SOLITUDE.

BY J. F. HOWARD.

The rocks are gray and cold to-day,
And partly covered o'er with moss;
And water through the crevice falls,
The vein unconscious of its loss.

The rocks are thick and circle round,
Forming a crescent cold and gray,
And evening shadows sweetly sleep
Through all the progress of the day.

I love the spirit of the place
'Tis solace to a shadowed mind;
A bird just flew in deep content,
A morsel for her young to find.

The thrifty ant is hurrying with
Its rice-like loaf beneath the stone:
I love the spot where none intrude,
In solitude I'm least alone.

The rocks are high and circle round,
Forming a crescent cold and gray,
And evening shadows sweetly sleep
Through all the progress of the day.

HAVANA, N. Y.

AN OPTIMIST;

—OR—

Amzi Crow, Farm Hand and Philosopher.

BY JEANETTE L. GILDER.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

"Surprised at gitten sich a good offer, I guess," replied the Squire, hotly. "I'd make yer a much better husban' than Joe Hance did, for I wouldn't leave yer with a mortgage on yer farm."

"Squire Pusley, if you say one word against my dead husband, I'll have you thrown into the road," said the indignant woman, her eyes fairly snapping with anger. She had hardly spoken when the voice of Amzi came through the window clearly and distinctly:

"I'm agoin' to turn the ole hog out, Mis' Hance."

Then there was silence for a moment, during which Squire Pusley's face became purple with rage, while that of Mrs. Hance took on mingled expressions of amusement and surprise.

"You called your hired nigger in to insult me, did you?" said the Squire. "A fine lady you are! But I'll make you pay for this, Abigail Hance," and, shaking his fist almost in her face, the irate squire left the house and shuffled down the path as fast as he could, closing the gate behind him with a bang that almost broke the hinges. Mrs. Hance watched him until he disappeared, then she looked around the room to see if she was really awake and in her own parlor. Yes, everything was just as it always was, except that a bit of purple lilac lay on the floor, its fragrance crushed out by an angry boot-heel. Then Mrs. Hance went out in the dusk to look for Amzi, whose threat had so enraged the squire and rid her of his hateful presence. She crossed over the bit of broaching ground at the back of the house and walked down to the acre lot by the barn, but she saw nothing of the negro. So raising her voice she called, "Amzi! Am-zi!"

Back up the hillside came Amzi's familiar, cheery tones:

"I'm down here, Mis' Hance, turnin' the big hog out 'er Squire Pusley's medder."

Mrs. Hance sat down upon a moss-covered bowlder at her feet, and burying her face in her hands shed a few tears in memory of the husband, whose good name had been insulted by the mean-spirited Squire Pusley. Then she burst forth into a merry laugh which came very near turning into hysterics; for it was a trying scene she had gone through, notwithstanding its ridiculous denouement. "Well" said she as she arose from the bowlder and walked slowly back to the house, "Amzi certainly proved himself my protector this evening."

Amzi's early education had been neglected, but Sally, whom he adored not alone for her good looks (she was a comely mulatto), had learned to read and write, and of this Amzi was very proud. "Sally's got a heap o' larnin," he would say. "She's a real scholard, she is so; she can read readin' and ritin', too. Well, I 'spose I'm better off without it, fur if I could read readin' I'd allus be a stoppin off work to do it. Book larnin' is a good thing fur women, but men hadn't orter take the time away from their work fur such things."

All the same it was a great grief to Amzi that he could not read, and that he was obliged to make his "mark" on occasions that called for his signature.

"I kin make a good mark of I have a good pen. That's a great deal in pens. Why, I've seed some pens that couldn't make no mark at all."

I think Amzi would have felt less badly than he did on the subject of his deficiency if he had only been able to read Sally's letters. Sally was proud of her accomplishment as a correspondent, and she wrote Amzi long letters when she was away from home, which was most of the time, and she would carry them around in his pocket for days before he could make up his mind to ask any one to read them to him. One evening Mrs. Hance saw him sitting on the big stone which served as the kitchen doorstep, with his spectacles on his nose and a letter spread out on its knees. As she got within a few feet of him she saw that the letter was upside down, but she didn't like to tell him so. At last he got it right side up, purely by accident, and he was saying to himself:

"There's an A. I can allus tell an A when I see it, for it stands for Amzi. If writin' was all A's I could read it well enough, but it's got so many other pesky little letters in it I can't member 'em all. Oh, Mis' Hance, is that you? How yer skeert me!"

