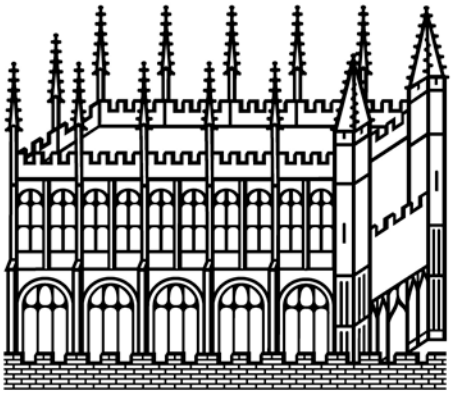

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AND

THE PEDLINGTONIANS.

BY

JOHN POOLE, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "PAUL PRY," "THE COMIC SKETCH-BOOK," ETC.

"Mine own romantic town."—SCOTT.

"A chield's amang ye takin' notes,
And faith he'll prent it."—BURNS.

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PREFACE.

POPE, in his Advertisement to the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, says: "Many will know their own pictures in it; but I have, for the most part, spared their names, and they may escape being laughed at if they please."

I cannot say so much for the record of my two visits to Little Pedlington: "many will know their own pictures in it," but that will be owing to no skill of mine in the art of portraiture, but simply to the circumstance of my having adopted the inexpert sign-painter's expedient, and named them outright. Having no motive for concealment, I have concealed nothing; and I here declare in the face of the whole world, Little Pedlington not excepted, that Hobbleday is Hobbleday; Rummins, Rummins; Daubson, Daubson; Fiat, Fiat; Strut, Strut; Miss Cripps, Miss Cripps; Tippleton, Tippleton—and so of the rest. Had I fastidiously taken refuge in such poetical personifications as Humbug, Quackery, Morbid Vanity, Cant, Puffery, Affectation, Unmitigated Selfishness, and others, the Pedlingtonians themselves would have seen through the hollow device, and applied those abstractions with tolerable precision; whilst certain wicked-minded Londoners might have distributed them amongst

their own acquaintance, each according to his fancy—*a danger particularly to be avoided.*

I am less anxious concerning incidents and events, which I have accurately narrated; the habits and manners of the great mass of Little Pedlingtonians, and their amusements in public and private, which I have faithfully described; their Theatricals, *some branches* of their Literature, and *some portions* of their Critical Press; of all which I have treated largely, as becomes their importance, and exhibited many specimens for (as I trust) imitation;—concerning all these I am less anxious: and should any ingenious reader choose to amuse himself by imagining parallels to them elsewhere, he is at perfect liberty to do so.

Little Pedlington I first visited as long ago as July, 1835; and notes of that, and of a subsequent visit, were published, from time to time, between that period and January of the present year. In arranging the papers for publication collectively, it became necessary to add, to alter, and to retract; yet, notwithstanding great care in the work, I fear I have to apologize for some few trifling, though almost unavoidable, repetitions.

In the course of these volumes are so many allusions to the "Guide Book,"* that for the assistance of such readers as are unacquainted with it, and to whom, consequently, those allusions would be unintelligible, it has been deemed expedient that it should be inserted in the Introduction; they, therefore, who, by its aid, or haply, by a visit to the place, are already familiar with the history and localities of Little Pedlington, will pardon its re-appearance in favour of those who are less fortunate.

---

* Once already *re*-published in "Sketches and Recollections."

Cant, Puffery, Humbug, and Quackery, words which I have already used, are, undoubtedly, very ugly words; but, as is the case with some faces, their ugliness is fully redeemed by their expressiveness. The qualities which they represent I detected—must I confess it?—even in Little Pedlington. I have taken the liberty to laugh at them. Should the reader laugh with me, I shall be satisfied.

J. P.

LITTLE PEDLINGTON

AND

THE PEDLINGTONIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

FELIX HOPPY, Esq., Master of the Ceremonies at Little Pedlington, has conferred upon the world in general, and upon me in particular, a never-sufficiently-to-be-appreciated favour, by the publication of the Little Pedlington Guide. At the approach of the summer season,—that season when London (and since the pacification of Europe, all England) is declared to be unendurable by all those who fancy that they shall be happier anywhere than where they happen to be, and who possess the means and the opportunity of indulging in the experiment of change of place; at the approach of that season, this present, I found myself, like Othello, "perplexed in the extreme." The self-proposed question, "And where shall I go *this* year?" I could not answer in any way to my satisfaction. I had visited, as I believed, every spot in Europe which celebrity, from some cause or other, had rendered attractive. I had climbed many thousands of feet up Mont Blanc, and stood on the very summit of Greenwich Hill; I had "swam on a gondola" at Venice, and "patienced" in a punt at Putney; had found my way through the dark and tangled forests of Germany, and lost it in the Maze at Hampton Court; bathed in the changing waters of the Rhone, and floundered in the *consistent* mud of Gravesend; beheld the fading glories of old Rome, and the rising splendours of New Kemp Town; I had heard the *Miserere* performed in the Sistine Chapel, and the hundred-and-fourth psalm sung by the charity boys in Hampstead church; I had seen the Raphaels at Florence, the Correggios at Dresden, the Rembrandts at Rotterdam, and the camera-obscura at Margate; I had tasted of caviare on the shores of the Black Sea, and of white-bait on the banks of Blackwall; I had travelled on a Russian sledge and in a Brentford omnibus; I had been everywhere (in Europe—the boundary of all my travelling projects), done everything,

seen everything, heard everything, and tasted of everything. Novelty and change of scene are the idle man's inducements to travel: for me there remained neither: I was—to use a melancholy phrase I once heard feelingly uttered by a young nobleman who had not then attained his twentieth year—*blasé sur tout!* Still the unanswerable question recurred—"And *where* shall I go *this* year?"

As for the hundredth time I exclaimed, "And where shall I go this year?" a packet was sent to me by my bookseller, who has a general order to supply me with all voyages, travels, journeys, tours, road-books, guides, and atlases, as soon as published. The parcel contained new editions of "Denham's Travels in Africa," of "Humboldt's in South America," and of "Parry's Voyages;" together with, just published, and almost wet from the press, "The Stranger's Guide through Little Pedlington, by Felix Hoppy, Esq., M.C." Throwing aside the rest as unimportant to my present purpose, I, on the instant, perused this last.

I was much pleased with the amiable understanding that seemed to exist between this and all other guide-books which I had ever consulted. It is but altering the name of the place in the title-page, as occasion may require, and the same book will carry you very creditably through every watering-place in England. You have in each a High Street, and a North Street, and a Crescent; a parish church, a poor-house, and a charity school; the best supplied market in the kingdom; the most highly-talented apothecary in Europe; the most learned parson in Christendom; the most obliging circulating-library-keeper in the known world; the most accommodating mistress of a boarding-house in the universe; and the most salubrious of climates, adapted to the cure of every imaginable disorder and to the improvement of every possible constitution. It is true that the tradesmen recommended to you by one Guide-book are severally named Scarsnell, Larkins, and Simcoe, (the town's-people usually consisting of ramifications of about three families;) whilst by another you are referred to nothing but Tupfords, Ruffens, and Whiffnells. This certainly is a remarkable difference, but it is the only one which I could ever discover in these polite Ciceroni; all other points, or, at least, nineteen out of every twenty, being notices of precisely the same things in precisely the same language, and the twentieth hardly ever worth the trouble of a distinction. But here is Mr. Hoppy's:—

THE STRANGER'S GUIDE

THROUGH

LITTLE PEDLINGTON:

COMPRISING

ITS HISTORY FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE PRESENT TIME;

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"Hail, Pedlingtonia! Hail, thou favoured spot!
What's good is found in thee; what's not, is not.
Peace crowns thy dwellings, Health protects thy fields,
And Plenty *all* her cornucopia yields."

Pedlingtonia: *a Descriptive Poem by the Rev. J. Jubb.*

JAMES YAWKINS, LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

183—.

HISTORY.

The Universal Deluge, which transformed the variegated and smiling face of our terrestrial globe into one unvaried and monotonous mass of the aqueous element, and which, in its ruthless and unpitying course, overwhelmed and swallowed up cities, empires, and nations, sparing neither the monarch's palace nor the peasant's hut; and which bowed down alike the gentle hill and the giant mountain, rooting up not only the tender plant of the garden, but also the mighty oak of the forest; and which, unlike the genial and beneficial showers of spring, which beneficently foster the fruits of the earth for the use of man; but which, more like the raging cataract, converted our rolling planet into one wide, vast, waste of waters, disfigured also the fair spot on which now stands the town of Little Pedlington.

But to descend to a later period.

Little Pedlington (or, as it has at various times been written, Peddle-le-town, Peddle-in-town, Piddletown, Peddletown, and Peedletown), (it is now invariably called by its more euphonious appellation of Pedlington), is situated in the county of ——, at the distance of — miles from London. And here, reflecting on these successive changes, we cannot refrain from quoting that apt line of the Swan of Avon,*—

"Each doth suffer a sea change."

But to proceed.

Of the extreme antiquity of this place there can be no doubt, for our ingenious townsman, Simcox Rummins, Esq., F.S.A., has clearly proved, in his learned and elaborate Essay on that subject (a *few* copies of which may still be obtained by an early application to Mr. Yawkins, Bookseller, Market Square), that the *identical ground* on which the present town is built existed long prior to the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar! And, if further proof were wanting, it might be adduced in an ancient coin, dug up about thirty years ago by some workmen, who were employed in removing Hob's Pound, which formerly stood at the north-east corner of South Street, and of which the curious visitor may still discover some faint traces. Of such antiquity is this precious

* We need not inform our poetical readers that we allude to the immortal Shakspeare.

relic, that one side of it is worn perfectly smooth, whilst, on the other, nothing more can be perceived than the almost imperceptible outline of two heads, and these remains of the legend, which have baffled the attempts of the most profound antiquaries to determine to which epoch of Roman greatness to refer it:

GUL—US ET M—R—

The sneers of a certain bookseller not a hundred miles from South Street, who has published *what he calls* a Pedlington Guide, and who describes the coin as nothing more than a William-and-Mary's shilling, we treat with the contempt they deserve. It is in the possession of the eminent gentleman we have already mentioned, who, with his well-known liberality, is always happy to offer it to the inspection of intelligent visitors, who will know how to decide between the ignorant assertion of a Sn-gg-rst-n and the opinion of a Rummins!

During the Civil Wars between the rival houses of York and Lancaster, as well as in the later conflicts between Charles and the Parliament, indeed, in every case where courage and wisdom were called into action—

> "O that dissension should our land divide!"
>
> PEDLINGTONIA.

it does not appear, from any positive record, that our town took any part;—but who can doubt that it did? "The fortifications," (see *Rummins*,) "if any did ever exist, must long since have been demolished, for not the slightest traces of any are to be found. I must, however, except the ditch which traverses the north end of High Street, and which, although it now be dry, and so narrow as to allow of one's stepping across it, must, if ever it had been a military work, have been so wide and deep as to be capable of containing a considerable quantity of water. Nor must I conceal the fact that, not many years ago, two *sword-blades and a cannon-ball were therein discovered:* these are now in my possession." The testimony of so impartial a writer to the prowess of the Pedlingtonians cannot be too highly valued; nor must their modesty recoil if we again quote the unrivalled poem from whence we have extracted our motto:—

> "Fair are thy daughters, and thy sons how brave!
> *No Pedlingtonian e'er will be a slave.*
> Friend to his country, and his King's well-wisher,
> At Glory's call he'll serve in the militia."

But it is only of late years that Little Pedlington has assumed its present importance, and justified its claims to be ranked amongst those towns and cities which adorn and dignify the British empire; and, if it yield the palm for extent and splendour to the metropolis of England,* it will confess itself second to no other for antiquity, beauty, and salubrity; nor need it fear to enter the lists in honourable competition with *any*, for the meed due to intellect and refinement, boasting, as it does, of possessing in its bosom a *Rummins* and a *Jubb*, a few copies of whose unrivalled and truly classical Poem, called PEDLINGTONIA, descriptive of the beauties of the place, may still be had at Yawkins's Library, price 2*s*. with a plate, and for which an early application is earnestly recommended.

"We have no hesitation in declaring it as our impartial opinion that, for classic purity of taste and style, nothing, since the days of Pope, has appeared worthy of comparison with this Poem: it is truly Doric. Without intending to decry B-r-n, C-mpb-ll, M—re, R-g-rs, or Sc-tt, we will venture to prophesy that this work will operate a reform in the public taste, bring back poetry *to what it ought to be*, and obtain for its author a deathless fame. We are proud to say it is the production of our highly-gifted Curate and townsman, the Rev. Jonathan Jubb."—*See the Pedlington Weekly Observer, June 17th.*

THE TOWN.

The entrance to Little Pedlington from the London road is by High Street, and presents to the astonished eye of the visitor an aspect truly imposing; nor will the first impression thus created be easily obliterated from the "mind's eye."† On one side, after passing between two rows of well-grown elms, stands Minerva Mansion, a seminary for young ladies, kept by Miss Jubb, sister of the Rev. J. Jubb, under whose able superintendence is Birch House, in the Crescent, a seminary for young gentlemen, the terms of both of which may be had at Yawkins's Library; and on the other, the view is met by the Green Dragon Inn, kept by Mr. Scorewell, whose politeness and attention are proverbial, and where travellers may be sure of meeting with every accommodation on very reasonable terms.

Passing along, we come to East Street, West Street, North Street, and South Street, so named from the several directions they take (see *Rummins*), all converging into a focus, designated

* London. † Shakspeare.

Market Square (now one of the fashionable promenades), the market having formerly been held on the identical spot now occupied by the New Pump; of which more in its proper place.

But, if we are at a loss to which of these noble streets to give the preference, whether for regularity or cleanliness, in what terms shall we describe the Crescent? Well may it be said, that Englishmen are prone to explore foreign countries ere yet they are acquainted with their own; and many a one will talk ecstatically of the marble palaces of Venice and Herculaneum, who is ignorant of the beauties of Little Pedlington. The Crescent, then, is at the end of North Street, and is so called from the peculiarity of its form (we are again indebted to *Rummins*), it being somewhat in the shape of a half-moon. It consists of twenty-four houses, mansions we might say, uniformly built of bright red bricks, which, when the sun is full upon them, are of dazzling brilliancy. There are bow-windows to all the edifices; and each having a light green door with a highly-polished brass knocker, three snow-white steps forming the ascent, an effect is produced which to be admired need only to be seen, and which, though some other places may perhaps equal, none certainly can surpass.

We cannot quit the Crescent without calling the attention of the literary pilgrim to the second house from the left-hand corner, No. 23. THERE LIVES JUBB!

> "A something inward tells me that my name
> May shine conspicuous in the rolls of Fame;
> The traveller here his pensive brow may rub,
> And softly sigh, 'Here dwelt the tuneful Jubb.'"
>
> PEDLINGTONIA.

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Proceed we now to matters which, albeit of less stirring interest, are yet not devoid of pleasure and utility. And first, to the

BOARDING-HOUSES.

The principal Boarding-house is kept by Mrs. Stintum, and is delightfully situated No. 17, Crescent. This excellent establishment combines elegance with comfort, and nothing can exceed the care and attention of the proprietress to her guests, who will find

under her fostering auspices all that their own homes would afford. This house is always thronged with the most elegant company.

Mrs. Starvum's Boarding-house, which yields to none for comfort, and which for elegance few can excel, is most beautifully situated No. 11, South Street. The attention and assiduity of Mrs. Starvum are proverbial. As none but the *haut ton* are received here, we need not add, that visitors will not find a deficiency in any of those comforts and conveniences which they have been accustomed to in their own houses.

LIBRARIES.

Yawkins's Library, in Market Square, has long been known to the frequenters of Little Pedlington; and, if an excellent collection of books, urbanity, all the new publications, attention, all sorts of choice perfumery, tooth-brushes, dispatch in the execution of orders, Tunbridge-ware, &c., &c., all at the most moderate prices, can claim the suffrages of the public, we have no hesitation in requesting their patronage of Mr. Yawkins.

Nor should we be just in failing to recommend Snargate's long-established Library in High Street. Here will subscribers be furnished with both old and *new* publications with the utmost readiness, and with a politeness highly creditable to the proprietor. And, if moderate charges for Tunbridge-ware, perfumery of the best quality, &c., &c., &c., are a desideratum, Mr. Snargate will be certain of an ample share of support. Here also is the Post-office.

There is also (as we are told) a *minor* establishment in Market Street, kept by a person of the name of Sniggerston, the publisher of a *would-be* Pedlington Guide. It would ill become *us* to speak of the work itself, which abounds in errors of the grossest kind, and will be found altogether useless to the traveller; but of the establishment we are bound in fairness to say, that nothing can be urged against it, as we are informed that it is resorted to by *some* of the respectable TRADES-PEOPLE of the town, and the FARMERS and COUNTRY-FOLKS on *Market-days*.

THE THEATRE.

From time immemorial the drama has been a chief source of amusement to the intellectual and the enlightened; nay, the Greeks and Romans patronized this innocent refuge from the busy cares of life; and it is beyond dispute that theatres were to

be found in the kingdoms both of Rome and Athens. No wonder is it, therefore, that Little Pedlington should languish for a fitting temple for the reception of Thalia and Melpomene ;* and that Yawkins's timber-yard should be contemplated as a convenient site for its erection. Mr. Snargate, the architect, has already executed a plan for a theatre, which will, in every respect, be worthy of our town: *we need say no more;* and Messrs. Yawkins, Snargate, and Co., our obliging bankers, have *liberally* consented to *receive* subscriptions for that purpose. At present, Mr. Strut's inimitable company, from Dunstable, perform in a commodious outhouse belonging to Mr. Sniggerston, the brewer, which is tastefully fitted up for the occasion. Ere long, however, we hope to receive the facetious Tippleton, the heart-rending Snoxell, and the versatile and incomparable Mrs. Biggleswade, in an edifice more becoming their high deserts.

YAWKINS'S SKITTLE-GROUND.

Nor should the lover of skittles and the fine arts fail to visit this place. On entering, he is astonished at beholding, at the further extremity, a Grenadier, with firelock and fixed bayonet, standing, as it were, sentry. "What!" he involuntarily exclaims, "the military in these peaceful retreats!" But, on nearer approach, he discovers it to be—what?—incredible as it may seem, nothing more than a painted canvass! Such is the illusion of art! For this unrivalled work we are indebted to the pencil of Mr. Daubson, portrait-painter, No. 6, West Street, where likenesses are taken in a superior style at five shillings to one guinea, and profiles done in one minute, at only one shilling each.

Yet, will it be believed! a certain jealous body of artists, in London, refused to exhibit this production, now the pride of Little Pedlington! Such is the force of jaundiced envy! Well might our "tuneful Jubb" thunder out the satire, which, should it demolish them, it will be well for modest merit, like our Daubson's, and they will have no one to thank for it but themselves.

> "'Where seek him' (cries th' astonish'd stranger here),
> 'Who drew this all-but breathing Grenadier?'—
> Not where, in academic pride, we see
> Sir David Wilkie and Sir Martin Shee,

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* The Goddesses of Tragedy and Comedy.

Briggs, Phillips, Landseer, Pickersgill, and, yea!
Turner, and R. R. Reinagle, R.A.
His works they hide in darksome nook, while they
Exhibit *theirs* in all the blaze of day;
His hang they high upon their highest wall,
Or, such their envy! *hang them not at all.*
Stand forth, my Daubson, matchless and alone!
And to the world in general be it known
That Pedlingtonia proud proclaims thee for her own!"

PEDLINGTONIA.

INNS.

Of the inns, we have already mentioned the Green Dragon. No way inferior to it for accommodation, civility, and reasonable charges, is Stintum's Golden Lion in East Street; and truth compels us to pass the same encomium upon the Butterfly and Bullfinch, in Market Street, kept by Snargate.

BATHS.

That immersion in water, or, as it is commonly called, bathing, was practised, both for health and cleanliness, by the ancients, is clearly proved by the existence of baths in Rome, still bearing the names of the emperors for whose use they were constructed —emperors long since crumbled into dust! But *baths*, properly so called, were reserved for the use only of the great; the middling and lower classes plunging (such is the opinion of our learned townsman, *Rummins*) into the Tiber.* Our town, however, can boast of *two* establishments, to which *all* classes may resort; and if we hesitate to say that Mrs. Yawkins's hot and cold baths, No. 22, West Street, are unequalled for comfort and cleanliness, it is only because we must, in justice, admit, that nothing can exceed the cleanliness and comfort to be found at the cold and hot baths kept by Widow Sniggerston, No. 14, Market Square.

THE MARKET.

The Market is in Market Street, which (as *Rummins* has ingeniously observed in his *Antiquities of Little Pedlington*, a work which no traveller should be without) appropriately derives its name from that circumstance. This edifice is well worthy

* A river in Rome.

the inspection of the curious. It is an oblong building, *with a roof*, which effectually protects the various articles exposed for sale from the inclemencies of the weather. Formerly, the market was held in the open air, to the great inconvenience of both purchaser and vendor, as well as to the injury of property; when it struck the intelligent mind of our townsman, Mr. Snargate, the builder (to whose patriotic exertions we are indebted for the present edifice), that an *enclosed* building would at once obviate all those inconveniences—an example which, we doubt not, will be followed in other parts of the kingdom. A subscription was soon raised for the purpose; and the Market of Little Pedlington now stands an eternal monument to his fame. Here are stalls for the sale of the finny tribe, the feathered creation, the produce of the earth, &c., &c., *all separate from each other;* and in such abundance, and so reasonable, that, not only for occasional visitors, but for the continual residence of families, especially of limited incomes, we should recommend this place as preferable to any other in England.

CURIOSITIES, ETC.

A few years ago, the STOCKS, which had stood, time immemorial, at the church door, were removed, and the present Cage was substituted in their place. *Mr. Rummins*, however, with praiseworthy zeal, anxious to preserve a relic of the venerable machine which had confined the legs of so many generations of offenders, petitioned the competent authorities of the town for leave to place one of the sliding-boards in his collection of curiosities. This was granted; and Mr. R. is always happy to exhibit this interesting fragment to respectable persons, between the hours of twelve and two, on any Friday during the season.

The NEW PUMP, which stands in the centre of Market Square, is an elegant and conspicuous object, as seen from the further end of any of the four leading streets; but it will amply repay the curious for a close and attentive inspection. It is composed *entirely of cast iron*, its predecessor having been merely of wood: such is the progress of luxury and civilization! It is in the form of an obelisk, or nearly so, on the top of which is a small figure of Neptune brandishing his trident, the attitude of which is much admired. The spout represents a lion's mouth; and the effect, as the water flows from it, is as pleasing as it is appropriate. The handle is in the form of a dolphin's tail—fitting

emblem! On the front, towards South Street, is the following inscription, for which we are indebted to the classical pen of *Mr. Rummins*:—

"THIS PUMP,

THE OLD ONE BEING WORN OUT,
ON THE 1ST OF APRIL, 1829,
WAS PLACED WHERE IT NOW STANDS
AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PARISH OF LITTLE PEDLINGTON.
THOMAS YAWKINS, CHURCHWARDEN,
HENRY SNARGATE, OVERSEER."

To the disgrace of human nature, we regret to add, that, shortly after its erection, the ladle which was suspended to it, that "the thirsty might drink," was stolen by some monster in human form!! This circumstance gave rise to dissensions which disturbed the town for many months, one party supporting the motion *for* a new ladle, the other as warmly opposing it. We rejoice to say, however (for we make no secret of our opinions on *that* subject), that a new ladle, with a strong double chain, was affixed to the pump, and that all rancorous party-feeling is fast subsiding, notwithstanding the efforts of a certain publisher of a certain Guide to prolong it. The robbery is finely and indignantly alluded to by Mr. Jubb, in his galling satire on a certain magistrate who opposed the restoration:—

"I'd rather be, than such a thing as Cr*mp,
The wretch that stole the ladle from the pump."

THE ENVIRONS.

Having conducted the stranger through the town, we will now lead him to its environs, and point out those spots most worthy of a morning's drive or walk. And first to the Vale of Health.

There is, perhaps, no place in Europe which can boast of so salubrious an air as Pedlington. Such, indeed, is the declared opinion of those eminent sons of Esculapius, Drs. Drench and Drainum, of this town. But the Vale of Health is paramount; and for invalids suffering from asthma, fits, tooth-ache, indigestion, corns, weakness of sight, gout, and other disorders of the same class, no other spot can be so safely recommended. It is most delightfully and conveniently situated near the new and extensive

Burying-ground (the old churchyard having long been full) which was planned by Doctors D. and D., who had the honour of laying the first stone of the entrance-gate, and is distant little more than a quarter of a mile from the town.

Nor should any lover of the picturesque leave us without visiting Snapshank Hill. There is no carriage-road to it; and, the path being broken and uneven, full of holes and ruts, consequently not altogether safe for horses, we would recommend a pedestrian excursion, as by far the most agreeable. It is exactly five miles distant from the Pump in Market Square, and the path is for the whole of the way a tolerably steep ascent. On arriving at the summit of the hill, a scene presents itself which the world cannot equal. But, since prose is too tame to do justice to it, we must borrow the exquisite description by our poet:—

"Lo, Snapshank Hill! thy steep ascent I climb,
And fondly gaze upon the scene sublime:
Fields beyond fields, as far as eye can spy!
Above—that splendid canopy, the sky!
Around—fair Nature in her green attire;
There—Pedlingtonia and its antique spire!
I gaze and gaze till pleasure turns to pain:
O Snapshank Hill! I'll now go down again."

We now take our leave.

Respecting the subscriptions to the Master of the Ceremonies' book, which lies at Yawkins's and at Snargate's libraries, as also to his weekly balls, it is not for *us* to speak; we therefore refer the visitor to those exceedingly obliging and attentive persons, who will candidly acquaint the inquirer with what is *proper and customary* on the occasion, as well as furnish him with his terms for teaching the pleasing art of tripping on the light fantastic toe. We cannot more appropriately conclude than by repeating the charming lines which we selected for our motto:—

"Hail, PEDLINGTONIA! Hail, thou favoured spot!
What's good is found in thee; what's not, is not.
Peace crowns thy dwellings, Health protects thy fields,
And Plenty *all* her cornucopia yields."

CHAPTER I.

Personal Narrative of the Journey to Little Pedlington—Pleasures of Poppleton-End—Blind Bob: a Job's Comforter—An agreeable Morning at Squashmire-Gate—The practice of receiving Money at Show-houses, defended—The Lippleton "Wonder"—Arrival at Little Pedlington.

No longer was I doubtful concerning my "whereabout." Little Pedlington, thought I, must be a Paradise! And had not my desire to visit this heaven upon earth been sufficiently excited by the exquisite lines, so aptly quoted by the M.C. from the charming poem of the "tuneful Jubb,"—

> "Hail! Pedlingtonia! Hail, thou favoured spot!
> What's good is found in thee; what's not, is not!"—

had not the promise of so much to gratify as well the intellect as the senses induced me thither; a feeling of shame, the consciousness that the bitter reproof uttered by the M.C. himself applied in its fullest force to my case, would alone have urged me to make the *amende honorable* by an immediate journey to the place.

"Well may it be said," he exclaims, "that Englishmen are prone to explore foreign countries ere yet they are acquainted with their own; and many a one will talk ecstatically of the marble palaces of Venice and Herculaneum, who is ignorant of the beauties of Little Pedlington."

True, true, indeed! and, myself standing in that predicament, I felt the sarcasm the more acutely. It was a suffering of a nature not long to be borne with patience; so I resolved to book a place for that same evening in the Little Pedlington mail.

Not a little was my astonishment on learning that there was *no* mail to that celebrated place; but great indeed it was when I was informed that there was no public conveyance whatever *direct* thither! However, I found that the Winklemouth coach (which ran nearer to it than any other) would set me down at Poppleton

End; that there I should be *pretty* sure of meeting with some one who would carry my luggage to Squashmire-Gate, a short three miles; and that from thence to Little Pedlington, a distance of eight miles—there or thereabouts—a coach ran regularly three times a-week during the season. Too happy to get there in any manner, I took a place in the Winklemouth coach, and, shortly afterwards, was rattling on towards the goal of my desires.

Between four and five in the morning the coach pulled up at the corner of a narrow cart-road, of no very inviting appearance, the soil being of clay, and the holes and wheel-tracks filled with water by the late heavy rains. A slight drizzling rain was falling then. The country for miles round was a dead flat, and not a house or shelter of any kind, save here and there a tree, was to be seen.

"Poppleton-End, sir," said the guard, as he let down the step.

"What! is *this* Poppleton-End?" said I.

"Yes, sir," replied he (adding, with a leer, which clearly indicated that he was satisfied of the excellence of his joke), "and has been, time out of mind."

"But I have a heavy valise with me," said I, as I alighted.

"Yes, sir," replied the guard, taking it down from the top of the coach, and placing it against the boundary-stone at the corner of the lane; "it is precious heavy, indeed."

"Well—I was informed that I should find somebody here who would carry it to Squashmire-Gate; but there is no person within sight, and I can't carry it myself."

"Why, no, sir, I don't very well see how you can; at least," continued he, in the same facetious tone, "it wouldn't be altogether pleasant. Hows'ever, sir, you have a very good chance of Blind Bob coming up with his truck in about half-an-hour or so."

I hate the phrase "or so." It is a cheat, an impostor, a specious and an insidious rogue. In all matters involving an inconvenience, I have invariably found that it is an aggravation of the original evil at least threefold. Thus, your "three miles, *or so*, further," to the place of your destination, after a wearisome walk in a strange country, may usually be computed at nine; "a guinea or so," in an uncertain charge, at three; if waiting the arrival of your bride, "an hour or so," at a day, a week, a year; if of your wife—but that is a case dependent upon peculiar circumstances.

"And pray, guard," inquired I, rather peevishly, "where am I to wait during that half-hour—or so?"

"Why, sir, if you should chance to miss Blind Bob, you might perhaps find it a *leetle* awkward with that large trunk of yours; so if you'll take my advice, sir, you'll wait where you are. Good morning, sir. I don't think it will be *much* of a rain, sir. All right, Bill; get on." So saying, he mounted the coach, and left me seated, beneath my umbrella, on the boundary-stone at Poppleton-End, at half-past four of the morning, in a drizzling rain.

They who travel much must be prepared to meet with difficulties; sometimes to encounter dangers: these carry a compensation with them in the excitement which they produce, and the exalted feelings they inspire. But one sinks under a tame and spiritless *inconvenience:* one's fortitude sneaks off, as it were, and one's temper oozes away. At five, at half-past five, at six o'clock, there I still sat, and not a human creature had come near me. The abominable rain, too! Rain! it was unworthy the name of rain. A good, honest, manly *shower*, which would have made one wet through-and-through in five seconds, I could have borne without complaint; but to be made to suffer the intolerable sensation of *dampness merely*, by a snivelling, drivelling, mizzling, drizzling *sputter*, and that, too, by dint of the exercise of its petty spite for a full hour-and-a-half——! There are annoyances which, it is said, are of a nature to make a parson swear; but this would have set swearing the whole bench of bishops, with their Graces of York and Canterbury at their head.

At length, I perceived, at some distance down the lane, a man dragging along a truck, at what seemed to me a tolerably brisk pace, considering the state of the road. He drew it by means of a strap passing over his shoulders and across his chest: and he carried in his hand a stout staff, which he occasionally struck upon the ground, though apparently not for support. He was rather above the middle height, broad, square, and muscular,—a cart-horse of a fellow. On arriving within two steps of my resting-place he stopped, and, with a voice of ten-boatswain power, shouted—

"Any one here for Squash'ire-Gate?"

"Yes," said I, almost stunned by the report, "don't you see? I am here."

"I wish I could," replied he; "but as I have lived Blind Bob all my life, Blind Bob I shall die."

The guard's description of my intended guide and carrier as "Blind Bob" had certainly not prepared me for the phenomenon

I was now to witness. Had I, indeed, paid any attention to it, the utmost I should have expected, as a justification of it, would have been a deduction of fifty *per cent.* from the usual allowance of eyes, in the case of the party in question. But here was a guide stone blind! *

"Blind!" I exclaimed; "under such circumstances, you have chosen a strange occupation."

"We can't choose what we like in this world, sir; if I warn't blind I'd never ha' chose to get my living by being a guide, that I promise you."

On my informing him that I had a portmanteau with me, and indicating the spot where it stood, he moved towards it, and, lifting it up, he tossed it, heavy as it was, over his shoulder into the truck, and instantly set forward towards Squashmire Gate.

"The "short three miles" turning out, as a matter of course, to be "a long five," and the whole of the road for that agreeable distance, being ankle-deep in mud, it was nearly nine o'clock when we came to the end of this portion of the journey. The conversation of my companion on the way might possibly have proved to be pleasant could I have afforded to purchase it at his price, which was—from the extraordinary loud tone of his voice—to suffer a smart box o' the ear at each word he uttered: this was beyond my power of endurance, so that, after a question and a remark or two, I remained silent. I called to mind a certain person, who being accosted in the street by a blind clarionet-screecher with "Have pity on the poor blind," replied, "I would if I myself were deaf!"

Squashmire Gate cannot, with strict regard to truth, be termed a pretty place; but as it puts forth no claim to that character, and as it is, moreover, the last stage on the road to Little Pedlington, it would be ungrateful as well as unjust to criticise it severely. It consists merely of a small public-house, of the most modest pretensions, situate on one side of a crooked road, slushy and miry; a small farriery on the other; a barn, a pigsty, and a horse-trough. And such is Squashmire Gate, where I was doomed to exist, as best I could, till the arrival of the coach—a term (I was *told*) of three mortal hours!

Tell not me of the clock or of the dial as the true indicators of

* Many persons may have seen the blind man who is (or lately was frequently to be found at the "Bull" at Stroud, and who acted as *guide* to strangers across the country between that place and Mereworth. *His* services were scarcely ever required except on dark nights, when he led the way with a lantern in his hand.

the progress of time. Nay, there are periods in every one's existence when the very sun himself is a "lying chronicler." There are occasions when, between his rising and his setting, months, years, ages, drag slowly along—in hope, doubt, or anxiety—in sickness or in sorrow—or when waiting the arrival of the Little Pedlington coach at such a place as Squashmire Gate!

Well! breakfast would beguile the half of an hour; so I ordered breakfast, which I took to the accompaniment of a "concord of sweet sounds:" the squeaking of a child cutting its teeth, the croaking of a raven in a wicker cage, the creaking of the sign-board on its rusty hinges, the occasional braying of a donkey; and the ceaseless yelping of a cur confined in a cupboard.

