It Might Have Been.

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these—it might have been."

The following note will explain itself; we are glad to have Mr. Dent's communication, which was handed to us by Mr. Pell:

MR. THADEUS PELL:

My dear sir,—My attention has recently been called to a short story published in The Tech, and signed with your name, which has forcibly recalled an occurrence in my own family, the details of which I have taken the liberty to send you.

Very truly yours,

C. H.

D-N-T.

HOLHURST, MASS., Dec. 10, 1884.

We were sitting by the open fire after tea, one evening, at Prof. Dent's, and we had been relating strange experiences which had befallen us; but our tales fell into insignificance when the Professor's brother, Mr. Grantley Dent, was one of our number, as on the present occasion; for he always brought with him a store of strange stories and reminiscences of by-gone days, when he came for one of his rare visits, until we really came to associate him in our minds with a weird sort of life, different from that of other men. He had been for years a great traveller, wandering hither and thither, seldom pausing long in any one place, but coming back ever and anon, for a day or two at his brother's; and "Uncle Grant's" visits were hailed by us all with great delight.

There had fallen upon us a little silence, this evening, after a pathetic story of a young gypsy girl, that Mr Dent had just finished, when Fred exclaimed, "O Uncle Grant, you've never yet told us that story about the Grantleys' old coachman, Caesar, that you promised us when you were here before, and this is just the time for it."

"Why, didn't I tell you that, after all? Well, let me think; it must have happened over sixty years ago, for I was a young man when my mother's half-brother, Robert Grantley, told me, and it occurred years before that. Well," as he slowly knocked the ashes from his cigar, and settled himself comfortably in his chair, "at that time the Grantleys lived at the old homestead on Oak Street. I've told you what a long, rambling house it was, and Cæsar, the old colored coachman, had for years occupied the little room in the third story, at the head of the back stairs; and for years he had walked in his sleep, night after night, always carrying his candle lighted in his hand. The family had become so accustomed to his nocturnal wanderings about the house, that they had long ceased to give them a thought. But one night Robert Grantley woke suddenly out of a sound sleep, and heard slow, muffled sounds which he recognized as Caesar's somnambulistic footsteps. Acting on one of those sudden impulses that we sometimes feel, he rose, and hastily throwing on his dressing-gown and slippers, went out into the hall; there, sure enough, he beheld old Cæsar, who had come through from the back part of the house, slowly going down the front stairs, carrying his lighted candle before him, his wide-open, unseeing eyes staring fixedly into space. Noiselessly he followed the old man down the stairs, through the hall, through the dining-room, across the little entry that separated it from the kitchen, through the kitchen, and out into the wood-shed beyond, the sleeper never running against anything, but carefully, as if awake, avoiding all obstacles in his path.

"Having reached the wood-shed, his curiosity changed to a thrill of expectant horror, as Cæsar took up the axe, laid it over his shoulder, and returned as he had come, setting down his candle as he fastened the wood-shed door. Back he went, upstairs, followed by Robert, who dared not awaken him. At the second story he turned, and went straight to Robert's room, walked up to the head of the bed, set his candle on a chair, and raising the axe high above his head, brought it down with sickening force upon the pillow where so lately had lain the head of the horror-stricken man behind him.

"Blow after blow followed, cutting the pillow into pieces. Then Cæsar picked up his candle, carried the axe back to its place in the wood-shed, and returning to his little room at the