"Sit still, Amzi," said Mrs. Hance, "don't let me disturb you if you are reading a letter. I suppose it is from Sally. Is it good or bad news?"

"It's good news, Mis' Hance, bad news never comes in letters—letters is too slow for bad news. I allus know when I get a letter that it's good news, for good news keeps. Wouldn't you like to read it, Mis' Hance?"

"Thank you, Amzi," said Mrs. Hance, taking the letter and reading it to herself.

"'Spose you was to read it out loud. I wouldn't mind hearin' it gin. Sally's letters is bear'n powerful lot o' readin'."

This is the letter that Mrs. Hance read after laying in a good stock of breath.

"Dear Amzi: I received your kind and welcum letter and was Moor than glad to here frum you and to know that you are well and I am well at the present time of my riting and hopd that wen these few lines Reach you that they may find you the same Mis Green and I started too Camp meetin and just Got to the tun in Time too get left I tell you wot I was verry Much disopointed for I had set my hart upon Gowing there Thursday wit anuther lady and myself went to a Pamrama at the bethul church it was verry nice The wether is verry changgble hear and I think that thir will be a very erly fall I Hope too be in Rosetown befor winter sets in every Thursday nite the Liberty earnet band givs A open air consurt on the beech The music is grand well my dear husbun as I have no Moor to say at present I will draw my letter to a clos by sayin good by answer Soon from your luving wif Sally Crow. P. S.—dear husbun you must excuse this way of writin' as one has been started since Mounday as I did not have the time to Finish on Mounday ther was a trific storm it swep things as it went and struck a bed and dubeled all of the Bed-Close all up in A heep But strange to say it did not set nothin A Flet this mornin I got out of my bed at six o'clock and looked out of My windo acros the water and the wind was a blowin the leaves of the trees and it was a Butiful site I am Agowin too the consert this Evenin there is nothin like goin roun and seeing All the world and it sights I do not want nuthing out off my Trounk as sumr is almost at an End I got a new dress and new shoues mad to Order I think that I have writun you A good long letter and I think that you out too writ me a longer one good by giv my love to mis Hants and doctur Bludgud auser soon From Sally."

"IF WRITIN' WAS ALL A'S, I COULD READ IT WELL ENOUGH."

Amzi's face, as Mrs. Hance read this letter, was a study in the expression of gratified pride.

"Well, now, ain't that a letter. She's got everything in. What a place Rasberry Park is. Little of everything's goin' on there and Sally she's seein' it all. That's right! I'm glad nuff that one of us can get roun and see what's goin' on, yes, I am. I'm glad that one of us can git roun 'an that 'stead that one's Sally, fur she's got such an eddication she can 'preciate travelin'; I ain't never been futher nor Trenton, I ain't, but I 'seen enuf there to show me thet it wantsan eddication to 'preciate travel and that's wot Sally's got. Yes, I'm glad that ef only one of us can go, Sally's thet one. 'Spose 'twas me. I never could write such letters. Why, it's as good as goin' to read one uv Sally's letters, and no trouble of gettin' roun, nuther."

Mrs. Hance gave him back the letter, which he folded up carefully and tucked away in the lining of his hat.

CHAPTER III.

Amzi believed in the old proverb, "Early to bed and early to rise." Eight o'clock found him stretched upon his cot under the eaves in the open attic. It didn't take him long to get to bed nor long to get to sleep. Such a word as night-gown found no place in Amzi's vocabulary. The old flannel shirt that he wore during the day served the purpose of a gown by night. "Too much changin' of clothes was bad for the health," he said, and there was no reason to fear that his health was going to suffer from any such cause. Once asleep, I think the house might have fallen down about his ears without awakening him. Mrs. Hance had found this out when she wanted to call him one evening about nine o'clock to drive the bull out of the door-yard. She gave up in despair, and the bull remained master of the situation until morning. When she told Amzi of her efforts to awaken him, he said:

"'Pears like I did hear someone call me in the night. I'm awful sorry, Mis' Hance; why didn't you call louder or shake me? That would a woke me up. I'm a werry light sleeper, I am."