Breakfast ended, and only half-past nine! What was to be done next? "Are there any books in the house?"—"No, not one."—"A newspaper?"—"No."—"Then bring me pen, ink, and paper." They were "quite out" of paper, the cat had just broken the ink-bottle, and, somehow, they had mislaid *the* pen—a circumstance the importance of which was considerably diminished by the two previous accidents.

I turned for amusement to the window-panes. There was not a line, nor a word, nor a letter, nor a scratch to be seen. The vulgar scribble upon the glass, by which one is usually offended at country inns, would to me, in my then desolate condition, have been delight ineffable. To have been informed that "*J. P. and C. S. dind hear on the* 13*th of Februry;*" or that "*Ephraim Trist lovs Jane Higs;* or that "*Susen Miles is a beatifull cretear;*" or even such tender exclamations as "*O Mariar!*" or "*O Poly!!*"—this, the smallest information, would not only have been thankfully received, but it would have become to me matter of profound interest. But not a line, not a letter.

At length, after a considerable lapse of time, it came to be ten o'clock.

"And pray, my good woman," inquired I of the hostess, "is there no chance of the Little Pedlington coach coming through this place earlier than twelve to-day?"

"Not *earlier*, sir; indeed I shouldn't wonder if its *arter* instead of *afore*, seeing the state of the roads!"

"What!" shouted Blind Bob, who was in the kitchen and overheard our short colloquy—"What! *afore!* and with them 'ere roads! The Lippleton 'Wonder' won't be here afore three to-day. *Blesh* you, it *can't.*"

"Three!" I exclaimed; "it is impossible to remain here till three o'clock; I shall die of impatience and *ennui*. Can I have a chaise, or a gig?"

"No, sir," replied the woman; "we have nothing of *that* sort. To be sure, we have a one-horse kind of a cart"—here was a prospect of escape—"but our horse died Friday-week, and my good man hasn't yet been able to suit himself with another."

"Then," said I, "as the rain has ceased, I'll leave my portmanteau to be sent on by the 'Wonder,' and will walk the eight miles to Little Pedlington."

"What!" again shouted my evil genius—for as such I now began to consider him; "eight mile? It's thirteen good mile any day of the year; and as you must go round by Lob's Farm, 'cause of the waters being out at Slush-lane, it's a pretty tightish seventeen just now." Had it so chanced that Job had espoused Griselda, and I had been the sole offspring of so propitious a union, sole inheritor of their joint wealth of patience, my whole patrimony would have been insufficient to answer the exorbitant demands now made upon it. To find my journey lengthening in nearly the proportion in which it ought to have diminished; to be *mud*-bound in a place like this, without a resource of any kind, corporeal or intellectual, to beguile the time; and, in aggravation of these annoyances, to be condemned to the ceaseless infliction of the combined yell, yelp, squeak, screech, and scream of the sick child, the sorry puppy, and the other performers, animate and inanimate, in the cruel concert which I have before alluded to—! I know not how my imagined parents would have acted under a similar pressure of ills; but, for my part, I surrendered at discretion to the irresistible attack, and striking the table with a force which caused the astonished teapot to leap an inch high—

"And must I," I exclaimed, "*must* I remain in this infernal place for the whole of this miserable day?"

The poor woman, evidently hurt at the opprobrious term which I had cast upon her *village* (for such, I suppose, she considered Squashmire Gate to be), slowly shook her head; and with a look of mild rebuke, and in a corresponding tone,—

"Sir," she said, "all the world can't be Lippleton; if it *was*, it would be much too fine a place, and too good for us poor sinners to live in."

I would not be thought to undervalue the great work of Felix Hoppy, Esq., M.C.; but admirable as it is for the elegance

of its style, and unrivalled for the graphic (that, I believe, is the word now commonly in use upon these occasions), the graphic power of its descriptions, I declare that that one simply eulogistic phrase of my hostess would as effectually have excited my desire to behold the beauties and the wonders of Little Pedlington, as had already been accomplished by the more elaborate temptation offered by the illustrious Hoppy himself.

Although this was adding fuel to the fire of my impatience, I was at once overcome by the gentleness of the woman's manner; and unwilling that she should consider me as an incarnation of slander and detraction, I "explained," somewhat after the Parliamentary fashion, assuring her that by the phrase "infernal place," I meant nothing more than that it was the sweetest spot on earth, but that I was anxious to proceed on my journey.

And now, having satisfied her that I meant no offence to Squashmire Gate,—"Consider," said I, "consider that I have yet five hours to remain here: you cannot furnish me either with books, or paper, or with any earthly thing which would serve to lighten the time"—(adding, in the most imploring tone I could assume); "tell me, tell me, what *can* I do to amuse myself?"

The landlady looked at me as if she felt my appeal in its fullest force; then, fondly casting her eyes on the sick, squalling child, which she carried on her arm; then, again looking at me, she said, "I'm sure I hardly know, sir, *what* you can do; but if you would like to nurse babby for two or three hours you are heartily welcome, indeed you are, sir."

Nothing, perhaps, could more strikingly illustrate the forlorn and helpless condition to which I was reduced, than that it should have instigated one human being to venture such a proposal to another. Inviting as was the offer, I declined it, taking due credit to myself for so exemplary a display of self-denial.

The weather cleared, and the impartial sun shed a portion of its brightness even upon the ugliness of Squashmire Gate. The landlady seized the auspicious moment to vindicate the reputation of the place, and, leading me to the door, exclaimed, in a tone of triumph, "*Now* look, sir! It stands to reason, you know, that no place can look pretty in bad weather."

Yet could I not exult in my position. Perhaps, the first impression may have produced an unfavourable prejudice in my mind; yet, a barn, a horse-trough, a pigsty, and a smithy, with here and there a stunted tree, were not materials out of which to extract beauty, or capable of exciting pleasurable emotions.

No; in these my cooler moments of reflection, I still maintain that Squashmire Gate is *not* a pretty place.

I walked, or rather waded, outside the house. I peeped into the pigsty, looked into the barn, examined the smithy, and counted the ducks in the pond. Next, to vary my amusement, I began with the barn, then proceeded to inspect the pigsty, then on to the duck-pond, and so forth. But, by the greatest possible exercise of my ingenuity, I could not force the time on beyond half-past eleven. "And here I must needs remain till three!" thought I.

Upon occasions like the present, when one happens to be coach-bound, or otherwise detained in a country place, the churchyard is an infallible resource, and an epitaph-hunt will generally repay the labour of the chase.

I inquired whereabouts was the church.

"Just over at Hogsnorton, sir."

"And what's the distance to Hogsnorton, ma'am?"

"We call it five mile; but it may be five mile and a half."

"Hogsnorton five and a half!" shouted Bob; "it's seven mile or so, any day."

The "or so" was sufficient; so I decided against a pilgrimage to Hogsnorton.

"But, la! sir, how *could* I come to forget it?" exclaimed the landlady, upon the impulse of a sudden recollection; there's Dribble Hall you might see, if it warn't that the roads are so bad."

"And what, and where, is Dribble Hall, pray?"

"La! sir; have you never heard of Dribble Hall, as belongs to Squire Dribble. Why, sir, folks come from far and near to see Dribble Hall. Such picturs! and such statties! and such grounds! and such a person as the Squire himself is! Dear me; if it warn't for the roads——"

"Never mind the roads," said I (delighted at the chance of an agreeable mode of getting through this intolerable morning); "never mind the roads, if the place be within a reasonable distance."

"It's only two mile and a half," replied she.

"What!" roared Blind Bob (I expected that, as usual, he was preparing to multiply the distance by three; but this time I was agreeably disappointed). "What! two mile and a half! that's going by the road; but if the gentleman takes by the green gate, it an't much more than a mile."

"And pray, Bob, which way must I go?"

"Why, sir, when you get out, keep on straight to the left till you come to the green gate—green gate, mind,—and then turn smack to the right, and that takes you up to the house, across the squire's meadows; but be sure you turn to the right as soon as ever you come to the green gate, or you'll chance to be getting back again to Poppleton End."

"But when I have been at the pains of walking to Dribble Hall, will the squire allow me to see his place?"

"O yes, sir," replied the landlady, "and glad enough too; for all that the housemaid—the house-*keeper* she is called at the Hall—who receives no wages—gets less than ten pound a year from visitors, the Squire is obliged to make good to her; whilst whatever she gets above that, he shares with her,—which is but fair, you know, sir."

In a commercial country, where everything is considered relatively to its money-value, it certainly is "but fair" that noblemen and gentlemen, whose mansions and their contents are worth an inspection, should allow their servants to make a charge for the exhibition of them. I do not pretend that such a proceeding is noble, or dignified, or handsome, or, indeed, at all worthy of a person of high station, but, merely and strictly, that it is *fair*. We pay for seeing the sights in the Tower, the lions in Wombwell's booth, and in that in Drury Lane; a charge is made for showing Westminster Abbey, and the wax-works at Madame Tussaud's rooms; and upon what principle, either of justice or equity, are we to expect that the Duke of A. or the Earl of Z., if they allow us to see their galleries or their grounds, should grant us such an indulgence *gratis?* The notion is preposterous. There are, indeed, certain thriftless proprietors of what are called show-houses, who are so inconsiderate as to do this, but they form an exception to the general rule; and, happily for the honour and integrity of the maxim, "Give nothing for nothing," such instances of improvidence are not numerous. Yet I cannot help thinking that Squire Dribble pushes the practice a *little* too far, though he deserves some praise for honestly avowing the principle upon which it is founded.

"Well; I set forth for Dribble Hall, along a road which one might have imagined had been constructed of boot-jacks, for, at each step I took, my boots were half-drawn off my feet by the necessary effort of extricating them from the tenacious soil. Following Bob's directions with punctuality equal to their precision, I kept *to the left;* but after walking—if struggling through such a road may be so termed—for considerably more

than an hour, I had not arrived at a green gate—the point at which I was to change my course *for the right*. Gates of all colours, black, white, and brown, I had passed, and occasionally a road branching off in a different direction, but no green gate had I seen. Nevertheless, confiding in the instructions of my blind guide, I proceeded; when, lo! at the expiration of another hour, I found myself in the lane which I had traversed in the morning, about mid-way between Squashmire Gate and Poppleton End! "O, Little Pedlington!" thought I; "a paradise before the fall must thou be to compensate me for all that I have this day endured for thy sake!"

Disappointed, wearied, and vexed, I returned to my *hotel* at Squashmire Gate; and there, on a bench before the door, sat Blind Bob.

"Rascal!" I exclaimed; "how dared you thus deceive me? how dared you send me on this wildgoose chase?"

"Couldn't you find the Hall, sir? I told you to keep to the left till you came to the green gate, and then—"

"I did keep to the left till here I am again; but the deuce a green gate is there the whole way."

"I think I ought to know best, sir. Tell me o' no green gate, indeed! Did you notice two tall poplars, with a gate between them, leading into a meadow?"

"I did,—a newly-painted *white* gate."

"White! nonsense, sir, begging your pardon; what does that signify? *That* be the green gate, and has been always called so in these parts, time out o' mind. It's o' no use to be angry with me: it's no fault o' mine if Squire has taken and had it painted white."

Obdurate must be his heart who is not to be pacified by a reason, or something that sounds like one. Besides, Blind Bob's excuse was strengthened by the explanation of the landlady, who told me that, although the green gate had always served as a sort of road-guide, yet Squire Dribble, being "a gentleman who looked sharply after his farthings," had resolved that for the future it should be painted white—white paint being rather cheaper than green.

"Order dinner," said a generally-too-late friend with whom I had agreed to dine at a tavern one day; "order dinner at six for half-past, and I will positively be with you at seven." The Little Pedlington "Wonder" being expected up at three, it consequently arrived at half-past four. And "O! what damned minutes told I o'er" in that long interval!

The Little Pedlington "Wonder" was a heavy, lumbering coach, licensed to carry six inside and fourteen out; was drawn by two skinny horses, and driven by a coachman built after the exact fashion of the coach he drove, *id est*, lumbering and heavy.

"Full out, room for one in," was the coachman's reply to my question whether I could have a place. I expressed my disappointment at not having an outside place, as I should thus be deprived of obtaining the first possible view of Little Pedlington; nor was my disappointment diminished by coachee's remark, that that was *indeed* a sight!

"And how long will it be before you start, coachman?"

"About a quarter of an hour or so, sir," was the reply.

"What!" bellowed forth my everlasting friend, Bob; "a quarter of an hour! You'll not get away from here afore six, Master Giles, and you know you won't."

Mr. Giles was part proprietor of the "Wonder" (the only coach on that road), which he drove up one day and down the next; so, there being no opposition, he carried matters with a high hand, deferring to the wishes or the convenience of one only person that ever travelled by the "Wonder," which one was himself.

"Six!" said Giles, taking up the word of Blind Bob, "why, to be sure; mustn't I have a bit of summut to eat? and mustn't I rest a bit? and mustn't my cattle rest a bit? How *can* I get off afore six? My tits are tolerable good ones; but if I didn't give 'em a rest here and there, how'd ever they get on to Lippleton, I should like to know?"

Considering the appearance of his "tits," the load they had to drag, and the roads along which they were doomed to drag it, that question was, certainly, a poser. When I was told of the Little Pedlington "Wonder," my expectations were of a rapidity of progress second in degree only to that of flying; but in the present case, the sole claim which the vehicle could conscientiously make to the title was, that it could be prevailed upon to move at all. It was, therefore, not without trepidation that I ventured to inquire at *about* what time we were *likely* to get into Little Pedlington.

"Why," replied Giles, "we must take the long road this afternoon, on account of the waters; so we shan't get in *much* afore nine."

"And very fair travelling, too," said I, happy at length at knowing *when* this day of disagreeables was to terminate:

seventeen miles in three hours is not to be complained of, under the circumstances."

"What!" again shouted the inveterate Blind Bob; "nine! you'll not see Lippleton afore eleven to-night. Why, the 'Wonder' never does more nor four mile an hour at the best o' times, and here's the long road to take, and as heavy as putty. Besides, won't you stop three times more to rest the horses? I say you'll not see Lippleton afore eleven; it stands to reason, and you know you won't."

"Why, you stupid old fool," said Giles, you say yourself I must stop three times to rest the horses: then how *can* I get in afore eleven? Some folks talk as if they were out of their common senses." Saying which, Giles entered the house, leaving me in some doubt whether the Fates might not have determined against my ever seeing Little Pedlington at all.

Something must be contrived to pass the time between this and six o'clock, and dinner was the only expedient that occurred to me. I called the landlady, who came, as usual, with that inevitable squalling child on her arm. It was screaming as if it would have screamed its head off, and I could not avoid commencing my address by a profane parody on Shakspeare:—"First of all, my good woman, 'silence that dreadful *child*.'"

"La, sir! consider, you were once a child yourself," was her reply; a rebuke, by the by, which you invariably receive if you presume to complain of the performance of that the most intolerable music ever composed by Nature.

Now, admitting the fact that I *was* once a child myself, it by no means follows as a necessary consequence that I was a squalling child; the justice, therefore, of applying the rebuke to me I am always disposed to question. On the other hand, if I did delight in that atrocious mode of exalting my voice, my present opinion is that, for the comfort of society, I ought to have been, in some way or other—to use a favourite melo-dramatic phrase—"disposed of." I throw this out merely as a hint, though I by no means positively advise that it be acted upon in any manner that might be unpleasant to the rising generation. Query: *Was* King Herod at heart a wicked man?

Having, at the risk of a sore throat, contrived to scream louder than the child, I inquired what I could have for dinner.

"What would you like, sir?"

"A boiled chicken."

"We have never a chicken, sir; but would you like some eggs and bacon?"

"No. Can I have a lamb-chop?"

"No, sir; but our eggs and bacon is very nice."

"Or a cutlet—or a steak?"

"No, sir; but we are remarkable *here* for our eggs and bacon."

"Have you anything cold in your larder?"

"Not exactly, sir; but I'm sure you will admire our eggs and bacon."

"Then what *have* you got?"

"Why, sir, we have got nothing but eggs and bacon."

"O! then have the goodness to give me some eggs and bacon."

"I was sure you'd choose eggs and bacon, sir; we are so famous for it."

Having finished my dinner, I thought it proper, for the good of the house, to inquire what wine I could have—of course, not expecting that my choice would be much perplexed by the variety offered.

"What would you like, sir?"

"Some port."

"We have no port, sir."

"A little sherry, then."

"We don't keep sherry, sir; in short, we have so little call for wine, that we don't keep any of no kind."

"Then pray give me some lemonade."

"Yes, sir. Do you—do you prefer it *with* lemon, or without?"

"How!"

"Why—only we happen just now to be out of lemons."

Finding that I should be obliged to "malt it," I asked for—what, from its delicious flavour, is now becoming the rage with the drinkers of England's Own—Collins's Richmond Ale. Fortunately, they could supply me with *that*, so I had but little cause to regret their being "out" of the rest.

At length, the welcome moment for our departure arrived.

"I think," said Giles, as he clumsily clambered up to his box—"I think we shall have a little more rain yet."

"What!" for the last time cried our Job's comforter; "a little? You'll have rain enough to *drownd* you long afore you're half way to Lippleton, and thunder along with it; mind, if

you don't. I can feel it in my head, and it stands to reason."

I took my place inside the coach; and now, being fairly on my road to that haven of bliss, Little Pedlington, I soon forgot all the past annoyances of the day. Yet was not my position one of absolute comfort. I was jammed in between two corpulent ladies, of whom one was suffering under a violent toothache, and the other from headache. Opposite to me was a stout man with part of a strong Cheshire cheese on his knee; another, saturated with the fumes of bad cigars with which he had been regaling himself; and the third had with him a packet of red-herrings. Between the two ladies a constant dispute was maintained as to whether the glasses should be up or down: she of the tooth declaring that if the windows were open the air would be the death of her; whilst the cephalagian as eagerly contended that she should incontestably expire from the heat if they were shut; and as the contest was carried on across me, I was in imminent danger of suffocation under the weight, not of the arguments, but the arguers. In addition to the compound of odours I have mentioned, one of the fair sufferers was using camphor, and the other, ether.

We proceeded at what might be the pace of a hearse in a hurry—something short of four miles an hour. At every hovel by the roadside, Mr. Giles pulled up to enjoy his "tithe of talk" with its inhabitants. Remonstrance and entreaty on the part of us, the impatient travellers, were useless. He plainly told us, that as there was no opposition on the road, he had always had his own way; and that he saw no reason why he should be baulked of it now. Then, he stopped at one small public-house to eat, and at the next to drink, and at another to rest. A long journey, fairly performed, is not an affair to complain of; but, oh! the torments of a short one prolonged by needless delay! At ten o'clock we had yet six miles of ours to accomplish. The night was dark; suddenly, as the sea-song has it, "the rain a deluge poured," and (to continue the quotation) "loud roared the dreadful thunder," when—within about two miles of Little Pedlington—crash! the pole broke. Whether or not the horses took fright I have never had any means of ascertaining: certain however it is, they neither became unmanageable, nor did they run away; they were not in a state to do either; so, like jaded, sensible horses as they were, they stood stock-still. After considerable delay, and many fruitless attempts to repair the accident, we were compelled to walk through a pelting shower the remainder

of the way. As I approached the town (though, from the utter darkness, I could not see it), I felt as one feels on first beholding Rome, or as Bonaparte is said to have felt at the first sight of the pyramids; and when, at length, I found myself in a bedroom at Scorewell's hotel, the Green Dragon, in High-street—forgetting all my bygone troubles, I exultingly exclaimed—"And here I am in Little Pedlington!"

CHAPTER II.

Profession of the spirit in which this journal will be (as all journals are) written—First morning in Little Pedlington—Am always the *first* to complain—Visit from mine host—Already a stirring event announced—Symptoms of envy, hatred, and malice even here—The four naughty people in the town denounced—The family with the fly—Great folks in little places—Becoming attentions—Visit from a great man—Everthing to be had in a country town excepting what you want.

JUNE 15.—"All the world can't be Little Pedlington: if it *was*, it would be much too fine a place, and too good for us poor sinners to live in." Those words, which made so powerful an impression upon me when uttered by mine hostess in rebuke of my evil-speaking of Squashmire Gate—those words occurred to me, as I awoke at eight o'clock of this, the morning of the 15th of June: those words, therefore, have I placed on the first page of the journal which I now commence, and which I purpose to continue during my residence in Little Pedlington. Each night will I repeat them ere I register the events of the by-gone day; or minute down the conversations to which I may have listened, or in which I may have shared; or ere I venture to record my judgment and opinions, whether of persons or of things: so shall the Spirit of Indulgence guide my pen! And should it be my chance to encounter amongst the Pedlingtonians some whose manners, whose acquirements, or whose genius may fail to satisfy my full-strained expectation, let me remember that as all the world cannot be one entire and perfect Little Pedlington, so neither can I reasonably hope to find in every Pedlingtonian a Hoppy, a Rummins, or a Jubb. Let me, O Truth! walk hand in hand with thee! And if, haply, upon occasion I slightly deviate from thy path severe, be it only to "hide the fault I see"—be it to "extenuate," not to "set down in malice." But if to propitiate the demon Vanity—if to purchase, or to maintain, a reputation for wit or sentiment, for sensibility or sarcasm, for talent or for *tact*, I sacrifice, O Goddess! one atom

of thy divine spirit at the shrine of Detraction, may I be hunted from the High Street to the Crescent, from Yawkins's skittle-ground to the "new pump which stands in the centre of Market Square," and driven with scorn and contumely from out the peaceful precincts of Little Pedlington, never to return!

So now to proceed.

Rose at eight. With what emotions did I listen to the clock of Little Pedlington Church, as, *for the first time*, I heard it strike the hour! Thought of my own dear clock which stands on the mantlepiece in my library, in my still-remembered "home, sweet home," No. 16, —— Street, and was preparing to shed a tear, when I was interrupted by the chambermaid, who knocked at my door and inquired whether I wished for some warm water? Although the most approved method of commencing a journal, even of a trip from Gower Street to Gravesend, is by a pathetic reflection or two upon the home we have left; yet, as I didn't come to Little Pedlington to do the sentimental, I was not sorry for the interruption. The jug of warm water she brought me being a small one, I desired she would bring a larger.

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[With, perhaps, blamable fastidiousness, I suppress many points which (it may be) are not of sufficient importance to interest the *general* reader: as in the present case, for instance:—"The second jug of water not being sufficiently warm, I sent it away to be heated—nearly seven minutes before she returned with it!" And afterwards, when writing of my breakfast, I have suppressed the fact, that "one of the eggs being too much boiled, I desired that another might be sent me, boiled *only three minutes and a quarter*. A hard egg is my mortal aversion." The reflection, however, I have thought worth preserving. The suppressions I may, perhaps, print hereafter, in a separate volume, for distribution amongst my private friends.]

Having finished dressing, was in doubt whether to walk out before breakfast, or to take breakfast before walking out. After a long deliberation with myself, resolved, notwithstanding my impatience to see the place, to breakfast first; as, that operation being performed, I should then enjoy the uninterrupted command of the morning. On my way down to the coffee-room met the chambermaid. Inquired of her which was considered to be the principal inn of the place. Told me that *this* was—that there

were two others which were so-so places upon the whole, but quite *un*ferior for gentlefolks—that all the tip-top people came here. Here she was interrupted by the violent ringing of a bell. Made her excuses for being obliged to leave me so "abrupt;" but explained, that if the bell of the family with the fly were not answered on the instant, the house would not be big enough to hold them.—Could not comprehend what was meant by the family with the fly.

Went into the coffee-room—not a creature in it. Looked out at the window—not a soul to be seen. Thought the town must be deserted. Rang the bell—enter waiter—white cotton stockings with three dark stripes above the heel of the shoe, indicating the number of days' duty they had performed. Ordered breakfast—coffee, eggs, and dry toast; observing, that if they were not *au fait* at making coffee, I should prefer to take tea. Waiter, rather piqued, assured me that I was the first gentleman who had ever said O fie! at their coffee, for that it gave general satisfaction.

Strange! It has invariably been my misfortune to be the *first* to complain of anything *what*soever, at any tavern, coffee-house, or hotel *where*soever; the slightest expression of discontent at my wine, my dinner, my accommodation—no matter what—having always been met with, "Dear me, sir! that's very extraordinary! This is the very first time we have heard a complaint of *that*, I assure you." I wonder whether my case in this respect is singular?

Breakfast brought; poured out from a huge japanned tin vessel, standing eighteen inches high, a nankeen-coloured liquid. Rose for the purpose of looking into the unfathomable machine—full to the brim! Made according to the most approved English coffee-house recipe—"to half an ounce of coffee add a quart-and-a-half of water:" but as their coffee "gave general satisfaction," I would not, by complaining, risk an appearance in so remarkable a minority as *one*.

* * * * *

A hard egg is my mortal aversion.

* * * * *

"You are the first gentleman that ever complained of our *over*-boiling our eggs, I assure you, sir," said the waiter.

"Do you take a London paper here?"

"*In* course, sir; a house like ours takes a London paper. We have the *Morning Post* up to last Saturday week, sir, and shall have all *last* week's down by *next* week's carrier. But I hope, sir, you are in no hurry to see the papers!"

"And why so?"

"Because, sir, the family with the fly has got them; and it would be as much as their custom is worth to ask for them till they are quite done with."

Before I had time to ask for an explanation concerning a family so oddly distinguished, the landlord, Mr. Scorewell, came hastily into the room, and angrily said to the waiter, "Don't you hear, sir? The family-with-the-fly bell has rung twice." Away scampered the waiter, as though he had been goaded on to his duty by the combined attack of every fly of every kind in Little Pedlington.

Scorewell, with inconceivable rapidity, converted his angry frown into the sweetest innkeeper-smile I ever witnessed; and, in a tone indescribably bland, accompanied by the matter-of-course bow, he welcomed me to "Lippleton"—that being the abbreviated name of the place.

"Is this your first visit to our place, sir?"

I told him it was.

"Then, sir, I can only say, you have a great treat to come."

"Your town seems to me to be empty," said I; "excepting yourself and your servants, I have not seen a human being."

"Quite the contrary, sir—fullest season ever known."

"Then what is become of all the people?"

"Dear me, sir! didn't the waiter tell you? how very stupid of him! 'Tis his duty to tell visitors when anything particular is going on in the town. I dare say, sir, you would have liked to go?"

"What is it, and where?" I eagerly inquired.

"Why, sir, everybody is gone down to the market-place to hear Miss Cripps's bag cried. Had the misfortune last night to lose her peagreen silk bag with a scarlet ribbon and a sky-blue binding, containing two sovereigns, a silver thimble, a lump of orris-root, three shillings, a pot of lip-salve, a new flaxen front, two half-crowns, a new tooth, a paper of carmine, and eighteen sixpences. And would you believe it, sir, though the crier has been three times round the town already, and has offered one-and-ninepence reward, there are no tidings of it, high or low? Miss C. declares that it isn't the loss of the money she cares about; but she is anxious on account of the new tooth, the

orris-root, the carmine, lip-salve, and flaxen front—*which belonged to a friend of hers.*"

These latter words the landlord (checking his volubility) uttered with particular emphasis, accompanied by a comically grave expression of countenance.

"A thousand pities, sir," continued Scorewell, "that you should have missed hearing the crier; the more so, owing to the extraordinary coin*ci*dence of so interesting a thing occurring the very first morning of your being in Lippleton, when all the town, as I may say, is in a state of excitement about it."

"I am greatly annoyed at my loss," said I; "but concerning Miss Cripps's, I entertain no apprehensions; for if what I hear of your towns-people be true—that they are as remarkable for their goodness and virtue, as your town is for its beauty——"

"You may say that, sir; and though I am a Pedlingtonian myself, this I will say, that for good-heartedness, and honour, and honesty—with never a grain of envy, hatred, or malice—and as for evil-speaking, why, bless you, sir, we don't know what the thing means. Ah! it is, *indeed*, a proud thing to be able to say, that in such a prodigious population as ours (for we count twenty-nine hundred and seventy-two, men women, and children) there are only two rascals to be found."

"Then pray tell me who they are, in order that I may avoid them."

"O sir, they are very well known: one is that villain Stintum that keeps the Golden Lion; the other is that scoundrel Snargate, of the Butterfly and Bullfinch. But I suppose, sir, there must be a black sheep or two in every flock, or the world would not be the world. Foul-mouthed villains, too! Why, sir, they never mention my name without——but I beg pardon, sir—there's the family-with-the-fly bell—will be with you again in a minute."

Ere I had ceased to wonder that a community so near to perfection as that of Little Pedlington should allow itself to be thus defiled, when it might become immaculate by ejecting only two of its members, Scorewell returned.

Not choosing to inquire directly what they meant by their family with the fly, I led to the question by asking Scorewell if his house was full.

"Why, sir, I should have been full if it hadn't been for those villains who kidnaps, positively kidnaps, customers into their houses. Sending their cards about—under-charging so, that *I'm*

sure they cannot get a living profit—and then, setting about a report that my chimneys smokes, d—n 'em!——I'm a man, sir, that speaks ill of nobody, and wishes ill to no man; but as for *them*, the day I see their names in the Gazette (and it wont be long first) will be the happiest day of *my* life. And then, again, sir, those boarding-houses! Full, indeed! I'll ask you, sir, how *is* one to be full, or how is an honest innkeeper to get a livelihood with such opposition as that? Little Pedlington, sir, would be a perfect Paradise if it warn't for them boarding-houses. But they are the pest of the place; they ought to be *annilliated;* government ought to interfere and put them down. When we send members to Parliament (which we have as good a right to do as many other places), *I'll* give my vote and support to whosomever will go in upon the independent interest, and bring in a bill to put down boarding-houses. And yet, upon the whole, I can't say they do *me* much harm, for real gentlefolks don't go to them. Real gentlefolks don't like to be *pisen'd* with stale fish and bad meat. I know how much a-pound Mrs. Stintum of the Crescent-boarding-house pays for her meat; and I know how Mrs. Starvum of South-street bargains for her fish and poultry. I don't say it to their disparagement, poor devils! because people must live; and those who sell cheap must buy cheap—only, they ought to be a *little* more careful in cholera times. But go to my butcher, sir, and ask him what sort of meat Scorewell of the Green Dragon buys—my son George, who is the most pre-eminent butcher in the market; and ask my other son, Tobias, who serves me with every morsel of fish and poultry that comes into this house, what prices *I* pay for my commodities: I'm not ashamed to have *my* larder looked into before the victuals is cooked. If, indeed, they would only live and let live, as I say—but two stingy, cheating, undermining, evil-speaking old tabbies like them, who cannot bear to see anybody thrive but themselves—especially me! They are the only two nuisances in the place, and it would be better for everybody if they were out of it. The world is big enough for us all, so there's no need of envy and jealousy, and of trying to do one's neighbour harm: that's my maxim; and I wish that they, and those rascals at the Butterfly and Bullfinch, and the Golden Lion, would profit by it."

I took advantage of Scorewell's taking breath to ask him who were the visitors he had in his house.

"Why, sir," replied he, "I have not many, but they are all of the first respectability. There's Mr. and Mrs. Fitz-bobbin;

Mr. St. Knitall and *his* lady; Mr. De Stewpan; Mr. Twistwireville; *and* Mr. Hobbs Hobbs and his family—*very* tip-top people, indeed, sir—*the* family with the fly. They always honour us with their company—the fourth season they have been at my house—Mr. Hobbs Hobbs and his lady; their two daughters, Misses Eleonora and Florentina; Master William Hobbs Hobbs, the younger son, and Mr. Hobbs Hobbs Hobbs, the elder—six altogether, sir, and always travel in their own one-horse fly."

So, the mystery of the "family with the fly" was explained.

"Of course, sir," continued Scorewell, "as you are from London, you must know most of the parties—have heard of them, at any rate?"

There was a touch of aristocracy—of gentility at the least—implied by the *Fitzes* and the *Villes*, and the imposing duplication of the Hobbs; yet I could not call to mind that I had ever heard any one of those names before.

At this moment there was again a violent ringing of bells.

"Nobody answering the family-with-the-fly bell!" exclaimed the landlord. "Beg pardon for leaving you, sir, but I must attend to it myself. You know, sir, it behoves a person in my situation to be most *particularly* attentive and obliging to *carriage* company."

I felt something like a shock on learning that there were two rascals (the innkeepers) in so virtuous a town as Little Pedlington; but when Scorewell informed me that there were two ladies also in the same unfortunate category—making an aggregate of four bad characters—I was inclined to believe that the reputation of the place for goodness, however it might deserve it for beauty, had been over-rated. And yet, thought I, compared with the mass of crime, villany, and roguery, of every description, that exists in London and other great cities, four offenders in such "a prodigious population as twenty-nine hundred and seventy-two" constitute no very alarming proportion of wickedness. The guide-book of Felix Hoppy, Esq., M.C., aided by the commentary of my landlady at Squashmire-Gate, had determined me to think favourably of Little Pedlington, and I resolved not to abandon my good opinion of it for four's sake.

As I rose from my seat, and struck my hands together, as one does upon having made up one's mind with one's self, Scorewell entered the room, and, with a low bow, handed me a visiting ticket, saying, "With his very best compliments and most profound respects, he has the inexpressible honour and

greatest possible felicity in welcoming you to Little Pedlington."

Heavens! what did I behold? It was from the illustrious M.C. himself!—a card (somewhat larger than Hardy's Great Moguls), beautifully glazed and richly embossed, having at the top an Apollo's head, at the four corners, respectively, a lyre, a French-horn, a fiddle and bow, and the Pandean pipes; these connected at the sides by true-lovers' knots and roses placed alternately. In the midst of this vast combination of elegance and splendour, there appeared in characters of gold—as such a name deserves to appear—

MR. FELIX HOPPY, M.C.
No. 4,
WEST STREET,
LITTLE PEDLINGTON.
Please to ring the bottom bell.

"A great man, sir!" said my loquacious host; "and a dancing-master. Lippleton, sir, would never have been what it is without him—I mean for elegance and fashion. He has made the Lippleton ladies what they are. You may tell his pupils a mile off by their walk. Bless you, sir, he makes them turn their toes out till they almost come behind their heels! And then such a dancer as he is himself! I sometimes read in the London papers about the opera; and Lord! the fuss they make with their *Cooluns* and *Elslums* and *Tagglenonis!* I wish they'd just come to Lippleton and see the great Hoppy: he'd soon take the shine out of them, I promise you. Ah, sir! there ar'n't many Hoppys in the world, you may rely upon *that*."

"I was not aware of his excellence in that way," said I; "my admiration of him is grounded upon his book,—his 'Little Pedlington Guide.'"

