fight for their homes should he attempt to serve his writ of ejectment. Parley resulted in nothing, so the bad one tried force, but he was routed in open fight and found it desirable to get away from the scene of action as soon as possible. He retreated across the Sound near the head of East River. The tide was out, so he stepped from island to island, without trouble, and those reefs and islands are to this day the Devil's Stepping−Stones. On reaching Throgg's Neck he sat down in a despairing attitude and brooded on his defeat, until, roused to a frenzy at the thought of it, he resolved to renew the war on terms advantageous entirely to himself. In that day Connecticut was free from rocks, but Long Island was covered with them; so he gathered all he could lay his hands on and tossed them at the Indians that he could see across the Sound near Cold Spring until the supply had given out. The red men who last inhabited Connecticut used to show white men where the missiles landed and where the devil struck his heel into the ground as he sprang from the shore in his haste to reach Long Island. At Cold Spring other footprints and one of his toes are shown. Establishing himself at Coram, he troubled the people of the country for many years, so that between the devil on the west and the Montauks on the east they were plagued indeed; for though their guard at Watch Hill, Rhode Island, and other places often apprised them of the coming of the Montauks, they never knew which way to look for the devil.

THE SPRINGS OF BLOOD AND WATER

A great drought had fallen on Long Island, and the red men prayed for water. It is true that they could get it at Lake Ronkonkoma, but some of them were many miles from there, and, beside, they feared the spirits at that place: the girl who plied its waters in a phosphor−shining birch, seeking her recreant lover; and the powerful guardians that the Great Spirit had put in charge to keep the fish from being caught, for these fish were the souls of men, awaiting deliverance into another form. The people gathered about their villages in bands and besought the Great Spirit to give them drink. His voice was heard at last, bidding their chief to shoot an arrow into the air and to watch where it fell, for there would water gush out. The chief obeyed the deity, and as the arrow touched the earth a spring of sweet water spouted into the air. Running forward with glad cries the red men drank eagerly of the liquor, laved their faces in it, and were made strong again; and in memory of that event they called the place the Hill of God, or Manitou Hill, and Manet or Manetta Hill it is to this day. Hereabouts the Indians settled and lived in peace, thriving under the smile of their deity, making wampum for the inland tribes and waxing rich with gains from it. They made the canal from bay to sea at Canoe Place, that they might reach open water without dragging their boats across the sand− bars, and in other ways they proved themselves ingenious and strong.

When the English landed on the island they saw that the Indians were not a people to be trifled with, and in order to properly impress them with their superiority, they told them that John Bull desired a treaty with them. The officers got them to sit in line in front of a cannon, the nature of which instrument was unknown to them, and during the talk the gun was fired, mowing down so many of the red people that the survivors took to flight, leaving the English masters at the north shore, for this heartless and needless massacre took place at Whale's Neck. So angry was the Great Spirit at this act of cruelty and treachery that he caused blood to ooze from the soil, as he had made water leap for his thirsting children, and never again would grass grow on the spot where the murder had been done.

THE CRUMBLING SILVER

There is a clay bank on Little Neck, Long Island, where metallic nodules are now and then exposed by rain. Rustics declare them to be silver, and account for their crumbling on the theory that the metal is under a curse. A century ago the Montauks mined it, digging over enough soil to unearth these pellets now and again, and exchanging them at the nearest settlements for tobacco and rum. The seeming abundance of these lumps of silver aroused the cupidity of one Gardiner, a dweller in the central wilderness of the island, but none of the Indians would reveal the source of their treasure. One day Gardiner succeeded in getting an old chief so tipsy that, without realizing what he was doing, he led the white man to the clay bed and showed him the metallic spots glittering in the sun. With a cry of delight Gardiner sprang forward and tore at the earth with his fingers, while the Indian stood by laughing at his eagerness.