As Mrs. Hance had shouted in his ear until she was hoarse, and had shaken him by the shoulder until she was afraid she would push him out of bed, she did not share the opinion that he was a light sleeper. However, it was seldom that he was wanted in the night, so she was glad that he did sleep so soundly after his hardday's work. Although he slept soundly, he awoke early. And hard on with the dawn

"I can't be abed till sunrise," he would say; "there's too much good light goin' by that time. When dawn breaks at half past 3, I can get a heap o' work done before the sun gets out with the sun."

Then Mrs. Hance got used to hearing hours she used to think that tramps had got into the house, for it seemed to her somewhere about the middle of the night that she heard the back stairs creaking under the muffled tread of Amzi's bare feet. One hot July morning she heard him go out with the dawn, but the break-fast hour came and he did not return. Mrs. Hance grew anxious, and she sent Maggie, the greenhorn who did the rough work about the house, was sent out to look for him; but he was nowhere to be seen. She looked everywhere she could think of about the place, and then, taking the old tin horn down from its nail behind the kitchen door, she blew a blast that would have brought a blush of envy to the cheek of a fish-peddler.

"If he don't hare that," said she, as she looked one over the dew-covered meadows, "he'll never hare it and Gabriel's horn, Indade."

"Have you looked, everywhere, Maggie," asked Mrs. Hance.

"Shure, ma'am, there's not a bit of the place I haven't bin over. First a while I was at the woodshed, beyant, and I was at the woodshed, beyant, and away she started for the woodshed by the barn. In a minnut more Mrs. Hance, who was standing in the kitchen doorway, heard a cry such as had never reached her ears before. It was like the wail of a lost soul. She ran as fast as her trembling limbs would permit toward the woodshed, whence the sound proceeded, and there she saw Maggie wringing her hands, the picture of terrified ignorance, and Amzi stretched out upon the ground, apparently unconscious, the blood flowing from a wound in his bare foot and staining the white chips that lay about it.

"He's kilt intirely, the poor crathur," exclaimed the girl with another wail, but a deep groan from the prostrate man discredited her diagnosis.

Mrs. Hance was equal to the emergency. The bloody axe that lay by Amzi's side told how the gaping wound had been made. Excitement often gives us strength to accomplish that which in our calmer moments would be impossible. The two women succeeded in getting the unfortunate man to the house, and there they laid him on the settee in the sitting-room. While Mrs. Hance washed the wounded foot with cold water and tied it up in strong bandages, Maggie harnessed Kitty to the farm wagon, and drove into Burlingtown for Dr. Bloodgood. The Doctor was eating his breakfast, when she arrived, but her wild Irish nature and warm heart were not to be restrained by conventionalities.

"Come, come quick, Docther, darlint," she cried, rushing into the dining-room. "The poor black man is kilt intirely, and mistress wants yez to come back with me and save his latte."

Leaving his breakfast unfinished—no unusual thing for the Doctor to do—he questioned the excited girl as to the nature of the accident, got together such remedies as were necessary, and set off at once in the farm wagon. When they reached the house Amzi was feeling very much better, and he was quite able and rather anxious to tell the story of his misfortune.

"It was jes this way," said he, "I cren down stairs werry airly this mornin, for there was some wood wantin' to be chopped for the kitchen fire. I'd got kinder behint han' with the wood on account of hayin'. So I sez to myself, sez I, I'll jest get sum o' that wood split up fo' the busy part o' the day begins. It was putty warm this mornin', so I loosed I'd leave off my shoes, the cool yearth felt so pleasant to my feet. Then I begun a choppin'; the ole ax had jest been groun and it cut as easy as goin through butter; but all at wanst I struck an ouery piece of wood what I hadn't inter it. The ole ax she shyed, off to one side jes where my foot was, an' she cut clean inter it. The next thing I knowed was nuthin. Then I heerd Maggie a screechin and seen Mis' Hance a standin' over me, but I was too clean gone to speak. I must a drapped off again, for the next time I knowed anythin I was a lyin' in here with my foot all done up, and Mis' Hance a feedin' me with suthin' that burnt me all the way down my windpipe."

Having told his tale, Amzi sank back exhausted, and Mrs. Hance gave him another teaspoonful of brandy for fear that he would faint again. Dr. Bloodgood removed the bandages and was shocked at the seriousness of the wound.