"A book, indeed. Ah, sir, you may well call it a book! Not many books in the world like that, eh, sir? But, as the saying is, man's work is never perfect; there are two terrible faults in it, and I once made bold to tell him so. How *could* he make mention of

the Butterfly and Bullfinch, and the Golden Lion,—and those rascally boarding-houses, too! But it shows his good nature. But, after all, sir, for *writing* you must see our Jubb—'Pedlingtonia's Pride,' as he calls himself somewhere in his poetry. And Rummins, too—the great Rummins! Of course, you'll stay here till Friday, if it's only to see his museum. But be sure you ask him to show you the sliding-board of the old stocks that were removed when the new cage was built: there you see the holes that the folks' legs used to go through, as plain, ay, sir, as plain as if they were only made yesterday. Antiquities are wonderful things, sir, ar'n't they?"

"As I came not only to see the place, but its celebrated inhabitants also, I shall endeavour to obtain introductions to Mr. Rummins and Mr. Jubb; and to your painter, Daubson, too!"

"There, again; Daubson! a great creature, indeed! Some of your Lunnuners—saving your presence, sir—come down here as big as bulls, talking of their celebrated 'this' and their great 't'other;' but when they have seen what we can show in *Lippleton*, they soon draw in their horns, that I can tell you, sir."

"Well," said I, somewhat impatiently (for, to confess the truth, although I was prepared to pay due homage to the great men of Little Pedlington, I was growing envious of their superiority to all the rest of the world),—"well, Mr. Scorewell, that will do for the present. I will now, guide-book in hand, pay a visit to the town; at five o'clock I will return; and since (as I perceive by the book) you have a well-supplied market——"

"The best in the whole universe, sir."

"Well, then, you will let me have a nice little dinner; some fish and——"

"Fish! To-day is Monday, you know, sir, and Wednesdays and Saturdays are our fish-days. Couldn't get fish to-day in Lippleton for love or money. But I'll tell you what, sir; if Joe Higgins should bring any gudgeons in to-morrow, I'll take care of 'em for *you*,—unless, indeed, the family with the fly should want 'em."

"A veal cutlet then, and——"

"Veal! We only kill veal in Lippleton, sir, once a week, and that's o' Tuesdays. But if you'd please to leave it to my cook, sir, she'll send you up as nice a little dinner as you could wish to sit down to."

I adopted the landlord's suggestion. As I was preparing to depart, he exclaimed, "Dear me, sir! I was near forgetting to remind you—but, if Miss Cripps's bag should'nt be found before twelve o'clock, you'll be sure to hear it cried then, if you go down to Market Square. As these things don't happen every day, they are the more interesting, you know, sir. Besides, when——but, beg pardon, sir:—there's the family-with-the-fly bell again."

CHAPTER III.

An interesting ceremony—Little Pedlington bank: obligingly give change for a Bank-of-England note to an utter stranger—Pedlingtonians apparently not theatrical—New Pump—Caution in criticism—A pleasant acquaintance: little Jack Hobbleday, a thorough-going Pedlingtonian—Civilities proffered: to be introduced to the magnates of the land—Mr. Shrubsole—Something like scandal—Hobbleday's candid opinion of his friend Shrubsole—Zoological Garden: monkey-mania of the Pedlingtonians—New burying-ground—Symptoms of a *bore*—Shrubsole's candid opinion of his friend Hobbleday—Evidence of the salubrity of the Vale of Health—Mineral spring *discovered*—Universal Knowledge Society—Rival confectioners—Mr. Yawkins, the eminent publisher: important new works in progress—Miss Tidmarsh, and a tale of horror—Daubson's celebrated picture visited and criticised—Culpable conduct of the R.A's.

WENT first of all to the*****
Next went to see the*****
Afterwards went to look at the*****

[Upon comparing my own notes with the masterly descriptions of the M.C., I find them so decidedly inferior to his, that (with only one or two exceptions) I shall suppress them; confining myself chiefly to events, characters, and conversations.]

Nearly twelve o'clock. Crowds of persons, with countenances eager and anxious, hurrying from all quarters to Market Square. Joined them. Exclamations of "Cruel loss!" "Unparalleled villany!" "Poor Miss Cripps!" "Serve her right!" "It will be the death of her!" &c., &c. Guessed the cause of the assemblage. As the clock struck twelve the crier appeared. Sudden silence,—almost awful, from its contrast with the previous buzz. The crier carried a bell, which he sounded thrice, each time exclaiming (as nearly as I could understand the words), "O Yes!" Here some heartless reprobate in the crowd cried out, "O *no*, if you think the bag will ever come to light." Symptoms of just indignation, and cries of "Shame! shame!" The crier then proceeded; and after detailing, in a

tone of voice interestingly monotonous, the contents of the bag, as already described to me by Scorewell, he concluded by offering a reward of two-and-three-pence for its recovery (an advance of sixpence upon the first tempting inducement to an honest proceeding), and declaring, that "no higher reward won't be offered." Altogether an impressive ceremony. Would not have missed it for worlds.

Went into a shop to purchase a pair of gloves. Found one of my pockets turned inside out and my purse gone. Could not have been better done in London. Assured by the glover—who was a hardware-man also, and vendor of Burgess's fish-sauces and Day and Martin's blacking—that "It was never no Pedlingtonian what did that—they were above such things." My nasty, suspicious mind doubted, for a moment, whether Little Pedlington were *much* better than other places, after all. Four not over-good people in it, by Scorewell's own admission,—and he a staunch Pedlingtonian, too. Psha! it must have been the work of one of the London swell mob. Fortunately, my pocket-book was safe.

Went to Messrs. Yawkins, Snargate, and Co. (the "obliging bankers," as they are truly designated in the guide-book; agents also to the London Salamander Fire-office, and for the sale of James's powders), to change a twenty-pound note. Asked me how I chose to take it. Replied, "Sovereigns." Mr. Snargate, the junior partner, went into the back office. In a few minutes returned with Mr. Yawkins, the head of the respectable firm. Mr. Yawkins regretted that at that moment they were *rather* short of specie. Obligingly paid me nineteen of their own notes (with a beautiful picture of the new pump upon them), a half-sovereign, seven-and sixpence in silver, and half-a-crown in halfpence. Suspect I must have looked rather queer at the notes, for Mr. Yawkins, without any other provocation, assured me they were "as good as the Bank." "Which?" thought I. Obligingly offered to send their "head clerk" (a scrubby-headed boy, who was watering the shop), with the halfpence to my inn. "Obliging bankers," indeed!—a lesson for Lombard-street. Inquired how the subscription for the erecting of a new theatre went on. Mr. Yawkins shook his head. Said that although Mr. Ephraim Snargate, the architect (proposer of the scheme), had patriotically headed the list with a subscription of one-pound-one,—although Mr. Luke Snargate, the builder, had nobly followed his example,—although the learned Rummins had kindly promised an inscription for the

foundation-stone, and the celebrated Jubb a poetical address for the opening night,—nay, although their "house" had voluntarily offered to *receive* subscriptions, he was sorry to add that "the Pedlingtonians *did—not—subscribe.*" Shook *my* head in reply, and took my leave. Sighed as I reflected upon such neglect of the drama even in Little Pedlington.

Being so near the new pump, took the opportunity to examine it. Deserves all the praise that has been bestowed upon it: with its lion-mouthed spout, dolphin-tailed handle, and the figure of Neptune brandishing his trident on the top, it is certainly far superior to any pump I have seen in London, scarcely even excepting that in Burlington Gardens. Aware as I am that it is not very agreeable to the inhabitants of any strange place one may visit to express an unfavourable opinion (although it be a true one) touching even so small a matter as a pump-ladle, yet, at the risk of being charged with want of candour, with malevolence, and ingratitude, I must say that I think the *form* of the ladle attached to the latter is preferable; *certainly the bowl is more capacious.* Perhaps a Pedlingtonian would not admit this; but as this point is one, not of mere taste, but of positive depth and circumference, an actual measurement of both ladles would settle it with mathematical precision, should any serious dispute arise on the subject: let us hope, however, that such will never occur. Made sketches of the pump from three different points of view. Whilst I was thus engaged, was accosted by a fat, rosy, round-faced little man in a nankeen jacket and trousers, white waistcoat, and brown cloth foraging cap. Name (as I afterwards learnt) Hobbleday — familiarly called little Jack Hobbleday. He had been observing me for several minutes, and with evident satisfaction.

"Man of taste, I perceive—intelligent traveller—laudable curiosity—*you* don't pass over the wonders of nature with half an eye. From London, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Never saw London; in fact, never was out of Little Pedlington. Had the honour of being born in the place—have had the honour of passing all my life in it—hope to have the honour of laying my bones in it. Should have no objection, though, to pass two or three days in London, just to see the sights, and yet, a Pedlingtonian needn't break his heart if he never did. You can show nothing there like *that*, I take it," (pointing to the pump). "Pooh, pooh! you know you can't."

"I don't think we can, sir—exactly."

"Well, well, Rome wasn't built in a day; but as I understand you are making great improvements there, why, one of these days, perhaps—sir; *I* am old enough to remember when we had nothing but a draw-well here; then came the old pump—a wooden thing with a leaden handle, which, in those days, we thought a very fine affair; *at* length—but you behold it. Ah, sir, this is a wonderful age we live in! If my poor father could rise out of his grave and see this, where would he fancy himself? certainly not in Little Pedlington. By-the-bye, sir, my dearest friend, as I am proud to call him, Mr. Simcox Rummins, the celebrated antiquary, has got the old pump-handle in his museum, and I'm sure he'll have great pleasure in showing it to you; *but*—*but*—you must not attempt to take a drawing of it; *that* he *won't* allow."

"Perhaps, sir," said I, "as I am a stranger here, whose chief object in this visit is to see your great men, and Mr. Rummins is a friend of yours, you would favour me with an introduction to him."

"With the greatest pleasure in life, sir."

"And to the Reverend Jonathan Jubb, your great poet?"

"Why, that is rather more difficult, for he is literally torn to pieces by the curiosity of strangers to see him; however, as I am proud to say he is the best friend I have in the world, I will."

"I fear you will think me indiscreet; but Mr. Daubson, the celebrated painter——"

"Daubson? proud to say the oldest friend I have in the world—introduce you with pleasure."

"As for Mr. Hoppy——"

"Dear, darling Hoppy! proud to say my most intimate friend—will introduce you. Most elegant creature! perfect gentleman! On Wednesday he gives a public breakfast at Yawkins's skittle-ground; you ought not to miss that—the prettiest sight in all Pedlington, Daubson's greatest work is there, you know—the "Grenadier," so finely described by Jubb. They'll fire the gun off, too—an immense cannon. They *do* say it is a four pounder, but, for my part, I only believe half I hear. And that extraordinary creature too, *he'll* exhibit his wonderful talents—a man, sir, who actually plays on the Pandean pipes and beats a drum at the same time—true, I assure you. Ah, Shrubsole," said he, to a person who approached us, "anything new to day?"

"Yes," replied Shrubsole, "Mrs. Sniggerston was brought to bed of twins, at two minutes past ten this morning."

"Queen Anne's dead," said the other; "that's old news to me; *long* before a quarter past I heard of it. But what about Miss Cripps's bag?"

"No tidings of it. I just called there, but she is in such a state of mind she doesn't see anybody—wouldn't even see *me*."

"Ahem!—I say, my dear S., now, between you and me, what is *your* opinion about the two sovereigns which she *says* were in the bag?"

"She *says* so, so no doubt there they were; but as I said just now to Mrs. S. 'who ever saw Cripps with gold in her purse?' You know her whole income is but fifty-five pounds a year, and her quarter won't be due till next Wednesday week. Besides, *I* know a certain person who wanted two pounds of her on Friday, when she had not got them to pay; and *you* know that when her money *does* come in, nobody pays more punctually than poor dear Cripps. But the false front, the tooth, the rouge, *and* the orris-root! that is a cruel exposure, to be sure. My little woman was right: she always insisted that Miss Cripps wore a false front, and now the murder's out."

"Pooh, pooh! that's nothing," said *my* friend; "but the orris-root—that's *very* odd. Though, I say, my dear Shrubsole, —isn't it good for the breath?"

"So I've heard; and, as all Little Pedlington knows, she was always gnawing it. Well, good day, Hobbleday; I must go home. Mrs. Applegarth has just put up her *new* drawing-room curtains, and I have promised to take Mrs. S. to see them. *I* think they are the old ones dyed in turmeric; and I'll answer for it my little woman will be of the same opinion." And away went Mr. Shrubsole.

"To give you my candid opinion of that Mr. Shrubsole, sir," said Hobbleday, "he and his 'little woman' are the most insufferable gossips in the place, and censorious to a degree! The Mrs. Sniggerston he mentioned—the twin lady—is the wife of Sniggerston, the library-keeper, who once tried to set up a guide-book in opposition to Hoppy's—wouldn't do—my friend Hoppy's carried all before it. Well, sir, she *and* Tupkin, the butcher there in the market—ahem!—How poor Sniggy can be so blind *is* astonishing, when the affair is talked of from one end of Little Pedlington to the other! But she comes of a bad stock —she's a Shrapnell; her father, Tom Shrapnell, the grocer, formed a connection with Mrs. Rumble, an actress in Strut's company here—turned his wife (a dear good soul) out of doors—and compelled her to live upon a separate maintenance of fifteen

pounds a year. Then, her sister Flora, who was housemaid at my uncle's at the time he had the honour of being churchwarden here, ran off with the guard of the Winklemouth coach, and has never since been heard of."

"What!" thought I, "slander and detraction, robberies, elopements, separate maintenances, and worse, in such a place as Little Pedlington!—then have honesty, honour, and virtue abandoned the world, and one might almost as well pass one's life in wicked, abominable London."

"Now, sir," continued Hobbleday, in a half-whisper, "these things would not so much matter if they were confined to our own class; but when one sees upper-servants in families, and tradesfolks—mere tradesfolks—apeing their betters, it puts an end to all distinctions, you know, sir."

After a short pause, he resumed. "Will you walk, sir? Perhaps you would like to see our Zoological Garden? The admission to strangers is two-pence; but as I have the honour of being a life-governor, I have the privilege of introducing a friend."

"There is no mention of such a thing in the guide-book," said I.

"Why, no—all done, projected and executed, within these three months; and, considering the time, we are getting on very well. Let me see—(and he counted on his fingers)—parrot, cockatoo, guinea-pig, duck—not your common duck-and-green-peas sort of duck, but a Virginia duck, I think they call it—*two* monkeys, a stuffed leopard, nearly *fifty* stuffed birds, two live canaries, and—we *shall* have an uncommon fine swan when the man has finished digging the pond for it. Getting up something of the same sort in London, I understand. Lost no time in taking our hint, eh? But will you go? Won't be at all out of my way: going to the Vale of Health to pay visits of condolence to poor Hubkins, who has just lost his wife and three children by scarlet-fever, and to Widow Grieves, whose *other* daughter is just dead of asthma. Go? All in my way—our *Zoo* is just between the Vale of Health and the new burying-ground. How do, Digges—how do? Nothing fresh about Miss Cripps's bag, eh?"

This he addressed to a tall, stout, rosy-faced man in black, who was walking along at a stately pace.

"That man, sir, ought to be the happiest fellow in Little Pedlington, for he's making a fortune. It is Digges, the undertaker—just married Dr. Drench's eldest daughter—*great* connection for him, for the doctor's practice is very extensive,

and he naturally recommends his own son-in-law. Come; now *do* go!"

To the Zoological Garden.—Cockatoo good—could not say much for the guinea-pig; but, in consideration of my new acquaintance's civility, abstained from uttering an unfavourable opinion, which might have given him pain. Like Samuel Johnson, LL.D. (who, it is at length discovered, was but a mere twaddler after all), I may be set down for "a fat old fool—a dense fool," for this: so be it: yet can't help wishing that some of my fellow-journalizers would follow my squeamish example. My conductor kindly (importunately, I had almost said) directed my most particular attention to every individual thing that was to be seen, even to the last tail of the last stuffed bird in the collection—reading their several descriptions from the well-digested catalogue (written on a slate), with which, as life-governor, he had on our entrance been furnished by the keeper, who was digging the pond for the swan. N.B.—Catalogue the joint work of Simcox Rummins, F.S.A., and Dr. Drainum; assisted (on particular points of natural history) by Mr. Chickney, the poulterer. Good-naturedly detained me upwards of ten minutes looking at the parrot swinging on a wire. "Vastly curious!" as he justly observed. Unfortunately, the monkeys sulky, and would not show. To go again on Sunday, at a quarter past one, immediately upon coming out of church, to see them do something or another which he did not exactly explain, but which, he assured me, is the most beautiful sight in the universe, worth going miles to see, and is all the rage, particularly with the ladies, in Little Pedlington.

Being so near the new burying-ground, Hobbleday kindly insisted upon taking me all over it. Was so obliging as to stop me at every individual tomb-stone, and to read aloud every word of every inscription—assuring me, now and then, that if I chose to copy any of them that *particularly* pleased me, he was not in the least hurry. This I declined, being unwilling to trespass overmuch upon his good nature. Having looked at seventy-two of these interesting memorials, I complained of the heat, which (under a broiling sun) was intense, and proposed to depart. Hobbleday put his arm through mine, and declared he could not think of my going till I had seen all—*only* about forty more to see. *Did* see all, as I thought. Yet one more, which he had reserved for the last—the *bonne bouche*—on account of its "sweetly pretty" epitaph, as he termed it, and which, he said, was attributed to Jubb. Had to traverse the whole length of

the ground to get at it. Forced me to take a copy of it, he repeating it to me :—

"Afflictions sore
Long time I bore;"—*

As he uttered these four words, involuntarily exclaimed, "You do!" *Il ne m'épargnera pas un oignon,* thought I.

"And now," said my obliging cicerone, "being so near the Vale of Health, we'll see *that.*" Endeavoured to excuse myself, on the score of the trouble to *him,*—fatigue, and the inconvenience of the heat, to myself; but in vain. On to the Vale of Health. Upon our way thither, I expressed my admiration of the virtues of the Pedlingtonians, as proved by the "short and simple annals" recorded on the tomb-stones of the departed who reposed in the new burying-ground: they being the "best of husbands," the "most affectionate of wives," the "most dutiful of children," or the "most faithful of friends." "True," said Hobbleday; "and it is something for us to be proud of. 'Tis the same thing, too, in the old burying-ground—they were angels upon earth, rest their souls! I wish, though, we could say as much of the live ones: I could name a few of them, who, when *they* go, won't be quite so favourably mentioned. Stop—pardon one moment, whilst I leave my compliments of condolence over the way."

Left me for a few minutes. Took refuge in my own reflections. Not comfortable at hearing this slur upon some of the live Pedlingtonians. Felt certain misgivings as to whether this retired country-town were much more moral, or, in other respects, much better than "populous cities proud."

Whilst I was waiting the return of Hobbleday, Mr. Shrubsole came up to me.

"I think, sir," said he, "that was my friend Hobbleday who just left you?"

I told him it was.

"I dare say you find him a charming companion. What a tongue he has! I wish, though, he didn't sometimes make so ill a use of it; for, to give you my candid opinion of that Mr. Hobbleday, he is the most censorious little wretch in the place;

* Having since been informed by an intelligent friend that this epitaph is to be found in two or three other places in England besides Little Pedlington, I suppress the remainder.

slanderous, malicious, malignant! Well, he may say what he pleases about me; thank my stars, he can say nothing to my disadvantage. Good mor—— Oh, when Hobbleday returns, pray tell him that my little woman and I have just seen the *new* window-curtains, which, as we suspected, turn out to be nothing but the old ones died in turmeric, after all. But that old woman is the vainest, the most boastful—in short, the greatest liar in all Little Pedlington. Good morning, sir."

In one respect, I was not sorry to learn that Mr. Hobbleday was of somewhat a censorious turn: it gave me hope that some of the live Little Pedlingtonians might be better than his report of them. He returned. I delivered the message, but suppressed the opinion. Took me all over the Vale of Health. Must admit that we have nothing at all like it in or near London—if, indeed, we except a cow-field near Camden-town. Eighteen small houses, scattered about, chiefly occupied by invalids, who retire thither on account of the superior salubrity of the spot. At a very pretty cottage, called Hygeia Lodge, saw two mutes standing at the door.

Taken to the extreme corner of the Vale. A man busy planting shrubs and young trees about a deep hole. Wondered what *that* was for. Informed by Hobbleday that Doctors Drench and Drainum (their celebrated physicians, and the proprietors of that portion of the ground) had had the good fortune to discover there a mineral spring of the nastiest water you ever put to your lips. "I've tasted it," continued Hobbleday; "enough to poison a dog! so it will be the making of the place, as they say. But what is to become of Cheltenham, Harrowgate, Tunbridge Wells, and such places?—however, poor devils! that's their affair." Fancied I smelt something like the detestable odour of a tan-yard. Peeped through the window of a small shed, the door of which was fastened by a strong padlock. Saw a box of sulphur, a couple of bags of iron filings, a pile of stale red-herrings, some raw hides cut into strips, and a quantity of bark, such as the tanners use. Wondered what *that* was for. As Hobbleday wondered also, I was nothing the wiser for my inquiry.

Went by the way of High Street; returned by the Crescent. Crescent worthy of all the praise bestowed upon it by Felix Hoppy. Mr. Hobbleday regretted that the sun had "gone in," so that the "highly-polished brass knockers" did not shine half as much as he had sometimes seen them. Beheld the house where "dwelt the tuneful Jubb!" An odd feeling, which I

shall neither attempt to describe nor account for, comes over one upon these occasions. Contemplating the abode of genius! At this moment, perhaps, the bard of Pedlingtonia is in a raptured trance.

Walked down South Street. Hobbleday directed my attention to a painted board just underneath the first-floor window of No. 18: it bore the words, "Little Pedlington Universal-Knowledge-Society;" and these were surmounted by a Britannia (evidently copied from a penny-piece), with a trident in the left hand, and a cockatoo held forth in the right. With a slight inclination of the head, accompanied by a complacent smile, he said, "*I—I*, sir, have the honour of being a member, conjointly with Rummins, Jubb, Hoppy, Daubson—in short, all the big-wigs of Little Pedlington. We have meetings—*conversyshonys*—twice a week: a library, too:—Murray's 'Grammar,' Entick's 'Dictionary,' Guthrie's 'Geography,' and (besides other useful works) we have the 'Penny Magazine,' *complete from—the—very first.*"

"But what is the meaning of that figure, sir?" said I, pointing to the Lady Britannia.

"Ha! thought you'd notice that. That, sir, is the work of our own Daubson: needn't go out of Little Pedlington for such things. The figure, I needn't tell *you*, is Minerva—'fitting emblem!' as Hoppy says of the dolphin's tail for our pump-handle."

"Minerva!—and with a cockatoo in her hand!"

"Dear me! that's very odd. You are almost the first person—a visitor, I mean—who ever noticed that. Of course, *we* know very well it ought, in strictness, to be an owl; but Daubson, who is the *arbitrator elegantium* of Little Pedlington, thought that a cockatoo would be a prettier thing; and as we luckily happened to have one in our Zoo for him to paint from, why——. I say, how naturally he has got the yellow tuft on the head, and the red spot on the neck! Clever creature! clever creature! *Shall* we go at once to the skittle-ground, and see his *great* work—the famous grenadier?"

This I declined, pleading, as my excuse, fatigue and the intense heat.

"Well, then," said my obliging companion, "to-morrow. You must allow me to call upon you to-morrow, and I'll show you more of the beauties and curiosities of our place. No denial, now—no trouble to me. Never so happy as when I am in the company of an *intelligent* visitor"—(here he bowed)—"who can

appreciate—you understand. Besides, from my position in society, I enjoy opportunities which——. For instance—Rummins's public day for his Museum is Friday: now *I*, from my position, as I said, am allowed the privilege of introducing a friend there any day in the week: for, besides being a member of the Knowledge Society, and a life-governor of the Zoo, I have the honour, sir, to be—ahem!—Deputy Chairman of the Little Pedlington Savings Bank. Good morning; I wish you a *very* good morning. Ha! a rush at Yawkins's library. Shouldn't wonder if they have news of Miss Cripps's bag." And to the library Mr. Hobbleday proceeded.

Dying of heat and thirst. Inquired of a boy, who was carrying a band-box, whether they had a confectioner in the place?

"What!" said he, "a confectioner in such a place as Lippleton! Where do *you* come from, I should like to know? *We* have *two* in *our* place—Stintum's over the way, and Mrs. Shanks's, in Market Square. I say, Bill"—(this was addressed to another boy who happened to pass)—"here's a gentleman wants to know if we hav'n't never a confectioner in Lippleton. That's a good one, isn't it?"

To Stintum's.—A confectioner! Gingerbread, raspberry-tarts, hard biscuits, and three-cornered puffs on the counter; bottles of lollipops, sugar-candy, bull's-eyes, and coloured sugar-plums on the window-shelves;—a clear case of a Gunter adapted to the capacity of the rising generation. Mr. Stintum told me, in answer to my request for an iced cream, that he had nothing to do with such nonsense, nor had his father before him; that he didn't want to get himself into the *Gazette*, by going out of his line, though a certain person in Market Square might. He didn't care to make a fine show in *his* window: all he desired was, to maintain his character as an honest tradesman. "I don't want to speak ill of a neighbour," continued he: "every one must look after their own soul; I've done nothing in this world to forfeit mine. I can sleep at night, because I've nothing weighty upon my conscience; and if it were the last word I had to speak"—(what horrid crime can that unhappy Mrs. Shanks have committed, thought I, that should excite the fears even of a rival pastrycook for her salvation?)—"if it were the last word I had to speak, I could safely say that I never put *salt* butter into *my* tarts."

Went to the shop of Mrs. Shanks, in Market Square; in all respects, except one, worthy of Little Pedlington. Window decorated with an exquisite model, in barley-sugar, of the new

pump in Market Square, and paste figures innumerable of Apollos and Venuses, shepherds and shepherdesses, &c. &c. Announcements in various parts of "Suppers provided on the shortest notice," "Confectionary of all sorts," "Water ices and iced creams." Mrs. Shanks, a skinny little woman, perched on a high chair behind the counter; yellow face; green patch over the right eye; curly, flaxen wig, encircled by a wreath of faded artificial roses; pale-blue silk dress; huge gilt neck-chain and bracelets; a jug before her, with flowers in it. Reminded me of the once celebrated divinity of the *Café des Mille Colonnes* in the *Palais Royal*. Lamentable to reflect that the soul contained in such a body should be in jeopardy, and all on account of a little salt butter smuggled into a tart.

"What ice can I have, Mrs. Shanks?"

"Whatever you please, sir."

"Lemon-water, then."

Mrs. Shanks opened a long, narrow book, in a parchment cover, dipped a pen into the ink, and inquired, "When for, sir? and how much do you wish to have?"

"Now, if you please; and one glass to begin with."

"Oh! we don't keep ices ready-made, sir; but we can make you any quantity you please, not less than a quart, at only one day's notice."

Assuredly Little Pedlington possesses many advantages; yet, oh! *dear* London!

"Is there any other shop in the town where I may get some? I'm dying for it."

"No, sir; ours is the only house in the line in all the place where *respectable* people can go. *We* don't make our pastry with mutton dripping; *we* don't use red-lead and copper to colour our sugar-plums; *we* never gave poor little Susan Gobbleton—the sweetest child in the world!—the colic it died of. But I'm certain that monster Stintum, sir, can't sleep in his bed; and that's the comfort of it."

Little more than twelve hours, sleeping and waking, in this place,—"too good for us poor sinners to live in,"—and have already heard of as much vice, immorality, and roguery, great and small, going on in it, as if it were a wicked, large town; yet not the convenience of procuring an iced cream on a hot day (excepting, indeed, by ordering it a day before-hand) as a set-off against it all!

Four o'clock. Went to Yawkins's library. Subscribed for a month. Set my name down also in the M.C.'s book. Wished

to know the present station of the —th dragoons, as I was desirous of writing by that night's post to a friend who was in it, and requested Mr. Yawkins to let me see the Army List. Fortunate in subscribing with him, for his was the only library in the place that possessed one. Produced the list for last November twelvemonth. Yawkins deserves his character for "urbanity," (*vide* "Guide,") for he told me, if I *particularly* wished to see it, he would order a new one down, along with the magazines, next Tuesday week. Purchased Jubb's "Pedlingtonia," price two shillings, and Rummins's "Antiquities of Little Pedlington," price one-and-sixpence. Yawkins assured me they were the two greatest works that had ever issued from the Little Pedlington press—Hoppy's "Guide" scarcely excepted. Yawkins expressed some astonishment that neither of those works had been noticed either in the "Quarterly" or the "Edinburgh." Thought such marked neglect of the two masterminds of the age a manifestation of a paltry spirit. Altogether above such pettiness at Little Pedlington. The Pedlington "Weekly Observer" *had* spoken of Rogers, and Moore, and Campbell, of Hallam, Lingard, and Southey, and such like;—ay, and with great kindness, too, notwithstanding. "I verily believe," he continued,—"I verily believe, there are but two men in our town who would *not* have acted with equal generosity, and those are Snargate and Sniggerston, who keep an inferior sort of circulating libraries here: but they are, notoriously, a couple of paltry fellows, and I have no hesitation in saying so!"

"What! two more of them!" thought I.

"And pray, Mr. Yawkins, is Mr. Rummins engaged upon any new work?"

"A work which will produce a powerful sensation, sir; especially here in Little Pedlington. Rummins is writing the 'Life and Times' of his great contemporary, Jubb."

"And Mr. Jubb?"

"Jubb, sir, is writing the 'Life and Times' of his illustrious townsman, Rummins. Rummins, you know, sir, is an F.S.A., so that the world will naturally look for a biography of *him!*"

"Would not the 'Table Talk' of such a man be interesting?"

"Why—aw—to speak candidly, I *do not* think that—to the generality of readers, at least—I don't think it would; for, to say the truth, he—aw—never says anything at all. No, sir; he is one of your thinking men, as you may gather from his writings.

But Jubb, now—Jubb's 'Table-talk,' indeed! But I have reason to believe Hoppy is engaged upon that work, and the very man for the purpose. I have lived in Little Pedlington all my life, sir, yet, I give you my honour, such another talker as Jubb *I never met with.* Wonderful, truly wonderful!—I have heard him talk for three hours without stopping; and so profound, so amazingly profound, is his conversation, that one-half of what he says his hearers cannot understand, whilst he himself does not understand the other. Truly wonderful, indeed!"

At this moment, a tall, thin, elderly lady, in deep mourning, entered the shop. One end of a long black ribbon she held in her hand, and to the other was fastened a fat, waddling French poodle. The lady was attended by a jaded-looking footman, in an orange-coloured coat, profusely ornamented with green worsted lace: he carried a large, wadded, black silk cloak, a shawl, a book, a bag of biscuits, a camp-chair, and a footstool.

"Good morning, mem," said Yawkins, as the lady took a seat; "I hope you are a little better to-day?"

"I shall never again be the person I was,—at least in this world, Yawkins. I shall never recover from the effects of it."

"It was a heavy blow,—a sad loss indeed, mem. And that the monster who perpetrated the crime should have escaped undiscovered! But justice will overtake him, sooner or later, take my word for it, mem."

"That will be a benefit to society, Yawkins, but no consolation to me. That won't restore him to life."

"Poor lady!" thought I; "some relation, or dear friend, barbarously murdered!"

The lady continued:—"Is the first volume of the 'Sad Story' at home yet? I have been upwards of a month 'down' for it."

"No, mem; but as soon as it does come home, you shall have it."

"Remember that, now; for you know I read the two last volumes first, to oblige Miss Cripps, who was waiting for them."

"Why, mem, you know if subscribers didn't accommodate each other in that way, we shouldn't get on at all. Talking of Miss Cripps, sorry to say that the report so general, about an hour ago, of her having recovered her bag, is not true."

"Poor Cripps! I'm very sorry for it,—not that I believe a word about the two sovereigns. Pray, Yawkins, how does the raffle for the tea-tray and patent snuffers get on?"

"Why mem, you know the list hasn't been up above a fortnight, and forty chances, at a shilling a piece, take a long while

to fill up. However, we are getting on: eighteen down already, and I have every reason to expect that Mrs. Hobbs Hobbs and Mrs. Fitz-Bobbin—visitors from London—will each take two chances. They *are* considering about it."

"Well, Yawkins, it is but fair to tell you that, on Saturday, I tea'd with Mrs. Hobbleday, in the Crescent; there was a large party; the whole evening we talked about little else but your raffle; and the general opinion was, that you would have done much better with eighty chances at sixpence."

"How, mem!" exclaimed Yawkins, with an air of offended dignity; "much obliged to Mrs. Hobbleday and her *party:* a sixpenny raffle might do very well at such a place as Sniggerston's, or Snargate's, but I should like to know what the company at *Yawkins's* would say to such a thing. No, mem"—(here he turned his eyes up to the ceiling, and placed his hand on his heart)—"no, mem; rather than so compromise the respectability of *my* establishment, I would almost sooner return the eighteen shillings to the subscribers, and sell the tea-tray and snuffers at prime cost."

The lady, after feeding the fat poodle with a couple of biscuits from the bag, withdrew—having first sent her unhappy servant forward with her commands that he would place her chair and foot-stool ready for her at the sunny corner of the Crescent.

"That's the Miss Titmarsh you must have heard so much about in London, sir," said Yawkins.

"I never heard the name till now," replied I. "But what is the nature of the calamity which has befallen her?"

"Why, *that* is it, sir. Dear me! it's very extraordinary you should not have heard of it in London! Why, sir, it kept all Little Pedlington in a ferment for a month. Except about that atrocious affair of stealing the pump-ladle,—which, of course, you must have heard of,—I never knew the town in a state of such tremendous excitement. She had a most beautiful French poodle, sir—twice as fat as the one she has got with her now—such a quantity of hair, too, and as soft as silk! She was in this very shop with it, sir, only the day before it happened. Well, sir, one morning she missed the dog: about two hours afterwards the poor thing returned, but in what a state! Conceive her horror—conceive the agonizing shock to her feelings! Some monster, some fiend in human form, had cut all its hair off—got hold of Miss Titmarsh's poodle and shaved it—shaved it, sir, as smooth as the palm of your hand!"

"Horrible, indeed!" I exclaimed: "and that an event of

such 'stirring interest' in Little Pedlington should remain unknown to *us!*" Adding, "But strange as it may seem to you, Mr. Yawkins, it is my fixed belief that were a troop of monsters, a legion of fiends in human shape, to shave all the dogs of every description that infest one-half of London, the other half would probably never know anything of the occurrence."

"Then blessed be Little Pedlington!" replied Yawkins, where everybody is acquainted with everybody else's affairs, at least as well as with his own."

