

# SHORT STORY AMERICA

## A PENNSYLVANIA LEGEND

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IS THE WORLD to become altogether philosophical and rational? Are we to believe nothing that we cannot account for from natural causes? Are tales of supernatural warnings, of the interposition and visible appearance of disembodied spirits, to be laughed out of countenance and forgotten? There are people who have found out that to imagine any other modes of being than those of which our experience tells us, is extremely ridiculous. Alas! we shall soon learn to believe that the material world is the only world, and that the things which are the objects of our external senses are the only things which have an existence. Recollect, gentlemen, that you may carry your philosophy too far. You forget how the human mind delights in superstition. You are welcome to explode such of its delusions as are hurtful, but leave us, I pray you, a few of such as are harmless; leave us, at least, those which are interesting to our hearts, without making us forget our love and duty to our fellow creatures.

As long, however, as there are aged crones to talk and children to listen, the labours of philosophy cannot be crowned with perfect success. A dread of supernatural visitations, awakened in our tender years, keeps possession of the mind like an instinct and bids defiance to the attempts of reason to dislodge it. For my part, I look upon myself as a debtor to the old nurses and servant maids who kept me from my sleep with tales of goblins and apparitions for one of the highest pleasures I enjoy. It is owing to them, I believe, that I read, with a deep sense of delight, narratives which seem to inspire many of my enlightened and reasoning acquaintances with no feelings but that of disgust. Yet I cannot but notice a remarkable scarcity of well-attested incidents of this sort in modern years. The incredulity of the age has caused the supernatural interpositions that were once so frequent to be withdrawn; portents and prodigies are not shown to mockers, and spectres will not walk abroad to be made the subjects of philosophical analysis. Yet some parts of our country are more favoured in this respect than others. The old beldames

among the German settlers of Pennsylvania tell in the greedy ears of their children the marvellous legends of the country from which they had their origin, and to the deep awe and undoubting reverence with which these are related and received, it is probably owing that the day of wonders is not past among that people. Let the European writer gather up the traditions of his country; I will employ a leisure moment in recording one of the fresher, but not less authentic, legends of ours.

Walter Buckel was a German emigrant who came over to Pennsylvania about sixty years ago. He was of gentle blood and used to boast of his relationship to one of the most illustrious houses in his native country. Nor was this an idle boast, for he could trace his pedigree with perfect accuracy through ten generations up to a hunch-backed baron, from whose clandestine amours with a milkmaid, sprung the founder of the family of the Buckels. The offspring of these stolen loves did not disgrace his birth, for he inherited all the pride and deformity of his father. So vain was he of his personal resemblance to his noble parent that he assumed the surname of Buckel, from the hump on his shoulders, and transmitted the name and the hump to his posterity. The family continued to wear this badge of their descent down to the time of Walter Buckel; and it was observed that, whenever it waned from its due magnitude in one generation, it was sure to rise with added roundness and prominence in another. As, however, the illustrious extraction of which it was the symbol grew more remote, the respect with which the neighbours regarded it diminished, and finally ceased altogether.

Walter Buckel, determined to form no connexion unworthy of his birth, had married one of his cousins, a fair, fat, flaxen-haired maiden, the purity of whose blood was attested by a hump like his own. Walter was one of those unfortunate men who are perpetually looking for respect, and perpetually disappointed, by meeting with nothing but ridicule: he had hoped to increase his consideration among his acquaintances by this marriage; but their jeers came faster and coarser, and so many rustic jokes were cracked on the well-matched couple that he almost grew weary of life. In his desperation, he sold the patrimonial estate on which he subsisted, and without bidding adieu to any of his neighbours except the curate, who used sometimes, induced by his benevolence, to come and talk to him about the antiquity and dignity of his family, and carry home a pig, or a turkey, or a shoulder of mutton, he emigrated to America and settled down upon four hundred acres of wild land in the interior of the state of Pennsylvania.

