

## PETHERICK'S PERIL.

Each story of the Sheldon Cotton Factory is fifteen feet between floors; there are seven such over the basement, and this rises six feet above the ground. The brick walls narrow to eight inches as they ascend, and form a parapet rising above the roof. One of the time-keepers in the factory, Jack Hardy, a young man about my own age, often runs along the brick work, the practice giving him a singular delight that has seemed to increase with his proficiency in it. Having been a clerk in the works from the beginning, I have frequently used the parapet for a foot-path, and although there was a sheer fall of one hundred feet to the ground, have done it with ease and without dizziness. Occasionally Hardy and I have run races, on the opposite walls, an exercise in which I was invariably beaten, because I became timid with increase of pace.

Hopelessly distanced one day, while the men were off at noon, I gave up midway, and looking down, observed the upturned face of an old man, gazing at me with parted lips, wide eyes, and an expression of horror so startling that I voluntarily stepped down to the bricklayers' platform inside. I then saw that the apparently frightened spectator was Mr. Petherick, who had been for some weeks paymaster and factotum for the contractors.

"What's the matter, Petherick?" I called down. He made no answer, but walking off rapidly disappeared round the mill. Curious about his demeanor, I descended, and after some little seeking, found him smoking alone.

"You quite frightened me just now, Petherick," said I. "Did you think I was a ghost?"

"Not just that," he replied, sententiously.

"Did you expect me to fall, then?" I inquired.

"Not just that either," said he. The old man was clearly disinclined to talk, and apparently much agitated. I began to joke him about his lugubrious expression, when the one o'clock bell rang, and he shuffled off hastily to another quarter.

Though I puzzled awhile over the incident, it soon passed so entirely from my mind that I was surprised when, passing Petherick in the afternoon, intending to go aloft, he said, as I went by—

"Don't do it again, Mr. Frazer!"

"What?" I stopped.

"That!" he retorted.

"Oh! You mean running on the wall," said I.

"I mean going on it at all!" he exclaimed. His earnestness was so marked that I conceived a strong interest in its cause.

"I'll make a bargain with you, Mr. Petherick. If you tell me why you advise me I'll give the thing up!"

"Done!" said he. "Come to my cottage this evening, and I'll tell you a strange adventure of my own, though perhaps you'll only laugh that it's the reason why it sickens me to see you fooling up there."

Petherick was ready to talk when Jack and I sat down on his doorstep that evening, and immediately launched into the following narrative:

"I was born and grew to manhood near the high cliffs of the coast of Cornwall. Millions of sea-fowls make their nests along the face of those wave-worn precipices. My companions and I used to get much excitement, and sometimes a good deal of pocket money, by taking their eggs. One of us, placing his feet in a loop at the end of a rope and taking a good grip with his hands, would be lowered by the others to the nest.

"When he had his basket full they'd haul him up, and another would go down. Well, one afternoon I thus went dangling off. They paid out about a hundred feet of rope before I touched the ledge and let go."

"What ledge?" asked Jack.

"Oh!" said Petherick, after a pause. "I see it will be troublesome to make you understand the situation." Then, after reflecting for some moments—

"You must know that most of the cliffs along that coast overhang the sea. At many points one could drop six hundred feet into the sea, and then be forty or fifty feet from the base of the rock he left. The coast is scooped under by the waves. But in some places the cliff wall is as though it had been eaten away by seas once running in on higher levels. There will be an overhanging coping, then, some hundred feet down, a ledge sticking out further than that of the top; under that ledge all will be scooped away. In places there are three or four such ledges, each projecting further than those above. These ledges used to fall away occasionally, as they do yet, I am told, for the ocean is gradually devouring that coast. Where they did not project further than the upper coping, one would swing like a pendulum on the rope, and get on the rock, if not too far in, then put a rock on the loop to hold it till his return. When a ledge did project so that one could drop straight on

it, he hauled down some slack and left the rope hanging."

"Did the wind ever blow it off?" asked Jack.

"Seldom, and never out of reach," said the old man. "Well, the ledge I reached was like this," illustrating with his hands. "It was some ten feet wide; it stuck out maybe six feet further than the cliff top; the rock wall went up pretty near perpendicular, till near the coping at the ground, but below the ledge the cliff's face was so scooped away that the sea, five hundred feet below, ran in under it nigh fifty feet."