Yet half-an-hour to spare before dinner. Time enough, perhaps, to see Daubson's grand picture—the grenadier. Inquired whereabouts was Yawkins's skittle-ground. Informed that it was an immense way off—quite at the further end of the town. Hopeless for to-day, thought I; but asked what the distance might be. Told, nearly four minutes' walk. Went; stood before the "all-but-breathing Grenadier," as it is designated by Jubb. Hard to describe its first effect upon me. As I approached it, involuntarily took off my hat. Thermometer 84° in the shade. Daubson certainly an original genius: unlike Reynolds, Lawrence, Phillips, Briggs, or Pickersgill. Neither did his work put me *much* in mind of Titian or Vandyke—*not in the least of Rembrandt.* No servile imitator—in fact, no imitator at all. Perhaps a military critic might object that the fixed bayonet is *rather* longer than the musket itself: be this as it may, owing to that contrivance, it appears a most formidable weapon. In order that the whole of the arms and accoutrements may be seen by the spectator, the painter, with considerable address, has represented the cartridge-box and the scabbard of the bayonet *in front.* Scabbard about one-third the length of the bayonet—judicious—needless to exaggerate in this—nothing formidable in the appearance of a long scabbard, whatever may be thought of a long bayonet. Legs considerably thicker than the thighs—grand idea of stability—characteristic of a "grenadier standing sentry." Upon the whole, a work worthy of its fame, notwithstanding its rejection by that envious and exclusive, that much and justly-censured body, the R.A.'s.

Took my leave of the Grenadier, resolving to "put in" for a chance for immortality, by having my profile in black, done by the unrivalled hand of the Pedlingtonian Apelles.

CHAPTER IV.

Summer-dinner at a country inn—Mr. Hobbleday, the kind and obliging: his call *merely to look at the clock*—Invite him to wine—A charming member of society described—Modern abbeys, castles, &c.: why so designated—Old acquaintance: Colonel Dominant and Mr. Truckle—Hobbleday a "humbug"?!—News worth waking for.

Five o'clock. Returned to "as nice a little dinner as I could wish to sit down to." Such was I promised by mine host. Thermometer inveterately holding to 84°. Huge hot round of beef, which filled the room with steam; hot suet dumplings, and hard; hot carrots, each as big as the grenadier's leg; scalding hot potatoes *in their skins*. Nice little dinner indeed—for the season!

Five minutes past five. Finished dinner and ordered some wine. Wine fiery as brandy, and warm: complained of it. Scorewell assured me it was the very same wine he was in the habit of serving to the family with the fly, and that *they* never complained of it. Indeed, neither did the St. Knitalls, nor the Fitz-Bobbins, nor Mr. Twistwireville, nor even Mr. De Stew-pan (who was remarkably particular about his wine),—in short, this was the first time his (Scorewell's) wine had ever been complained of by mortal man. Such authorities it would have been downright insolence to oppose. Said no more, but simply ordered a little weak brandy-and-water. Scorewell undertook to "try again." Whilst he was away, fancied I heard a pump-handle at work. Returned; wine by no means so strong, and much cooler. The first decanter chipped at the lip; so was this—odd coincidence. Inquired how the decanter came to be so wet outside? Scorewell replied, that he had just given it a minute in ice. That's a reason, thought I.

Whilst I was sipping my wine, and reading Jubb's "Pedlingtonia,"—(found Rummins's "Antiquities" too learned, too profound, for after-dinner reading),—Mr. Hobbleday came in. Merely looked in to see the time by the coffee-room clock.

Recollecting his civilities to me in the morning, invited him to wine. Ordered a fresh bottle. "Know the sort of wine Mr. Hobbleday likes," said Scorewell, as he quitted the room.

"Good creature that Scorewell," said Hobbleday, "and this one of the best inns in Little Pedlington."

"Then I am fortunate," said I, "in having accidentally been brought to it. The other innkeepers are but moderately honest —at least so I am told by Scorewell; and for a stranger, as I am, to have fallen upon the only one who——"

"What I say, understand me, I say in confidence. Good creature—capital inn; but call your bill every morning—that is, if you should find it *possible* to stay at it for more than a day or two. Call it, I say, every morning—you understand. In the hurry of business, people sometimes forget what you have *not* had, and down it goes into the bill. After a week or so, you can't tax your memory as to whether you had such or such a thing, or not; and, rather than dispute about it, why you—— ahem! Now, Scorewell, what have you done for us, eh? Is that some of Colonel Dominant's wine?"

Scorewell assured us that it was, and left us.

"Who is Colonel Dominant?" inquired I.

"What!" cried Hobbleday, with astonishment; "*who* is Colonel Dominant? Pooh, pooh! you can't ask that question seriously. *You* know — everybody knows — must know him. Great man—lately returned from the East Indies—was governor of Fort Popan'gobang. Should like the colonel to hear anybody ask *who* he is?"

"From India! That somehow brings the name to my mind."

"I was sure you had heard of him, sir," said Hobbleday. "Why, he is a descendant of the great Drawcansir: his crest is a sledge-hammer, and his motto, 'All this I can do because I dare.' Has got a place about ten miles off—Guttlebury Abbey."

"Guttlebury Abbey! Some interesting ruins to be seen there, eh, Mr. Hobbleday?"

"Ruins! Pooh, pooh! They say there *was* an abbey there, or thereabouts, millions of ages ago, but there is not a stick or a stone remaining of it."

"Then why does the gallant colonel call his place an abbey?"

"First," gravely replied Hobbleday, "because it's the fashion; and, secondly, because it's a small, square, red brick house, standing in a cabbage-garden."

The second being as good a reason as is frequently to be found for nicknaming residences of similar pretensions manors, abbeys, places, and castles, I was satisfied with it.

"He is here now," continued Hobbleday; "he generally passes the fashionable season here: stays at Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house. You should dine there some day: there you would see him in all his glory. Extraordinary creature!—has got a tail."

"Got a tail!" exclaimed I; "the monster!"

"Pooh, pooh! I don't mean that sort of tail; but a *tail*, you know,—obsequious followers; *toadies*, as we call them here. He has only to say that black is white, and they must swear to it."

"Poor devils!" I exclaimed. "But why call this wine Colonel Dominant's? Is he a wine-merchant?" inquired I.

"No," replied Hobbleday; "but he says it is the only wine in the place fit to drink, and he knows everything better than anybody else—at least, he thinks he does: consequently, everything he may choose to say about all things in the world is like the law of the Medes and Prussians in Little Pedlington——at least, he thinks it ought to be."

"Is he, then, a man of such exquisite taste, such extensive knowledge, such unerring judgment, such——"

"Of course," replied Hobbleday,—"at least, he thinks he is. He is the man that came over in two ships, *that* I can tell you,—at least, he thinks he did. Pleasant, amiable creature, though, and easily satisfied upon the whole: requires nothing more than to have everything exactly his own way; and, at Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house, especially, he will have it,—at least, as often as he can get it. When he can't, why, he naturally growls at everything and everybody."

"An agreeable companion for the other guests at Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house," said I.

"Have you any of the Dominant family in London?" inquired Hobbleday.

"I never met with one," replied I; "nor do I think that an animal such as you have described would long be tolerated there in any society possessing the slightest respect for itself, or the power of relieving itself of so offensive an associate."

At this moment, Hobbleday, starting from his seat, exclaimed, "There he goes!" I looked out into the street, and beheld, strutting along, the identical Colonel Dominant, whom I had accidentally met a few years before, and whose name had just now struck me as being not altogether unknown to me.

Picard, in the preface to one of his pleasant comedies, says of a certain character—"It was drawn from the life: its original paid me a visit one morning; almost whilst he was speaking I wrote down his words—*et voilà la scène.*" Thus, of the three following short scenes, I may say, that they are literal transcripts from what I actually witnessed. Of the *names* of the *dramatis personæ* I shall say nothing; but the *dialogue* I give without exaggeration, and I really believe without the alteration of a material word.

If with unblushing effrontery I can confess, not only that I know where is Bloomsbury Square, but that I have been in it: if I have the hardihood to acknowledge as my friends, human beings who absolutely reside there: nay, more; if, without the slightest sense of shame or of remorse, I own that, upon occasion, I positively visit them, it will be the less wondered at that I should be capable of declaring in the face of all Europe that once I was at Margate. But as Goldsmith's bear danced to "none but the genteelest of tunes," so did I appear at none but the genteelest of places—the French Bazaar, Bettison's Library, Clifton's Bathing-Rooms,* and Howe's (The Royal) Hotel. By the bye, I am informed that, since I was there, the hotel and the library, both being ruined, are closed; the consequence of which is, that not a soul is to be seen in or near Hawley Square, wherein they are situated. But ought not this desertion of the neighbourhood to be attributed rather to the circumstance of the theatre (which is near it) being *open?* It is so elsewhere.

It was at Margate, then, that scenes the first and second occurred.

I was taking my dinner in the coffee-room at Howe's Hotel. At a table opposite to mine (the only other table in the spacious apartment that was occupied) sat two gentlemen, Colonel Dominant and Mr. Truckle. The former was a tall man, thin and stiff, with red hair cut very close, large bilious-looking eyes, and complexion of the colour of the very best pickled mangoes. He wore a blue coat, buff waistcoat, buttoned close up to the throat, white duck trowsers, and a black military stock. He was reclining back in his seat, reading a newspaper, with his feet, each resting on the back of a chair, elevated to a level with his

* A certain person at this place being once shown into a bath-room by no means remarkable for its cleanliness, with much simplicity inquired of the proprietor—"Pray, sir, where is it people go to wash, after bathing here?"

own nose. He had lately returned from the East Indies after many years of profitable service—to himself at least.

Mr. Truckle was a small, slight man, of about five-and-forty years of age, with a head entirely destitute of hair, a good-humoured blue eye, and a perpetual smile upon a countenance strongly indicative of its owner's willingness to be pleased and happy as long as the world would let him. He was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat (not of the newest), white trowsers, and a white cravat, ornamented with a huge bow and ends. His voice, like himself, was small, and his manners mild and unassuming in the extreme. He sat opposite to the colonel, with his hands resting on his knees, and his legs unostentatiously tucked under his chair. He was a distant relation of the colonel's, who certainly did not seem inclined to diminish the distance between them by any inviting approaches on his part; and that he was the poor relation also, his attitude and demeanour, as contrasted with those of the former, sufficiently attested.

Generally speaking, there is nothing of the humorous or the ludicrous in a display of unfeeling domination on one side, of the "all this I can do because I dare,"—and of helpless acquiescence on the other: pity for the oppressed, and disgust or hatred of his petty, paltry tyrant, are the only emotions it excites. There does not at this moment occur to me a more remarkable illustration of this than the early scenes between Sir Giles Overreach and Marall in the "New Way to pay Old Debts;" though there, perhaps, somewhat of contempt for the interested subserviency of the latter may mingle with one's compassion for his slavery. But in the case of Truckle it was otherwise: he was humble, submissive, and satisfied, as if he conceived it to be in the immutable nature of things that he should be so; and the *ludicrous* of the situation arose simply out of the immeasurable disproportion between his gentle attempts, now and then, to hint at a wish or a desire of his own, and the nature of the execration with which they invariably were met by Colonel Dominant.

Be it observed, that the colonel's voice, though deep-toned, was harsh, and that his utterance was abrupt and snappish, sounding like the word of command when given by an ill-tempered drill-serjeant: except, indeed, when he delivered the emphatic word of the execration alluded to, and upon that he would drawl.

It was five minutes past six. Truckle looked at the clock which was facing him, hummed part of a tune (accompanying himself by beating with his fingers on the table), and hesi-

tatingly, and in a gentle tone of voice, said—"Dear me! Five minutes past six! Well—I *think*—really I *do* think it is time they brought our dinner."

The colonel threw down his paper suddenly, thrust out his arm (extending it to its full length across the table), with his fore-finger pointed directly at Truckle's face, and vociferated,—

"What's that?—I say, sir, what's that you say?"

"Why, sir," mildly, and smilingly, replied Truckle, "dinner was ordered at six; it is now five minutes past; and as they might as well be 'punctual,' I merely ventured to——"

"D—n your ARROGANCE!! Punctual! Have the poor devils here nothing to do but attend upon you? Have *I* complained? Am I in any hurry for *my* dinner? Yet *you* talk about 'punctual!' D—n your arrogance!"

"True, sir, you didn't *say* you were in any hurry, but I—I thought, sir——"

"Thought! *Thought*, did you? *You* thought! *Da—a—a—a—mn* your arrogance!"

Arrogance and poor little Truckle named in the same year! He, in thought, feeling, manner, and conduct, an impersonation of humility!

Their dinner was served. Dominant helped himself, and then thrust the dish across to his companion. Just at this time I happened to call to a waiter for some Chili vinegar.

"Dear me!" said Truckle, looking into his plate, smiling, and rubbing his hands at the same time—"dear me! I think—yes, really I *do* think I should like a little Chili vinegar myself. Waiter! Bring *me* a little Chili vinegar, too."

"What's that you want, sir? I say, sir, what's that you want?" (These words were accompanied by the same gesture of pointing the finger as before.)

"Why, sir," answered Truckle, "I heard that gentleman ask for Chili vinegar, and I thought that—Chili vinegar, you know, is a very nice relish, sir; so I thought that when that gentleman had quite done with it, why—why *I* should like a little Chili vinegar."

"Chili vinegor? D—n your arrogance! Who are you, sir, that you can't eat your dinner without Chili vinegor? Do *I* ask for Chili vinegor? But it's just like you, with your insatiable desires: whatever you see or hear of you want, d—n your arrogance! Waiter! No Chili vinegor to be brought to *this* table. Chili vinegor, indeed! *Da—a—a—mn* your arrogance."

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Scene the Second.—In the evening I went into Bettison's Library. They were playing eight-shilling loo. I approached the table. Close to it, and in the front rank of a small crowd, forming three or four deep, stood Truckle. He was earnestly watching the proceedings, but did not play; though ever and anon his right hand made an ineffective move towards his breeches' pocket. A few games had "come off," and the insinuating dealer was announcing, in the usual seductive phrase, the near completion of another:—

"Now, ladies and gentleman, *only* three numbers wanting to complete this loo: 2, 3, *and* 5.—Thank'ee, sir.—Only 2 and 5 vacant.—Thank'ee madam.—Number 2 gone.—Only *one* wanting.—Number 5 vacant."

Here was a tantalizing pause. There was no bidder for No. 5. At length, Truckle exclaimed:—

"Dear me! Well, now, I think—really I *do* think *I'll* have a chance."

His hand made a desperate plunge into his pocket, and, in an instant, or ere reflection could come to his aid, his shilling lay glittering on the table. In the same second of time a voice was heard from behind the crowd:—

"What are you doing there, sir?—I say, sir, what is it you are doing there?"

There stood Colonel Dominant, his white hat seen high above the crowd in front of him; his outstretched arm reaching over their heads; and the fatal fore-finger pointing directly in the face of poor Truckle, who had turned as suddenly as if he had been *twirled* round by some mechanical power inherent in and peculiar to the voice of his tyrant.

"I say, sir, what is it you are doing there?"

Not in the slightest degree confused or abashed by this authoritative interference, public as it was, Truckle good-humouredly replied:—

"Why, sir, I—you see, sir, this is a loo; and by putting down a shilling——"

"Put down a shilling! *You,* sir,!—D—n your arrogance! How dare you put down a shilling? Take it up, sir."

"But this is a loo, you see, sir; and by putting down one shilling I may win seven; that is to say, I may win a ticket which——"

"D—n your arrogance! Win seven upon one! What right have you to try to win seven shillings of these poor people's money with one of yours? D—n your arrogance! Take it up.

Take it up, I say, *Ta—a—a—ke* it up, sir. *Da—a—a—mn* your arrogance!"

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Scene the Third.—I left Margate by the steamer. We had completed about one hour of our homeward-bound voyage when Colonel Dominant ascended the deck from the after-cabin. He set himself down on the gunwale, midway between the stern of the vessel and the paddle-box. I *believe* I have applied the term "gunwale" correctly; but not feeling perfectly at my ease concerning it, it were safer I should explain that thereby I mean the sort of paling which runs along the sides of the deck to prevent one's tumbling into the water. By this modest caution two points are gained: if the term be the proper one, it may still be unintelligible to many, whose voyages, like my own, have been limited to those seas; if otherwise, I have taken it out of the power of any seaman more experienced than myself to assail me with—"D—n *your* arrogance!"

The colonel, as I have said, was sitting on the gunwale, in that aristocratic division of a Margate steamer which lies between the paddle-box and the stern. His arms were superciliously folded across his chest; his head was erect and motionless, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left; whilst his eyes disdained to encounter any meaner object than the glorious heavens themselves. Presently I saw emerging from the *fore*-cabin, the happy, good-humoured Mr. Truckle. Smiling, and rubbing his hands together with an air of self-enjoyment, no sooner were his feet fairly on deck than, in the fulness of his delight, he exclaimed:—

"Capital breakfast! I never made a better breakfast in all my life. *And* such a beautiful morning as it is! *And* such a fine passage as we shall have!"

Trippingly he approached the colonel.

"Charming morning, sir! I'm happy to inform you, the captain assures me that ——"

On the instant, out went the arm with the portentous forefinger at the end of it.

"What do you want here, sir? D—n your arrogance! What do you want here?"

"Why, sir, as the captain told me that we shall have a delightful passage, and that we shall be at the Tower by half-past three, I thought you'd like to kn——"

"D—n your arrogance! Come here, sir."

The colonel, followed by Truckle, placed himself in front of the paddle-box, and directed the attention of the latter to certain words which were thereon inscribed; saying,

"Read that, sir. Read that, I say."

Truckle looked at the words for just so long a time as might suffice to read them, and then nodded his head in token that he had done so.

"Do you hear me, sir? Read that."

"Well, sir, I have read it," replied Truckle, with his usual smile.

"You have read it! D—n your arrogance! Read it aloud, sir."

Truckle read:

"*Whoever passes the paddle-box will be expected to pay the FIRST-CABIN fare.*"

"Then, d—n your arrogance! what do you do here? Go back, sir."

"Why, sir, as I said before, I thought you might like to——"

"And, because you presume to think, am I to pay two shillings additional for your d—d arrogance? Go back, sir; d—n your arrogance! Go back. Go back, I say; *g—o—o—o* back, *da—a—a—mn* your arrogance!"

Shortly after this, I accidentally met poor Truckle as he was descending the steps of some chambers in Paper Buildings, Temple. I amused myself for some time in fancying what could have been his business there. At length, I came to this conclusion:—He was desirous of saying to Colonel Dominant that "his soul was his own;" and had been to take opinion of counsel learned in the law as to whether he had any right to make the assertion.

* * * * * * * *

Eight o'clock. "No more wine," said Hobbleday, "I must go. We have a meeting of our Universal-Knowledge Society. Never miss it. Although I have been a member upwards of two years, I am still in want of an immense deal of knowledge—you'd be astonished to hear how many things I am ignorant of! Some of our learned members say, that I bore them to death with questions. Can't help that, you know. No use to sub-

scribe one's money to a Knowledge-Society, unless one is allowed to profit by it."

Expressed a desire to attend the meeting.

"Take you with the greatest pleasure—not to-night—'tis not my turn—any other night you choose."

Reminded him of his promise to introduce me to Rummins, Jubb, and the rest of the great Little Pedlingtonians.

"To-morrow I'll introduce you to them all. Let me see—come and take a bachelor's chop with me at five: I'll invite them to meet you—Hoppy and Daubson, too—just we six—'flow of reason, feast of soul,' eh? If they are *all* unengaged, and can *all* come—five to-morrow, eh? Let you know by twelve. Good evening. Capital wine that." (To Scorewell, who just then entered the room)—"I say, Scorewell, if you should hear anything positive about Miss Cripps's bag, send word to me at the U. N. S. Good evening."

"What does he mean by the U. N. S., Mr. Scorewell?" inquired I.

"Universal-Knowledge Society, sir. — Pleasant gentleman, Mr. Hobbleday, sir."

"And exceedingly civil to me," said I.

"Invited you to dine with him to-morrow, sir. Ahem! Nice gentleman, sir; but the greatest humbug in Little Pedlington. He never gave a dinner to anybody in his life—a tea and turn-out, now and then—and never once offered an invitation without an *if* tacked to it. He knows that to-morrow is Mr. Hoppy's teaching day, so *he* can't come: he knows that Mr. Jubb is engaged to dine with Mr. Rummins (for he heard Mr. R. order a bottle of Cape Madeira to-day for the purpose), so *they* can't come. I say again, sir, the greatest humbug in all Little Pedlington."

This was "the most unkindest cut of all." That there should be to be found in Little Pedlington roguish innkeepers, disreputable librarians, poisoning pastry-cooks, and pick-purses; the envious, the malicious, and the scandalmonger; wicked husbands and naughty wives; nay, even purloiners of pump-ladles, and shavers of pet poodles—little as I expected to hear of all or of any of these, I might, in the course of time, have reconciled myself to the circumstance. Knowing them, I might avoid them. But that there should exist in this pre-eminently virtuous town one of that contemptible race so emphatically named by mine host—a race (as I had hitherto imagined) peculiar to London!—"As soon should I have expected!" I exclaimed, "to

hear that you have amongst you one of those uttermost miscreants, who are at once the scorn of the honourable profession which they disgrace, and the despised of the society they infest—a pettifogging attorney!"

"Unhappily for us, sir," said Scorewell, "we *have* one. To-morrow I'll tell you some of the rogue's tricks. His name is Hitch——beg pardon, sir; I hear the family-with-the-fly bell."

Regretted that I didn't hear his name at length. Resolved to inform myself of it to-morrow; and (together with the account of his tricks, with which Scorewell is to favour me) to insert it in my journal, that it may stand as a "Beware" to all future visitors to Little Pedlington.

* * * * * * *

Ten o'clock. Finished reading "Pedlingtonia," and felt inclined for bed; fatigued (no doubt by the excitement of the day), and there being a busy morrow in store for me. Rang for chambermaid. Mem. Inquire of Hoppy (when I shall have the honour and happiness of seeing him) who and what those *Fitzes* and *Villes* really are. From a momentary glimpse I had of Hobbs Hobbs, Esq., fancied there was something of the valet cut even about *him*. Chambermaid, to "marshal me the way." Met Scorewell in the passage. Had just returned from the office of the "Pedlington Weekly Observer." Nothing certain yet about Miss Cripps's bag. Editor keeps the press open till the last possible moment, in order to give his readers to-morrow the latest intelligence concerning it. Happy Pedlingtonians! An affair of ten times this "stirring interest" would scarcely produce a perceptible effect upon us poor, over-excited Londoners. Desired they would let me have the paper in the morning, to extract anything *remarkably* interesting. "Good night."

Half-past twelve. A loud knocking at my door.

"Are you asleep, sir?"

"I was, and soundly too, till you disturbed me. Who is it, and what do you want?"

"Please to get up, and open the door ajar, sir. It's chambermaid."

"Ugh! There—now—what's the matter?"

"Master thought you'd like to know, sir: Miss Cripps has got her bag safe, with everything in it—except the money."

CHAPTER V.

A COUNTRY NEWSPAPER.

LITTLE PEDLINGTON WEEKLY OBSERVER:—Anxieties of an Editor: obstinacy and provoking indifference of Crowned Heads—Distressing event, and editor's singular delicacy and impartiality touching the same—Awful calamity—Extraordinary phenomenon—Providential escape—Literary, learned, and artistical—To the lovers of champagne—Notices to correspondents—The theatre—Foundling hospital for the muses: poetical contributions—The journalizer ventures a few remarks suggested by some of them—Advertisement of a magnificent property confided to the hammer of Mr. Fudgefield, the great auctioneer of Little Pedlington.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16TH.—Found the "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer" on my breakfast-table. Surely that Emperor of Russia must be an obstinate, pig-headed fellow, and the editor of the paper the most enduring of men! Were I the latter, I would at once abandon the poor infatuated creature to his unhappy fate, for advice and remonstrance seem to be utterly lost upon him. For my own part, I declare that there is nothing I can imagine in the power of the world to bestow which would induce me to undertake the direction of the conduct of folks of that stamp, who, after all, *will* do just as they please. Yet here is Mr. Simcox Rummins, junior (the editor in question, and son of the great antiquary), sacrificing his time, temper, and patience, his health and his peace of mind,—or, in that most expressive of old-woman's-phrases, "worrying his soul to fiddle-strings,"—and all because an Emperor of Russia won't do as he bids him! As exhibiting at once the editor's temper, the power and the elegance of his style, and the practical utility of his labours, I extract the following passage from his leading article:—

"Once more we call the attention of his imperial majesty to what we have so often said, and what we have repeated above; shall we add, *for the last time?* But, no; for though patience,

like the eagle, which wings its airy flight through the boundless realms of ether, must descend at length to rest its weary wing, yet shall ours still soar upwards whilst, with the piercing eye of hope, we behold a ray of expectation that our advice will not, like the sands of the desert, be eventually lost upon him. He may continue to *not* notice us in any of his decrees or manifestoes, and thus *affect* to be indifferent concerning what we say to him; but we have it on the best authority that he is frequently seen thoughtful and musing—not, indeed, in his moments of noisy revelry, when immersed in the vortex of pleasure, and surrounded by flatterers, who, like locusts, would bar our honest counsel from his ear, but in the nocturnal solitude of his chamber. There it is that our warning voice, wafted on the wings of the viewless wind, pierces the perfumed precincts of the palace of Petersburg, and carries conviction, like the roaring of the rushing cataract, into his mind. And if the 'Little Pedlington Observer' does sometimes address the autocrat in terms of more than usual severity, let him remember, that we do so 'more in friendship than in anger;' that we regret the necessity we are under of giving him pain, but that, 'like skilful surgeons, who,' " &c.

Decidedly I would not for the universe be the editor of the "Little Pedlington Observer." What an anxious life must he lead! Upon reading on, I find he takes just the same trouble to manage the King of the French, the King of the Belgians, the Emperor of China, &c., not one of whom (if I may judge from his complaints of their indifference to his counsel) seems to mind him a whit more than he of Russia. Surely, it must be a subject of ceaseless mortification to him, that, notwithstanding the infinite pains he is at to settle, or to reform, the government of every country in the known world, his advice is so little, if at all, attended to. O ye monarchs, and ye ministers to monarchs! were I he, I would let you go to ruin your own way, nor raise a finger to save you.

Under the head of LITTLE PEDLINGTON, I find the following:—

"DISTRESSING EVENT.—Yesterday, our peaceful town was thrown into a state of excitement, which it far transcends our feeble powers to describe, by one of those events which, fortunately, as they do not often happen, so do they not frequently occur. Late on Sunday evening it was whispered about in the

best-informed circles—though We were in possession of positive information of the fact as early as a quarter past nine—that our amiable and talented townswoman, Miss Honoria Cripps (whose virtues are the theme of universal admiration, and whose numerous fugitive little offspring are the chief ornaments of our 'Foundling Hospital,' which this day is again enriched with one of her charming effusions), had had the misfortune to lose her silk bag, containing many articles of no use to any one but the owner; and, 'though last, not least,' as Shakspeare hath it, a sum amounting nearly to three pounds! But whatever doubts might have existed in certain quarters as to the correctness of the report on Sunday night, the truth was placed beyond the remotest shadow of dispute yesterday morning, at eight o'clock, by a circumstance which, we will venture to say, must have convinced the most incredulous; the bag was cried about the town by the indefatigable Coggleshaw, whose accuracy in describing its contents was the theme of general approbation; though we must say that we object to his holding, at least in these times, the office of crier *and of sexton also;* especially if, as it is rumoured, any addition is to be made to his fees in the latter capacity, more particularly when a person, whom we can conscientiously recommend as fit for the employment, is willing to undertake it upon the existing terms. But, for more upon this subject, we refer our readers to an admirable letter, signed 'An Anti-Pluralityarian,' in another part of this day's paper, which, by a strange coincidence, recommends the very person we have alluded to; which expresses also the identical opinions we entertain on the subject; and must, therefore, carry conviction to every unprejudiced and reflecting mind.

"The appeal of the crier was not attended with that success which every *honourable* and *feeling* mind desired. At twelve o'clock, again was the same experiment repeated, but, alas! with the same much-to-be-lamented result. From that time till a late hour in the evening, groups of anxious inquirers might be seen in Market Square, in the Crescent, and at the public libraries, their countenances expressive of the deepest interest in the event. Judge, then, what must have been the feelings of the amiable lady herself! However, last night, at five minutes before twelve, the bag was *clandestinely* dropped down Miss Cripps's area, when it was discovered that the lip-salve, the tooth, the false front, the carmine, in short, that everything was restored to her, except—and we must add, to the everlasting disgrace of our town—except the money! But indignant as we are at this

act, we cannot, in the present excited state of our feelings, venture any remarks upon it; we shall, therefore, reserve them as the subject for the leading article in our next, when, as impartial journalists, we shall be happy to publish any letters we may receive, free of postage, either *for* or *against* an assertion we have heard in more quarters than one,—viz., that the money in the bag at the time it was lost *did not amount to anything like the sum stated by the fair lady herself.* Till then, as in fairness bound, we shall offer no opinion upon the subject."

The following extracts are from the miscellaneous department:—

"Awful Calamity.—On Thursday last, this town was visited by a terrific hail-storm. Several of the stones were picked up of a size truly tremendous. The devastation it occasioned was awful. At Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house, five panes of glass were broken; four at Yawkins's library; a like number at Mrs. Hobbleday's, in the Crescent, who had the misfortune, also, to have the top of a cucumber-frame *literally smashed to pieces!* But the greatest sufferer by the calamity is Mr. Snargate, the builder, twenty-nine panes of whose green-house are entirely destroyed, and fourteen others more or less injured. Many persons have visited the scene of destruction. Such is the irresistible power of the elements!"

"Extraordinary Phenomenon.—In a litter of pigs which we have lately seen at Mrs. Sniggerston's, the keeper of the baths, there are actually two without tails! Such are the extraordinary freaks of Nature!"

"Providential Escape.—On Wednesday afternoon, as a labourer in the employ of Mr. Luke Snargate, the builder, was crossing the Snapshank Road, about a quarter of a mile from High Street, his foot slipped, and he fell with such violence, that, for a few minutes, the poor fellow was unable to rise. He, however, soon recovered himself. Providentially, the accident did not occur on a dark night, at the moment when our heavily-laden coach, the 'Wonder,' was passing, or the unfortunate man would, in all human probability, have been run over and killed on the spot, leaving a disconsolate widow and nine helpless children, totally unprovided for, to deplore his loss."

"LITERARY, LEARNED, AND ARTISTICAL.—The last meeting of the 'Little Pedlington Universal-Knowledge Society' was most particularly interesting. Our celebrated poet, Jubb, read a portion of his forthcoming 'Life and Times of Rummins,' our well-known antiquary; and Rummins favoured the members by reading a portion of his forthcoming 'Life and Times of Jubb.' Our eminent painter, Daubson, exhibited a very curious drawing, which he has lately completed. It is a profile in black, which, looked at one way, represents a man's head in a cocked hat, and with a large bow to his cravat; but, when turned topsy-turvy, shows the face of an old woman in a mob-cap! Who shall presume to set bounds to the ingenuity of art? But the thing by far the most interesting was, what was stated by our learned antiquary, Mr. Rummins, to be a helmet of the time of King John. It was dug from the ruins of an old house lately pulled down, in North Street, and is now the property of Mr. Rummins himself. It is corroded by the rust of ages; and, except that it has no handle, is in form not unlike a saucepan of our own days. Mr. R. read a learned memoir, which he has drawn up upon the subject (and which, together with a drawing, he intends to forward to the Society of Antiquaries), wherein he states, that when he was in London, and saw the play of 'King John' acted, the principal actors wore helmets of *precisely that shape*. Its authenticity is thus proved beyond all manner of doubt. But, upon these points, who shall presume to question the judgment of a Rummins?

"The presentations to the library, and for the sole use of the members, were, 'Goldsmith's History of England,' abridged for the use of schools, and Tooke's 'Pantheon' (an account of *all* the heathen gods and goddesses, *with numerous cuts*), both the gift of our munificent townsman, Mr. Yawkins, the banker.

"On the motion of Mr. Hobbleday, the question was put and carried, that Entick's 'Spelling Book' being much worn by constant use, the said book be newly bound at the expense of the Society."

"TO THE LOVERS OF CHAMPAGNE.—We cannot too strongly recommend that admirable substitute for Champagne, the gooseberry-wine made and sold by Hubkins, the grocer, in Market Square. We speak from our own knowledge, as he has obligingly sent us six bottles as a sample. We can say nothing of his other home-made wines, which he only *mentions to us*, as we cannot, with a conscientious regard to our duty as impartial journalists,

venture an opinion which we do not possess the means *of verifying by a trial.*"

These from the

"NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"*** The letter from a certain oilman in East Street, requesting us to give a favourable opinion of his pickles, anchovy paste, &c., must be paid for as an advertisement. We cannot compromise our independence by praising what he has not given us an opportunity of tasting."

"*** We are obliged to our valuable correspondent, *Philo-Sphynxius*, for the answer to the charade in our last, which is *Skittles*. Perhaps he will favour us by exercising his ingenuity on our charade of this day."

"THE THEATRE.

"We are at length enabled to state, that Mr. Sniggerston (in consequence of the present amount of the subscription towards building a new theatre not being sufficient to warrant the undertaking), having again kindly consented to grant the use of one of his commodious outhouses, though, at what seems to us to be a rather exorbitant rent, our liberal and spirited manager, Mr. Strut, from Dunstable, will positively open his campaign on the 15th of next month; though, in our opinion, it would answer his purpose much better did he delay the opening till the 18th, not but that he might open with great advantages on the 15th, or even the 12th. The preparations are on the most extensive scale; and a new drop-scene (of which we have been favoured with a private view) has been painted by our unrivalled Daubson. The subject is a view of the new pump, in Market Square, as seen from South Street; though, it seems to us, the painter would have done better had he represented it as seen from North Street; not but that we think South Street a very favourable point for viewing it, and no man has greater taste in these matters than Daubson, when he chooses to exercise it. The manager has done well in engaging all our old favourites, the most prominent of whom are, 'the facetious Tippleton, the heart-

rending Snoxell, and the versatile and incomparable Mrs. Biggleswade,' as they are aptly characterized by our tasteful Master of the Ceremonies in his 'Guide Book;' but why has he not also engaged Mrs. Croaks, the celebrated vocalist, who, we understand, is unemployed? This he must do. Yet if, as we are told, she requires twice as much as has ever been paid to any other performer for doing only half the usual work, we must say that Strut is right in resisting such a demand; though we admit that talent like hers cannot be too highly remunerated, and are of opinion she is perfectly justified in making her own terms; nevertheless, we recommend her to follow the example of moderation set by the three eminent performers we have named, they having liberally consented to take each a fourth of the clear receipts, allowing the remaining fourth to be divided amongst the rest of the company *in any way the manager may think proper*, after deducting one-third of *that* for himself. Tippleton, with his usual disinterested zeal for the good of the concern, has consented to play any part whatever which may be likely to conduce to that end, provided, in the first place, it be a good part in itself; secondly, that it be the only good part in the piece; and lastly, that the part be, in every possible respect, to his own entire and perfect satisfaction. The only *particular* stipulations he has made are, that no person shall have a clear benefit *but himself;* that no person shall be allowed to write as many orders nightly *as himself;* that no person shall have their name printed in the play-bills in large letters *but himself;* and that he shall not at any time be expected to do anything to serve anybody—*but himself.*

"With such spirited exertions on the part of the management, and such liberality and zealous co-operation on that of the performers, the concern must succeed; though we would recommend the manager not to act so much himself as he did last season; though we admit that his assistance is usually indispensable. However, as far as we are concerned, Strut may rely on having our support—for, indeed, he deserves it; not that we altogether approve of the arrangements he has made, which, in our opinion, are, in many respects, faulty in the extreme; nevertheless, he is an enterprising manager, and ought to be patronized by the Pedlingtonians; not that we should recommend them to go into a hot theatre, to see plays, sometimes, to say the truth, indifferently acted—nor, indeed, can he expect that they should."