His first care was to provide a shelter for his family. His new neighbours, most of whom were recent settlers like himself, came together the morning after his arrival, and before the sun had gone down, a comfortable log house, with two rooms, was ready for their reception. It was built at the foot of a small hill, in a little natural opening of the forest under a fine flourishing tree of that species commonly called the red oak, which in favourable soils, and in the open country, grows to a great size and with a most beautiful symmetry, its long lusty boughs given off in whorls at regular distances and its smooth bark of a greenish-brown colour looking as if ready to burst with the luxuriance of its juices. The tree was one of the finest of its kind, and stood in the centre of a circle of rich turf about half an acre in extent, the circumference of which was fenced

by a natural hedge of undergrowth that prevented you from looking into the darkness and solitude of the surrounding woods. A brook came down the hill and ran noisily through the cheerful spot over the round stones, among which were seen a few straggling roots of the oak, laid bare by the action of the current.

Walter, who was a thin, bilious, bustling man, went to work in the bitterness and vexation of his heart, thinking sometimes of his genealogy, sometimes of the gibes and jeers of acquaintances, and sometimes of his voluntary exile from his native country, until he had cleared the wood from all that part of the farm which lay south of the house and was judged to include about one third of the whole. The rest he suffered to lie in its wild state for the purpose of supplying with fuel the fire that roared all winter in the enormous chimney which occupied a full half of the room called the kitchen. In the mean time, his wife was not idle; before the year came round she presented him with a son, whom he named Caspar, a name which, according to the family tradition, belonged to their ancestor, the hunch-backed baron.

It has been said that marriages between relations not only perpetuate but even aggravate, the physical and mental deformities of the parents in their offspring. I cannot tell if this be so; I was never willing to believe it; but whenever I think of the case of Caspar Buckel, I am staggered in my unbelief. As he grew to the age of puberty, it was remarked that he inherited the self-conceit and the uneasy temper of his father, along with the sullen taciturnity of his mother. The corpulency of the one seemed to have fixed itself in his back and belly, while the spare habit of the other was copied in his lean arms, his shrunk loins, and slender legs. The hump on his shoulders was at least two inches higher than that of either of his parents; his forehead was traversed by a thousand crossing wrinkles; his flabby cheeks were seamed with longitudinal furrows and hung down so low on each side of his peaked chin as to give him the appearance of having three chins at once. Two small dim gray eyes peeped from under two white shaggy brows; between them the nose seemed as if absorbed into the face, but re-appeared at a prodigious distance below; and above, a bushy shock of carrot hair stared in all directions.

At an early age, Caspar had an appearance of decrepitude; nobody who looked at him would have thought him younger than his father. Yet this singular being was not without his enjoyments. He had often heard his father speak of his noble extraction, and this idea became to him the occasion of great inward glorying when he looked upon the earth-born plebeians around him. But it was a pleasure of a deeper and more thrilling nature to listen to the marvellous stories doled out by a toothless old female domestic, whom his father brought with him from Germany and who was now too old and infirm to do anything but smoke her pipe and tell old tales by the fire-side. She told him of fairies who dwell by day in the chambers of the earth and dance by night in solitary groves, of hairy wood-demons and swart goblins of the mine, till his little eyes shone with a fixed glare and his bushy hair looked as if it would disentangle and straighten itself with terror.

Caspar liked neither to work nor to go to school, and his parents were too kind to think of compelling him to do either; his boyish days were consequently passed under the great oak. He

whiled away the still summer mornings in chucking pebbles into the brook; in the heat of the day he slept with the dog in the shade, or climbed up to a seat among the thick boughs and leaves and built castles in the air; and when the cooler breezes sprung up in the afternoon, he amused himself with swinging in a long rope, the two ends of which he had tied to two strong neighbouring branches. But if the tree was thus necessary to his amusements, it was also the strengthener of his superstitions. His bed was in a kind of loft just under the eaves of the house; and in the stormy autumnal nights, as he lay thinking over the legends of the old female domestic, he heard with terror the distant roar of the wind wrestling with the trees of the forest. At length he heard it fall with fury upon the oak itself, and then a storm of big rain-drops would be shaken from its boughs and a shower of acorns would rattle down and the long branches would lash the roof till it seemed to him as if all the fiends of the woodland had fastened upon the old log cabin and were going to fly away with it.