Presently a shade crosssed the white man's face, for he thought that this vast treasure would have to be shared by others. It was too much to endure. He wanted all. He would be the richest man on earth. Stealing behind the Indian as he stood swaying and chuckling, he wrenched the hatchet from his belt and clove his skull at a blow. Then, dragging the body to a thicket and hiding it under stones and leaves, he hurried to his house for cart and pick and shovel, and returning with speed he dug out a half ton of the silver before sunset. The cart was loaded, and he set homeward, trembling with excitement and conjuring bright visions for his future, when a wailing sound from a thicket made him halt and turn pale. Noiselessly a figure glided from the bush. It was the Indian he had killed. The form approached the treasure, flung up its arm, uttered a few guttural words; then a rising wind seemed to lift it from the ground and it drifted toward the Sound, fading like a cloud as it receded.

Full of misgiving, Gardiner drove to his home, and, by light of a lantern, transferred his treasure to his cellar. Was it the dulness of the candle that made the metal look so black? After a night of feverish tossing on his bed he arose and went to the cellar to gloat upon his wealth. The light of dawn fell on a heap of gray dust, a few brassy looking particles showing here and there. The curse of the ghost had been of power and the silver was silver no more. Mineralogists say that the nodules are iron pyrites. Perhaps so; but old residents know that they used to be silver.

THE CORTELYOU ELOPEMENT

In the Bath district of Brooklyn stands Cortelyou manor, built one hundred and fifty years ago, and a place of defence during the Revolution when the British made sallies from their camp in Flatbush and worried the neighborhood. It was in one of these forays on pigs and chickens that a gallant officer of red−coats met a pretty lass in the fields of Cortelyou. He stilled her alarm by aiding her to gather wild−flowers, and it came about that the girl often went into the fields and came back with prodigious bouquets of daisies. The elder Cortelyou had no inkling of this adventure until one of his sons saw her tryst with the red−coat at a distance. Be sure the whole family joined him in remonstrance. As the girl declared that she would not forego the meetings with her lover, the father swore that she should never leave his roof again, and he tried to be as good, or bad, as his word. The damsel took her imprisonment as any girl of spirit would, but was unable to effect her escape until one evening, as she sat at her window, watching the moon go down and paint the harbor with a path of light. A tap at the pane, as of a pebble thrown against it, roused her from her revery. It was her lover on the lawn.

At her eager signal he ran forward with a light ladder, planted it against the window−sill, and in less than a minute the twain were running toward the beach; but the creak of the ladder had been heard, and grasping their muskets two of the men hurried out. In the track of the moon the pursuers descried a moving form, and, without waiting to challenge, they levelled the guns and fired. A woman's cry followed the report; then a dip of oars was heard that fast grew fainter until it faded from hearing. On returning to the house they found the girl's room empty, and next morning her slipper was brought in from the mud at the landing. Nobody inside of the American lines ever learned what that shot had done, but if it failed to take a life it robbed Cortelyou of his mind. He spent the rest of his days in a single room, chained to a staple in the floor, tramping around and around, muttering and gesturing, and sometimes startling the passer−by as he showed his white face and ragged beard at the window.

VAN WEMPEL'S GOOSE

Allow us to introduce Nicholas Van Wempel, of Flatbush: fat, phlegmatic, rich, and henpecked. He would like to be drunk because he is henpecked, but the wife holds the purse−strings and only doles out money to him when she wants groceries or he needs clothes. It was New Year's eve, the eve of 1739, when Vrouw Van Wempel gave to her lord ten English shillings and bade him hasten to Dr. Beck's for the fat goose that had been bespoken. “And mind you do not stop at the tavern,” she screamed after him in her shrillest tone. But poor Nicholas! As he went waddling down the road, snapping through an ice−crust at every step, a roguish wind—or perhaps it was one of the bugaboos that were known to haunt the shores of Gravesend Bay—snatched off his hat and rolled it into the very doorway of the tavern that he had been warned, under terrible penalties, to avoid.