"As I went down, thousands of birds rose from the jagged places of the precipice, circling around me with harsh screams. Soon touching the ledge, I stepped from the loop, and drawing down a little slack, walked off briskly. For fully quarter of a mile the ledge ran along the cliff's face almost as level and even in width as that sidewalk. I remember fancying that it sloped outward more than usual, but instantly dismissed the notion, though Gaffer Pentreath, the oldest man in that countryside, used to tell us that we should not get the use of that ledge always. It had been as steady in our time as in his grandfather's and we only laughed at his prophecies. Yet the place of an old filled fissure was marked by a line of grass, by tufts of weeds and small bushes, stretching almost as far as the ledge itself, and within a foot or so of the cliff's face.

"Eggs were not so many as usual, and I went a long piece from my rope before turning back. Then I noticed the very strange conduct of the hosts of sea-fowls below. Usually there were hundreds, but now there were millions on the wing, and instead of darting forth in playful motions, they seemed to be wildly excited, screaming shrilly, rushing out in terror, and returning in masses as though to alight, only to wheel in dread, and keep the air in vast clouds.

"The weather was beautiful, the sea like glass. At no great distance two large brigs, and nearer a small yacht, lay becalmed, heaving on the long billows. I could look down her cabin stairway almost, and it seemed scarcely more than a long leap to her deck.

"Puzzled by the singular conduct of the sea-birds, I soon stopped and set my back against the cliff to rest while watching them. The day was deadly still and very warm.

"I remember taking off my hat and wiping the sweat from my face and forehead with my sleeve. While doing this, I looked down involuntarily to the fissure at my feet. Instantly my blood almost froze with horror! There was a distinct crack between the inner edge of the fissure and the hard-packed, root-threaded soil with which it was filled! Forcibly I pressed back, and in a flash looked along the edge. The fissure was widening under my eyes, the rock before me seemed sinking outward, and with a shudder and a groan and a roar, the whole long platform fell crashing to the sea below! I stood on a margin of rock scarce a foot wide, at my back a perpendicular cliff, and five hundred feet below the ocean, now almost hidden by the vast concourse of wheeling and affrighted birds.

"Can you believe that my first sensation was one of relief? I stood safe! Even a feeling of interest held me for some moments. Almost coolly I observed a long and mighty wave roll out from beneath. It went forth with a high, curling crest—a solid wall of water! It struck the yacht stern on, plunged down on her deck, smashed through her swell of sail, and swept her out of sight forever.

"Not till then did my thoughts dwell entirely on my own position; not till then did I comprehend its hopelessness! Now my eyes closed convulsively, to shut out the abyss down which my glance had fallen; shuddering, I pressed hard against the solid wall at my back; an appalling cold slowly crept through me! My reason struggled against a wild desire to leap; all the demons of despair whispered to me to make an instant end. In imagination I had leaped! I felt the swooning helplessness of falling, and the cold, upward rush of air!

"Still I pressed hard back against the wall of rock, and, though nearly faint from terror, never forgot for an instant the death at my feet, nor the utter danger of the slightest motion. How long this weakness lasted I know not; I only know that the unspeakable horror of that first period has come to me in waking dreams many and many a day since; that I have long nights of that deadly fear; that to think of the past is to stand again on that narrow foothold, and to look around on the earth is often to cry out with joy that it widens away from my feet."

The old man paused long. Glancing sidewise at Jack, I saw that his face was pallid. I myself had shuddered and grown cold—so strongly had my imagination realized the awful experience that Petherick described.

"Suddenly," said the old man, "these words rushed to my brain: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.' My faculties so strained I seemed to hear the words. Indeed, often yet I think that I did truly hear a voice utter them very near me.

"Instantly hope arose, consciously desperate indeed, but I became calm, resourceful, capable, and feeling unaccountably aided. Careful not to look down I opened my eyes and gazed far away over the bright sea. The rippled billows told that a light outward breeze had sprung up. Slowly, and somewhat

more distant, the two brigs moved toward the horizon. Turning my head I could trace the narrow stone of my footing to where my rope dangled, perhaps three hundred yards distant.