Walter Buckel now found himself growing rich, and began to be ashamed of living in a log house at a distance from the highway and under the shade of a great tree. He therefore imitated the example of some of his more prosperous neighbors and built a fine, huge, yellow house, about two hundred rods from his old dwelling, close to the public road, where there was not a bough to keep the summer heat from his door, where he might be continually stifled by the dust raised by loaded wagons and herds of cattle driven to the Philadelphia market, and where the passing traveller might look in at his windows; he then quitted his pleasant little nook, and demolished his log house. An American farmer, whether a native or an emigrant, cuts down a tree with as little ceremony as he cuts down ripe corn, and the oak would have shared the fate of the cabin it sheltered had not Caspar, who intended to swing under its boughs many an idle afternoon yet, pleaded hard in its favour.

The toothless old female domestic who had told Caspar so many goblin stories survived this transplantation of the family but two months. At first Caspar cared very little about her death, but in a few days he felt severely the want of that excitement from her wild tales that had become habitual to him, and he began to feel a sincere grief for her loss. It became irksome to linger about his father's great new house; he grew sick of seeing carts, wagons, and cattle go by the door and ramble away into the dark and still woods, like those in which the scene of most of the legends that had taken such strong hold of his mind were laid. He often remained out till the sun was down, and sometimes till the twilight was down also; and on his return, expecting at every step to be greeted by some gigantic mountain spirit, he peeped into many a dark thicket to see if it did not hide some dwarfish elf of the forest. To give Caspar his due, he did not seek these fearful interviews merely from a love of the wild and the terrible; his anticipations were all of good luck, and he considered the descendant of the hunch-backed German baron as too important and too fortunate a personage to be regarded with any other feeling than good will by these powerful but capricious beings.

At length his father and mother died, both in the same year, and were decently laid in their graves. Caspar had then just come of age, and being left master of his father's estate, which was

a very comfortable one, he was unwillingly forced into contact with the world. At first his neighbours, partly from natural civility, partly from a feeling of pity, and partly also, perhaps, from a respect to his wealth, were careful to suppress the mirth occasioned by his deformity and his uncouth aspect and manners; but when they saw the undisguised contempt with which the misshapen creature treated them, they no longer kept any measures in their ridicule. The school boys chalked his figure on the board fences, the young men quizzed him, the girls ran away from him, and it was generally allowed by all who had any dealings with him that it was a capital joke to cheat him.

All these things, however, moved him less than the scorn of the beautiful Adelaide Sippel, a German beauty with an abundance of fair hair, a pair of roguish light blue eyes, and a neck and arms, none of the slenderest it is true, but of a milky whiteness. Caspar, after having fully considered the matter, had concluded to take a help-mate to assist him in the management of his estate and had signified to Adelaide his intention of conferring the honour upon her, but she only laughed in his face. Soon afterwards he made a formal declaration of his passion in a letter, the tenderest that the schoolmaster, under his special direction, could compose; but the only notice she deigned to take of it was to send, by way of answer, an exact likeness of his own figure, carved out of a rickety mangel-wortzel. This rebuff almost stunned poor Caspar, who thenceforward resolved to have as little as possible to do with such an ill-judging and disrespectful world. He resumed his lonely rambles in the woods, and sought relief from his mortification by indulging the wild imaginations that formerly possessed him.