As he bent to pick it up the door fell ajar, and a pungency of schnapps and tobacco went into his nostrils. His resolution, if he had one, vanished. He ordered one glass of schnapps; friends came in and treated him to another; he was bound to do as much for them; shilling by shilling the goose money passed into the till of the landlord. Nicholas was heard to make a muttered assertion that it was his own money anyhow, and that while he lived he would be the head of his own house; then the mutterings grew faint and merged into snores. When he awoke it was at the low sound of voices in the next room, and drowsily turning his head he saw there two strangers,—sailors, he thought, from their leather jackets, black beards, and the rings in their ears. What was that they said? Gold? On the marshes? At the old Flatlands tide−mill? The talkers had gone before his slow and foggy brain could grasp it all, but when the idea had fairly eaten its way into his intellect, he arose with the nearest approach to alacrity that he had exhibited in years, and left the place. He crunched back to his home, and seeing nobody astir went softly into his shed, where he secured a shovel and lantern, and thence continued with all consistent speed to the tumbledown tide−mill on the marsh,—a trying journey for his fat legs on a sharp night, but hope and schnapps impelled him.

He reached the mill, and, hastening to the cellar, began to probe in the soft, unfrozen earth. Presently his spade struck something, and he dug and dug until he had uncovered the top of a canvas bag,—the sort that sailors call a “round stern−chest.” It took all his strength to lug it out, and as he did so a seam burst, letting a shower of gold pieces over the ground. He loosed the band of his breeches, and was filling the legs thereof with coin, when a tread of feet sounded overhead and four men came down the stair. Two of them he recognized as the fellows of the tavern. They saw the bag, the lantern, then Nicholas. Laden though he was with gold until he could hardly budge, these pirates, for such they were, got him up−stairs, forced him to drink hot Hollands to the success of their flag, then shot him through the window into the creek. As he was about to make this unceremonious exit he clutched something to save himself, and it proved to be a plucked goose that the pirates had stolen from a neighboring farm and were going to sup on when they had scraped their gold together. He felt the water and mud close over him; he struggled desperately; he was conscious of breathing more freely and of staggering off at a vigorous gait; then the power of all the schnapps seemed to get into his head, and he remembered no more until he heard his wife shrilling in his ears, when he sat up and found himself in a snow−bank close to his house, with a featherless goose tight in his grasp.

Vrouw Van Wempel cared less about the state of her spouse when she saw that he had secured the bird, and whenever he told his tale of the pirates she turned a deaf ear to him, for if he had found the gold why did he not manage to bring home a few pieces of it? He, in answer, asked how, as he had none of his own money, she could have come by the goose? He often told his tale to sympathetic ears, and would point to the old mill to prove that it was true.

THE WEARY WATCHER

Before the opening of the great bridge sent commerce rattling up Washington Street in Brooklyn that thoroughfare was a shaded and beautiful avenue, and among the houses that attested its respectability was one, between Tillary and Concord Streets, that was long declared to be haunted. A man and his wife dwelt there who seemed to be fondly attached to each other, and whose love should have been the stronger because of their three children none grew to years. A mutual sorrow is as close a tie as a common affection. One day, while on a visit to a friend, the wife saw her husband drive by in a carriage with a showy woman beside him. She went home at once, and when the supposed recreant returned she met him with bitter reproaches. He answered never a word, but took his hat and left the house, never to be seen again in the places that had known him.

The wife watched and waited, daily looking for his return, but days lengthened into weeks, months, years, and still he came not. Sometimes she lamented that she had spoken hastily and harshly, thinking that, had she known all, she might have found him blameless. There was no family to look after, no wholesome occupation that she sought, so the days went by in listening and watching, until, at last, her body and mind gave way, and the familiar sight of her face, watching from a second floor window, was seen no longer. Her last day came. She had risen from her bed; life and mind seemed for a moment to be restored to her; and standing where she had stood so often, her form supported by a half− closed shutter and a grasp on the sash, she looked into the street once more, sighed hopelessly, and so died. It was her shade that long watched at the windows; it was her waxen face, heavy with fatigue and pain, that was dimly seen looking over the balusters in the evening.