Admired the profoundness of the critic's reflections, the extent and minuteness of his information, the wisdom of his advice, and,

above all, his beautiful consistency. Fancied I had somewhere occasionally read something in a similar style — could not recollect where.

These from the

"FOUNDLING HOSPITAL FOR THE MUSES.

"*To Doctors Drench and Drainum, on their grand discovery of a Mineral Spring in the Vale of Health.*

" Galen and Esculapius men may praise,
(Apothecaries great in by-gone days ;)
But you, my friends, O Drainum ! and O Drench !
At once the flambeaus of their merit quench.
They no chalybeate for our use e'er found
On Pedlingtonia's health-restoring ground :
That task the gods, to Pedlingtonia true,
Reserved, my Drainum and my Drench, for *you!*
So shall *your* names for aye *their* names outshine,
Immortal in the poet's deathless line !
That task, thrice-favour'd Jubb, that happy task be mine !

"JONATHAN JUBB."

"A CHARADE.

" A member of the feathered race,
With half a certain well-known place,
If rightly you do guess, I ween,
You'll name the pretty thing I mean.

"ENAJ SBBURCS."

"*** The following charming, pathetic little gem, composed several days ago, assumes a most peculiar feature of melancholy interest, when we consider the present distressing state of mind laboured under by the fair poetess, the full particulars of the loss of whose reticule (containing—besides a large sum in money, of her own—a lump of orris-root, a pot of lip-salve, a new flaxen front, a new false tooth, and a paper of carmine, *belonging to a friend of hers*), we have given in another part of our (this day's) paper.—ED.

"O, gentle Strephon, cease to woo!
O spare poor Chloe's virgin heart!
O tempt me not! but cease to sue;—
In pity spare me, and depart.

O do not praise the roseate blush
On Chloe's grief-worn cheek displayed!
Alas! 'tis but a hectic flush,
Which soon, too soon, in death must fade.

O speak not of the teeth that shine
Like pearls, 'twixt lips like cherries twain,
Tinted with Nature's pure carmine:
Alas! fond youth, 'tis all in vain.

Nor praise no more the balmy breath
Thou dost to orris sweet compare,
When soon the icy arms of death
In the cold grave those sweets must share.

Urge not thy suit, but fly me now,
Fond youth! nor praise those locks of flax
Thou say'st adorn my ivory brow—
Leave me to die—'tis all I ax.

"HONORIA."

A punctilious critic would, perhaps, raise an objection to the "locks of flax," and (with a greater show of right on his side) to the concluding word of Miss Cripps's "charming little gem." But surely this would not be the case with a candid reader, inclined (as I own I always am) to be pleased. By the "locks of flax," it is clear the Sappho of Little Pedlington means *flaxen locks*, whatever may be the exact import of the words she uses; and with respect to the other point, it is to be defended on the plea of necessity. "Any port in a storm," says the sailor; and, driven by stress of rhyme, I think the lady is fortunate in not having been forced into a less commodious haven; for the most fastidious ear must be satisfied with the rhyme, which is perfect; whilst the only objection that can be made to the word *ax* (as a word) is, that the Exclusives, the Almacks of the Dictionary, refuse to acknowledge it as a member of their super-refined Society. But I fear I entertain a dislike of the general tone of the poem, exquisite as it is in detail. Why need the lady be so confoundedly—I cannot help swearing at it—so confoundedly dismal? Why should she everlastingly (as I perceive by a former number of the "Foundling Hospital")

be tampering with such disagreeable matters as "death," and "the grave," and "the canker-worm," and "the blighted hope," "the withered heart," "the seared soul," and a thousand other such uncomfortable fancies? If her woes be real, most sincerely do I pity the poor lady, and the sooner her gloomy aspirations after death and the grave are gratified, the better it will be for her; if feigned, I shall say no more than I wish that, for the pleasure of the readers of the "Little Pedlington Observer," she would exercise her imagination upon subjects of a more agreeable character. I am aware I may be told that Miss Cripps is, *par excellence*, the "Songstress of Woe;" that she "strings her lyre with tears;" and that much also will be said about "finer sensibilities," "poetical temperament," "flow of feeling," and "outpourings of soul." Fiddle-de-dee! the mere commonplace twaddle of criticism. Could the performances on this tear-strung lyre be restricted to the hand of Miss Cripps alone (the inventress of the instrument, and its mistress also), I should not so much object to an occasional movement *doloroso;* but her genius, as it is evinced in the effusion which has occasioned these passing remarks, might, unhappily, beget a brood of imitators, who, like imitators in general, would select only the worser qualities of their model: then should we have every young lady in Little Pedlington whimpering about "blighted hopes" at fourteen; at fifteen, invoking death, and sighing for the quiet of the cold, cold, grave; and, at sixteen, running off with a tall footman, or a haberdasher's mustachio'd "assistant." Rather than these things should occur, I would suggest—since extremes provoke extremes—an Act of Parliament to prohibit lady-poets from meddling with any other subjects than silver moons, radiant rainbows, blushing roses, modest violets, and the like; and to restrict them, in their gloomiest moods, to illustrations the most sad and dismal of which should be—a cloudy night in summer.

Amongst the advertisements, the following is the most prominent. My attention was first attracted by that portion of it which is printed in capital letters, and which I read (as I would recommend all readers to do) independently of the context in humbler type. "Magnificent property, indeed!" thought I. As I have never met with anything of the kind at all comparable with it, I think it worth extracting:—

CHATSWORTH AND BLENHEIM

Are not likely either speedily or soon to be brought to the hammer, but a most desirable Freehold Property in the Vale of Health,

WILL BE SOLD BY AUCTION,

On the premises, on Monday next, at twelve o'clock precisely,

BY MR. FUDGEFIELD.

It seldom falls to the fortunate lot of an auctioneer to have to offer to the public a property, to describe which puts to the utmost stretch of extension the most sublime and inexhaustible powers of description for to describe; and which, to convey an idea of sufficiently adequately, would be required to be described by the unequalled and not to be paralleled descriptive powers of a

LORD BYRON.

What then, must be the feelings of Mr. Fudgefield on the present occasion, when he has to offer for sale that most desirable residence, situate in the Vale of Health, and known by a name as appropriate as it is befitting, and well merited as it is most richly deserved,

PARADISE HOUSE!

The particulars of this most desirable and charming residence, which may truly be called

A PERFECT RUS IN URBE *A LITTLE WAY OUT OF TOWN,*

will, in the course of this advertisement, be stated fully and at length; and which Mr. Fudgefield owes it as a duty to his employers to state as circumstantially as he would if it were a

MAGNIFICENT MANSION,

Fit for the residence of

A NOBLEMAN'S FAMILY.

Being near the town and in its immediate vicinity, where everything that Nature's multitudinous desires can wish for can be obtained when wanted, it is not necessary, and scarcely requisite that it should boast of

THREE DOUBLE COACH-HOUSES

AND

ACCOMMODATION FOR TWENTY HORSES;

Nor, indeed, should it be expected, when the town can boast of two confectioners, that it should possess a

WELL-CONSTRUCTED ICE-HOUSE.

It is also the opinion of many persons that, as it occasions great expense, outlay, and disbursement, to maintain and keep up

ONE OF THE FINEST PINERIES IN THE KINGDOM,

NUMEROUS GREENHOUSES AND CONSERVATORIES,
A WELL-STOCKED FISH-POND,

AND

AN AVIARY WORTHY THE ATTENTION OF ALL EUROPE,

None but such as those whose fortunes are equal, and whose means are adequate, to such

AND OTHER LUXURIES,

Ought to encumber themselves with them. From this rule is not to be excepted

A CHOICE COLLECTION OF RARE BOOKS,

ALL IN COSTLY BINDINGS,

when from any of the circulating libraries in the town any book to convey pleasure to the understanding, instruction to the imagination, or information to the intellect, may be obtained at the cost of a moderate and not unreasonable subscription. The same observations would apply to

A SMALL BUT TRULY SELECT SELECTION OF

CHINA,

FROM THE FAR-FAMED AND WELL-KNOWN MANUFACTORIES OF

SEVRES AND DRESDEN;

And one of the

MOST SPLENDID COLLECTION OF PICTURES,

BY THE OLD MASTERS, EVER BROUGHT TO THE HAMMER:

Including several by

RAPHAEL ANGELO, LUNARDI DE VINSY, PAUL VERYUNEASY, THE THREE STORACES, VANDYKI, RUBINI, PAUL POTTERER, SEBASTION PLUMPO, JULIET ROMANO, TITAN, JERRY DOW, GEORGE ONY, OLD PALMER, DON MYCHINO, AND OTHER SPANISH, ENGLISH, AND ITALIAN ANCIENT OLD MASTERS.

For the reasons above adduced, and as Mr. Strut's unrivalled company are shortly to exhibit their well-known talents in a theatre of their own, a

SMALL BUT ELEGANT PRIVATE THEATRE

Would be supererogatory and superfluous; as also, considering the

CHARMING DRIVES AND RURAL PROMENADES,

Reminding the enchanted eye of the enraptured beholder of the

ELYSIAN FIELDS,

Which are to be enjoyed at every turn in the neighbourhood of Little Pedlington, an

EXTENSIVE PARK AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

Would hardly compensate the Purchaser for the immense cost which he must be at for planting and laying out perhaps as many as would

COMPRISE 10,000 ACRES!!!

It is only necessary further to add, that

PARADISE HOUSE

Consists of four rooms, small but commodious; with wash-house and most convenient kitchen, detached: with a garden of a quarter of an acre in extent, more or less; from which (should they ever honour the Vale of Health with a visit) the fortunate purchaser of this most desirable Property would be enabled most distinctly to see the

QUEEN AND ALL THE ROYAL FAMILY

CHAPTER VI.

Little Jack Hobbleday calls—Specimens of the Art of boring, *passim*—Hobbleday's pressing invitation—Advantages of the possession of a little musical talent—Stoppage of the Little Pedlington Bank and its disastrous consequences—Too friendly by half—Equivocal compliment—Sit to the matchless Daubson—Cant of connoisseurship—"Your *candid* opinion, sir," and its customary consequences—No professional envy in *this* place—Daubson's cool contempt for the Royal Academy, and a hint worth the attention of that exclusive body—Remarkably kind note from Hobbleday.

SCARCELY had I finished the reading of my newspaper when Scorewell, bill-of-fare in hand, entered the room, and thus addressed me:—

"Mr. Hobbleday wishes to see you, sir. Bill-of-fare, sir. What would you choose to have for dinner, sir?"

"It is probable, Mr. Scorewell," replied I, "I shall not dine at home. You may remember Mr. Hobbleday invited me to dine with him to-day, for the purpose of meeting some of the worthies of this place."

"Yes, sir, with an *if*, sir. That's why I ask you what you would please to order, sir. Mr. Hobbleday, as I said last night, sir, is a nice gentleman, but the greatest humbug in Little Pedlington. And then, sir, if I might make free to tell you, sir, don't say anything to him you would wish to keep secret, sir."

"I never do, landlord, to anybody," said I.

"What I mean is this, sir: he is very intimate with Mr. Simcox Rummins, junior, sir, the editor of our newspaper, sir; and people suspect that whatever he hears he——But here he is, sir."

Mr. Hobbleday made his appearance—stopped short in the middle of the room—thrust his hands into his pockets—looked at the clock—then at me—smiled with an air of self-satisfaction—again looked at the clock—when then (to adopt a Miltonic form of phrase), "when then thus Hobbleday:"—

"Do you see that? Told you I would be here at twelve, and twelve it is to a minute. That's what I call punctuality. Pride myself on being punctual. To be sure, it is no great merit in me to be so—nothing else to do—no business, no occupation—gentleman at large, as I may say—a ninety pounds a-year, independent. And yet it is something to be proud of, nevertheless, eh? But I'm afraid I interrupt you—you were reading the paper. Now, no ceremony with me—if I do interrupt you, say so. Never bore anybody, if I know it—hate to be bored myself. But some people have no tact. Ahem!"

It must here be noted that before and after every "ahem," Mr. Hobbleday paused for a second or two—a habit which gave additional importance, if not interest, to what he was pleased to call his conversation; and which, at the same time, contributed to allay any feeling of impatience that might otherwise have arisen in his hearers.

"Ahem! No man is better acquainted with his faults than I am with mine—sorry to say I have many; but this I may safely say for myself, whatever else I may be, I am anything but a bore. But all owing to tact, eh? Can't endure a bore; and now, if I *do* interrupt you——"

Assured him he did not, reminded him that I was prepared for his visit, and requested he would take a seat. Deliberately seated himself opposite to me—deliberately placed his straw hat upon the table—deliberately unbuttoned his nankeen jacket, and deliberately took off his gloves. Seemed—like rain, when one least desires it—regularly set in for the day.

"Sure, now, you have finished reading your newspaper? Resemble me in one respect, I dare say. Reading a newspaper is all very well, but prefer conversation, eh? Well, then, won't apologize for the interruption. Nothing equal to pleasant conversation; for my part, I may almost say I live upon it!—Ahem!—Breakfast not removed—you breakfast late, eh? Now I breakfast at eight in summer, at nine in winter; and, what is very remarkable, have done so as long as I can remember. Now I'll tell you what my breakfast consists of."

Obligingly communicated to me the fact, that he took three thick slices of bread-and-butter, one egg, and two cups of tea; adding to the interest of the information, by a minute detail of the price he paid for the several commodities, the quantities of tea and sugar he used, the time he allowed his egg to boil, and his tea to draw; and also, by a particular description of the form and size of his teapot. Though early in the day, I experienced a

sensation of drowsiness, for which (having slept well at night) I could not account.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Hobbleday, as the clock struck; "one o'clock, I declare! How time flies when one is engaged in pleasant conversation! But, perhaps, I'm boring you, eh? If I am, say so.—Ahem!—By the bye—a sad disappointment—never so put out by anything in my life. Had made up my mind to one of the pleasantest afternoons imaginable. But Jubb can't come—engaged to dine with Rummins. No matter, we must arrange for some other day. I won't let you off; so, let me see—or, no—fix your own day—now, come; fix a day you must. But don't say to-morrow—to-morrow is Hoppy's day for his public breakfast at the skittle-ground; and on Thursday I'm engaged at a rout at Mrs. Applegarth's, who shows off her new drawing-room curtains—sad ostentation!"

"Well, then," said I, "on Friday, if you please."

"That's Rummins's day for showing his museum; and on Saturday I *tea* with Miss Shrubsole. Can't say, though, that her parties are at all in my way." Here he shook his arm, as if in the act of dealing out cards, and, with a grave look, continued:—"You understand;—tremendous play! Like a quiet, old-fashioned rubber very well;—have no objection even to a round game, when played in moderation; but when it comes to three-penny *shorts*, and when, at loo, the lady of the house is so *fortunate* as to turn up pam almost every time she deals—ahem!—But, to the point. Sunday, of course, is out of the question; and—a——"

"And on Monday, at the latest, I must return to town."

"No, no, I can't consent to that: I must not be deprived of the pleasure of introducing you to my eminent friends. Do you *positively* leave us on *Monday?*"

"Positively; business of importance, which will require my presence——"

"No, no! pooh, pooh!—won't listen to such a thing; won't, I tell you: for on *Tuesday* I shall consider you as engaged to dine with me. A week's notice to my eminent friends will secure their company."

"Your politeness and hospitality," said I, "deserve a suitable return on my part. Since you are so pressing in your invitation, it would be ungracious in me to refuse it; so I will write to town by this night's post, and, even at the risk of some inconvenience, will remain here till——"

"Ahem!—aha!—Never so flattered by anything in all my

life; but, no—won't listen to it—wouldn't put you to inconvenience for all the world;—say no more about it; never mind my disappointment; we shall see you in Little Pedlington again. Sadly disappointed, indeed: but don't you let that interfere with your arrangements. Come, will you take a turn?"

Scorewell, who just before had come into the room, and heard the concluding part of the conversation, again presented his bill-of-fare, with—"Bill-of-fare, sir. *Now* what would you choose to have for dinner, sir?"

Puzzled to guess what he intended by his emphasis upon the "now;" neither could I understand what he meant by the odd twinkle of the eye with which he accompanied his question.

Whilst I was doubting over Scorewell's bill-of-fare, Hobbleday amused himself by breathing upon one of the window-panes, and making marks thereon with his fore-finger.

"Draw?" said he, in an inquiring tone.

Told him I did.

"Pretty accomplishment. I've a taste that way myself.—Ahem!—Play the flute?"

Told him I did not.

"Pity: you'd find it a great comfort. Besides—gets one into the best society—at least, I find it so in Little Pedlington. For instance, now, there's Yawkins, the eminent banker, hates me, yet invites me to all his music-parties. You'd think that odd, perhaps—not in the least. Why? Because he can't do without me. His daughter is a very fine performer on the pianoforte, I admit—first-rate—no more taste, though, than a bagpiper; yet, what would be the 'Battle of Prague,' or the overture to 'Lodoiska,' without little Jack Hobbleday's flute accompaniment? Pooh! pooh! nothing, I tell you.—Ahem!—malicious little creature that daughter of his. Never stops for you when she finds you sticking at a difficult passage, but rattles on, and finishes five minutes before you, merely to show her own skill. I had my revenge, though, the other evening. Caught *her* at fault—ha! ha! ha!—my turn now, thought I; so on I went; and hang me if I didn't come to my last tootle-tootle-too, while she had still nearly a whole page to play. Tit for tat, eh?"

"But what cause can Mr. Yawkins have for hating you, as you say, Mr. Hobbleday?"

"I did him a service, my dear sir; and, with some people, that is cause sufficient. You must know that—ahem! You don't want Scorewell, eh? Scorewell, you may leave the room."

Scorewell, with some reluctance, and a glance at Hobbleday, bespeaking no very wonderful affection for that gentleman, took the hint and withdrew.

"That is the most impertinent, prying rascal in all Little Pedlington," continued Hobbleday. "He pretends to be busied in dusting the wine-glasses and decanters on the side-board, when, in fact, he is listening to your conversation. Whatever he hears, he reports to our newspaper, and for that he receives *his* paper *gratis*. Between ourselves, he is not the only one in this place I could mention who does the same thing."

"Are these rivals in the same trade?" thought I, "or which of them is it that belies the other? Oh! Little Pedlington! Ah! Little Pedlington! if these be thy doings——Yet, no; Scorewell shall, upon Hobbleday's testimony, be written down a publican of moderate honesty; Hobbleday, upon the word of Scorewell, shall stand recorded what eye, methought, had never seen, what tongue had never named, in this all-perfect place—a humbug; but that either of them, or that any other Pedlingtonian should be suspected of betraying——No, no, no; they are labouring under some strange delusion, and know not what they say. This, for mine own happiness, I must and will believe."

Hobbleday resumed:—"But respecting Yawkins. You remember the panic a few years ago, which, as Jubb describes it, 'Like roaring torrent overwhelmed the *Banks!*' Up at six in the morning, 'my custom (as Shakspeare aptly says), my custom always in the afternoon.' I was the first in Little Pedlington to hear of the great crash. Saw a traveller just arrived from London, long before the post came in—told me of *this* bank going in consequence of a run upon it, and of *that* bank going in consequence of a run upon it. Thought of my friends Yawkins, Snargate, and Co. No fear, though, for such a firm as *that*,—sound as a roach, at bottom. Yet prevention is better than cure, thought I; for if the Little Pedlington bank *should* go, the credit of the world's at an end. Well, sir, what does little Jack Hobbleday do? I'll tell you what he does. He runs to his friend Shrubsole, and knocks him up two hours earlier than his usual time. 'Shrubsole,' says I, 'don't be alarmed; there's a tremendous run upon the banks all over England; the consequence is, they are smashing like glass. I know you have cash at Yawkins's, but be calm, *and don't press upon them*, and your money will be safe; but should there be a run upon them to-day, they must be ruined. You know my

friendship for old Yawkins in particular: follow my advice, and I shall take it as a personal favour.' From him I run to my friend Chickney,—knock *him* up. 'Chickney,' says I, 'don't be alarmed; there's a tremendous,' &c. &c. &c. Well, sir, from him I run to my friend Stintum,—knock *him* up. 'Stintum,' says I," &c. &c. &c.

Two o'clock.—Hobbleday had already mentioned the names of nineteen persons to whom he had run, and repeated to me the same speech in precisely the same words as he had delivered it to each of them; always commencing with—"Well, sir, from him I run," &c.

Greatly admire this method of telling a story, as I do my friend Major Boreall's manner of narrating; who, for instance, is a longer time in telling you of his ordering a dinner than it would take you to eat it. As thus:—"First of all I say to Kaye, 'Kaye,' says I, 'you will be very particular in letting us have a tureen of very nice spring-soup at one end of the table;' then I say to Kaye, 'Kaye,' says I, 'you will be very particular in letting us have a tureen of very nice *soupe-à-la-reine* at the other;' then I say to Kaye, 'Kaye,' &c." and so on, through the whole service, even to a biscuit with the dessert. The great advantage of this system is, that a vast deal of time is consumed by it; and they will not be disposed to object to it whom experience has taught that human life is considerably too long for any useful purpose, and who have found that, but for expedients of this kind for "beguiling the time," many hours would have been left at their own disposal for which they must have sought employment. Long live the Borealls and the Hobbledays of the world for relieving us of this care!

Continued his story, in precisely the same form, through thirteen names more, and then proceeded:—

"Well, sir, having taken all this trouble to prevent a run upon the house of this ungrateful man, it was near eight o'clock; so home I go and get a mouthful of breakfast. Look at my banker's book—find I have eleven pound two in their hands. Eleven pound two, as I hope to be saved! Bank opens at nine, thinks I; post won't be in till ten; probably the firm will know nothing of what is going on in London till then. Eleven pound two a great deal to me, though not much to a house like the Yawkins's—I'll go down quietly, as if I knew nothing, and draw *my* balance—*that* can't hurt them. Go—get there at a quarter before nine—what do I see?—I'll tell you what I see: I see Shrubsole, I see Chickney, I see Stintum, I see [here he

recapitulated the whole of the two-and-thirty names he had already mentioned, ending with] and I see Sniggerston; all, with consternation painted on their faces, crowding about the door. Notwithstanding my request that they would not press upon my friend Yawkins, there they all were—and before me, too! What was the consequence? I'll tell you. The consequence was, the first ten or a dozen that contrived to squeeze in were paid; but that could not last, you know; human nature couldn't stand it. Pooh! pooh! I tell you it couldn't: so after paying nearly two hundred pounds—stop! a regular stoppage, sir. I was at the tail of the crowd; and when I saw the green door closed you might have knocked me down with a feather. However, at the end of two years, although the outstanding claims amounted to nearly a thousand pounds, a dividend was paid of four shillings in the pound: and now, Snargate drives his gig again, old Yawkins rides his cob, and, to the honour of our town be it said, the Little Pedlington Bank is as firm and sound as any in Europe. Never kept cash there since, though; no more bankers for me—eleven pound two—the sight of that green door—no, no—one such fright in a man's life is enough. Ahem!"—Here he paused.

"But," said I, "you have not told me the point of the story—the cause of Mr. Yawkins's hatred of you, which led you to favour me with these interesting details."

"Dear me—no more I have—forgot the point. You must know, then, that he has always declared—mark the black ingratitude!—that if I had not gone running all over Little Pedlington, frightening his customers by telling them not to be alarmed, and thus causing them to take him by surprise, he needn't have stopped payment—till he thought best."

Here was another pause. Clock struck three.

"Three o'clock, as sure as I'm born!" exclaimed my entertaining acquaintance. Now who'd have thought *that?* But, as I said before, time does fly when one is engaged in pleasant conversation. Have not enjoyed so agreeable a morning for a long while. Afraid I've kept you at home, though; lost all your morning,—eh?—Ha! there goes Shrubsole. Ahem! the greatest bore in Little Pedlington. He'll sit with you for three hours, and not say a word—man of no conversation. But you are thinking about something—eh?"

Hobbleday right. Thinking about Sir Gabriel Gabble, a *chattering* bore, and Major Mum, a *silent* bore. One will sit with you *tête-à-tête* through a long winter's evening, as mute as

if he had but just issued from the cave of Trophonius, and (as Charles Bannister said of Dignum) *thinks* he's *thinking*; the other will chatter your very head off—his matter compounded of dull trivialities, commonplace remarks, and the most venerable of old woman's gossip, all which he calls conversation. Query 1. Which of the two is the *least* to be endured? Query 2. Were you to be indicted for that you did accidentally toss them both (or any of the like) out at window, whereby did ensue "a consummation devoutly to be wished," would not a jury of any sensible twelve of your countrymen return a verdict of "Justifiable *Bore-icide?*"

Hobbleday rose to depart—but didn't. Almost wished he would. Expressed an apprehension that I was trespassing too far upon his patience and good-nature by *detaining him*. Assured me I didn't in the least. Sorry, indeed, to leave me; but it was past his dinner time. Slowly drew on one glove, smoothing each finger separately with the other hand: drew on the other glove with (as the French say) *le même jeu*. Deliberately took up his hat, looked into the crown of it, and whistled part of a tune. Reiterated his regrets that I didn't play the flute; and repeated his assurance that I should find it a *very* great comfort. Made a move—("At last!" thought I)—but not towards the door. His move, like a knight's at chess, brought him, by a zigzag, only into another corner. Made the circuit of the room, and read all the cards and advertisements that were hanging against the walls, whistling all the time.

"Well, now—go I must. Sorry to leave you, *for the present.*"

Can't account for it; but, on hearing these three words, you might—(to use Hobbleday's own expression)—you might have knocked me down with a feather.

"By the bye, promised to take you to see my dear friend Rummins's museum on a *private* day. Can't to-morrow. Thursday, I'm engaged. Let me see;—ay, I'll send you a letter of introduction to him—'twill be the same thing—he'll do anything to oblige *me*. Now remember; anything I can do to be agreeable to you whilst you stay in our place—command me. Sorry our little dinner party can't take place *this* time; but when you come again to Little Pedlington—remember—come you must—positively won't take *no* for an answer. Everybody knows little Jack Hobbleday. Pooh, pooh! I tell you they do. Always willing to—always anxious to——good bye—see you at Hoppy's public breakfast to-morrow—good bye."

Really he is an obliging creature; and not to avail myself of his proffered civilities would be an offence.

Strolled out—(four o'clock, and the thermometer at 82°) and found the town deserted. Informed it was the fashionable day for walking to Snapshank Hill to see the view,—only five miles distant. How unfortunate am I that Hobbleday didn't acquaint me with this! for, as I am informed, having reached the top of the hill, one may look back again, and, with a tolerable telescope, discover the spire of Little Pedlington church—that being the chief purpose of the pilgrimage, though the spire, with the church into the bargain, may be seen without any trouble at all, from any one of the four corners of Little Pedlington churchyard.

Approached a window wherein were exhibited several profiles in black, and a notice that "Likenesses are taken in this manner, at only one shilling each, *in one minute*." There was a full-length of Hobbleday—no mistaking it—and of Mrs. Shanks, the confectioner; and of Miss Tidmarsh, with her poodle; and of many others, the originals of which I knew not, but all unquestionable likenesses, no doubt; for the works before me were Daubson's! Recollected his "all-but-breathing grenadier;" recollected, too, Jubb's noble apostrophe to him, commencing with

"Stand forth, my Daubson, matchless and alone!"

and instantly resolved to sit to him for a black profile.

My request to see Mr. Daubson was answered by a little girl, seated at a little table, and employed in preparing the happy canvas destined to receive immortality from the hand of the great artist: in other words, she was cutting up a sheet of drawing-card into squares of different sizes.

"Mr. Daubson can't possibly be disturbed just yet, sir," said she, with an air of importance befitting the occasion; "he is particularly engaged with a sitter."

"Then," replied I, "I will call again in an hour or two, or to-morrow, or the next day."

"But," continued she (not noticing what I said), "if you will take a seat, sir, for half a minute or so, he will see you. The lady has been with him nearly a minute already!"

Recollected Daubson's expeditious method of handing down to posterity his mementos of the worthies of his own time—"perpetuating" is, I believe, the word I ought to use.

And this word reminds me of an untoward circumstance which occurred (not in Little Pedlington, but at another equally well-known place—Paris) upon the occasion of a Welsh friend requesting me to take him to the studio of the Chevalier G——, (unquestionably the best portrait-painter in France), whose works he expressed a great desire to see. The name of the party introduced, which was well known, would have been a sufficient passport to the chevalier, even had it not been countersigned by me, and he was received with flattering attention—the painter himself conducting him through the studio, and carefully exhibiting to him his choicest productions. The chevalier's portraits were of high merit as works of art, yet, I must admit, he had been somewhat unfortunate in his originals, who certainly had not furnished his pencil with the most beautiful specimens of the "human face divine." My friend examined the pictures with great minuteness, but made no remark, although the chevalier understood English perfectly well. Having completed the tour of the gallery, the painter, whose vanity was scarcely less than his politeness, turned towards his visitor with an evident, and no unnatural, expectation of some complimentary observation. The latter, having given one last and general glance around him, exclaimed, — "*Monsieur le Chevalier*—what devilish infatuation can induce people to desire to perpetuate their d—d ugly faces!—*Monsieur le Chevalier*, I wish you good morning."

Resolved that the recollection of this anecdote should not be lost upon me on the present occasion.

Ushered into the presence of the great artist. As it usually happens with one's preconceived notions of the personal appearance of eminent people, mine, with respect to Daubson, turned out to be all wrong. In the portrait of Michael Angelo, you read of the severity and stern vigour of his works; of tenderness, elegance, and delicacy in Raphael's; in Rembrandt's, of his coarseness as well as of his strength; in Vandyck's, of refinement; in all, of intellectual power. But I must own that, in Daubson, I perceived nothing indicative of the creator of the "Grenadier." Were I, however, to attempt to convey by a single word a general notion of his appearance, I should say it is *interesting*. To descend to particulars:—He is considerably below the middle height; his figure is slim, except towards the lower part of the waistcoat, where it is protuberant; his arms are long, and his knees have a tendency to approach each other; face small, sharp, and pointed; complexion of a bilious hue, the

effect, doubtless, of deep study; small gray eyes; bushy black eyebrows; and head destitute of hair, except at the hinder part, where the few stragglers are collected and bound together pigtail-wise. Dress:—coat of brown fustian; waistcoat, stockings, and smalls, black; silk neckerchief, black; and, I had almost added, black shirt, but that I should hardly be warranted in declaring on this point upon the small specimen exhibited. Manners, language, and address, simple and unaffected; and in these you at once recognized the GENIUS.

Having told him, in reply to his question whether I came to be "done?" that I had come for that purpose, he (disdaining the jargon, common to your London artists, about "Kitcats," and "whole-lengths," and "Bishop's half-lengths," and "three-quarters," and so forth) came at once to the point, by saying—

"Do you wish to be taken short—or long, mister?"

Told him I should prefer being taken short.

"Then get up and sit down, if you please, mister."

I was unable to reconcile these seemingly contradictory directions, till he pointed to a narrow, high-backed chair, placed on a platform, elevated a few inches above the floor. By the side of the chair was a machine of curious construction, from which protruded a long wire.

Mounted, and took my seat.

"Now, mister, please to look at that," said Daubson; at the same time pointing to a Dutch cuckoo-clock which hung in a corner of the room. "Twenty-four minutes and a half past four. Head *stiddy*, mister."

He then slowly drew the wire I have mentioned over my head, and down my nose and chin; and having so done, exclaimed, "There, mister, now look at the clock—twenty-*five* minutes and a half. What do you think of *that?*"

What could I think, indeed! or what could I do but utter an exclamation of astonishment! In that inconceivably short time had the "great Daubson" produced, in profile, a perfect outline of my bust, with the head thrown back, and the nose interestingly perked up in the air. "Such," might Hoppy well exclaim, —"such are the wonders of art!"

"Now, mister, while I'm giving the finishing touches to the pictur',—that is to say, filling up the outline with *Ingy*-ink,—I wish you'd just have the goodness to give me your *candid* opinion of my works here. But no flattery, mister;—tell me what you *really* think. I like to be told of my faults; I turn it to account; I improve by it."

Can a more agreeable task be assigned to you than that of delivering to an artist, an author, or, indeed, to anybody, a *candid* opinion of his productions; especially if, in the excess of your candour, you temper a hundred-weight of praise with but one little grain of censure? Let mine enemy walk through the rooms of the Royal Academy arm-in-arm with an exhibitor, and try it—that's all.

Looked at the profiles hanging about the room. Said of them, severally, "Beautiful!"—"Charming!"—"Exquisite!"—"Divine!"

"So, so, mister," said Daubson, rising, "I've found you out: you are an artist."

"I assure you, sir," said I, "you are mistaken. I am sorry I cannot boast of being a member of that distinguished profession."

"You can't deceive me, mister. Nobody, excepting one of us, can know so much about art as you do. Your opinions are so just, it can't be otherwise. But these are trifles not worth speaking of—though they may be very well in their way, mister—and though, without vanity, I may say, I don't know the man that can beat them. But what think you of my great work—my 'Grenadier,' mister? Now, without flattery."