It was in a mild summer evening, when he had been out all day in the forest and had thought more than usual of the scorn of Adelaide and the scoffs of the world, that he found himself under the great oak that once hung over his father's cabin. The twilight had just set in, and the frogs were piping in the marshes. "It is too early to go home yet," thought he, and he sat down on one of the logs of the old building that lay half bedded in the earth with wild flowers nodding over it and began to mutter over the burden of his discontent. All at once he seemed to hear a sound as of a human voice, blended with a rustling of small boughs and leaves. He looked about him but saw nothing. Again he heard the sound; it seemed to proceed from directly above his head. He looked up and beheld, high in the tree and seemingly projecting from the side of the trunk next to him, a beautiful well-turned throat. The features were moulded in the finest symmetry – youthful, but with that look of youth which we see in Grecian statues and may imagine to belong to beings whose lives are of a longer date than ours, and which seems as if never to pass away. On each side of the face flowed down a profusion of light brown hair that played softly in the wind.

"Caspar, Caspar," said the voice.

"I am here," said Caspar, "what wouldst thou with me?"

"Art thou unhappy, Caspar?"

“Art thou a spirit, and askest that question,” replied the youth. “Dost thou not see my deformity, and dost thou not know that all the world laugh at me, and Adelaide slights me – and yet thou inquirest if I am unhappy.”

“Caspar,” returned the voice, “thou did once preserve my existence, and I have not forgotten the benefit. Wash thy hands and face in the little pool in that rivulet, and go thy way home, and thou wilt soon see that I am not ungrateful.”

Caspar obeyed the direction and returned home with a lightened heart. He went to bed but could not sleep for thinking of the adventure of the evening. When he rose in the morning, he fancied his hump was less heavy and unwieldy than the day before, and it is related that an old woman of the neighbourhood, who lived by herself in a little hut and subsisted principally on charity, and who had come to his house to borrow, or rather beg, a bit of butter and a little tea, could not refrain from saying to him, “La! Mr. Buckel, how well you look this morning.” Certain it is, however, that from that day there was a gradual and surprising change in his personal appearance. It seemed as if the superabundant bulk of his spider-like body was travelling into his shrunken arms and legs. The bridge of his nose rose from its humble level and bent itself into a true Roman curve; his cheeks ascended to their proper place, his wrinkles went away one by one, his eyes filled and brightened, his brows darkened, and his chestnut hair curled the edge of a fine forehead. In a twelvemonth the transformation was complete. His shoulders had become straight, his limbs well-proportioned, and his waist, with a little reduction, would have satisfied any fashionable coxcomb that struts Broadway in a corset. His height also had astonishingly increased. Formerly he wanted just an inch of five feet, and now he wanted but an inch of six. (I myself have seen the notch where he was measured in one of the rooms of an old house then occupied as a tavern, and I carefully ascertained its distance from the floor by means of a three-foot rattan which I commonly carry about with me.) Caspar had formerly a great aversion to looking-glasses, but now he consulted his mirror several times a day, and whenever he approached it, he could not help bowing to the graceful stranger whom he saw there.

Caspar’s neighbours would not have recognised him after this change had he not almost from the first forgotten his misanthropy in the delight it gave him. As soon as ever he became satisfied that it was real and progressive, he almost went mad with joy and could not forbear hugging every body he met. The elderly ladies all declared that Mr. Buckel had a strange way with him, and the young ran shrieking from these vehement demonstrations of his good will. He mingled in the rustic sports of the young men at trainings, elections, and other holidays, and though a little awkward at first, he soon became a famous leaper and wrestler and learned to throw a ball and pitch a quoit with as much dexterity as the best of them. Every body began to take a liking to a young man so handsome, good-humoured, and rich; the farmers who had daughters told him it was high time to think of getting married; the matrons expatiated in his presence on the good temper and industry of their girls; and, the buxom fair-haired German maidens never laughed so loud as when they thought him within hearing. Caspar, however, had not forgotten his first love, and when he again proposed himself in softer phrase to Adelaide Sippel, the blushes came over

her fair temples and white neck, but she did not again reject him. They were married amid such fiddling and dancing, such piles of cakes and floods of whiskey, and such a tumult and tempest of rustic rejoicings, as had never before been known in the settlement.