THE RIVAL FIDDLERS

Before Brooklyn had spread itself beyond Greenwood Cemetery a stone could be seen in Martense's Lane, south of that burial−ground, that bore a hoof mark. A negro named Joost, in the service of the Van Der Something−or−others, was plodding home on Saturday night, his fiddle under his arm. He had been playing for a wedding in Flatbush and had been drinking schnapps until he saw stars on the ground and fences in the sky; in fact, the universe seemed so out of order that he seated himself rather heavily on this rock to think about it. The behavior of the stars in swimming and rolling struck him as especially curious, and he conceived the notion that they wanted to dance. Putting his fiddle to his chin, he began a wild jig, and though he made it up as he went along, he was conscious of doing finely, when the boom of a bell sent a shiver down his spine. It was twelve o'clock, and here he was playing a dance tune on Sunday. However, the sin of playing for one second on the Sabbath was as great as that of playing all day; so, as long as he was in for it, he resolved to carry the tune to the end, and he fiddled away with a reckless vehemence. Presently he became aware that the music was both wilder and sweeter than before, and that there was more of it. Not until then did he observe that a tall, thin stranger stood beside him; and that he was fiddling too,—composing a second to Joost's air, as if he could read his thought before he put it into execution on the strings. Joost paused, and the stranger did likewise.

“Where de debble did you come frum?” asked the first. The other smiled.

“And how did you come to know dat music?” Joost pursued.

“Oh, I've known that tune for years,” was the reply. “It's called 'The Devil's joy at Sabbath Breaking.'“

“You're a liar!” cried the negro. The stranger bowed and burst into a roar of laughter. “A liar!” repeated Joost,—for I made up dat music dis very minute.”

“Yet you notice that I could follow when you played.”

“Humph! Yes, you can follow.”

“And I can lead, too. Do you know the tune Go to the Devil and Shake Yourself?'“

“Yes; but I play second to nobody.”

“Very well, I'll beat you at any air you try.”

“Done!” said Joost. And then began a contest that lasted until daybreak. The stranger was an expert, but Joost seemed to be inspired, and just as the sun appeared he sounded, in broad and solemn harmonies, the hymn of Von Catts:

“Now behold, at dawn of day,
Pious Dutchmen sing and pray.”

At that the stranger exclaimed, “Well, that beats the devil!” and striking his foot angrily on the rock, disappeared in a flash of fire like a burst bomb. Joost was hurled twenty feet by the explosion, and lay on the ground insensible until a herdsman found him some hours later. As he suffered no harm from the contest and became a better fiddler than ever, it is supposed that the recording angel did not inscribe his feat of Sabbath breaking against him in large letters. There were a few who doubted his story, but they had nothing more to say when he showed them the hoof−mark on the rock. Moreover, there are fewer fiddlers among the negroes than there used to be, because they say that the violin is the devil's instrument.

WYANDANK

From Brooklyn Heights, or Ihpetonga, “highplace of trees,” where the Canarsie Indians made wampum or sewant, and where they contemplated the Great Spirit in the setting of the sun across the meeting waters, to Montauk Point, Long Island has been swept by the wars of red men, and many are the tokens of their occupancy. A number of their graves were to be seen until within fifty years, as clearly marked as when the warriors were laid there in the hope of resurrection among the happy hunting grounds that lay to the west and south. The casting of stones on the death−spots or graves of some revered or beloved Indians was long continued, and was undoubtedly for the purpose of raising monuments to them, though at Monument Mountain, Massachusetts, Sacrifice Rock, between Plymouth and Sandwich, Massachusetts, and some other places the cairns merely mark a trail. Even the temporary resting−place of Sachem Poggatacut, near Sag Harbor, was kept clear of weeds and leaves by Indians who passed it in the two centuries that lapsed between the death of the chief and the laying of the road across it in 1846. This spot is not far from Whooping Boy's Hollow, so named because of a boy who was killed by Indians, and because the rubbing of two trees there in a storm gave forth a noise like crying. An older legend has it that this noise is the angry voice of the magician who tried to slay Wyandank, the “Washington of the Montauks,” who is buried on the east end of the island. Often he led his men into battle, sounding the warwhoop, copied from the scream of the eagle, so loudly that those who heard it said that the Montauks were crying for prey.