"This is a pretty bad business, Amzi," said he; "this cut is five inches long and nearly an inch deep."

"Yer don't say so," said Amzi, "Five inches long and nearly an inch deep—my, my, my! well, that is lucky."

"Lucky," said the Doctor, "I don't see anything very lucky about such a wound as that."

"I was jes a thinkin how lucky it was that I'd left off my shoes. They'd a bin clean ruined with a cut five inches long and nearly an inch deep. Shoes won't stan' no sich blows as that. It's jest look—so lucky as I didn't have 'em on."

The Doctor dressed the wound and put on new bandages, and with the help of Mrs. Hance and Maggie got Amzi up to the little hall bed-room on the second floor and into the snowy bed.

"You ain't goin' to put me inter this a bed," said he protestingly.

"Yes, we are," replied the Doctor. "We are going to make you as comfortable as possible, for you won't be able to get out doors again inside of two months."

"For the Lawd's sake, Doctor, don't say that."

"It's true, Amzi, and whether you ever have the use of your foot again depends upon your keeping quiet."

"I'm thankful, eh! that's so, that the hay's all in. That's more luck, not to git laid up till after hayin' time."

"Now, Doctor, if you will help me, we will pull this bedstead around so that Amzi can see out the window," said Mrs. Hance.

The change was soon made, and Amzi was propped up with snowy pillows which threw his black face into strong relief against their whiteness.

"Ef this 'ere, ain't jes' too much," exclaimed he, his eyes turned toward the open window. "There ain't no 'sense for feelin' lonesome here, with such a fine view of the cemetery, and as many as three funcels a day agoin' by." And a smile of profound contentment passed over the optimist's face, succeeded by a look of eager anticipation as the slow tread of horses' feet heard upon the turnpike announced the approach of a funeral cortege.

[THE END.]

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Manners to Men.

Passion united with principle makes great men.

A man will tell a thing that he wouldn't have published for the world.

In examining the faults of our neighbors, nearly all of us use a microscope.

The man who speaks before he thinks is not in a position to do lots of thinking afterward.

The best friend you have is the man who turns the conversation when the laugh is on you.

The trouble with most men is that they want to work up a surplus before they get their capital paid up.

A man runs the fastest when he is running after a dollar, and runs the farthest when he is running from a woman.

THE PLAGUE OF LIES.

FIFTH SERMON IN THE SERIES ON THE CITY'S PLAGUES.

Dr. Talmage Preaches à Forcible Discourse Which Will Apply Equally Well in Country and City—"Ye Shall Not Surely Die," Satan Told Eve, and He Lied.

PROBABLY IT WAS THAT "I'D LEFT OFF MY SHOES."

"The Plague of Lies" was selected by Dr. Talmage for the subject of the fifth of his discourses on "The Plagues of These Three Cities." His text was Genesis iii, 4, "Ye shall not surely die."

That was a point blank lie. Satan told it to Eve to induce her to put her semicircle of white, beautiful teeth into a forbidden apricot or plum or peach or apple. He practically said to her, "Oh, Eve, just take a bite of this and you will be omnipotent and omniscient. You shall be as gods." Just opposite was the result. It was the first lie that was ever told in our world. It opened the gate for all the falsehoods that have ever blighted on this planet. It introduced a plague that covers all nations, the plague of lies. Far worse than the plagues of Egypt, for they were on the banks of the Nile, but this on the banks of the Hudson, on the banks of the East River, on banks of the Ohio, and the Mississippi, and the Thames and the Rhine, and the Tiber, and on both sides of all rivers. The Egyptian plagues lasted only a few weeks, but for six thousand years has raged this plague of lies.

There are a hundred ways of telling a lie. A man's entire life may be a false-hood, while with his lips he may not once directly falsify. There are those who state what as positively untrue, but afterward say "may be" softly. These departures from the truth are called "white lies;" but there is really no such thing as a white lie.