Encouraged by the praise of my connoisseurship, and from so high a quarter, I talked boldly, as a connoisseur ought to do; not forgetting to make liberal use of those terms by the employment of which one who knows little may acquire a reputation for connoisseurship amongst those who know less; and concluding (like the last discharge of rockets at Vauxhall) by letting off all my favourite terms at once.—"Mr. Daubson," said I, "I assure you, that for design, composition, drawing, and colour,—for middle distance, foreground, background, *chiar'-oscuro*, tone, foreshortening, and light and shade,—for breadth, depth, harmony, perspective, pencilling, and finish, I have seen nothing in Little Pedlington that would endure a moment's comparison with it."

"Where could you have got your knowledge of art, your fine taste, your sound judgment, if you are not an artist? I wish I could have the advantage of your opinion now and then—so correct in all respects—I am sure I should profit by it, mister. Now—there is your portrait: as like you as one pea is to another, mister."

"Yes," said I, "it is like; but isn't the head thrown rather too much backwards?"

Daubson's countenance fell!

"Too much backwards! Why, mister, how would you have the head?"

"My objection goes simply to this, Mr. Daubson. It seems to me that, by throwing the head into that position——"

"Seems to *you*, mister! I think I, as a professional artist, ought to know best. But that is the curse of our profession: people come to us, and would teach *us* what to do."

"You asked me for a candid opinion, sir; otherwise I should not have presumed to——"

"Yes, mister, I did ask you for a candid opinion; and so long as you talked like a sensible man, I listened to you. But when you talk to a professional man upon a subject he, naturally, must be best acquainted with——backwards, indeed! I never placed a head better in all my life!"

Reflecting that Daubson, "as a professional man," must, consequently, be infallible, I withdrew my objection, and changed the subject.

"How is it, sir," said I, "that so eminent an artist as you is not a member of the Royal Academy?"

"D—n the Royal Academy!" exclaimed he, his yellow face turning blue: "D—n the Royal Academy! they shall never see me amongst such a set. No, mister; I have thrown down the gauntlet and defied them. When they refused to exhibit my 'Grenadier,' I made up my mind never to send them another work of mine, mister; never to countenance them in any way: and I have kept my resolution. No, mister; they repent their treatment of me, but it is too late; Daubson is unappeasable: they may fret their hearts out, but they shall never see a pictur' of mine again. Why, mister, it is only last year that a *friend of mine—without my knowledge*—sent them one of my pictur's, and they rejected it. They knew well enough whose it was. But I considered that as the greatest compliment ever paid me,—it showed they were afraid of the competition. D—n 'em! if they did but know how much I despise 'em! I never bestow a thought upon 'em; not I, mister. But that den must be broken up;—there will be no high art in England whilst that exists. Intrigue! cabal! It is notorious that they never exhibit any man's pictur's, unless he happens to have R.A. tacked to his name. It is notorious that they pay five thousand a-year to the *Times* for praising *their* works and for not noticing mine. D—n 'em! what a thorough contempt I feel for 'em! I can imagine them at their dinners, which cost them thousands a-year;—there they are, Phillips, and Shee, and Pickersgill, and Wilkie,

and Briggs, laying their heads together to oppose me! But which of them can paint a 'Grenadier?' D—n 'em! they are one mass of envy and uncharitableness, that I can tell you, mister."

"Happily, Mr. Daubson," said I, "those vices scarcely exist in Little Pedlington."

"Unheard of, mister. I don't envy *them*—I envy no man—on the contrary, I'm always ready to lend a hand to push on any rising talent that comes forward;—though, to be sure, I'll allow no man to take profiles in Little Pedlington whilst *I* live: that's self-preservation. But they!—they'd destroy me if they could. But, bad as some of them are, the worst are those envious fellows, Turner and Stanfield. They have done their utmost to crush me, but they have not succeeded. Why, mister, last summer I began to do a little in the landscape way. No sooner were my views of the Crescent and of Little Pedlington Church mentioned in our newspaper, than down comes a man from London with a *camera-obscura* to oppose me! Who was at the bottom of that? Who sent him? Why, they did, to be sure. The envious ——! But I didn't rest till I got him out of the town; so that scheme failed. No, no, mister; they'll not get me amongst them in their d—d Academy, at least, not whilst they go on in their present style. But let them look to it; let them take care how they treat me for the future; let them do their duty by me—they know what I mean—or they may bring the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer' about their ears. For my own part, I never condescend to bestow a thought upon them! D—n 'em! if they did but know the contempt I feel for them!"

Here another sitter was announced; so I received my portrait from the hands of the great artist, paid my shilling, and departed.

"So then," thought I, "genius, even a Daubson's, is not secure from the effects of envy and persecution (real or imaginary) even in Little Pedlington!"

Six o'clock. Returned to mine inn. In the course of the evening received a note from Hobbleday, enclosing *sealed* letters to Rummins and Jubb.

"Dear Sir,—Sorry cannot have pleasure of accompanying you to my dear friend Rummins, neither to my worthy friend Jubb. Send letters of introduction,—spoke in warmest terms,—all you can desire. Sorry sha'n't see you to dine with me

this time,—next time you must,—no denial. Believe me, my dear sir, your most truly affectionate friend,

"JOHN HOBBLEDAY.

"P.S.—*Do* think of my advice about flute,—*do* turn your mind to it—will find it a great comfort."

Will not believe otherwise than that Hobbleday is a warm-hearted, sincere little fellow.

To-morrow to Hoppy's public breakfast, where I shall meet all the beauty and fashion of Little Pedlington. Afterwards with my letters to Rummins and Jubb. With such warm introductions from their friend Hobbleday, what a reception do I anticipate!

CHAPTER VII.

Awful conflagration—Pleasures and advantages of early rising—Charity unexampled—Meet a great man. Who?—Jack Hobbleday's marketing: well-considered economy—The great man no less a personage than Felix Hoppy, M.C.—How to get your money's worth—Another of the advantages of early rising—A visit to Simcox Rummins, F.S.A.—Projects of the F.S.A.: all disinterestedly and praiseworthily *pro bono publico* — Avail myself of Hobbleday's introduction and present his flattering letter: results—"O, Mr. Hobbleday!!!"

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17TH.—Aroused by a violent knocking at my door. "What *is* the matter?" said I, startled by the noise.

"Get up, sir, for Heaven's sake, get up," cried the chambermaid: "the house is o' fire!"

"The house on fire! What's o'clock?" inquired I.

"Almost six, sir. Get up, get up, get up!"

"Only six o'clock? and the house on fire!" To this there was no reply; for the chambermaid having fulfilled her duty by communicating the intelligence to me, was proceeding in her laudable occupation of alarming such of the lodgers as were still (to speak poetically) "in the arms of Morpheus."

Albeit unused to pay my respects to the sun at his levée, the present provocation was irresistible. Rising early for the idle purpose of "brushing with early feet the morning dew," and listening to the matin song of the lark, is one thing; performing the same disagreeable exploit to avoid being burned in one's bed, is another; so I arose and dressed. Expected, as the smallest compensation for this untimely disturbance, that I should be enabled to enrich this my journal with an account of the dangers I had to encounter in making my way through clouds of curling smoke and volumes of the "devouring element"—of rushing along corridors and down staircases

enveloped in flame—haply of snatching a female, young and beautiful, from the "awful jaws of destruction." Alas! no such good fortune was mine. On opening my door I was regaled, to be sure, with a very disagreeable odour of soot; but, disappointment ineffable! I walked down stairs uninterrupted by either of the antagonists for whose opposition I had prepared myself. Nowhere was a blaze, nor even a single spark of fire, to be seen; and (to render my mortification complete), in reply to my anxious inquiries concerning the whereabout and the extent of the *conflagration*, I was informed by Scorewell that it was only the kitchen-*chimley* which had been o' fire, but that he, assisted by the waiter, had succeeded in extinguishing it with a bucket of water or two!

"And was it for this?" thought I, with a sigh.

In about half-an-hour after the event—time enough to have allowed of the "Green Dragon" being burned to the ground—three ragged little boys, headed by the parish beadle, came dragging along a fire-engine somewhat bigger than a wheelbarrow. Having waited for some time, with eyes anxiously fixed on the building, and nothing occurring to require their services, "Come, boys," with a shake of the head, and in a melancholy tone, said the liveried guardian of the public safety, —"come, boys, take the engine back again: *there's no hope.*"

This reminded me of the *naïve* complaint of a certain person (well known as a subscriber to most of the public charities, a follower of the public sights and amusements of London, and a constant attendant at the parks in the skating season), that although he had been a life-governor of the Humane Society for nearly four months, and visited the parks every skating day, he had not yet been lucky enough to see any one drowned!

There is, generally speaking, a beautiful proportion in things. The destruction of the Houses of Parliament by fire was, for some time, the prevailing topic of conversation in London: in like manner, the fire in Scorewell's kitchen-chimney obliterated the remembrance of the losing and the finding of Miss Cripps's bag, and became the talk of all Little Pedlington during the whole of this day. Compared with the relative extent, population, and importance, of the two towns, the interest of the two events is about equal. The political economist, perhaps, and the statistician, may think lightly of this notion; yet I apprehend there is something in it which might be worth the consideration of the moralist or the observer of manners, nevertheless.

Well, having been at the trouble of rising at six o'clock, I would not go to bed again, although it was then no more than seven. I have occasionally heard the pleasures and advantages of early rising extolled, especially by the Hobbledays of my acquaintance. I must be unlucky, indeed, thought I, if I do not derive *some* benefit from this experiment; though, as it is my first, my expectations shall be wisely moderate.

Walked into the town. Had the satisfaction of seeing the shutters taken down from several shop-windows—a very pretty sight; though, as none of the various commodities intended for sale are exhibited till later in the day, that is all there was to see. Passing a door, was almost choked by a cloud of dust and dirt suddenly broomed out by a young gentleman who was sweeping the shop. A little farther on, encountered another young gentleman, who, with a huge watering-pot, was describing large figures of eight on the pavement, whistling all the while. Endeavouring to skip out of reach of his fountain, first on one side, then on the other, received at each attempt a plentiful supply of water about the legs. Unacquainted, as yet, with early-morning etiquette, as the young gentleman did not beg *my* pardon, but, with an unconcerned air, continued to whistle and to water, I thought it might be proper to beg *his*. Did so. "No offence," said the young gentleman. Turning the corner of a street, came in contact with a chimney-sweeper; my appearance not improved by the collision. "All right again!" exclaimed a facetious baker, who ran against me within the same minute. An admirable illustration of the principle of compensation, certainly. A butcher's boy, turning suddenly round to nod to an acquaintance, struck me a smart blow on the head with the corner of his tray, out of which a leg of mutton was jerked by the concussion: received at the same time a well-merited rebuke, though in not very choice terms, for my awkwardness. Nearly thrown down by the milkman of Little Pedlington swinging one of his sharp-rimmed pails against my legs; the consequence was, a bruised shin, the injury of my trowsers, and a copious effusion of milk. Preparing to express my displeasure at the man's carelessness, but it being the unanimous opinion of three market-women, a bricklayer's labourer, the dustman, an itinerant tinker, the chimney-sweeper aforesaid (who strengthened the evidence against me by crying out, "Vy, he run against *me*, just now," and pointing to my dress in support of his testimony), together with an old lady with a basket of matches, a young one selling watercresses, the brickdust man, and the knife-grinder, by all of whom I was imme-

diately surrounded—it being the unanimous opinion, I say, of this respectable asssmblage, that I ought to make the man some compensation for the loss of his milk, I gave him half-a-crown, rubbed my shins and walked on.

Proceeded to a less frequented part of the town—the Crescent. Counted seven housemaids beating the dust out of seven door-mats, and five others trundling mops. Did'nt suffer much inconvenience from either of those operations, as I contrived to keep as far as possible out of the sphere of their influence, by walking in the muddy carriage-road. Saw several pretty heads peeping through the iron railings of the areas, in close conversation with juvenile butchers, bakers, grocers, and other *chargés d'affaires* of various tradesmen, occupied, no doubt, in delivering their mistresses' orders for the day. Witnessed an interesting incident—an act of charity !—a footman giving broken victuals to a beggar-girl. Concealed myself behind a projecting doorway, and paused to moralize the scene.

The beggar-girl was pretty, and, though all tattered were her garments, her person was plump and sleek, whilst her cheek glowed, not with the artificial hue borrowed by the wealthier and happier of her sex from the emporium of Hendry or Delcroix, but with the tinge which the finger of Hygeia herself had implanted there. In one hand she carried an empty basket covered with a cloth, the other bore one single bunch of matches. Small was the fan-like bundle of the slender and sulphur-pointed shreds, as might well befit a maiden's hand to bear; but the osier-woven pannier was capacious. "A footman has a heart," thought I. "Yes, ye lords ! who for your tyrannous oppression and manifold crimes are, ere long, to be unlorded—gainsay it as you will, I call Nature to witness, a footman has a heart!"

The beggar-girl approached and held towards him her now uncovered basket, whilst he—his ready hand obeying the impulse of his benevolent heart—threw into it the remnants, swept in disdain, perhaps, from the groaning table of his pampered and o'er-fed lord—those all-despised remnants which, to her, poor want-stricken maiden ! were an epicurean banquet. She covered her basket—in an ecstasy of gratitude she approached the benevolent youth—he (his compassionate heart swelling with rapture as he contemplated the object whose life, perhaps, his charity had saved) pressed his lips to hers—a bell was heard as from within the house—he, the oppressed slave to its tyrant summons, rushed headlong to obey it—she, the fair and virtuous daughter of want and woe, startled at the sound, fled like the

timid deer aroused by the insatiate hunter's horn—and vanished from my sight.

With truth may Jubb exclaim, that for Pedlingtonia,

"Plenty *all* her Cornucopia yields!"

when the very "broken victuals" (as such donations are termed) bestowed in the present instance, consisted of a rump-steak undressed, a cold roasted fowl *minus* a wing, a quantity of uncooked vegetables, an uncut quartern loaf, and *a silver fork and table spoon!* These last articles in the list prove, not only that a footman has a heart, but that his heart may be susceptible of the most refined delicacy of attention towards the fair sex. "In Little Pedlington alone," thought I, "could be witnessed a scene so interesting and so edifying: never, surely, hath Charity in form so refined been known to walk up the steps of a *London* area."

Walked on towards the market. On my way thither met a gentleman, who, from his dress, was evidently returning home from a very late party, for it was not yet much past seven o'clock. In walking he turned out his toes in a most exemplary style; and trod as lightly as if the streets of Little Pedlington had been paved with burning coals. As he passed, he honoured me with a very low bow: his bow was remarkable. He lifted his hat, at arm's length, from his head, and, in stooping, almost swept the ground with it. On turning to look after him, found that this act of politeness was not intended as a singular compliment to me, for that he did the same thing to every person he met: so that his hat was never out of his hand, and no sooner on his head than off again. Any common observer would have wondered that he did not wear out his hat; my wonder was he did not wear out his head: the constant friction *had*, indeed, worn out his hair, for his head was bald. His person was small, but finely proportioned; and his dress calculated to exhibit it to the utmost advantage. Black coat, fitted to his form with an accuracy which might have excited the envy of one of those wooden blocks we see at the doors of the London emporiums for cheap fashion; waistcoat white, from which rushed a cataract of shirt-frill, ornamented, as Mr. Fudgefield, the auctioneer of Little Pedlington, would describe it, with an unparalleledly large [*mock*] diamond [*which if it were real would be*] worth, at least, five hundred pounds; black smalls; open-worked black silk stockings, which set off a leg of exquisite form, though a

fastidious eye, perhaps, might deem it superabundant in calf; and dancing-pumps decorated with huge rosettes of black riband. Between the fore-finger and thumb of the left hand he held a small black cane, with a large black silk tassel depending from it; and, as if to show that he used it as an ornament merely, and not for support, he carried it with his fore-arm extended forward, and his elbow resting on his hip. Wondered who he could be: satisfied he was not one of the *nobodies* of the place.

In the market saw Hobbleday. Intended to inquire of him who was the remarkable gentleman I had just passed; but, as he was busily occupied—(for he was running about from stall to stall, and, with an earnest countenance, examining the various articles exposed for sale; whispering questions to the market-people, and mysteriously placing his ear to their lips to receive their replies)—I felt it would be ill-timed and improper to divert his attention from what was clearly an affair of some importance to him. Could account for the extraordinary trouble he was giving himself upon one of only two suppositions: either that Hobbleday was official inspector of the market; or that he had undertaken, as steward for some great entertainment to be given, to purchase the choicest commodities at the most reasonable prices. Did not long remain in doubt, for I was speedily joined by my obliging acquaintance.

"Ha! so you're here, eh?" said Hobbleday. "Well, everything must have a beginning—sure you'll like early rising when you get used to it. Yet it is a pity you are so late."

"Late!" exclaimed I; "why, it is hardly half-past seven!"

"Bless your soul, my dear fellow; I've been here these two hours—since half-past five—saw the first basket of cabbages opened; pooh-pooh! tell you I did."

"He is Inspector, then," thought I.

"Prodigious advantage in coming here early—save fifty *per cent.* in one's purchases."

Withdrew my too hasty conclusion, and resolved that the other supposition must be the true one.

"Now see here," he continued, at the same time drawing a lettuce from his pocket: "now guess what I paid for this?"

"I am not expert at guessing," replied I; "besides, as I am not a housekeeper, I am miserably ignorant of the usual cost or value of such commodities."

"But guess:—*do* guess."

I would not for worlds have it imagined that Hobbleday is a

bore; yet, as a bore *would have done*, he eleven times reiterated his desire that I would "guess." At length he continued—delivering the conclusion of his speech with an emphasis worthy the importance of the occasion:—

"Well, since you can't guess, I'll tell you. Sir, I paid for this fine lettuce, such as you see it, *only—one—penny!*"

"And is it possible, Mr. Hobbleday," exclaimed I, with astonishment, "that you have been at the trouble of coming here at five in the morning to purchase a penny lettuce?"

"Trouble, my dear sir! Bless you, it is no trouble to me: one must do something, you know. Besides, as I said before, I save fifty *per cent.* by it; I must have paid three halfpence for it at a shop."

"But surely that is not your only purchase?"

"My only purchase! Why, sir, this lettuce will serve me two days. Now I'll tell you how I contrive with it. The first day I take my lettuce and——"

Here the obliging creature favoured me with a long detail (which occupied twenty minutes) of his method of coaxing one penny lettuce into the performance of two days' duty. But as I have mislaid my notes relative to this point, I will not venture to trust my memory upon so important a matter.

"Pray pardon my curiosity," said I: "you come here at five in the morning; I find you busied in inspecting all the stalls, and asking questions of all the market-people; yet the upshot of all this is the purchase of——"

"What of that, my dear sir?" said Hobbleday (accompanying his words with a poke in my ribs); "it isn't for what I *buy;* but one gets at the price of things; one stores one's mind with knowledge—information. I'm no boaster; but"—(here he drew me down by the collar of my coat till he had brought my ear close to his mouth, when he added, in an emphatic whisper)—"but though I don't buy much, there's no man in all Little Pedlington knows the price of things so well as little Jack Hobbleday; and that's something to be able to say, eh?"

At this moment the gentleman whom I had lately passed crossed the market, bowing and bowing and bowing, as before. Inquired of my companion who he was.

"Who!—he!—that!"—exclaimed Hobbleday, in evident amazement at my ignorance. "Who *should* he be? *That*, my dear sir, is our Hoppy!"

With becoming reverence I looked after this celebrated personage till he had bowed himself out of sight.

"Judging by his dress," said I, "he must have been up all night at some party or assembly."

Hobbleday looked at me with an expression of countenance, and a shake of the head, which convinced me that I had not, by my remark, raised myself in his estimation—at least for my notions of the proprieties of society.

"Assembly!—Party! Pooh! pooh! What can that have to do with his dress? Never saw him dressed otherwise in my life: sunshine or rain; morning, noon, or night. *Really*, my dear sir, you seem to forget what he is. Dancing-master, and Master of the Ceremonies, too, of such a place as Little Pedlington! how *should* he dress? Must excuse me for saying a cutting thing: but clear to see you have no Master of the Ceremonies of London."

Abashed by the rebuke, and unable to boast of such a functionary for poor London, I abruptly changed the subject of conversation. Thanked him for the letters of introduction which he had sent me to Rummins and Jubb. Told him that, after breakfast, I should avail myself of them.

"Oh—ah!" said Hobbleday, with something like a show of confusion, which I attributed to regret at having just now so deeply wounded my feelings; "ah!—surely! Have said all you can desire.—Ahem!—But you say after *breakfast*. Thought you were going to Hoppy's Public Breakfast, at Yawkins's skittle-ground, at one o'clock."

"So I intend," replied I; "but I shall take breakfast at my inn."

"I see, you mean *only* to make a dinner of it, eh?"

"Nor dinner neither," said I.

"How odd! Don't you see what the bill says?" said Hobbleday, directing my attention to a posting-bill which announced the Grand Public Breakfast.

"Yes, Mr. Hobbleday, I see: 'Admission, two shillings, refreshments included'——"

He interrupted my reading with—"Refreshments?—Tea and hot rolls, my dear fellow—ham and eggs. You must pay two shillings whether you eat or not; so I always make it a rule to——"

I continued to read: "Refreshments included, *ad libitum*."

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed he; "limit 'em indeed! The bill says so, to be sure; limit who they please, they don't limit little Jack Hobbleday, that I can tell you. No, no, my dear fellow; pay my two shillings—no trifle, you know—so I make

it serve me for breakfast and dinner both. And, I say,"—(here he brought my ear in contact with his mouth, as before, at the same time honouring me with another poke in the ribs)—"and, I say, half the people who go there do the same thing, that I can tell you, *too*."

After a moment's pause, "Now," continued he, "I'll carry home my lettuce, and then I'll go to our Universal Knowledge Society, and read 'Guthrie's Geography' for an hour or two; and then I'll take a nap for an hour or two; and that will just fill up the time till the Breakfast."

"A nap so early in the day!" exclaimed I, somewhat astonished.

"Of course," replied he; "Nature is Nature"—(a philosophical reflection which I was not at the moment prepared to dispute); and he continued: "Ah! my dear fellow, I perceive you know nothing of the pleasures—of the *advantages* of early rising. Ah! for shame! You, who lie in bed till nine or ten, are as fresh as a lark all day long, eh?—in the evening ready for anything—read, talk, sing, dance,—no wish for bed; no enjoyment of your natural rest, as I have. But I, when eight o'clock comes, can't keep my eyes open; and am half asleep all the rest of the day into the bargain."

* * * * *

Eleven o'clock. Two hours to spare between this and the time fixed for the Master of the Ceremonies' Breakfast. Rummins's public day for exhibiting his museum is Friday; but as his "dear friend," and my most obliging acquaintance, who already does me the honour to "my dear-fellow" me, and (who has, as he assured me, "the privilege of introducing a friend there on *any* day of the week") has furnished me with a flattering letter of introduction to the great antiquary, I will at once avail myself of the advantage of it. Under such auspices as Hobbleday's, I feel confident of an agreeable reception. But, for my own satisfaction, let me once more refer to the exact words of Hobbleday's kind note to me.

"Sorry cannot have pleasure of accompanying you to my dear friend Rummins, neither to my worthy friend Jubb. Send letters of introduction—spoke in warmest terms—all you can desire. * * * *

"Your most truly affectionate Friend,

"JOHN HOBBLEDAY."

"Most truly affectionate friend!" Kind, obliging, warm-hearted Hobbleday! Yet this is the man stigmatized by Score-well as a humbug! O friendship! spontaneous as it is disinterested and pure! O shades of Castor and of Pollux! O Pylades! and Orestes, O! You, ye sublime exemplars of the noble passion! If ever——about to proceed to Rummins's, I have not time to work out my apostrophe in a way worthy of the subject; but what I mean to say is this, let those who complain that friendship is not to be found on the surface of our wicked world—a complaint which I do most devoutly believe to be rarely well grounded, except in the case of such as do not deserve to find it—let them, I say, try Little Pedlington.

To the residence of Simcox Rummins, Esq., F.S.A. The door opened by a little, slim woman, aged and tottering—the finest specimen of the living antiquities of the place I had yet seen—an appropriate appendage to the domestic establishment of the F.S.A. Her age (as I was afterwards told) ninety-four. Asked me if I wanted to see "little master."

"Little master! No," replied I. "My visit, my good lady, is to Mr. Rummins, the elder, who is, as I am informed, a gentleman of near sixty."

"That's him, sir," rejoined the old woman, as she ushered me into a small parlour: "but that's the name he has always gone by with *me*, and it's natural enough, for I was his nurse and weaned the dear babby when he was only three weeks old—as fine a babby as ever *war*—and he has never been out of my sight never since." (Without halting in her speech, she pointed to a drawing suspended over a buffet.) "There he is, bless him! done when he was only three years old over the cupboard with a dog behind him in sky-blue jacket and trowsers with sugar-loaf buttons running after a butterfly in a brown beaver hat just afore he was taken with the small-pox with a Brussels lace collar to his shirt and an orange in his hand which he bore like an angel though the poor dear babby's sufferings——"

"Thankee, thankee, thankee," cried I, forcing a passage through her speech; "but if you will have the kindness to inform Mr. ——"

It was in vain: for (unlike the generality of ladies of her vocation, who are usually not over-communicative of their information concerning the early diseases, sufferings, and escapes, of their interesting charges) she bestowed upon me a particular account of the "poor dear babby's" (the present illustrious F.S.A.'s) progress through the small-pox, chicken-pox, measles,

hooping-cough, rush, rash, thrush, mumps, dumps, croup, roup, and forty other sublime inventions, which I had, or had not, before heard of, for diminishing the numbers of the infantine population; nor did she cease till she had safely conveyed him through the scarlet fever which "took him"—happily, not off—in his fifteenth year. She then withdrew to inform Mr. Rummins of my visit.

Cannot say that I felt at all obliged to the old lady for the information, since it must, to a certain extent, diminish my interest in little master's "Life and Times," which is preparing for the press by Jubb, who will, doubtless, treat of those matters with becoming minuteness.

Being left alone, read the various printed "Schemes," "Projects," and "Prospectuses," which were scattered about the tables. The great antiquary's learning almost equalled by his philanthropy and patriotism. All conceived with a view to the benefit of the empire at large; but, as might be expected, to that of Little Pedlington more particularly; and—as it somehow struck me—*most* particularly to the advantage of Simcox Rummins, Esq., F.S.A., himself. Amongst many others were the two or three following:—

PROSPECTUS

OF A

NATIONAL EDITION

OF

Rummins's Antiquities of Little Pedlington.

When we reflect upon the march of intellect: when we reflect upon the spread of intelligence: when we reflect upon the improvements in the arts of printing and engraving: when we reflect upon steam-boats and rail-roads: when we reflect upon the facility with which all nations of the civilized world are brought into intercourse with each other by these means: when we reflect upon their mutual anxiety, in consequence of such facility, to become acquainted with each other's *Topography* and *Antiquities:* above all, when we reflect upon the growing importance of Little Pedlington, it cannot but be a matter of wonder and of regret that, although TROY has been illustrated by its Gell, and ATHENS by its Stuart, OUR TOWN should not as

yet have put forth a work worthy of its station in the map of Europe, and capable of satisfying the growing desires of society in its present more enlightened state. It is true that Mr. Rummins's 'Antiquities,' in a small duodecimo volume (to be had of the author, price one-and-sixpence), may be 'an admirable *vade-mecum* and pocket companion for the traveller, and which no traveller should be without,' (see 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer,' 25th April), yet, as that intelligent journal adds, 'a splendid edition, worthy of our town, and fit for the shelves of the library, is still a desideratum: and it is disgraceful to our country that no such monument exists,' &c. &c.

Mr. Rummins, feeling deeply for the honour of his natal town, and of the kingdom at large, is resolved that this reproach shall no longer have cause for existence; and, regardless of time, labour, and expense, has determined to publish an enlarged and improved edition of his work.

TERMS.

THIS NATIONAL EDITION, in one volume, post octavo, *embellished with four elegant lithographic engravings*, to be published BY SUBSCRIPTION, price four shillings; one-half to be paid at the time of subscribing, and the other half to be paid on delivery of the copies. Only five hundred copies will be printed; and, to prevent delay, the work will go to press as soon as four hundred and ninety-nine copies are subscribed for. To prevent trouble, subscriptions will be received by the author only.

Patriotic Rummins!

PLAN FOR AIDING THE FUNDS OF THE LITTLE PEDLINGTON ALMS-HOUSES.

Mr. Rummins,—having learnt, with the deepest and most heartfelt regret, that the eloquent sermon delivered on Sunday last by our highly-gifted curate, the Rev. Jonathan Jubb, in favour of the above-named charity (although it melted the hearts and drew tears from the eyes of a numerous congregation), did not (from a variety of adverse causes) produce (in a pecuniary point of view) the effect anticipated (only four shillings and twopence having been collected at the church-door), Mr. R. submits to the nobility, gentry, visitors, and towns-

people of Little Pedlington, who are ever foremost in the heart-soothing work of charity, the following plan for supplying the deficiency :—

MR. R. PROPOSES TO PUBLISH,

IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF THE SAID INSTITUTION,

An elegant Engraving of his lately-acquired treasure,

THE HELMET OF THE TIME OF KING JOHN.

The drawing will be made on stone by Mr. R. himself; and, after five hundred copies are sold, at one shilling each, to defray the necessary expenses, Mr. R. will PRESENT all that may afterwards remain, *together with the copyright in the stone itself*, to the trustees for the management of that praiseworthy institution; *the whole of the profits thereof to be applied in aid of its funds!*

Philanthrophic Rummins!

BEAUTIFYING OUR ANCIENT AND VENERABLE CHURCH.

The churchwardens and overseers of the parish of Little Pedlington having, in the most prompt and liberal manner, complied with the wish of several of the parishioners, 'that the roof of our ancient and venerable church be whitewashed,' Mr. Rummins suggests that a general meeting of the inhabitants of the place be held at the Green Dragon, on Wednesday next, at one o'clock, for the purpose of passing a vote of thanks to those gentlemen. Mr. R., regardless of all personal inconvenience to himself, will take the chair, and hopes and trusts that the meeting will be as numerous as the occasion requires.

Mr. R. having had the said vote of thanks (which he has *gratuitously* drawn up) printed on an elegantly-embossed card, each person, on entering the room, will have an opportunity of becoming possessed of this memorial of the occasion, *price only sixpence.*

Disinterested Rummins! Find me such an F.S.A. elsewhere than in Little Pedlington!

"Little Master" entered the room. Six feet two, and stout in proportion. Port and demeanour dignified—I had almost said

pompous—but what else ought I to have expected in so great a man? Speech, slow and solemn;—pro-nun-ci-a-ti-on precise, accurate even to inaccuracy, and so distinct as to be almost unintelligible—at least, to one accustomed, as I had hitherto been, to the conversation of ordinary people, who utter their words in an every-day sort of manner. The great antiquary delivered each syllable separately,—upon its own responsibility, as it were,—disconnected from its companions in the same word: in short, as a child does when it first gets into "words of three syllables" in its spelling-book. He wore a green shade over his eyes.

Slowly raising his head, so as to enable himself to see me from beneath his green shade, he pointed amongst the papers on the table, to the prospectus for his national edition, saying, in a sort of taking-it-for-granted tone, "For this;" at the same time he put a pen into my hand. Unable to comprehend what he meant, I at once delivered to him Hobbleday's kind letter of introduction, and said, "No sir—for this!" accompanying my words with a bow, and the involuntary "a-hem" which usually escapes one on feeling perfectly satisfied that *that* (such or such a thing) settles the business. Rummins first raised the letter to the tip of his nose, then slowly lowering it, held it out at arm's length, turned it up, down—examined it lengthways, breadthways—looked at the superscription, the seal; at length he made the solemn inquiry,—

"From whom?"—(pronouncing it *woom*)—"and what may be its ob-ject or pur-*pawt?*"

"It is, sir," replied I, "a letter of introduction to you, with which your friend Mr. Hobbleday has favoured me. I, like the rest of the world, am desirous of viewing your museum; but, as my stay in this place till Friday, your public day, is uncertain, and Mr. Hobbleday being allowed by you to introduce a friend on *any* day——"

Here I was interrupted by a long-drawn "*He!!!*" growled forth in a tone of mingled astonishment and disdain. I paused in awful doubt of what might next occur.

The F.S.A. having made three strides, which carried him from one end of the room to the other, and three strides back again, desired I would read the letter to him, the state of his eyes (in consequence of a cold he had taken) rendering it inconvenient to him to undertake the task himself: and he concluded with—"*He* in-tro-de-oos to the Rumminsian Museum!"

Either (thought I) Hobbleday, carried away by his enthu-

siastic love of obliging—perhaps by his scarcely-merited friendship for me, has promised a *little* beyond his power to fulfil; or, it may be, that I have chosen my time unluckily—have disturbed Mr. Rummins in his moments of profound meditation; in short (and reason sufficient), it may be, that Mr. Rummins is "not i' the vein." But here is Hobbleday's letter to the "dearest friend he has in the world," and, doubtless, that will set the matter right. Reassured by this reflection, I opened the letter, and read.

"Sir,——"

Somewhat disappointed that it was not "Dear Rummins," or "My Dear Friend," or, at worst (that lowest degree in the scale of friendship), "Dear Sir."

"SIR,

"Pardon liberty—not my fault—bearer wants to see your museum on a private day—wouldn't take such a liberty for myself; but you know how one is sometimes pestered—one don't like to refuse—so promised him letter of introduction. *Onternoo*, as the French say, don't know much of him—just took some wine with *me* at Scorewell's, t'other afternoon; so do as you like—don't put yourself to smallest inconvenience on account of,

"Sir,

"Your very respectful, humble Servant,

"JOHN HOBBLEDAY."

"P.S.—Can say you're busy. Leaves Lit. Ped. end of *this* week, so please say, will be happy to oblige me any day *next* week, for won't be here. Please read this to yourself, and please destroy when read."

Utterly confounded! Looked at Rummins. Rummins (who, in the excess of his astonishment, removed the green shade from his eyes) looked at me. I explained, and, as briefly as possible, stated the circumstances of my acquaintance with Hobbleday. Showed him Hobbleday's *kind* letter which had enclosed the introductions to himself and Jubb. Broke open the introductory note to Jubb, and found it in substance a counterpart of the other.

"Ex-tra-or-di-na-ry!" exclaimed the F.S.A.; "neither I nor my illustrious friend admit him to our houses; he is a bo-er."

"And," said I, apprehensively, and with hesitation,—for I felt deeply anxious for the purity of Little Pedlington in this one respect,—"and a—humbug?"

"E-mi-nent-ly so," replied Rummins.

"And is it so?" I mentally exclaimed; and a transitory wish crossed my mind that I were back again in London.