A man of moderate fortune who has not acquired habits of industry and attentive management of his estate should content himself with living idly and easily; he cannot afford to live splendidly. Caspar was not aware of the truth of this maxim: he knew that he was richer than his neighbours, but he had never calculated what expenses he could incur without lessening his estate. He was resolved that his smiling wife should wear the finest clothes and ride to church in the finest German wagon, drawn by the finest horses in the place. He loved society – the more, probably, for having been excluded from it in his youth – and sat long and late at the taverns with merry, jesting, catch-singing, roaring blades from the old countries. He attended all the horse-races he could hear of, at which he betted deeply and was taken in by the knowing ones. He was fond of hunting, and bought a rifle and a couple of hounds and went into the woods in pursuit of game day after day, during which the concerns of his farm took care of themselves. By such judicious methods he contrived to get himself pretty deeply in debt; he was dunned; he borrowed money of one man to pay another; at length a testy creditor sued him; his other creditors followed the example, and the unfortunate man saw all the dogs of the law let loose on him at once. He had not borne his prosperity calmly, and it could not therefore be expected that he should show himself a stoic under misfortune. He grew moody and testy, and a kind of instinct drove him again to ramble in the woods without either his rifle or his dogs, as was his wont in the days of his youth and his deformity.

One evening, as he was returning, a little after sunset, he chanced to pass slowly under the boughs of the great oak. He was thinking that on the whole he had little reason to thank the kindness of his supernatural friend. “She has made me a handsome fellow,” thought he, “but what of that? If I had not been handsome, I should not have run into expenses that have made me poor. A man may as well be miserable from deformity as from poverty.” At that very moment, a sweet, low voice from the boughs of the tree, the well-remembered voice that three years before he had heard at nightfall on that very spot, articulated his name. He looked up, and saw the same calm features of unearthly loveliness and youth, with a smile playing about the beautiful mouth.

“I know thy thoughts, Caspar,” said the apparition, “and thy misfortunes, and it shall not be my fault if thou art not happy. Dig on the north side of the trunk of this tree, just under the extremity of that long branch which points towards the ground, and there thou wilt find what, if thou art reasonable, will suffice thy wishes. Replace the earth carefully.”

Caspar was of too impatient a temperament to defer for a moment the enjoyment of his good fortune. He went immediately for a spade. On his return he again looked up to the place where he had beheld the vision, but he saw only the brown bark of the tree visible in a strong gleam of twilight and the neighbouring boughs and foliage moving and murmuring in the night-wind that was just beginning to rise. He turned up the earth at the spot which had been pointed out to him

and took out a large jar of money, and then shovelled back the mould and pressed the turf into its place.

On examining the coins in the jar, they proved to be Spanish and Portuguese gold pieces of a pretty ancient date, all of them at least half a century old, some still older. Among the many persons from whom I have gathered the particulars of the tradition I am recording, I have not met with one who could satisfactorily explain the circumstance of the money being found in that place. It could not be the coinage of the apparition, for it was not to be supposed that she was the proprietor of a mint, and if she were, why should the coins be so old? As to the suggestion that it was buried there by Captain Kidd, the pirate, I do not think it worthy of notice, for I hold it certain that he concealed the money elsewhere, though it is not for my interest at present to reveal the particular spot. Besides, what should the Captain be doing in the woods of Pennsylvania, more than a hundred miles from the sea coast?

Caspar, however, cared not when the pieces were coined, nor by whom; he was not accustomed to speculate upon his good fortune, but to enjoy it. He held that, if there is any pleasure in the mere exercise of speculation, there is as much opportunity for it afforded by bad luck as by good, and he chose not to confound things which appeared to him so completely different. After paying off all his creditors, he gave a grand entertainment at his house, to which all his neighbours for several miles round were invited, and among the rest, the testy creditor who had set the example of bringing a process against him. This fellow got as drunk as a lord on the whiskey of the man whom, a few weeks ago, he would have ruined, and hugged his generous entertainer with tears in his eyes. As he was altogether too far gone to find his own way home, Caspar ordered out his great Pennsylvania wagon, drawn by two spirited horses and driven by a shining-faced black fellow; the maudlin hero was lifted into the hinder seat and, nodding majestically as he went, was whirled home in that sublime condition.