The whitest lie that was ever told was as black as perdition. No inventory of public crimes will be sufficient that omits this gigantic abomination. There are men high in church and state actually useful, self-denying and honest in many things, who, upon certain subjects and in certain spheres, are not at all to be depended upon for veracity. Indeed, there are many men and women who have their notions of truthfulness so thoroughly perverted that they do not know when they are lying. With many it is a cultivated sin; with some it seems a natural infirmity. I have known people who seemed to have been born liars. The falsehoods of their lives extended from cradle to grave. Prevarications, misrepresentation and dishonesty of speech appeared in their first utterances, and were as natural to them as any of their infantile diseases, and were a sort of moral croup or spiritual scarlatina. But many have been placed in circumstances where this tendency has day by day and hour by hour been called to larger development. They have gone from attainment to attainment, and from class to class until they have become regularly graduated liars.

The air of the city is filled with falsehoods. They hang pendent from the chandeliers of our finest residences; they crowd the shelves of some of our merchant princes; they fill the sidewalk from curb-stone to brown-stone facing; they cluster around the mechanic's hammer and blossom from the end of the merchant's yard-stick, and sit in the doors of churches. Some call them "fiction." Some style them "fabrication." You might say that they were subterfuge, disguised, delusion, romance, evasion, pretense, fable, deception, misrepresentation; but, as I am ignorant of anything to be gained by the hiding of a God defying outrage under a technographer's blanket, I shall call them what my father taught me to call them—lies.

I shall divide them into agricultural, mercantile, mechanical, ecclesiastical and social lies.

First, then, I will speak of those that are more particularly agricultural. There is something in the perpetual presence of natural objects that make a man pure. The trees never issue a "false stock." Wheat fields are always honest. Rye and oats never move out in the night, not paying for the place they have occupied. Corn shocks never make false assignments. Mountain brooks are always "correct." The gold on the grain is never counterfeit. The sunset never flaunts in false colors. The dew sports only genuine diamonds. Taking farmers as a class, I believe they are truthful and fair in dealing and kind-hearted. But the regions surrounding our cities do not always send this sort of men to our markets. Day by day there creak through our streets and about the market-houses farm wagons that have not an honest spoke in their wheel or a truthful rivet from tongue to tailboard.

During the last few years there have been times when domestic economy has foundered on the farmer's pricing. Neither high taxes, nor the high price of dry goods, nor the exorbitancy of labor, could excuse much that the city has witnessed in the behavior of the yeomanry. By the outlet firesides in Westchester and Orange counties I hope there may be seasons of deep reflection and heavy repentance. Rural districts are accustomed to rail at great cities as given up to fraud and every form of unrighteousness, but our cities do not absorb all the abominations. Our citizens have learned the importance of not always trusting to the size and style of apples on the top of a farmer's barrel as an indication of what may be found farther down. Many of our people are accustomed to watch and see how correctly a bushel of beets is measured, and there are not many honest milkmen. Deceptions do not all cluster round city limits. When our cities weep and weep over their sins, all the surrounding countries ought to come in and weep with them. There is often hostility on the part of producers against traders, as though the man who raises the corn was necessarily more honorable than the grain dealer who pours it into his mammoth bin. There ought to be no such hostility. Yet producers often think it no wrong to snatch away from the trader; and they say to the bargain maker: "You get your money easy." Do they get it easy? Let those who in the quiet bed and barn get their lying exchange pieces with those who stand to-day amid the excitements of commercial life and see if they find it so easy.

When the farmer goes to sleep with assurance that his corn and barley will be growing all the night, moment by moment adding to its record, the merchant tries to go to sleep conscious that that moment the cargo may be broken on the rocks or damaged by the wave that sweeps clear across the hurricane deck, or that reckless speculators may that very hour be plotting some monetary revolution, or the burglar be prying the door open, or his debtors fleeing from town, or his landlord raising the rent, or the fire kindling on the block that contains all his estate. Easy! Is it? Can you help the merchant! It is hard to leave the palms of the hands blistered with auto-door work, but more dreadful process when through mercantile anxieties the brain is consumed.