There was a pause, during which Mr. Rummins twiddled the corner of the subscription-sheet for his National Edition.

"Unpleasant for you, sir—very. If, sir, you had an in-tro-duc-ti-on to me—*any sort* of in-tro-duc-ti-on—"—and his eyes involuntarily fell on the subscription-sheet.

Bewildered as I was, and scarcely conscious of what I was doing, I wrote down my name as a subscriber for two copies, and paid the subscription-money in full.

At the end of a flattering speech from the learned antiquary (how I had come to merit it I know not), I received an invitation for that very evening, at six o'clock, to *tea;* when not only should I see his museum, but I should also meet Jubb himself!

This piece of good fortune, seconded by an hour's brisk walking on the Snapshank road, restored my spirits and my temper. On my return, I found parties of the beauty and fashion of Little Pedlington hastening to Hoppy's public breakfast, at Yawkins's skittle-ground. I joined the crowd. Mr. Hobbleday had informed me he should be there: and having resolved upon the course I should pursue with respect to him, I paid my two shillings and entered.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOPPY'S PUBLIC BREAKFAST—The M.C.'s announce-bill, a model for that style of writing—Signor Rumbello del Squeaki, the unrivalled foreign *Artiste*—His *third* last appearance—Unparalleled rapacity of the foreign Artiste: Who's to blame?—A hitch in the scenery, and symptoms of dissatisfaction amongst the M.C.'s generous patrons—Meet Hobbleday, and overwhelm him with shame and confusion—A hitch again: another disobedient performer—Unreasonable demands of the generous patrons: successfully resisted—Indispensable ceremony—The family with the fly—Altercation between the fashionables—Precedency: a point worthy of the consideration of the Ladies Patronesses of Almack's or the Herald's College—Awful expo*zee*.

UPON entering Yawkins's skittle-ground, where Mr. Felix Hoppy gave his seventh public breakfast, a printed programme of the morning's entertainments was presented to me. The principal object of attraction appeared to be that "extraordinary creature who" (according to Hobbleday's description of him) "actually played upon the Pandean pipes and beat a drum at the same time!" And, judging by the London estimate of a performer's talents, which are justly considered to be in exact proportion to the size of the letters in which his name is announced, this Pandean-piper must be one of unparalleled ability, for each letter of his was a foot long. Though an enthusiastic admirer of both the instruments performed upon, I do not pretend to a practical knowledge of either, nor, indeed, to a very nice judgment of the superiority of one performer upon them over another: therefore, as in all similar cases, I bow to the large letters, make an unconditional surrender to them of my own opinion, and applaud vehemently. Besides, were I sceptical or ignorant enough to doubt, or sufficiently learned to decide, I should be a bold man indeed to do either, when these are the very terms in

which the master of the ceremonies himself speaks of the *artiste** he has engaged for the delight of Little Pedlington. By the way, it cannot be doubted that this well, nay, elegantly-written announcement is the work of Mr. Hoppy himself: his taste and refinement are apparent in every line. Never did he draw more copiously from the "Well of English undefiled," than upon this occasion; and, upon the whole, never, perhaps, were his literary powers, of which he is justly proud, exhibited to greater advantage.

"RE-ENGAGEMENT FOR THIS MORNING ONLY,

And positively the LAST *last appearance*

OF THE UNRIVALLED AND NEVER-EQUALLED

SIGNOR RUMBELLO DEL SQUEAKI,

Principal Pandea-tympanist to his Majesty the King of Naples.

"The Master of the Ceremonies has the pleasing gratification of announcing to his numerous most honoured Friends and Patrons, that (in consequence of the unexampled crowd of visitors at the *first* last appearance, and in compliance with the most earnest request and entreaty of numerous families of distinction who were unable to obtain admission, in consequence of the unprecedentedly immense overflow, at the *second* last appearance, of this most unrivalled foreign *Artiste*, whose astonishing performance on the Drum and the Pandean Pipes *at the same time* has set all competition at defiance, and is, unquestionably, in the opinion of all competent judges, the most perfect *morceau* of musical skill that has ever electrified a British audience) he has fortunately succeeded, regardless of expense, in prevailing upon the SIGNOR to condescend to accept an engagement for *this morning only*,

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* *Artiste:* an admirable word (albeit, somewhat Frenchified), of late applied, with nice discrimination, to every species of exhibitor, from a rope-dancer or an American Jim Crow, down to a mere painter or sculptor. On looking into little Entick (my great authority in these matters), I find we have already the word *artist;* but, with stupid English perversity, we have hitherto used that in a much more restricted sense than its newly-imported rival, which it is now the excellent fashion to adopt. It is questionable, however, whether tumblers, buffoons, and the clowns in Ducrow's circle, will feel themselves much gratified at being comprehended under the same general term with such folks as Baily, Chantrey, Turner, Shee, Landseer, Wilkie, and the like.

being *positively* his *very* last appearance here, as he is compelled to leave Little Pedlington this evening, having received orders from

HIS EXCELLENCY THE NEAPOLITAN AMBASSADOR

to return immediately to his post in

LE CAPELLO DE LA ROI DE LE NAPLES.

"Upon this occasion, SIGNOR RUMBELLO DEL SQUEAKI will perform several of the most admired fashionable airs, and will also *condescend* to accompany the dancing from two o'clock till four, the commencement and conclusion of which will be notified by the

FIRING OF A REAL CANNON.

"*** On Wednesday next will be given the Eighth Public Breakfast of the Season, being for the

BENEFIT OF SIGNOR RUMBELLO DEL SQUEAKI,

And MOST POSITIVELY his last appearance."

What! more last words! a *third* last appearance this morning; off for Naples to-night; and another last appearance on Wednesday next! How are these seeming contradictions to be reconciled? or how is the intended journey to be performed? However, as I never interfere with what does not immediately concern me, I shall ask for no explanation of the difficulty; but merely note it down that the thing seems *odd*, and that they have a method peculiar to themselves of arranging these matters in Little Pedlington.

No sooner had I entered the ground than Mr. Felix Hoppy, tripping on tip-toe, came to welcome me to what he called "the Property." He was dressed precisely as I had seen him this morning, at seven o'clock, in the market-place. The loss of two front teeth gave an interesting lisp to his utterance, which (together with what, for want at the moment of any more expressive term, I shall call a mincing manner) was in the highest degree becoming a dancing-master and Master of the Ceremonies. Each word or two was accompanied with a bow. He completely fulfilled the idea conveyed by Hobbleday's brief, but forcible, description of him—"an elegant creature."

"Highly honoured—paramountly flattered—most welcome to the property—most exceedingly flattered by your honourable patronage, excellent sir."

Having thanked him for his polite reception of me, I expressed my regret at witnessing so thin an attendance—at the apparent backwardness of the public to reward his exertions for their amusement: there being, as I guessed, hardly fifty persons present.

"Pray condescend to pardon me, obliging sir; but this is the fullest attendance of the season—forty-three paying visitors—upwards of four pounds already taken at the door! With such honourable patronage 'the Property' *must* succeed. At the same time, I can *credibly* assure you, kind sir, that our expenses are enormous. In the first place, there's our great gun——"

"As to that, Mr. Hoppy," said I (with an obtuseness to the figurative at which, on consideration, I blushed),—"as to that, as your great gun is fired only twice, I don't perceive how——"

"Pray condescend once more to pardon me, honourable sir; by our great gun I mean the Del Squeaki. On his first engagement, we paid him five shillings a day, double the sum we had ever paid to any musician before; at his second, he insisted upon having his dinner into the bargain; and now, finding he is of some use to us"—(this he added with a sigh)—"*now* he has advanced upon us to three half-crowns!"

"To the honour of our country," exclaimed I, "*native* talent, in that department, is less rapacious."

To this remark the Master of the Ceremonies replied only by a slight shake of the head; and I continued,—

"But, doubtless, in proportion to your outlay for the amusement of the Pedlingtonians, you are rewarded by their patronage?"

"Sorry I must once more entreat your pardon, considerate sir; but the fact is, we depend for support entirely upon noble and illustrious visitors from London. The tradespeople and shopkeepers of the place are, of course, excluded from an elegant assemblage like this; and for the gentry, as most of them live in the Crescent, it would be preposterous"—(here again he heaved a sigh, which seemed to proceed from the very bottom of his dancing pumps)—"it would be out of human nature to expect *they* should come."

Unable to perceive the slightest connection between the consequence and the imputed cause—to understand why it should be "out of human nature" to expect a person's attendance at a public entertainment simply because he happened to reside in a crescent—I ventured to the M.C. a hint of my difficulty.

"See there, good sir," said he (at the same time pointing to the back of a row of houses, the windows of which, occupied by men, women, and children, commanded a view of the skittle-ground)—"see there! a heart-breaking sight it is; and yet one can hardly expect that people should pay to see my dancing and my fireworks, and hear my music, when they can enjoy it all from their windows, free—gratis—for nothing."*

"But yonder I see Mr. Hobbleday," said I; "with whom, by the bye, I must presently have a few words of explanation: he, at least, is, as he tells me, one of your constant patrons."

"Hobbleday?—*Gobble*day!" exclaimed Mr. Hoppy, with a fierceness of manner strikingly inconsistent with the previous blandness of the Master of the Ceremonies. "Patron, indeed! He comes in upon a free admission; devours eggs and ham in the most unfeeling manner; finds more fault with the entertainments than our newspaper critic himself; and is laid up with a fit of the gout once a year—which invariably happens to be on the night of my annual benefit-ball."

I had the authority of the Master of the Ceremonies himself for the fact, or I could not have believed that such instances of illiberality and unmitigated meanness were to be found in Little Pedlington.

Here our conversation was interrupted by cries, from various of the company, of "Shame! shame!" "Begin! begin!" "Mr. Hoppy!" "Master of the Ceremonies!"

Mr. Hoppy, looking at his watch, explained to me that it was ten minutes past the time when the *signor* ought to have com-

* By an association of ideas less remote than that which I have just alluded to, bethought me of an anecdote related by the grandfather of the present young Earl of D. His lordship had had some dispute (respecting the right of shooting over certain grounds) with one of his tenants, the back of whose house happened to be close upon his lordship's preserves. Some time afterwards the good-natured earl met the man, who was about to pass him with a sulky bow, and thus accosted him: "What! not stop and talk to me, B——! Although I wouldn't allow you to shoot, I told you that you might at any time have game for your family by sending to my keeper for it. Why haven't you done so? Never bear malice, man."—"Not I, thank you, my lord," replied the *independent* farmer; "I'll accept none of your game. Your lordship's pheasants come and roost o' nights in the trees under my windows; when I *want* a bird I put my hand out o' window and quietly pull one in by the tail: so you see I'm not the man to be under an obligation to the best lord in the land. Good day, my lord."

menced his performance, and that the company were impatient of the delay.

Mr. Hoppy left me, and, hat in hand, tripped towards the discontents. He bowed and simpered with overpowering elegance: what he said, I know not; but almost on the instant of his interference order was restored. From them he went, bowing all the way, to a bench at a short distance, on which was seated Signor Rumbello del Squeaki himself. The "Principal Pandea-tympanist to his Majesty the King of Naples" was appropriately habited in the costume of an Italian brigand; though, to my unpractised eye, his dress appeared to be a cast-off from the wardrobe of one of the London theatres. Some minutes elapsed, during which they were in conversaton; and, as I inferred from their gestures, and the sulky air of the signor, in no friendly mood. On approaching, I heard the M. C. in an imploring tone say to the *artiste*—

"But, my kind signor, allow me to entreat you—consider—it is nearly twenty minutes past time—the disappointment—the ——you may rely upon having it *after* the performance, *upon my honour*." These latter words he accompanied with a profound bow, and by placing his hand upon that part of his white waistcoat beneath which, he would have the signor to understand, was to be found a heart incapable of deception.

To this the "unrivalled FOREIGN *artiste*" replied—

"Come, come, Muster 'Oppy, it's o' no use your trying to gammon me. I'm agreed to 'ave three ha'-crowns for playing 'ere, and not a thump o' my drum or a blow o' my pipes do you get till I've got my money safe in 'and."

Astonished at the language of this address, I could not help exclaiming, in the words of Shakspeare—"Extant, and written in *choice Italian*."

"But, my good signor," resumed the M. C., "if you will but have the condescension to recollect our agreement——"

"Ay, ay; our agreement *ware* as I *ware* to 'ave 'alf my money down, and the rest arterwards; but on second thoughts, I'll 'ave it all. I ar'n't the chap to run no risk, not I. Suppose, ven all vas over, you vos to pocket the cash and run avay, as Joe Strutty did at Branford Fair? then I mought vistle, you know. So 'and over the stuff, or you gets no play out o' me."

The visitors again becoming clamorous, and the "unrivalled foreign *artiste*" continuing obdurate, Mr. Hoppy was reluctantly compelled to comply with the demand.

The Del Squeaki now adjusted his pipes to his chin, and slung

his big drum across his shoulders. Already had he set one foot upon the small platform on which he was to exhibit: there was a profound quiet, disturbed only by loud cries of "Silence! silence!" when he turned to the Master of the Ceremonies, and abruptly declared, that he would not begin unless he gave him a pot of ale!

"This is perfectly preposterous!" lisped the M.C.; "that is *not* in our agreement."

"No matter for that, Muster 'Oppy; I've just taken it into my 'ed, and I'll 'ave it." He withdrew his foot from the platform, and continued: "Give me vot I ax, or, as sure as my name's Rob Squeaks, I'm off to join my master vot I'm engaged to,—that's to say, the famous Muster Richar'son, at Vinklemouth Fair—and then there'll be a row in your garden. You can't do without me; so, you see, give me a pot of ale vot *an't* in my agreement, or I von't play: and then the company vill break your benches and tables—and sarve you right."

Mr. Hoppy now threw himself upon the opinion of his generous patrons, and, in terms pathetic, and with imploring looks, entreated them to support him in resisting such impudent extortion—so gross an attempt to take an unfair advantage of his helpless condition. To this his generous patrons unanimously replied, that that was no affair of theirs: that, indeed, they conceived it to be quite in order that an "unrivalled foreign *artiste*" should be humoured in everything he might desire: that as the Neapolitan ambassador [*id. est*, according to signor's own account, Mr. Richardson] had commanded his immediate return to his post in *Le Capello de la Roi de le Naples* [*id. est*, according to the same authority, Winklemouth Fair], they would not relinquish the present opportunity of hearing him; and that, in short, having paid their money for that purpose, they would insist upon it that Mr. Hoppy should, by all means, and at whatever sacrifice, fulfil *his* contract with *them*—Mr. Hobbleday (who had come in with an order) being one of the most strenuous in maintaining the justice of these positions. The Master of the Ceremonies consented to the new demand of the Del Squeaki. As he was proceeding to issue his mandate to one of the waiters to convey a pot of ale to the *artiste*, the latter, perceiving that the advantage was on his side, naturally, and as is usual in such cases, made the most of it: accordingly—"*And* summut to eat, also," vociferated the signor.

This supplementary *request* being also complied with, the Del Squeaki went through his astonishing performance; and the

auditors were delighted, enraptured, ecstasized, &c., &c., &c., as never before had auditors been delighted, enraptured, ecstasized, &c., &c., &c., in this sublunary world!

Found, upon subsequent inquiry, that the liberal *entrepreneur*, after paying expenses (including the three half-crowns, &c., to the Del Squeaki), was a loser of no more than four-and-sixpence by the morning's entertainment. Told also that Mr. Hoppy complained of even this moderate loss. Plague on the man! how much less did he wish to lose? But it is a trite observation that some people are never satisfied. Told, moreover, that the M.C. complains of what he calls the "tyranny and oppression" to which he has been obliged to submit!

Now, with submission, this is somewhat unreasonable. Be-praised and be-puffed, even to his own amazement, the "unrivalled *artiste*" very wisely doubles his terms: these complied with, he very considerately trebles them: compliance with this begets a natural demand for a pot of ale, although it be not "so nominated i' the bond;" and thence, as was decent and proper, the Principal Pandea-tympanist to his Majesty the King of Naples (or, as it might more truly have been set forth, his itinerant Majesty, Richardson, King of *Boothi*a), insists upon being supplied with an unstipulated "summut to eat also." Ah, Mr. Hoppy! if I might venture to perpetrate a profane parody on a line in the immortal "Tom Thumb," I should whisper in your ear—

"You make the giants first, and then *can't* kill them."

* * * * * * * *

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," and well was it for Hobbleday that there is much truth in this. I had not been unperceived by him, but he was too busily engaged to come to me, being laudably employed in diminishing the labour of the waiters—that is to say, by packing inside himself a quantity of eggs, ham, hot-rolls, and coffee, which, but for such considerate assistance, they must have undergone the trouble of removing. At length, the breakfast-tables being cleared preparatory to the commencement of the dancing, he approached me. His mouth was full; in one hand he bore a huge ham-sandwich which he had constructed for himself, and in the other a cup of coffee.

"Ah! my dear fellow," said he (talking and eating at the same time), "you're here, eh? But not eat anything! How odd! Must pay just the same whether you do or not, you know. Pooh, pooh! I tell you, you must! I say, little Jack Hobbleday was right, eh? Extraordinary creature that Signor del——"

"That *extraordinary* creature, Mr. Hobbleday," replied I (emphasizing every other word or two, as is the practice when one is savagely bent upon cutting a person to the very soul),—"that *extraordinary* creature, sir, by his 'concord of sweet sounds,' has so *calmed* my *irritated feelings*—so completely *subdued* the *rage* and *indignation* that were rising in my breast, that I shall take no further notice of your *very—extraordinary—behaviour*, than just to *return* you your *very flattering* letters of introduction to your *friends* Rummins and Jubb." And with these words I presented to him both his letters open.

Conscience-striken, with some difficulty he bolted the morsel which he had in his mouth, the effort producing a violent fit of coughing, which greatly alarmed me for his safety; and that, in its turn, by the convulsive movement which it communicated to his arms, causing him to jerk the lumps of ham from out their envelope of bread-and-butter, and to spill the entire contents of his cup over his nankeen trousers. When he was sufficiently recovered to articulate a few words, abashed and confused, he thus attempted to excuse himself, crossing his address to me with a disjointed apostrophe to his damaged nankeens:—

"My dear fellow—really, my dear sir—did you ever see such a mess?—Indeed, sir, if you'll believe me—wet through and through, as I hope to be saved!—most improper conduct of theirs to show my confidential letters—it will give me my death of cold.—As for Rummins, his age protects him, else, may I perish if—cost sixteen-and-sixpence, and new on only yesterday. Can take no notice of Jubb; his cloth protects *him*.—They'll wash, to be sure; but their beauty's gone for ever!—But don't set me down for a humbug, don't. If there's one character I despise more than another, it's a—awful accident, indeed! Can't conceive how uncomfortable one feels with one's—No fault of mine, 'pon my life; and, rest assured, that next time you visit our place—All eyes are upon me; must go.—Between ourselves, his museum not worth seeing—pooh, pooh! I tell you it isn't! and *that's* the reason why I—Can't stay to dance in such a mess; though I know my dear friend Hoppy has set his heart upon little Jack Hobbleday's dancing—No, no, I'm anything but a humbug; and if there's anything else whatever I can do for

you, *except* Rummins and Jubb—Good-bye, my dear fellow—Awful accident!—a thousand pities! The best fit I ever had in all my life!"

Symptoms of dissatisfaction again. Two o'clock has struck, and the signal for the commencement of dancing ("the firing of a real cannon") not yet made. Calls for the Master of the Ceremonies, and a repetition of the customary cries of "Shame! shame!"

For the honour of the M.C., I am bound to declare my opinion that the blame for the delay ought not to have been attributed to him. For the last four or five minutes he had been sedulously poking at the touch-hole of the piece with a lighted candle fastened to the end of a very long pole—a precaution which, as he made no pretensions to considerable skill in the science of gunnery, he had prudently adopted, in order to keep himself as far as possible out of the dangers necessarily attending such an undertaking. But the gun would not go off; it was evident (to use a theatrical phrase) there was a hitch in the scenery.

"Had he put any gunpowder into the cannon?" inquired one.

"Plenty,' was his reply.

"Which had he put in first—the powder or the wadding?" asked another.

After a moment's reflection, Mr. Hoppy declared, that "he was pretty clear—nay, he was positively certain, he had put the powder in first."

"Perhaps he might have omitted the trifling ceremony of priming?"

"No: he always made it a rule to prime the gun before he fired it."

Then, in that case, the company could come to but one conclusion: the devil was in the gun.

But the unlucky gentleman who is generally held answerable for the ill consequences of our own blunders, or negligences, or offences, could establish his innocence, in the present instance, by proving an *alibi;* for, upon a careful inspection, the true cause of the disobedient conduct of the obstinate four-pounder appeared to be, that some dull perpetrator of practical jokes had abstracted the priming, and, in place of it, filled the touch-hole with wet tea-leaves! Hereupon hisses, groans, and, from four or five persons (sounds most fearful to the ears of an M.C.!) calls of "Return the money!" These latter declared that, never having witnessed the ceremony of letting off a gun, they

had come upon that inducement only—reminding me of a certain intelligent person who made Paris his residence during an entire summer, for no other purpose than to eat melons and see balloons let off.

Mr. Hoppy now mounted a bench, and entreated the indulgence of his "honourable, noble, and illustrious patrons." He assured them that in the whole course of the many years he had "belonged to the Property," such an accident had never before occurred, and that he would raise heaven and earth to prevent a similar accident occurring again: that there was nothing he would not willingly do or suffer—no sacrifice he would, for a moment, hesitate to make—to satisfy the wishes of such an assembly as the one he had the honourable gratification of addressing. But (he continued) as to returning the money, he most humbly requested permission to take the liberty of assuring them, in the most respectful manner, that that was a moral impossibility, and altogether inconsistent with the long-established usages of "the Property." Moreover, he hoped he might be allowed to remind his munificent patrons that they had already enjoyed the breakfast which he had had the satisfaction of providing for them: as also to hint to two or three of those kind friends who had condescended to honour "the Property" with their presence, and who were the most clamorous in demanding the return of their money —that *they* had come in with orders!

The reasonableness of this address, seconded by its master-of-the-ceremony-like politeness and elegance, lulled the rising storm, and the preparations for dancing proceeded.

In a place like Little Pedlington, and at such an entertainment as a public breakfast given by the Master of the Ceremonies in Yawkins's skittle-ground, it may not unreasonably be supposed that "noble and illustrious visitors from London," who attend it, are tenacious concerning the etiquette of precedency. And although, in the confusion of a rush of upwards of forty persons, each struggling to secure the most advantageous place for listening to the ravishing performance of the Del Squeaki; or even in the scarcely more regular arrangement of the breakfast table (at which each naturally takes possession of any seat nearest to the cold ham or the hot rolls, which may chance to be vacant), the observance of such ceremony is not insisted upon: it is, nevertheless, important, if not absolutely indispensable, to the existence of polite society, that, when persons are brought together for the *dance*, the laws of precedency should be rigidly adhered to.

It appears that hitherto the place of honour had been unhesitatingly conceded to Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs Hobbs (Scorewell's "family with the fly," it may be remembered), except, indeed, when Colonel Dominant condescended to honour the garden with his presence. Upon such occasions the colonel, although he did not dance, would just occupy the enviable place for a minute or so—"Just to prove his right to it," as he said—and then retire. Before *his* pretensions, even those of the Hobbs Hobbses quailed.

Upon the present occasion, the Master of the Ceremonies was sorely perplexed by the several and contending claims of distinguished persons who had this day for the first time honoured him with their company; these being people of no less importance than Mr. St. Knitall and his lady, and Mr. and Mrs. Fitzbobbin. Colonel Dominant not making his appearance, Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs Hobbs were proceeding to their usual station, when Mr. and Mrs. Fitzbobbin rushed passed them and took possession of it.

"Come out o' that," said Mr. Hobbs Hobbs: "them 'ere is our places."*

"We shan't," fiercely replied Mr. Fitzbobbin; at the same time pulling on a white kid glove in a way that clearly showed he was not the man to be put down: "we shan't: we paid our money as well as you, so the place is as much our'n as your'n."

"If some folks don't know how to behave themselves when they get into genteel company, perhaps there's other folks as 'll teach 'em," said Mr. Hobbs Hobbs.

"I wish you may get it," coolly observed the other, who did not appear to be in the least intimidated by the implied threat.

"My dear Mr. Hobbs Hobbs," said Mrs. H. H., "don't bemean yourself by getting into a con*tor*tion with such folks. Leave the Master of the Ceremonies to settle the *pint*. You may see as how they have never been at Little Pedlington afore. Margate—by the steamer. Ha! ha! ha!"

* The gallant achievement of cramming *four* grammatical blunders into only seven monosyllables stands, as yet, I believe, unrivalled.—"So," said a certain person (in the presence of several others who can vouch for the fact) to a well-known and wealthy patron of the opera;—"So, I understand you are going with * * * * to the opera, to-night?"—"*Him* and *me has took* two stalls," was the reply.

The altercation had proceeded thus far when, fortunately, the Master of the Ceremonies arrived to interpose his authority. This he exercised with so much judgment, and with decision so tempered by suavity, that though he could not exactly please both parties, even the dissatisfied acquiesced in his decree. He awarded the contested place to the Hobbs Hobbses upon two grounds: first, by right of long-maintained possession; and next, and chiefly, for that they travelled in their own one-horse fly, which the other party did not. As Mrs. Fitzbobbin receded, she said with a sneer, "Of course, my dear Fitz, we must give up to *carriage* company! But *sitch* carriage company! One-horse fly! Ha! ha! ha! Carriage company! All round my hat."

"Ha! ha! ha! That's a teazer, I think," said Mr. F. with an approving chuckle at his lady's wit: "and what'll you bet we can't buy 'em out and out—fly and all? Ha! ha! ha!"

"I shouldn't wonder," quietly observed Mr. Hobbs Hobbs, and scarcely deigning a look at his adversary. Then, turning to his lady, he said in an affected whisper, yet so loud as that every one should hear him: "When we relate this 'ere scene to our *friend* Lord Squandermere, I think he won't laugh a bit." (!!!)

During these disputes, Mr. Twistwireville and Mr. De Stewpan (the latter being the gentleman mentioned by mine host of the Green Dragon as "remarkably particular about his wine") were standing arm-in-arm, picking their teeth, and looking on with an affectedly careless air. Occasionally they indulged in a titter, smiled, turned up their noses, and whispered each other: by all which it was clear they would impress you with a notion how exceedingly amusing were the disputes of *such* people to men of *their* quality.

But here a new difficulty arose, and one, apparently, less easy of settlement than the former. Mrs. St. Knitall, though she willingly conceded the right of the first place to the party with the imposing duplication of name, and the friends of a lord, moreover, still thought she had quite as good a right to the second as Mrs. Fitzbobbin—for who *was* Mrs. Fitzbobbin, she should like to know?

The point for the M.C. now to decide was one of sufficient nicety to perplex a herald at a coronation, or even the conductors of Almack's, namely: Whether or not a *Fitz* had a right to take precedence of a *St.* A question turning upon so delicate a point might have puzzled a wiser head than even Mr. Hoppy's; so Mr. Hoppy did not hesitate to confess himself puzzled

exceedingly. He suggested that, setting aside that distinction, the party whose name appeared first in his subscription-book should have precedence. To this Mr. St. Knitall objected; knowing, probably, that his did not. Hereupon high words occurred between Mr. St. K. and Mr. Fitz B. This altercation was not carried on in the playful and neatly-sarcastic style which had distinguished the previous one: here was no small-sword fence, but the bludgeon: in this case the gentlemen had recourse to language which—in short, they regularly O'Connellized each other.

Cards were hastily (and as the event proved, inconsiderately) exchanged; and fatal might have been the consequences had not the M.C. adroitly seized them both in their transit. He suggested that the gentlemen should permit him to throw both cards up into the air; and that whichever first fell to the ground should determine the disputed point in favour of its owner. This was agreed to; when, lo! it appeared that "Thomas Knitall, hosier, Leadenhall Street," was the victor in the contest for precedence with "Samuel Bobbin, haberdasher, Tottenham-court Road."

Upon this discovery the Hobbs Hobbses withdrew; declining to dance "in *sitch* company," as Mr. Hobbs Hobbs expressed it.

"I say, De Stewpan," said Twistwireville, with a titter, "here's a precious expo*zee!* *Por*sitively *ridiclus!*"

"*Emez*ingly *ridiclus,*" replied his companion—he the "remarkably particularly about his wine."

"Well," exclaimed the late Mr. *Fitz* Bobbin, who had prudently concealed his knowledge of the other parties for so long as he had his own trifling disguise to maintain, but who now was resolved not to fall alone—"well, at any rate we are as good as Mr. Twistwire, the birdcage-maker of Holborn, or Dick Stewpan, a cook at the Lunnun Tavern, let out on an 'oliday for a week in the dull season."

At this moment a groom in livery rushed in, crying to the doorkeeper, "I am not going to stay: I only want to speak a word to Mr. Hobbs."

"George Hobbs," said he, addressing the family-with-the-fly gentleman, "your holiday's cut short: Lord Squandermere has sent me to order you up to town immediately: *Mounseer* is taken suddenly ill, and till you return, my lord has nobody that he can fancy to tie a shoe-string for him." And away went the groom whistling Handel's "Every *Valet* shall be exalted."

The sky had been louring for some time, and presently, a

heavy shower came down, which abruptly terminated the morning's amusements—an interruption not disagreeable, perhaps, to certain of the company.

Being engaged for this evening at Mr. Rummins's, returned home to an early dinner:—wondering by the way whether pretensions upon a similar scale, or a smaller, or a greater, though upon no better foundation, are ever asserted in other places besides Little Pedlington.

CHAPTER IX.

RUMMINS'S CONVERSAZIONE.

A time-serving innkeeper: delicate attentions.—A CONVERSAZIONE—Introduced by the great antiquary to all the big-wigs of Little Pedlington—A prodigy: a juvenile "Controller of Destinies"—Abstraction, poetical and scientific—The RUMMINSIAN MUSEUM exhibited—Its rare contents described, and learnedly descanted on by the F.S.A.—Antiquarian arguments, as usual, unanswerable—Symptons of jealousy and impatience, unexampled at a *conversazione*—Song by Miss Cripps, the Pedlingtonian Sappho: the most approved [English] method of singing—Patronizing Capitalist—Cant of Criticism: its usefulness—Astounding discovery: "Garth did not write his own Dispensary"!—Pretty compliment from Sappho—Each partial to his own pursuits: a rational distinction touching the collecting-mania—His *pictur'* neglected, Daubson departs in dudgeon—Snargate's grand architectural project explained: an objection ventured; consequences; awful denunciation of vengeance by the Controller of Destinies—Rare occurrence: *i.e.*, toadying a critic—Envy incompatible with true genius: Rummins and Jubb—Jubb impatient to recite his "Ode to Patience"—Qualified praise dangerous—Sappho and the Conundrumist women above vulgar prejudices: interesting proofs thereof—N.B. Never to quit a *conversazione* till the last: "I leave my character behind me."—Bid farewell to Little Pedlington; and why.

HAVING ordered for my dinner nothing more than a veal-cutlet, I was not a little astonished at the parade with which the repast was served. Heard Scorewell withoutside calling, in an authoritative tone, "Now—Number Sixteen's dinner—look sharp." Presently the door was thrown open, and there entered, in procession, Scorewell with a dish of cutlets, who was succeeded by the head-waiter carrying a dish of broccoli, who was followed by a boy with a couple of potatoes, who was followed by another boy with a butter-boat. These things being placed in due form upon the table, Scorewell and his satellites hopped and skipped

round and round it; one officiously moving the pepper-castor half an inch to the right of the place where it stood; another shoving the vinegar-cruet half an inch to the left; a third taking up a spoon and laying it down again with an air of busy-ness,—each doing something which did not need to be done. This display of good-for-nothing activity ended, the assistants left the room; and Scorewell, after a short preparatory cough (at the same time, with a sort of chess-playing action, displacing and replacing every article on the table), said,—

"Hope you'll excuse what's past, sir—attendance in future shall be better than it has been, sir—no fault of ours, sir; but now that that family-with-the-fly is gone, as I am happy to say, sir——Plague on 'em! The gentleman—I mean that man, that Hobbs, who has no more got two Hobbses in his name than I have, turns out, after all, to be nothing more than valet to Lord Squandermere! But I was right: I thought from the first they were nobody. Your real gentlefolks never give no trouble, never complain. But, as for them, nothing was never good enough for 'em; and as for waiting on, I'm sure the little profit I have got by 'em will hardly pay for the bell-wires they have worn out. Ahem! What wine would you choose to take to-day, sir?"

"Remembering what you told me a day or two ago," replied I—(and to my shame I confess it, it is with malice prepense that I did so)—"remembering *that*, Scorewell, I shall not pretend to a choice; so give me a little of the wine which you are in the habit of serving to Mr.—Mr.—I forget his name, but I mean the gentleman who is so 'remarkably particular about his wine:' Mr. *De* Stewpan, I think it is."

"Particular, indeed! Another bird of the same feather, sir. Cook at the London Tavern, sir. But he never deceived *me*. From the first moment I saw him, sir, I thought he was no *real* gentleman, for all the *De* to his name. And his friend Twist-wire, the birdcage-maker, with a *ville* tacked to his! A pretty show-up of the whole party, indeed, there has been at Mr. Hoppy's public breakfast this morning. When great folks go into a strange place incog. they make themselves look little; your little folks have nothing for it, therefore, upon such occasions, but to look big. But I saw through them from the first, and glad am I that they have taken themselves off. Of course, they could not stay in this place after such an exposure."

"And yet, if I remember rightly, it was but a day or two ago

you described them all to me as being 'very tip-top people indeed.'"

"O—yes—true, sir—that's to say, they spent a good deal of money; but I never meant that they were gentlefolks. No, no, sir; my occupation sharpens a man's wits; and, for my part, I have seen so much of the world (as is natural in a place like Little Pedlington), that I can make out what people are with half an eye. Ahem! I think you told me yesterday, sir, that you were not in the army—nor the navy—but that you—that you——" He hesitated and paused.

"I told you nothing on the subject."

"And I am sure you are not in the church, sir, by your wearing a blue coat. No, no, sir; Scorewell has seen too much of the world to be mistaken on such points.—Ahem!—I have heard it said, sir, that the bar is a very fine profession; and I should think *you* ought to know, sir."

"I have no better means than any one else of knowing it," replied I, resolved to throw him upon his own self-vaunted penetration for making *me* out.

Having been at fault in the army and the navy, in divinity and law, he tried physic, the arts, science, commerce, each with no better success.