"It seemed to hang within easy reach of the cliff face and instantly I resolved and as instantly proceeded to work toward it. No time remained for hesitation. Night was coming on. I reasoned that my comrades thought me killed. They had probably gone to view the new condition of the precipice from a lower station, and on their return would haul up and carry off the rope, I made a move toward it. Try to think of that journey!"

I nodded to him silently.

"Shuffling sideways very carefully, I had not made five yards before I knew that I could not continue to look out over that abyss without glancing down, and that I could not glance down without losing my senses. You have the brick line to keep eyes on as you walk along the factory wall; do you think you could move along it erect, looking down as you would have to? Yet it is only one hundred feet high. Imagine five more such walls on top of that, and you trying to move sidewise—incapable of closing your eyes, forced to look down, from end to end; yes, three times further! Imagine you've got to go on or jump off! Would you not, in an ecstasy of nervous agitation, fall to your knees, get down face-first at full length, clutch by your hands and with shut eyes feel your way? I longed to lie down and hold, but of course that was impossible."

"Still, there was a wall at your back," observed Jack.

"That made it worse! The cliff seemed to press outward against me. It did, in fact, incline very slightly outward. It seemed to be thrusting me off. Oh, the horror of that sensation! Your toes on the edge of a precipice, and the impalpable, calm mountain apparently weighting you slowly forward."

Beads of sweat broke out over his white face at the horror he had called before him. Wiping his lips nervously with the back of his hand, and looking askant, as at the narrow pathway, he paused long. I saw its cruel edge and the dark gleams of its abysmal water.

"I knew," he resumed, "that with my back to the wall I could never reach the rope. I could not face toward it and step forward, so narrow was the ledge. Motion was perhaps barely possible that way, but the breadth of my shoulders would have forced me to lean somewhat more outward; and this I dared not and could not do. Also, to see a solid surface before me became an irresistible desire. I resolved to try to turn round before resuming the desperate journey. To do this I had to nerve myself for one steady look at my footing."

"In the depth below the myriad sea-fowl then rested on the black water, which, though swelling more with the rising wind, had yet an unbroken surface at some little distance from the precipice, while further out it had begun to jump to white caps, and in beneath me, where I could not see, it dashed and churned with a faint, pervading roar that I could barely distinguish. Before the descending sun a heavy bank of cloud had arisen. The ocean's surface bore that appearance of intense and angry gloom that often heralds a storm, but, save the deep murmur going out from far below my perch, all to my hearing was deadly still.

"Cautiously I swung my right foot before the other and carefully edged around. For an instant, as my shoulder rubbed against the rock, I felt that I must fall. I did stagger, in fact, but the next moment stood firm, face to the beetling cliff, my heels on the very edge, and the new sensation of the abyss behind me no less horrible than that from which I had with such difficulty escaped. I stood quaking. A delirious horror thrilled every nerve. The skin about my ears and neck, suddenly cold, shrank convulsively.

"Wild with fear, I thrust forward my head against the rock and rested in agony. A whirl and wind of sudden wings made me conscious of outward things again. Then a mad eagerness to climb swept away other feeling, and my hands attempted in vain to clutch the rock. Not daring to cast my head backward, I drew it tortoise-like between my raised shoulders and chin against the precipice, and gazed upward with straining of vision from under my eyebrows.

"Far above the dead wall stretched. Sidewise glances gave me glimpses of the projecting summit coping. There was no hope in that direction. But the distraction of scanning the cliff-side had given my strained nerves some relief; to my memory again returned the promise of the Almighty and the consciousness of His regard. Once more my muscles became firmstrong.

"A cautious step sidewise made me know how much I had gained in ease and security of motion by the change of front. I made progress that seemed almost rapid for some rods, and even had exultation in my quick approach to the rope. Hence came freedom to think how I should act on reaching it, and speculation as to how soon my comrades would haul me up.

"Then the idea rushed through me that they might even yet draw it away too soon; that while almost in my clutch it might rise from my hands. Instantly all the terrors of my position returned with ten-fold force; an outward thrust of the precipice seemed to grow distinct, my trembling hands told me that it moved bodily toward me, the descent behind me took an un-

speakable remoteness, and from the utmost depth of that sheer air seemed to ascend steadily a deadly and a chilling wind. But I think I did not stop for an instant. Instead a delirium to move faster possessed me, and with quick, sidelong steps—my following foot striking hard against that before—sometimes on the point of stumbling, stretched out like the crucified, I pressed in mortal terror along.