In the next place we notice mercantile lies, those before the counter and behind the counter. I will not attempt to specify the different forms of commercial falsehood. There are merchants who harness themselves for deviation from truthfulness because of what they call commercial custom. In other words, the multiplication and universality of a sin turns it into a virtue. "Profits have been large fortunes gathered" where there was not one drop of unrequited toil in the wine, not one sparkle of the temper flashing from the bronze bracket, not one drop of needle woman's heart blood in the crimson plush, while there are other great establishments in which there is not one door knob, not one brick, not one trinket, not one thread of lace but has upon it the mark of dishonor. What wonder it, some day, a hand of toil that had been wrung and worn out and blistered till the skin came off should be placed against the elegant wall paper, leaving its mark of blood—four fingers and a thumb—of what some day, walking the halls, there should be seen accosting the decipient, saying: "Six cents for making a shirt," and flying the room, another voice should say: "Twelve cents for an army blanket," and the man should try to sleep at night, but every an noise be aroused, unable to get rid of the ringing in one's ears, he should shriek out, "Who's there?"

One Sabbath night, in the vestibule of my church, after service, a woman fell in convulsions. The doctors said she needed medicine not so much as something to eat. As she began to revive in her delirium, she said gasping: "Eight cents! Eight cents! Eight cents! I wish I could get to done. I am so tired I wish I could get some sleep, but I must get to-done! Eight cents! Eight cents!" We found afterward she was making garments for eight cents apiece, and that she could make but three of them a day. Three times eight are twenty-four! Heaven help men and women who have comfortable homes! Do not steal an old dime when you are selling at less than cost.

Some of the worst villains of the city are the employers of the women. They beat them down to the last penny, and then they try to cheat them out of that. The woman must deposit a dollar or two before she gets the garments to work on. When the work is done it is sharply inspected, the most insignificant flaws picked out, and the wages refused, and sometimes the dollar deposited not given back. The Women's Protective Union reports a case where one of these poor souls, finding a place where she could get more wages, resolved to change employers and went to get her only work, doneit. The employer says, "I hear you are going to leave us." "Yes, sir," said the poor soul, "and I have come to get what you owe me." He made no answer. She said, "Are you not going to pay me?" Yes, he said, that article for which five dollars is charged is not worth more than four. Is it worth no more than four dollars? Then all right. If it be worth more, and for the sake of getting it for less than its value you willing depreciate it, you have falsified. You may call it a sharp trade. The recording angel writes it down on the ponderous tome of eternity.

Mr. So-and-so, merchant on Water street or on Eighth street or on Fulton street, of Mrs. So-and-so's keeping-house on Beacon street, or on Madison avenue, or Rittenhouse square, or Brooklyn Heights or Brooklyn Hill, told one falsehood. You may consider it insignificant, because relating to an insignificant thing. You would despise the man who would falsify in regard to some great matter in which the city or the whole country was concerned; but this is only a box of buttons, or a row of pins, or a case of needles. Be not deceived. The article purchased may be so small you can put it in your vest pocket, but that sin was bigger than the Pyramids said the echo of the dishonest whisper passed through all the mountains of crime.

In the next place I notice ecclesiastical lies. There is no class of falsehood that minister more to the welfare of the city than artisans. To their hand we must look for the building that shelters us, for the garments that clothe us, for the car that carries us. The most widespread falsehood of the day is the division of the Christian church. Many of them, instead of all their expostulations, and stand at the front of religious and philanthropic enterprises, but this class, like the others that I have named, has in it those who have in the element of sincerity. They cannot all be trusted. In times when the demand for labor is great it is impossible to meet the demands of the public, or do work in such a thorough manner, and perfection that would in other times be possible.

But there are mechanics whose work cannot be trusted at any time. No man has a right to promise more work than he can do. There are mechanics who say they will come on Monday, but they do not come until Wednesday. You put work into their hands that they tell you shall be completed in ten days, but it is thirty. There have been houses built of which it might be said that every nail driven, every foot of plastering put on, every yard of pipe laid, every shingle hammered, every stone mortared, could tell of falsehood connected therewith. There are men attempting to go to one fifteen pieces of work who have not the time of strength to do more than two or six pieces, but promises never fail filled keep all the undertakings within

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The next lie I notice is social lies. There is no class of falsehood that minister more to the welfare and the city than artisans. To their hand we must look for the building that shelters us, for the garments that clothe us, for the car that carries us. The most widespread falsehood of the day is the division of the Christian church. Many of them, instead of all their expostulations, and stand at the front of religious and philanthropic enterprises, but this class, like the others that I have named, has in it those who have in the element of sincerity. They cannot all be trusted. In times when the demand for labor is great it is impossible to meet the demands of the public, or do work in such a thorough manner, and perfection that would in other times be possible.

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