It took less than half the gold of which Caspar became possessed in this extraordinary way to satisfy all his debts; and the sight of the remainder, blinking and smiling in the capacious jar, was not likely to suggest to his mind any very strong motives for leaving off his habits of idleness and expense. His only study seemed how to get rid of his money, and in this laudable design fortune seemed willing to assist him.

About this time, Nicholas Vadokin, the schoolmaster who had penned the unfortunate epistle of Caspar to Adelaide, having saved a little money by his vocation, set up shop in the neighbourhood, which he furnished from Philadelphia with dry goods and groceries, and all that miscellaneous collection of merchandise to be found in the store of a country trader. Nicholas was a cunning Hanoverian, with a shrewd hazel eye and brassy complexion. He was a prompt, ready-spoken man who could turn his hand to anything, and having come to the United States to make his fortune, he would have thought himself convicted of want of perseverance and enterprise had he suffered himself to be diverted from his object by any trifling scruples of conscience. For four years he had flogged the children of the place for a livelihood, and he now resolved to try whether any thing could be made by fawning on their parents.

To Mr. Buckel, as the richest man in the neighbourhood, he was particularly attentive and obsequious. He always offered him a glass of bad wine whenever he came to his shop; talked to him of his wealth, his horses, his wagon, and his dogs; listened with profound interest to long stories of his hunting exploits; and, though he scorned to flatter a man to his face, hinted that he ought to be a candidate for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. He was so conscientious as to let him have all the goods for which he had occasion, at first cost; and whenever one of his loaded wagons arrived from Philadelphia, he never failed to take his patron aside and tell him of such and such articles which he had purchased expressly on his account – all which the good natured Caspar was always sure to take off his hands.

Caspar soon came to be a daily frequenter of the shop, and he never called without making a purchase, for the ingenious Nicholas had always a reason for his taking almost every article he had. One thing was necessary, another convenient; one was fashionable, another indispensable to a man of his fortune and character; this was wonderfully cheap, and that wonderfully rare; and how could he refuse to be guided by the advice of his excellent and disinterested friend, who was only so attentive to his convenience, and who let him have every thing at cost. In a short time, Caspar found the bottom of his jar; his money was gone, but his habits of expense were not easily shaken off, and being pressed for cash, he applied to his friend Nicholas. Nicholas showed himself truly his friend, for he counted out to him the sum he wanted with many smiles and protestations of delight at being able to do him a service, and took a mortgage of his estate.

The story of the mortgage soon took air, and immediately afterwards, Caspar, finding himself without money, found himself without credit also. In his embarrassment he again went to Nicholas for assistance, but his disinterested friend unfortunately had not the means of helping him further. A day or two after, he called at the shop for the purpose of beginning a new score, but Nicholas informed him, with a very solemn look, that although there was no man in the world whom he would go farther to serve than his very good friend Mr. Buckel, yet his duty to his family obliged him to give credit to those only whose circumstances justified the expectation that they would pay; he added, however, that he should be exceedingly happy to supply him with any the thing he wanted – for ready cash. Caspar stood for a moment as if thunderstruck, and the next, his rage prevailing over his astonishment, he levelled a blow at the Hanoverian, which would infallibly have knocked him down had he not wisely avoided it by ducking under the counter.

Caspar returned home to digest his mortification as he could, and the blue devils followed him and fastened upon him. He felt the thirst of Tantalus, a continual craving for expense with no means of satisfying it; it seemed to him as if all the rest of the world were rolling in wealth, buying and selling, driving fine horses, and feasting each other like princes, while he, poor fellow, had not a beggarly doit to spend. He grew meagre and hollow-eyed, and walked about with his hands in his pockets, looking vacantly at the geese nipping the grass before his door and the hens wallowing in the sand of the road and jerking it over their backs with their wings. At

last he thought of the vision he had seen in the oak. "I will see her again," thought he; "who knows but she may relieve me a second time?"