"Every possible accident and delay was presented to my excited brain. What if the ledge should narrow suddenly to nothing? Now I believed that my heels were unsupported in air, and I moved along on tip-toe. Now I was convinced that the narrow pathway sloped outward, that this slope had become so distinct, so increasingly distinct, that I might at any moment slip off into the void. But dominating every consideration of possible disaster, was still that of the need for speed, and distinct amid all other terrors was that sensation of the dead wall ever silently and inexorably pressing me outward.

"My mouth and throat were choked with dryness, my convulsive lips parched and arid; much I longed to press them against the cold moist stone. But I never stopped. Faster, faster—more wildly I stepped—in a delirium I pushed along. Then suddenly before my staring eyes was a well-remembered edge of mossy stone, and I knew that the rope should be directly behind me. Was it?

"I glanced over my left shoulder. The rope was not to be seen? Wildly I looked over the other—no rope! Almighty God! and hast Thou deserted me?"

"But what! Yes, it moves! it sways in sight! it disappears—to return again to view! There was the rope directly at my back, swinging in the now strong breeze with a motion that had carried it away from my first hurried glances. With the relief tears pressed to my eyes, and—face bowed to the precipice, almost forgetful for a little time of the hungry air beneath—I offered deep thanks to my God for the delivery that seemed so near."

The old man's lips continued to move, but no sound came from them. We waited silent while, with closed eyes and bent head, he remained absorbed in the recollection of that strange minute of devoutness.

"I stood there," he said at last, "for what now seems a space of hours, perhaps half a minute in reality. Then all the chances still to be run crowded upon me. To turn around had been an attempt almost desperate before, and certainly, most certainly, the ledge was no wider where I now stood. Was the rope within reach? I feared not. Would it sway toward me? I could not hope for that.

But could I grasp it should I be saved? Would it not yield to my hand—coming slowly down as I pulled, enrolling from a coil above, trailing over the ground at the top, running fast as its end approached the edge, falling suddenly at last? Or was it fastened to the accustomed stake? Was any comrade near who would summon aid at my signal? If not, and if I grasped it, and if it held, how long should I swing in the wind that now bore the freshness and tremors of an imminent gale?

"Now again fear took hold on me, and a desperate man I prepared to turn my face once more to the vast expanse of water and nothing beyond that awful cliff. Closing my eyes, I writhed, with I know not what motions, easily around till again my back pressed against the precipice. This was a restful sensation. And now for the decision of my fate! I looked at the rope. Not for a moment could I fancy it within my reach! Its swaying were not, as I had expected, even slightly inward, but when falling back against the wind, it swung outward as though the air were eddying from the wall.

"Now I gazed down steadily. Would a leap be certain death? The water was of immense depth below. But what chance of striking it feet or head first? What chance of preserving consciousness in the descent? No, the leap would be death; that at least was clear.

"Again I turned to the rope. I was now perfectly desperate, but steady, nerved beyond the best moments of my life, gored for an effort surpassing the human. Still the rope swayed as before, and its motion was very regular. I saw that I could touch it at any point of its gyration by a strong leap.

"But could I grasp it? What use if it were not firmly secured above? But all time for hesitation had gone by. I knew too well that strength was mine but for a moment, and that in the next reaction of weakness I should drop from the wall like a dead fly. Bracing myself, I watched the rope steadily for one round, and as it returned against the wind, jumped straight out over the heaving Atlantic.

"By God's aid I reached, touched, clutched, held the strong line. And it held! Not absolutely. Once, twice and again it gave, gave with jerks that tried my arms. I knew these indicated but tightening. Then it held firm and I swung turning in the air, secure above the waves that beat below.

"To slide down and place my feet in the loop was the instinctive work of a moment. Fortunately it was of dimensions to admit my body barely. I slipped it over my thighs up to my armpits just as the dreaded reaction of weakness came. Then I lost consciousness.

When I awakened my dear mother's face was beside my pillow, and she told me that I had been tossing for a fortnight in brain fever. Many weeks I lay there, and when I got strong found that I had left my nerve on that

awful cliff-side. Never since have I been able to look from a height or see any other human being on one without shuddering.

