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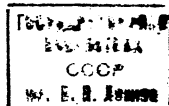
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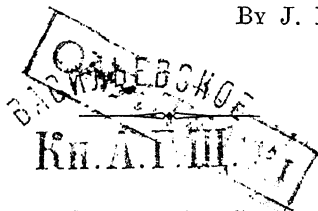
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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD & SONS, 45 GEORGE STREET,
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To whom all Communications must be addressed.

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

WITH the Number for January 1887 the size of 'BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE' will be permanently enlarged.

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THE LAND OF DARKNESS.

[THE following narrative forms a necessary part of the Little Pilgrim's experiences in the spiritual world, though it is not her personal story, but is drawn from the Archives of which, in their bearing upon the universal history of mankind, she was informed.]

I FOUND myself standing on my feet, with the tingling sensation of having come down rapidly upon the ground from a height. There was a similar feeling in my head, as of the whirling and sickening sensation of passing downward through the air, like the description Dante gives of his descent upon Geryon. My mind, curiously enough, was sufficiently disengaged to think of that, or at least to allow swift passage for the recollection through my thoughts. All the aching of wonder, doubt, and fear which I had been conscious of a little while before was gone. There was no distinct interval between the one condition and the other, nor in my fall (as I supposed it must have been) had I any consciousness of change. There was the whirling of the air, resisting my passage, yet giving way under me in giddy circles, and then the

sharp shock of once more feeling under my feet something solid, which struck yet sustained. After a little while the giddiness above and the tingling below passed away, and I felt able to look about me and discern where I was. But not all at once: the things immediately about me impressed me first—then the general aspect of the new place.

First of all the light, which was lurid, as if a thunderstorm were coming on. I looked up involuntarily to see if it had begun to rain; but there was nothing of the kind, though what I saw above me was a lowering canopy of cloud, dark, threatening, with a faint reddish tint diffused upon the vaporous darkness. It was, however, quite sufficiently clear to see everything, and there was a good deal to see. I was in a street of what seemed a great and very populous

place. There were shops on either side, full apparently of all sorts of costly wares. There was a continual current of passengers up and down on both sides of the way, and in the middle of the street carriages of every description, humble and splendid. The noise was great and ceaseless, the traffic continual. Some of the shops were most brilliantly lighted, attracting one's eyes in the sombre light outside, which, however, had just enough of day in it to make these spots of illumination look sickly; most of the places thus distinguished were apparently bright with the electric or some other scientific light; and delicate machines of every description, brought to the greatest perfection, were in some windows, as were also many fine productions of art, but mingled with the gaudiest and coarsest in a way which struck me with astonishment. I was also much surprised by the fact that the traffic, which was never stilled for a moment, seemed to have no sort of regulation. Some carriages dashed along, upsetting the smaller vehicles in their way, without the least restraint or order, either, as it seemed, from their own good sense, or from the laws and customs of the place. When an accident happened, there was a great shouting, and sometimes a furious encounter—but nobody seemed to interfere. This was the first impression made upon me. The passengers on the pavement were equally regardless. I was myself pushed out of the way, first to one side, then to another, hustled when I paused for a moment, trodden upon and driven about. I retreated soon to the doorway of a shop, from whence with a little more safety I could see what was going on. The noise made my head ring. It seemed to me that I could not hear

myself think. If this were to go on for ever, I said to myself, I should soon go mad.

"Oh no," said some one behind me, "not at all; you will get used to it; you will be glad of it. One does not want to hear one's thoughts; most of them are not worth hearing."

I turned round and saw it was the master of the shop, who had come to the door on seeing me. He had the usual smile of a man who hoped to sell his wares; but to my horror and astonishment, by some process which I could not understand, I saw that he was saying to himself, "What a d——d fool! here's another of those cursed wretches, d—— him!" all with the same smile. I started back, and answered him as hotly, "What do you mean by calling me a d——d fool?—fool yourself, and all the rest of it. Is this the way you receive strangers here?"

"Yes," he said, with the same smile, "this is the way; and I only describe you as you are, as you will soon see. Will you walk in and look over my shop? Perhaps you will find something to suit you if you are just setting up, as I suppose."

I looked at him closely, but this time I could not see that he was saying anything beyond what was expressed by his lips, and I followed him into the shop, principally because it was quieter than the street, and without any intention of buying—for what should I buy in a strange place where I had no settled habitation, and which probably I was only passing through?

"I will look at your things," I said, in a way which I believe I had, of perhaps undue pretension. I had never been over-rich, or of very elevated station; but I was believed by my friends (or enemies)