He set off for the tree that very evening. It was an October night, and he lingered under it till the grass grew silvery with the frost, but she did not appear. The next evening he repaired to the same spot, and looked with a still more intense anxiety for her appearance, but he saw only the boughs struggling with the wind, and the dropping leaves. The third evening he was more successful; she was there, but her look was sad and reproachful. At times the gusts that swept by would rudely toss her hair above her forehead and against the trunk of the tree, and then, as they subsided, it would fall down again on each side of her fine countenance.

"I had hoped, Caspar," said the vision, with a mournful voice that seemed like an articulate sigh, "to have reserved for some more pressing need of thine, the last favour that is in my power to bestow upon thee. I have observed thy nightly visits to my shade; I know thy motive; I know that thou wilt be unhappy if my bounty is withheld; and I cannot forget that thou wast born under my boughs, and that thy intercession has preserved me from the axe. Between the two roots that diverge eastward from my trunk, thou wilt find a portion of what the children of men value more than all the other gifts of heaven. Replace the turf over my roots, and remember that this is the last of my benefits."

Caspar dug eagerly in the spot, for he had been provident enough to bring his spade with him, and joyfully carried home a jar of money of the same figure and capacity with the former.

It were long to tell by what methods Caspar contrived to get rid of the second donation of the lady of the oak. To do him justice, he set out with the firmest resolutions of frugality and economy, and actually kept the gold by him three days without touching a moidore. But when he came to raise the mortgage of his friend Nicholas and to satisfy some other debts that were a little troublesome, the habit of paying out money, being once re-admitted, obstinately kept possession. His old propensity to extravagance returned upon him with a violence that swept all his resolutions away. It is true that, when he saw his finances nearly exhausted, he made some praiseworthy attempts to repair them. It is whispered that he gambled a little with certain smooth-spoken, well-dressed emigrants from the country of his fathers, and it is very certain that he bought lottery tickets, drew blanks, bought others, and had the satisfaction of drawing an additional number of blanks.

(I have often thought that it was a thousand pities that Caspar did not live in these blessed times, and in this well-governed state of New-York, where the law refuses to license these pernicious institutions and prohibits the sale of the tickets of all such as are established in other states. It is true that the ghosts of old lotteries chartered long ago are raised and meet you at every turn; that lottery offices are multiplied without number and almost every tenth door holds out an invitation to try your luck; that the worthy and conscientious people who live by decoying others into this legalized gambling swarm all over our city, each provided with his poet who indites his advertisement in the sweetest of rhymes – a circumstance conveying this most beautiful moral, little attended to, I fear, by the eager adventurer who buys the ticket: that he is

paying his money for a song. I say it is a pity that Caspar had not lived in these blessed times, and in this blessed state, for although he might not have been prevented from engaging as deeply as he pleased in these beneficial speculations, he could not but have admired the wise and effectual measures taken to suppress them.)

Suffice it to say that Caspar saw himself growing poor, and as he had no taste for the pleasures of such a condition, he determined to make a desperate effort to shoot beyond the circle of the whirlpool that threatened to carry him down. He was well satisfied that he should get nothing by applying to the lady of the oak, but he could not help suspecting that there was more gold under her boughs. "The two jars," said he to himself, "were concealed in different places, both near the same tree, which served as a kind of mark by which to find them again; and who knows how many more are lying scattered about the same spot? I will search at least; if there is any gold there, it is a pity it should lie useless in the earth, and if there is not, I shall lose nothing."

The very next morning, he loaded his black servant and another labourer with pick-axes, spades, and hoes and sent them to dig about and under the tree with instructions to bring him immediately whatever curious or remarkable thing they might find there. He was ashamed to go to the spot himself, for he felt that he had abused the gifts of his benefactress and was now repaying her kindness with ingratitude. In the evening the labourers returned, having found nothing but a few fragments of a glass bottle, and complained that the water from the rivulet that ran near the tree soaked through the earth and filled the excavations they were making. Caspar ordered them to dam it up a few rods nearer its source and turn it into a new channel.