"So now you know the story, Mr. Frazer, and have had your last walk on the factory wall."

He spoke truer than he knew. His story has given me such horrible nightmares ever since that I could no more walk on the high brickwork than along that narrow ledge in distant Cornwall.—E. W. Thompson's Prize Story in The Youth's Companion.

## THE JIMJAMS.

How a Man Got Cured of Seeing the Monkeys.

From the Detroit Post.

"Did you ever have the tremens?" was the laconic inquiry made recently by one Detroit of another.

"The what?"

"The tremens, snakes, shakes, triangles, jimjams, side jumps or whatever you choose to call them."

"Oh, I see; you mean the jerks. No, I never had them and never will. I went through an experience once that convinced me I had no use for any nervous disturbance of that character. I was rooming with a capital young fellow at a hotel. He was a Southerner; came from Texas and had all that generous, impulsive nature that is attributed to the best class of Southerners. But that fellow would get on the most hilarious batters of the most pronounced type. He'd get blind, howling drunk and keep it up until nature would bring in her bill and send him to bed because he couldn't meet them. He'd spend all the money he had, all he could borrow, and then run his credit to the very limit. He was ready to be anybody's friend, and the fact was taken advantage of while he could work the bars. He was quick to anger, and when his money disappeared he was liable to be treated to a pair of black eyes or a sore jaw. He would come out of a spree determined never to have another one, and while his resolution prevailed he was gentlemanly, tidy as a fashion plate and the best of company. He was a Democrat, and Cleveland's election took the young man clear off his feet. He was on the war path for two weeks. He was drunker than a lord and made Rome howl for weeks. He finally had to give up and went to bed at the hotel. He slept twenty-four hours and then wanted whiskey. The doctors said to give a reasonable amount, but the debilitated politician wanted a quart. He was quieted for a time and I threw myself on the bed for a nap. A voice awakened me. I heard the young fellow praying and saw him kneeling by the bedside. His petition was that the Lord, his mother and all other interested parties might forgive him for what he was about to do. He felt it as his duty to murder me then and there because in his distorted judgment I was fit to clutter the earth no longer. I was almost petrified with mingled astonishment and fear. I saw that he had 'em. He was an athlete, six feet tall, and out of his head. In the corner of the room were two Indian clubs and a baseball bat. He rose from prayer, started for the corner, and I saw that I must do something or be bent into a jelly. I made a spring before he knew I was awake, pinioned his arms behind him and let out two or three terrific yells. In a few seconds the porter with a half dozen other men were helping put the Cleveland man to bed. He got around all right and vows he's done drinking, but I wouldn't sleep with him after another Democratic victory for half of the state of Michigan. I'm cured and I'll never have the rattles."

## The Man Who Jumps.

"There's always some fool to jump off a train and get hurt," said a brakeman, and frequently the one that jumps is just the man who always claims that he knows better and gives other people lectures for their foolishness. I'll never forget a little thing that happened one day as we were going into Indianapolis. On the train was a sheriff who had in charge three imbeciles whom he was taking to the asylum. They were not handcuffed nor tied in any way, but were permitted to run about the car just as they wanted to. On board was a passenger who complained about this a great deal. He thought the imbeciles should be tied up. "They haven't any more sense than to go and jump off the train," he said, "and they should be better taken care of." But the Sheriff he just took things easy, and said he guessed they were all right. Well, as we were going in to Indianapolis I was standing on the rear platform. This complaining passenger came out, with his grip in his hand and his shiny silk hat on his head. As we came to a street crossing he said: "Guess I'll get off here," and before I could do a thing to stop him he jumped. He probably thought we were running slow, but those things are very deceptive. He landed on his feet, but he didn't stay there long. He just assumed the shape of a half circle, bent the wrong way to be uncomfortable for him, and ended up with his nose in the mud and his heels in the air. Then he spread out and fell flat, kind o' sprawling out as if he wanted to cover the whole street. But the funniest thing was that as I turned to go into the car I found one of them imbeciles looking out the door. He grinned as if he was never so delighted in his life and uttered: "The darned fool did jump, didn't he!"—Chicago Herald.