It was while killing an eagle on Block Island, that he might use the plumes for his hair, that this chief disclosed himself to the hostiles and brought on a fight in which every participant except himself was slain. He was secretly followed back to Long Island by a magician who had hopes of enlisting the evil ones of that region against him,—the giants that left their tracks in “Blood−stone Rock” and “Printed Rock,” near Napeague, and such renegades as he who, having betrayed his people, was swallowed by the earth, his last agony being marked by a stamp of the foot that left its print on a slab near the Indian burial−ground at Kongonok. Failing in these alliances the wizard hid among the hollows of the moors, and there worked spells of such malice that the chief's hand lost steadiness in the hunt and his voice was seldom heard in council. When the haunt of this evil one was made known, a number of young men undertook to trap him. They went to the hills by night, and moved stealthily through the shrubbery until they were almost upon him; but his familiars had warned him of their approach, though they had wakened him only to betray him for a cloud swept in from the sea, fell about the wretch, burst into flame, and rolled back toward the ocean, bearing him in the centre of its burning folds. Because of the cry he uttered the place long bore the name of Whooping Hollow, and it used to be said that the magician visited the scene of his illdoing every winter, when his shrieks could be heard ringing over the hills.

MARK OF THE SPIRIT HAND

Andover, New Jersey, was quaint and quiet in the days before the Revolution—it is not a roaring metropolis, even yet—and as it offered few social advantages there was more gathering in taprooms and more drinking of flip than there should have been. Among those who were not averse to a cheering cup were three boon companions, Bailey, Hill, and Evans, farmers of the neighborhood. They loved the tavern better than the church, and in truth the church folk did not love them well, for they were suspected of entertaining heresies of the most forbidden character. It was while they were discussing matters of belief over their glasses that one of them proposed, in a spirit of bravado, that whichever of the trio might be first to die should come back from the grave and reveal himself to the others—if he could—thus settling the question as to whether there was a future.

Not long after this agreement—for consent was unanimous—Hill departed this life. His friends lamented his absence, especially at the tavern, but they anticipated no attempt on his part to express the distinguished consideration that he had felt for his old chums. Some weeks passed, yet there was no sign, and the two survivors of the party, as they jogged homeward to the house where both lived, had begun to think and speak less frequently of the absent one. But one night the household was alarmed by a terrible cry. Bailey got a light and hurried to the bedside of his friend, whom he found deathly white and holding his chest as if in pain. “He has been here!” gasped Evans. “He stood here just now.”

“Who?” asked Bailey, a creep passing down his spine.

“Hill! He stood there, where you are now, and touched me with a hand that was so cold—cold—” and Evans shivered violently. On turning back the collar of his shirt the impression of a hand appeared on the flesh near the shoulder: a hand in white, with one finger missing. Hill had lost a finger. There was less of taverns after that night, for Evans carried the token of that ghostly visit on his person until he, too, had gone to solve the great secret.

THE FIRST LIBERAL CHURCH

In 1770 the brig Hand−in−Hand went ashore at Good Luck, New Jersey. Among the passengers on board the vessel, that it would perhaps be wrong to call ill fated, was John Murray, founder of Universalism in America. He had left England in despair, for his wife and children were dead, and so broken was he in his power of thought and purpose that he felt as if he should never preach again.

In fact, his rescue from the wreck was passive, on his part, and he suffered himself to be carried ashore, recking little whether he reached it or no. After he had been for half an hour or so on the soil of the new country, to which he had made his entrance in so unexpected a manner, he began to feel hungry, and set off afoot along the desolate beach. He came to a cabin where an old man stood in a doorway with a basket of fish beside him. “Will you sell me a fish?” asked Murray.

“No. The fish is all yours. I expected you.”

“You do not know me.”

“You are the man who is to tell us of God.”

“I will never preach of Him again.”

“I built that log church yonder. Don't say that you will not preach in it. Whenever a clergyman, Presbyterian, Methody, or Baptist, came here, I asked him to preach in my kitchen. I tried to get him to stay; but no—he always had work elsewhere. Last night I saw the brig driven on the bar, and a voice said to me, 'In that ship is the man who will teach of God. Not the old God of terrors, but one of love and mercy. He has come through great sorrow to do this work.' I have made ready for you. Do not go away.”

The minister felt a strange lifting in his heart. He fell on his knees before the little house and offered up a prayer. Long he staid in that place, preaching gentle doctrines and ministering to the men and women of that lonely village, and when the fisherman apostle, Thomas Potter, died he left the church to Murray, who, in turn, bequeathed it, “free, for the use of all Christian people.”