It was July, and a severe drought prevailed all over the country. The pastures looked red and sun-burnt; the hardy house-plantain before Caspar's door rolled up its leaves like a segar; the birds were silent; the cattle drooped; nothing was cheerful and lively but the grasshoppers, who always swarm thickest and chirp merriest in dry seasons, and the poultry, who chased and caught them by the sides of the road. The poor oak, almost undermined and deprived of the moisture of its rivulet, was the saddest looking tree in the whole country: its leaves grew yellow and rusty and dropped off one by one, and it is said that once, when Caspar was looking towards it from one of the back windows of his house, just as the twilight set in, he fancied he saw again that fair, sad face among the boughs, and a white shadowy arm, beckoning him to approach. But he hardened his heart and turned away from the sight, and the next morning his labourers went on with their task.

One afternoon on a day of uncommon heat, as Caspar was engaged at a tavern in bargaining for a pair of horses with a jockey who had come twenty miles on purpose to cheat him, the labourers were driven from their work by a furious tempest. The woods roared and bent in the violent wind and the heavy rain, and a thousand new streams were at once formed which ran winding all over the open country like so many serpents. The brook that formerly ran by the oak broke over the barrier which diverted it from its course, and coming down the hill with a vast body of water, ploughed for itself a new channel through the excavations of Caspar's workmen

and completed the undermining of the tree. At last a strong gust took it by the top and laid it on its side, with its long roots sticking up in the air. Caspar's family beheld its fall from the windows.

Two hours afterwards there was a clear sky and a bright sun shining on the glistening earth, and the wet roofs of Caspar's building were smoking in the warm rays. A little pot-bellied man, with an enormous hump on his shoulders, small, thin legs and arms, and hideous features, dressed in a suit of clothes that seemed to have been made for a man much taller and straighter than himself, the collar of his coat standing erect about a foot from his neck, entered the house and began to issue his commands to the servants with an air of authority. At first they only smiled at his conduct, supposing him to be insane, and offered him some broken victuals and a cup of cider. At this he flew into a great rage and swore he was Caspar Buckel himself, the master of the house. Finding that he grew troublesome, they sent for Mrs. Buckel, who was beginning to talk soothingly to him with a view of persuading him to leave the house, but what was her astonishment when the misshapen being insisted that he was her husband. Shocked and frightened at his proof of his madness, she ordered the labourer and the black fellow to put him out of the house, which they effected with some difficulty while he struggled, scratched, bit, foamed at the mouth, and declared, with a thousand oaths, that he was Caspar Buckel, their master. When they had got him out of the door and had disengaged themselves from him, the black gave him a stroke with the long horsewhip that he used in driving his master's horses, and calling out the dogs, set them upon him. The deformed creature scampered before them into a neighbouring wood, and then the negro called them off.

Caspar did not return that night, and the next morning Mrs. Buckel sent to the tavern to inquire for him, but without learning any thing satisfactory concerning him. The landlord recollected he was there about the middle of the tempest, but could not say when he left the house; he mentioned, also, that after the sky began to clear, a little hunch-backed man had asked at his bar for a glass of whiskey, and having paid for it, immediately went away. As for the jockey, he had gone off with his horses just before the storm began, having been unable to drive such a bargain with Mr. Buckel as he wished.

Mrs. Buckel continued her searches and inquiries for six weary months, after which she concluded that her husband was dead, and remained disconsolate for six months longer. At the end of this period she gave her hand to a young fellow from New England, who had fallen in love with her plump, round face, and well stocked farm.

As for Caspar, he was never heard of again; but the old people say that the woods north of his widow's house are haunted at twilight by the figure of a hunch-backed little man, skipping over the fallen trees and running into gloomy thickets as soon as your eye falls on him, as if to avoid the sight of man.