

## OBSERVING MEN AND MATTERS.

How often it occurs when the perpetrator of some reckless or bloody deed is captured, that his outward appearance does not answer the numerous imaginary pictures that people have instinctively drawn of him. Hence the oft-repeated exclamation of astonishment by people who chance to see such a character—"Why he doesn't look like a desperado!" The expectation has been an absurd exaggeration; just as if men who become highwaymen had any other seeming than that of mortals.

Such characters are generally presumed to be dark, swarthy persons, with lowering, beetle brows and small, sharp, peering eyes, of furtive, suspicious and coldly cruel or hotly ferocious expression. They are, as a rule, thus erroneously depicted in plays and novels. Those who thus paint "heavy villains" do not draw upon the rule of nature among the Caucasian race. Such fanciful delineations are contrary to the generality of instances. The large majority of criminals of the desperate and sanguinary classes are of light complexion, many of them have not outwardly a villainous aspect, and are frequently affable and obliging when their passions are not aroused and when not engaged in their calling. Any person who has had opportunities for observing the personnel of the criminal class of the stripe referred to and has made use of his senses knows this to be correct. "Billy the Kid," one of the most noted desperadoes that ever operated in Arizona, New Mexico and portions of California was a notable instance in point. It has been estimated that he must have killed in his time over a dozen men. Fortunately his career was cut short at Fort Yuma, several years since, by an Arizona deputy sheriff, who shot him through the heart. He was described as a dapper little chap, neatly and lightly built, and not over five feet three inches in height. He had blue eyes and blonde complexion, having more the appearance of the hero in an ordinary romance than an actual murderous highwayman, horse thief and desperado.

There doubtless is, as a rule, something about the appearance of desperate criminals of the class referred to indicative of their character and disposition, but in many instances it can only be detected by keen students of human nature, which

in these cases is perverted. It cannot, as a rule, however, be discerned casually. It requires analysis, although the process may be necessarily rapid.

It is the same in this regard as in relation to many other conditions of life. Some people pass along without exercising their faculties for observation and analysis, which are allowed to lie dormant. Others will pass through similar scenes and circumstances and see in men, matters and things, beauty, pathos and humor. It was this sharpness of the mental eyes in Dickens that enabled him to draw from nature so vividly that his word-painting causes the reader to enter into complete sympathy with the characters he portrays, many of whom are old acquaintances, met with in everyday life, but not specially noticed until the charming novelist directed attention to them. He had the ability to fish them out and use them; the ordinary people, walking among and talking with them, didn't know they existed until their component parts were pointed out by the mind of a genius.

This same element of character scrutiny is the chief fascination of Wilson's "Tales of the Borders." The reader who weeps, laughs or grows angry over some character and phase of the story, suddenly discovers that the writer has introduced to him an old friend or acquaintance whose eccentricities are all carefully described.

The habits of observing closely, of self interrogation upon what is seen, and the making of reasonable deductions constitute a most efficient process for sharpening the intellect. Those who do not thus keep their faculties awake belong to that class that "pass through the world with their eyes shut."

This writing has digressed somewhat from its original strain, but perhaps its consistency is saved by a connecting thread.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIRACLES.

"A miracle is an impossibility." So say the disciples of Huxley, Ingersol and other modern agnostics, as they choose to call themselves, although they frequently depart from the negative position of knowing-nothing-ism and make positive assertions like that we have quoted. It often happens that these dogmatic utterances carry some weight with them because of the technical signification attached to a term. It is

so with the sentence that commences this article. Its truth or importance depends upon the meaning of the word miracle.

Those who deny the possibility of such a prodigy, define a miracle as something contrary to the laws of nature. Taking this as a proper signification of the term, they are able to bring forth some strong reasons against the existence of such a phenomenon. Any amount of testimony that may be adduced as evidence that miracles have been performed, whether it be written or oral, ancient or modern, counts for nothing against the fiat of their impossibility. Of course if they cannot be, all who say they are, or have been, must be either deceivers or deceived.

A great deal of ridicule has been indulged in by infidels and agnostics, at the expense of persons who profess belief in the miracles said to have been wrought by divinely called ministers and teachers in times of old. It is all based on the technical meaning the scoffers have attached to the word. But while some religious people may have accepted the accounts given in the scriptures, without thought as to whether the marvels described were violations of nature's laws or not, the most thoughtful and careful investigating believers repudiate the agnostic interpretation of the term, and simply view the phenomena as effects of causes with which they are not familiar. They do not believe in effects without a cause, nor in anything really contrary to the operations of nature.

Of course, when the existence of a Personal Deity is accepted, the power of that Being to produce marvels and to overrule and subvert nature must be conceded. But the intelligent student of divine science perceives that the Almighty is the God of nature, and that He work in and through and by the principles of nature, and that He is consistent with Himself and His own established laws, and therefore does not disrupt them or interfere arbitrarily with their due process.

Their understanding of the term miracle is well explained in the subjoined, which is clipped from the *Toronto Week*:

"In the Greek testament there are three words used which may all be included in the generic term 'miracles,' viz., *seseia*, *terata*, *dynamis*. These three are rendered, very literally, in R. V. by 'signs,' 'wonders,' and 'powers,' respectively. Occasionally the last named is accorded the old-fashioned term 'mira-