"Very odd!" said he; "very: I'm confident, quite confident, sir, *you* have nothing to conceal" (and this he said with a lengthened countenance and a suspecting look which belied his professions of confidence); "*but*——"

"You asked me what wine I should choose to take," said I (pretending not to have noticed his hint). "Let me have some claret. Good wine, I know, can only be obtained at a good price; and I have already seen enough of you, Scorewell, to be satisfied that I may trust to you for its quality."

"The best in Europe, sir. No, no, sir, as I said, quite sure *you* have nothing to conceal, *for*"—(here was an adroit change of one little word)—"for, as I said to my wife, the moment you came into the house, *that* is none of your shim-shammies."

"A time-serving rogue of an innkeeper even in virtuous Little Pedlington!" thought I, as I swallowed a couple of glasses of incontestable raspberry-juice.

As the learned antiquary *teas* at six, it was now time for me to betake myself to his house. At the door of the Green Dragon was accosted by mine host:—

"Going to Mr. Rummins's *conversationy*, I understand, sir. At what time shall I send the boy with the lantern to you, sir?"

"Send a boy with a lantern!" exclaimed I.

"Why, sir, Mr. Rummins's parties are always very late—sometimes, indeed, they don't break up much before eleven—and as we naturally don't light the lamps in Little Pedlington till after Michaelmas, and as there will be no moon to-night——"

"I'll contrive to find my way home in the dark, Scorewell."

"As you please, sir. Then, if you will have the kindness to ring the *night*-bell, sir, you will find boots sitting up for you, sir."

O for the comforts and conveniences of a dear little country-town! Send a boy with a lantern! In London, now, one might break forty legs (if one had them) in the course of a walk home, on a dark night, for the want of such an accommodation. To be sure, there *is* a gas-lamp here and there. Then, again, to ring the *night*-bell at *eleven*, when I shall find poor boots drowsily waiting to let me in! A volume could not say more in favour of the moral habits of these peaceful Pedlingtonians than is implied by these few words. They have no time, indeed, for vice or wickedness, great or small; for at an hour when the reprobate knockers of London are scarcely yet vocal for the nightly revel, *they* are virtuously "reclining" (as Miss Cripps would express it) "in the arms of Morpheus." But I must hasten to Mr. Rummins's *Conversazione*.

On my way thither indulged in the pleasing reflection, that if anywhere a meeting of the kind could be free from the intrusion of spleen, envy, malice, pretension, or affectation, it must be in *such* a place as this.

"I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs," says Childe Harold. With feelings not less strongly excited, I apprehend, than his upon that occasion when, for the first time, he beheld the fairy city, did I find myself standing opposite to a small door on the first floor of Mr. Rummins's house. Upon this door, which was the entrance to a small back room, was pasted a square bit of paper, bearing, in German text, carefully written, the words—

RUMMINSIAN MUSEUM.

The little girl who had conducted me up stairs (telling me by the way that master and the company were at tea in the museum) announced my arrival.

The learned F.S.A. received me with all the civility due to a subscriber for two large-paper copies of his work, and introduced me to each of the distinguished persons present. His appearance and manner, as well as his peculiar, but appropriate mode of uttering and pronouncing his words, I have already attempted to describe. First of all I was *in-tro-de-oos'd* to—"One whom I am proud, sir, to call my son: Rummins the younger, conductor of that tremendous engine of power, the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer.'" He added in a whisper—"And marvellous is it, that the destinies of Europe should be controlled by one so young, he being barely twenty. His yesterday's castigation of the Emperor of Russia cannot fail to produce effects which—— But more of this anon."

Although I abstained from expressing it, my own private opinion nevertheless is, that there is nothing marvellous about the fact. For such a controller of destinies, whether they be the destinies of a people or a play-house, an autocrat or an actor, twenty is a mature age; and (whatever a fond father, in his partiality, may imagine to the contrary) the time gives it proof. Here and there, indeed, may be found one who, with childish timidity, has delayed to set up as a "Controller of destinies," till having lived long enough to see much, hear much, and learn much, and leisurely to compare and reflect, he at length conceives himself to be in some degree qualified for the undertaking. These, however, form but the exceptions to the rule: consequently, Mr. Rummins, the elder, may be assured that his son is not a Phœnix in his generation.

"Our Daubson," continued the F.S.A., pursuing the ceremony of introduction; "our Daubson, whom I find you know, as he informs me that——"

"Yes," said the painter, "he had the honour of sitting to me yesterday for his profile." Then, with an uneasy recollection of my criticism upon it, he said to me, "The head thrown too much back, eh, Mister? If you have the work with you, we'll by-and-by take the unbiassed opinion of all present upon that point; and we shall then see who will dare to pretend to know better than me."

"Mr. Felix Hoppy, also, you have met before," continued Rummins. "Not in his capacity of Master of the Ceremonies, which I esteem not, do I receive him as my friend; but as he is the author of the Little Pedlington Guide, a work, sir, which——"

Mr. Hoppy blushed, bowed, drew his well-perfumed hand-

kerchief across his face, and entreated Mr. Rummins to "spare him."

I was next presented to Miss Cripps ("our Sappho," as she was designated by Rummins), whose exquisite verses I copied from yesterday's "Observer" into my journal. Miss C., tall and slender, and apparently on, what I shall take the liberty of calling, the *sedate* side of fifty. She was reclining back in her chair; her arms were folded across her bosom, and her eyes fixed with an air of abstraction on Mr. Rummins's ceiling. Her countenance bore the traces of recent and still-existing sorrow. The Pedlington newspaper has recorded the loss of her bag. Dress—pink muslin gown, trimmed with pale blue ribands, yellow sash, shoes of red morocco, and a wreath of roses, crimson and yellow alternately, bound around her curly flaxen—[Private mem. *Wig*]—hair.

Mr. Rummins proceeded—

"Mr. Yawkins, the head of our bank. Mr. Snargate, the architect, of whom I need say no more than that he furnished the design for our new pump."

Mr. Snargate drew himself up to the height of nearly five feet.

"Miss Jane Scrubbs, whose name is so universally known that——"

I fear my looks must have betrayed my culpable ignorance of so celebrated a name; for Mr. Rummins, drawing me a little aside, said in an under-tone—

"My dear sir!—Is it possible?—Why, sir, that lady is the *Enaj Sbburcs*, who does the charades and conundrums for our newspaper. Ignorant of *her* name! Bless my soul!—But, now, sir—*now*—I am last of all to *in-tro-de-oos* you to my illustrious friend, the Reverend Jonathan Jubb—the Bard of PEDLINGTONIA!—(Here again followed what is theatrically termed an *aside*.) "Simple in appearance, unaffected in manners—instead of the popular poet, you would be inclined to set him down for nothing more than one of yourselves—ahem!—rather than one of us. But so it ever is with genius of a high order."

And, truly (though contrary to my reasonable expectations), there sat the illustrious poet, neither attitudinizing, nor sighing, nor looking either sad, solemn, or sentimental, nor in any manner striving after effect, but unaffectedly swallowing tea and munching hot muffins, with as much earnestness as if (to repeat Rummins's phrase) he had, indeed, been nothing more than one of ourselves!

Shortly after the conclusion of the ceremony of introduction,

Rummins desired his servant to "take away the tea-things." "Then," said he, "I will exhibit to you the Rumminsian Collection."

The little girl, having made the circuit of the room, and collected on a japanned waiter the emptied tea-cups, approached Miss Cripps; but "Sappho," still rapt in meditation, did not observe her. Having for some time stood unheeded, the girl put her lips to Miss Cripps's ear, and screamed, "Done with your tea-cup, ma'am?" Miss Cripps, startled, let drop her cup and saucer, both of which were demolished by the fall, and drawing her hand across her forehead, exclaimed, with a sigh—

"'T'is gone, 'tis lost; the fairy chain is broken."

"Yes, madam," angrily said the F.S.A., "and so is my crockery. I *do* wish, Miss Cripps, that, for the future, you would not fall into your poetic reveries till after tea. This is the fourth time the thing has occurred, *and always when a stranger has happened to be present.*"

Miss Cripps made no reply, but, slowly shaking her head, patiently resumed her Madonna-like attitude.

At the same moment, *Enaj Sbburcs*, who also had been absorbed by meditation, though, as was presently shown, upon a subject infinitely more abstruse, suddenly started from her chair, and exclaimed, "Pig's pettitoes!"

"That's it, that's it!" cried the editor, adding, with a condescending nod to the lady, "Without flattery, Miss Scrubbs, there is no one in all Little Pedlington who can approach *you* in your *own* way; and *my* opinion upon these matters is, as you know——"

"You overwhelm me, Mr. Rummins," replied Miss S. "Your favourable judgment might well make any one proud—at least, if one had not the good sense to know, that when one has passed a life in these studies, a *little* superiority must be the consequence."

Miss Jane Scrubbs's exclamation of "Pig's pettitoes," neither the meaning nor the merit of which did I immediately perceive, was, as it was afterwards explained, the solution of an enigma, which had for the last five weeks baffled the ingenuity of all the wits of Little Pedlington.

T[illegible] *Rumminsian Collection* is contained partly in an old-[illegible] book-case, with glazed doors, and partly in a corner-[illegible] the shelves of which the various articles—amounting,

I may venture to say, without fear of exaggerating, to eighty in number—are systematically arranged. In the department of natural history, it is not remarkably rich, possessing only a stuffed lap-dog and parrot, a dried snake, a feather of a peacock's tail, the skeleton of a monkey, and the skin of a cat, the latter chiefly interesting from the circumstance of its original wearer having been, during fourteen years, the prime favourite of the antiquary's grandmother. Indeed, he himself admits that, in this portion of his museum, he cannot compete with the *Zoo*, meaning thereby their Zoological-gardens; but in mineralogy he can boast of no fewer than a dozen specimens of the ores of tin, copper, and iron, "all curious" (as Rummins profoundly observed) "all curious, as showing you that sort of thing in a state of natur'."

In *Numismatics*—for each compartment of the book-case and corner-cupboard is appropriately labelled—in numismatics the museum contains, first, the "antique Roman coin" which occasioned so fierce a controversy as to whether it were such, or, in reality, nothing more than a plain William-and-Mary's shilling; for the particulars of which, *vide* Hoppy's "Guide Book." Secondly, a farthing, which Rummins pronounces to be one of the famous three of Queen Anne, boldly challenging the world to prove, from any internal evidence, the contrary, inasmuch as it is worn perfectly smooth on both sides. Third, and lastly, a *medal* (in form and size, and in general appearance, indeed, resembling those local tokens which many years ago were issued for the purpose of supplying a deficiency in the copper coinage), bearing on one side the head, and the name also, of Brutus (the Elder), and on the reverse, a cap of liberty, with the figures 1793. That it is a genuine medal of the time of the worthy whose effigies it bears, Mr. Rummins entertains not the smallest doubt; and with respect to the numerals (the only difficulty in the case), which by the ignorant might be mistaken for the date of the period when it was struck, the F.S.A. learnedly inquires, "How is it possible for us at this time of day to tell what they meant by them?" The estimation in which these three objects are held by their fortunate possessor is sufficiently marked by the circumstance of each being carefully preserved beneath the inverted bowl of a broken wine-glass.

"But we are now coming to that portion of the Rumminsian Museum," said the exhibitor, "upon which I chiefly pride myself —the Pedlingtonian relics."

The F.S.A. had been minute and elaborate—I don't mean *prosy*, as it will sometimes happen, under similar circumstances,

to the best-intentioned F.S.A.—in describing each of the objects of curiosity, as they were in succession exhibited to my astonished eyes. Fancied that in some of the party I perceived symptoms of weariness, and of impatience in others. The banker and the architect were fast asleep; Miss Cripps, with folded arms, was sighing, and looking—sonnets; Jubb drew from his pocket a huge manuscript, "a-hem'd," and thrust it in again; Daubson audibly d——d the museum, and muttered, "The daylight will be gone before I can show *my pictur'*;" Hoppy appeared greatly inclined to follow the example set by the banker; whilst the "controller of destinies" and Enaj Sbburcs were seated, literally, *tête-à-tête*, in the recess of a window, partly concealed by a curtain, making (I suppose) conundrums.

The most remarkable of the Pedlingtonian relics are the sliding-board of the old *stocks*, and the handle of the old pump, upon each of which the F.S.A. expatiated lengthily and learnedly; easily digressing from the one, to the cage which has lately been erected in the Market-Place—remarking, by the way, upon the horrors of the Bastille and the atrocities of the Inquisition;—from the other, to the Roman Aqueducts, Bernini's fountains, and "our New Pump."

To the military antiquary the most interesting objects in the collection would be the two sword-blades and the cannon-ball, picked up in a ditch at a short distance from the town; and the helmet of the time of King John. Of the two sword-blades, one is formed exactly like a sickle, the other bears some resemblance to the blade of an old-fashioned carving-knife. These circumstances sufficiently attest their antiquity; for, as Mr. R. triumphantly exclaimed, "Where do you see such swords now-a-days!" On the latter may still be traced these curious remains of an ancient inscription:—

Th-mps-n an- Co. Sh-f—ld.

Of this, the learned antiquary himself despairs of finding an explanation, modestly confessing that its meaning is lost in the lapse of ages.

The cannon-ball is of the *size* of a four-and-twenty-pounder, but wonderfully light in proportion; weighing not more, indeed, than a hollow cistern-ball of the same circumference! Well might Mr. R. observe, "The tooth of antiquity has preyed upon its very vitals."

Of the helmet of the time of King John, so curiously resem-

bling a saucepan of the time of our own gracious Queen Victoria, I need say nothing in this place, as an accurate description of it will be found amongst the extracts from the "L. P. Observer." From these military remains the learned Rummins clearly infers that, at some remote period of our history, the Pedlingtonians *must* have been engaged in a desperate conflict, in which prodigious numbers *must* have fallen on both sides, and that, at its termination, victory *must* have been declared for the Pedlingtonians. To state the arguments by which those inferences were supported would hardly be fair towards Mr. Rummins, since they are to appear in the new edition of his "Antiquities;" but I may observe generally, that the arguments whereby he attempted to prove incontrovertibly that which it is incontrovertibly impossible to prove at all, were as ingenious, and quite as convincing, as antiquary arguments, in similar cases, usually are.

The *Rumminsian MSS.*, though not numerous, are rare. Of these the most interesting are—

1st. A book containing nearly four hundred recipes (many of them unique) in cookery, confectionery, medicine, &c., &c., &c. —*all in the handwriting of the antiquary's late mother.*

2nd. A *complete collection* of Mr. Rummins's own school copy-books. "This," as Mr. R. modestly observed, "will scarcely be valued during my lifetime."

3rd. Minutes of all the public proceedings in Little Pedlington during the last thirty years; together with biographical notices of all those who have served the offices of churchwarden and overseer within the same period.

"This, I may say," said Mr. R., "is a work of profound research, and one which will be of eminent utility to the antiquary of future times. It contains, also, correct reports of all the debates occasioned by that spirit-stirring event, the abstraction of the pump-ladle—an event, sir, concerning which (although it kept this town in a state of tremendous excitement for many months) I will venture to assert you have yet many interesting particulars to learn in London."

4th, and lastly, carefully framed and glazed, the original draft, in his own handwriting, of Mr. R.'s inscription for the New Pump. There it is, with all his erasures, additions, alterations, &c.! This interesting and valuable document he has bequeathed (as he informed me) to his native town, on condition that, at his

death, it be placed over the chimney-piece of the vestry-room—there to remain for ever!

Catherine II. promised a splendid reward to one of her *emissaries* (as such disreputable cattle are styled in melo-dramas) if he should succeed in procuring (*id est*, stealing) for her, from the Barberini Palace, the celebrated vase, latterly known as the Portland vase, and which is now in the British Museum. Remember this fact, ye vestrymen of Little Pedlington, and be vigilant!

Thanked Mr. Rummins for the gratification which the inspection of *his* museum had afforded me. Observed—perhaps for want of something better to say—that I had lately passed a morning in the *British* Museum. To this the F.S.A., locking the door of his corner-cupboard, and putting the key into his pocket, carelessly replied—

"Ay—they have *some* curious things *there*, also."

"Come," said Daubson, unable any longer to restrain his impatience, "come; now there's an end of *that*, you shall see my *pictur'*."

"Pardon, my dear friend," said Hoppy (interposing with master-of-the-ceremony-like gallantry), "we must concede the *paw* to the ladies."

At the same moment the poetess cleared her voice, and the fair conundrumist smilingly drew a strip of paper from her reticule; whilst the M.C. continued:—

"Miss Cripps has written a charming song—an exquisite little effusion—of which she intends to favour us with a private hearing, and——"

"And *you*, I see, have brought your guitar to accompany it, Mr. Hoppy," said Miss Scrubbs, angrily; adding, with a sneer (at the same time thrusting her paper back into her reticule), "it is vastly polite of you to give the *paw* to the *ladies*."

"How plaguily impatient some people are to show themselves off!" whispered the painter to the architect.

"Contemptible vanity!" replied the latter, in a similar tone. "And then we shall have Jubb with his reading, and Rummins with *his* reading. I wish they were all at Jericho! The evening will be at an end before I can exhibit my great plan for the improvement of Little Pedlington."

"Now, my dear Miss Cripps, if you mean to sing, pray sing at once," said Mr. Rummins, the elder. "My illustrious friend Jubb intends to read some specimens of a new work of his—after I have read a few from one of my own."

A good quarter of an hour was exhausted by Mr. Hoppy in

tuning his guitar, and by Miss Cripps in protestations that she didn't sing, couldn't sing, never did sing—that she was hoarse, out of health, out of spirits, &c.

"Besides," she added (and in a manner resembling an ill-made salad—that is to say, containing three vinegars to one oil), "besides, my effusion has nothing to recommend it but a little *feeling*—and *sentiment*—and *imagination*. I can't pretend to such abstruse efforts as charades and enigmas."

Enaj Sbburcs bent her head in acknowledgment of the compliment. Then, turning to the editor, she whispered—

"I wonder how Miss Cripps (who certainly is not altogether an idiot) can be prevailed upon to sing her own nonsensical verses!"*

Mr. Hoppy preluded. Miss Cripps meantime looked down upon her thumbs, and, having to *sing*, she very naturally closed her teeth and lips; just leaving a small aperture at one corner of her mouth to sing *through*. The air being a well-known one, Miss Cripps's own poetry formed, of course, the chief attraction of the performance. Thanks to the lady's *method* of singing—a method which, I am informed, is commonly taught in Little Pedlington—I can answer for it that the following copy of her "exquisite little effusion" is literally correct:—

"Se tum sn en sm se,
Me o sn tam se oo,
To nm te a te me
Pe tam ta o te poo."

And these words, running through five verses, she articulated with as much distinctness as if she had been regularly educated as a singer for the English Opera.

To Mr. Hoppy, for the *precision* of his accompaniment, too much praise could not be given; for, whenever he was *out*, he requested the lady to "stop" till he had fully satisfied himself that he had got fast hold of the right chord.

Thanks to the fair poetess from all the party: though, from some of them (as I guessed from the bustle amongst them) they were tendered for that the conclusion of the performance gave them an opportunity for a display of their own—each after its

* This is not unlike the well-turned compliment paid by an eminent member of Mr. Rummins's body to the Duke of Cleveland of a former day:—"I dined at Raby Castle, Lord Darlington's. The old Duke of Cleveland with us. A cheerful old man, and in conversation *very far from an idiot.*"—PENNANT, *Tour from Ashton Moor to Harrowgate.*

kind. Miss Scrubbs alone was silent: throughout the perform ance she was sleeping—or pretending to sleep.

Mr. Hoppy, who had observed the trick (if trick it were), whispered to Miss Cripps—

"Offensively contemptuous!"

"No," whispered Miss Cripps, in reply, "merely envious."

Now, for my own part, I thought them both much too severe upon poor Miss Scrubbs; being generally inclined to consider such conduct (although it certainly may appear like rudeness) as nothing more than an evidence of drowsy stupidity.

"Fine song! great genius!" exclaimed the banker. "How I envy people of talent!" And he jingled the shillings in his pocket.

Being seated between the poet and the antiquary, I whispered to the latter that I was not prepared to find in Mr. Hoppy (the author of so profound a work as the "Little Pedlington Guide"), a man of such various talents, or one possessing so many of the lighter accomplishments.

"He's a charming creature, sir," replied Mr. Rummins. "But what think you of his 'Guide'?—I mean the historical and antiquarian portions of the work?"

Here was an opportunity for me to show the F.S.A. that I was not altogether ignorant of how I ought to behave myself at a literary *conversazione*. So I mumbled a reply which meant nothing in particular, but which I took care to render *telling*, by ringing the changes upon the customary common-place exclamations—"learned!" "erudite!" "profound!" "deeply-searching!" "widely-grasping!" and some others which I had heard delivered, in the same manner, upon similar occasions.

"You are an excellent critic, sir," said Mr. Rummins; "*those* portions of the work *I* wrote."

"But what may be your notion, idea, or opinion of the *descriptive* parts of the book?" inquired Mr. Jubb.

Here was another opportunity for me; so I proceeded as before, merely varying my common-places with the occasion. These were now—"picturesque!" "life-like!" "dioramic!" "vivified!" "graphic!" "spirit-stirring!" &c., &c., &c.—taking care to thrust in at least six *graphics* to any one of the others.

"I'm highly flattered: all the *descriptive* parts are mine," said the illustrious author of "Pedlingtonia!"

"Then pray, gentlemen," inquired I, "if one of you wrote the descriptive portions of the work, and the other the anti-

quarian and historical, what was there left for the illustrious Hoppy to write?"

"Nothing more, sir," answered Rummins, "nothing more than a receipt for the sum of seven pounds ten, which he paid us for our joint labours."

So, then! I have encountered the perils of Poppleton End, and tasted of the miseries of Squashmire Gate, on my journey hitherward—a journey induced, in a great measure, by an earnest desire to look upon the eminent author of the "Little Pedlington Guide," and what is my reward? What is it I behold? Strutting in all a peacock's pride, with glittering plumage dazzling the eyes of the admiring world, a peacock we pronounce him: but, frail as it is false, his ostentatious tail, surrendering at a pull, is scattered by the wind, and, lo! he stands confessed —a goose! Can London, in the plenitude of its quackery, furnish a parallel to this? "Speak, ye who best can tell!" Answer me, A——, B——, C——, D——, E——, F——; yea, all of you to the very end of the alphabet. I challenge you to the reply—*Can* London, in the plenitude of its quackery, furnish a parallel to this?

Expect the next piece of agreeable information I shall receive will be, that Rummins "did not write his own" "Antiquities," or Jubb his "Pedlingtonia."

My unpleasant reflections interrupted by Miss Cripps, who beckoned me across the room to her, and requested my *candid* opinion of the verses she had just now sung. No request more common upon such occasions, none more flattering to the taste of the request*ee*, or more easily complied with. Answered as before, but with the requisite variations. These were—"gem!" "*bijou!*" "tear-moving!" "heart-probing!" "soul-searching!" "intense!" "quintessence of grief!" "concentrated feeling!" "verge of agony!" and so forth. Miss Cripps's opinion of *my* opinion more flatteringly expressed than by words—she begged I would write something in her album which she had brought with her. Being no poet, I wrote down a portion of the fine and well-known supplication of Eve to Adam, from the "Paradise Lost," commencing, "Forsake me not, O Adam!" Miss Cripps was so kind as to say I had a pretty turn for poetry, yet she wished that I had written it in rhyme.

During this time some of the party were collected around a circular table, which was covered with Penny Magazines, and subscription-lists for various of Mr. Rummins's publications. Miss Jane Scrubbs told me she was a collector of franks: that she had

some which were *very interesting*, inasmuch as they were perfectly illegible—even to the writer's own name, which was, indeed, the most difficult of all to decipher: that she was *dying* for a frank of Mr. Mortarly Trowel's, the patriotic representative of the new constituency of Seven Dials (St. Giles's); and that she should hold herself eternally obliged to me if I could procure for her that—or any others.

"I am astonished, Miss Scrubbs," exclaimed the F.S.A., "positively astonished that a woman of your intellect should condescend to so trifling an occupation as that of collecting autographs! But I, sir," (this he addressed to me), "*I* am collecting impressions from seals. Now, if you happen to have any letters about you, and would just pick off the seals for me, *that* would be doing me a great favour indeed."

Presented him with two: one (from my friend James Jenkinson) bearing the interesting initials, J.J.; the other exhibiting the pretty device, "*Inquire within.*" With the latter, the learned antiquary expressed himself highly gratified.

Nine o'clock.—Mr. Rummins rang the bell, and desired his little maid to bring a light.

"And bring my hat at the same time," fiercely cried Daubson.

"Surely, my Daubson," said Rummins, "you are not going without showing us your new work!"

"Show you my work, mister!" replied the painter: "this is adding insult to injury. How is a work like this—a profile of a man on horseback, all at full length—how is a work like this, I say, to be seen by candle-light! An architectural plan, like Snargate's, indeed, might be——"

He was interrupted by Mr. Snargate, who, with allowable anger, said, "Enough of your scurrility, sir. I know what you would insinuate; but my works, sir,—*my* works, I am proud to say, will bear *any* light."

"You are too severe, my friend Snargate," whispered the Reverend Jonathan Jubb, in a tone of mild rebuke: "remember he is your fellow-creature, and be merciful."

"Come, come, Mr. Daubson," said the Controller of Destinies (who expected that his interference would allay the storm), "stay where you are: we—I mean *I* have a particular motive for desiring to inspect your work. Should it satisfy us—I mean *me*—as I doubt not it will, we shall give—I mean *I* shall give such a notice of it in our—I mean in *my* next, that if the Royal Academy do not instantly throw wide its portals to receive you——"

Here the rage of the unrivalled profilist became ungovernable. He stamped about the room, rolling, unrolling, and re-rolling his drawing, which he brandished like a truncheon; turning every now and then towards the editor, against whose unfortunate head his thunders were chiefly directed.

"*You* inspect my work!" he said, or rather screamed. "*You* presume to patronize a Daubson, you young puppy! *You* get me into the Royal Academy! D—n the Royal Academy! To mention such a set in my presence I take as a personal insult. They shall never see *me* amongst them; they shall never be honoured with the presence of a Daubson: no, mister; when they refused to exhibit my 'Grenadier,' I made up my mind to that. *You* get me in, indeed! No, no; this is my passport." (Here he shook his drawing above his head.) "This is what shall force open the doors of the Academy for a Daubson; here are my credentials, mister. Talk to *me* of the Royal Academy! —a despicable set! But when they get a Daubson amongst them——! Good night. You shall none of you see my work; and this is the last time you will be honoured with the presence of a Daubson at *any* of your d—d *convershonies*.

So saying, he rushed out of the room, violently closing the door behind him.

Mr. Snargate expressed his astonishment that Mr. Daubson should behave so like a fool.

Tranquillity being restored, Mr. Snargate said, that, having an engagement at half-past nine, he would at once exhibit and explain his plan.

"Let him, let him," petulantly whispered Jubb to Rummins, "and then we shall have done with it; for, in addition to my prose readings, I am anxious to recite my new 'Ode to Patience.'"

Mr. Snargate spread out his plan upon the table, and proceeded to read his explanation, which appeared to occupy about sixty folio pages. The exordium was elegantly written: it ran thus:—

"When we consider that gradual improvement—that reform, temperate as it is wise, and wise as it is moderate, are the peculiar characteristics of the age we live in: when we consider that, in the advance of knowledge, the tardy heel of one improvement is aspiringly trodden upon by the advancing toe of another: when we consider * * * * *

* * [And so on through seven pages.] * *

Mr. Snargate confidently submits to the public the following scheme for the improvement of the town of Little Pedlington. In the first place, then, he proposes——"

Rummins looked at his watch; Jubb yawned.

"It is not upon my own account," said the F.S.A., "that I remind you that the evening is getting on; but our gifted friend, here, also has something to read to us. Couldn't you contrive, therefore, without going into particulars, to tell us at once what is the great feature of your improvement?"

"That is the point I was proceeding to, sir," replied the architect, with (as I thought) a tinge of acrimony in his manner. "I shall not long detain *you* from *your* display," continued he; "and I *promise* you *you* shall *not* be *interrupted* by *me*.—In the first place, then, I propose to pull down the whole of the present town, and then to build an entirely new one at the foot of Snapshank Hill."

"Gigantic scheme!" exclaimed Mr. Rummins.

"Sweetly pretty!" exclaimed Sappho Cripps.

"Miltonic conception!" exclaimed Jubb.

"What *à-plomb!* An *entrechat-six* in its way!" exclaimed the M. C.

"Worthy of Indigo Jones!" exclaimed the banker. "What would I give to possess such talent!" And again he rattled the shillings in his pocket.

Mr. Snargate listened unconcernedly to these praises: they were his just due. He proceeded:—

"In the second place, I propose——"

Here he was interrupted by the editor of the "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer."

"My dear Snargate," said he, "allow me to stop you at the *first* place. You begin by pulling down the old town, and *then* you build a new one. Now we would inquire where you intend to put all the people in the meanwhile?"

"A pretty question, upon my word!" said the architect. "What have I to do with that? My project, sir, stands upon its own independent merits. 'Put the people,' indeed! If one is to be stopped by such petty considerations, there is an end at once to all National Improvements upon a GRAND *scale*."

"Notwithstanding that," replied the editor, "we must press our objection; for, from our position, as the leading organ of this place, we must be supposed to know *something* of these matters."

This he uttered with an air of becoming self-sufficiency; add-

ing, in a tone of patronage proper to a young controller of destinies,—

"You know, Snargate, we have always given you our support; we have always taken you by the hand; in our columns, we have always placed you in an imposing attitude, and all this we shall continue to do; but with respect to the point in question——"

"Patronizing puppy!" cried the architect. "And is a man of *my* standing, a man of *my* experience, a man of *my* reputation, to be met upon his own ground by a whipper-snapper of a boy? If you were not in your father's house, I would toss you out at the window! But Daubson was in the right; he could stand it no longer; he went off like a sensible man as he is, and I shall follow his example. I wish you all a very good night. 'Put the people,' indeed!"

So saying, he rolled up his plans and papers, and rushed out of the room, *à-la-Daubson*.

"I hope you will resent this," whispered the conundrum lady to the editor.

"Rely upon that," fiercely replied he; "we will annihilate him—in our next."

"Mr. Snargate ought to be ashamed of himself," said Miss Cripps, addressing herself to the editor, who had now crossed to where she was seated. "To dispute with one of your profound learning, universal knowledge, correct judgment, exquisite taste! ——By the bye, what do you *really* think of the trifle I attempted to sing to-night?"

"An exquisite little gem, indeed," replied the editor; "a perfect *bijou*, overflowing with——But, if you have no objection, we will insert it, together with our opinion of it, in our next."

"Then here is a correct copy of it," said the lady. Then, laying her taper fingers on his arm, she added, "I hope you have no engagement for to-morrow evening. I expect a few friends. *Do* come and tea with me, for a party is nothing without you."

"With great pleasure; for no one's parties are half so delightful as yours. Late, as usual, I suppose, eh? Half-past six, eh?"

"And—a—Rummins—bring your little critique with you; I should like to see it in *manicrips*. But be impartial; say what you *really* think of it, notwithstanding."

This conversation passed in a half whisper.

Mr. Jubb now read some extracts from his "Essay on the Literary Character of the unrivalled Rummins:" after which,

Mr. Rummins favoured us with portions of *his* "Essay on the Literary Character of the unequalled Jubb." In these, not a word of censure, not a trait of envy or of jealousy, occurred; but each, with manly frankness, did homage to the transcendent genius of the other. Informed by Hoppy that a Review, to be called the "IMPARTIAL," is about to be established in Little Pedlington: of this (*sub rosâ*) Rummins and Jubb are to be co-editors.

The capitalist, who had been sound asleep during these readings, was inhumanly disturbed by the applause which succeeded them. He started, yawned, rubbed his eyes, clapped his hands, and (again jingling his money) declared there was nothing in the world he so much desired as to be a man of talent. Then, turning to me, he asked me what I thought of the town, of the people, and whether I was not perfectly astonished at the number of great men they had amongst them?

"Yet," he added, "in a population, sir, amounting to two thousand nine hundred and seventy-two, it is scarcely to be wondered at that we——Apropos: what may happen to be the amount of the population of London?"

Expressed my regret at my inability to answer him with accuracy equal to his own, but told him it was computed at about one million and some odd hundreds of thousands.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the worthy and sapient banker; "dear me! you don't say so! Immense! Prodigious! But surely it must be much too large for anything like comfort!"

"And now," said Rummins, junior, "perhaps Miss Scrubbs will favour us with her new conundrum?"

Miss Scrubbs eagerly availed herself of the request; and, scarcely allowing the interval of a second to elapse, she dashed off with "Now, then: 'Why is a man in a blue coat and a white waistcoat, riding on a black horse, along a green lane, like a'——"

"A thousand pardons, Miss Scrubbs," said Jubb; "but, as it is growing late, allow me first to recite my new 'Ode to Patience.'" And without allowing a pause for reply he did so. It was greatly applauded by the enraptured listeners—Miss Scrubbs excepted, who, during the recitation, appeared to be absorbed in the study of a "Penny Magazine."

"The finest thing you ever wrote, sir," said the young Controller of Destinies; "it has all the sublimity of Pope, all the ease of Milton, all the polished elegance of Crabbe, all the vigour of Moore; it is equal to Campbell, and on a level with Rogers: notwithstanding, you will allow that——"

"None of your 'notwithstandings,' young gentleman, if you please," said the poet; at the same time rising and putting his manuscript into his pocket: "You would be an excellent critic if you knew where to stop; but let us have none of your 'notwithstandings.' Dear me! it is nearly half-past ten, I declare! Rummins, my illustrious friend, good night. Ladies and gentlemen, good night." And so departed the illustrious Jubb.

"I wonder how you could listen to such *stuff!*" said the highly-gifted maker of conundrums and charades. "Why, half of it was about religion! A pretty subject to touch upon in the presence of men of intellect, women of mind, original thinkers, rational beings, spirits emancipated from childish prejudices, &c., &c.; master-spirits, march of intellect, gifted creatures, enlightened age, master-minds, philosophical research, human understanding, test of reason," &c., &c.

I by no means pretend that Miss Jane Scrubbs uttered these words and phrases in the precise order in which I give them; that, however, is a matter of not the slightest importance. Suffice it to say, that without uttering one sentence possessing a grain of meaning, she did, most ingeniously and didactically, ring the changes upon them for a full quarter of an hour,—repeating the phrase, "women of mind," more frequently than any other to be found in the march-of-intellect vocabulary of cant.

Miss Scrubbs's lantern was announced. The lady, accompanied by the editor (the offer of whose escort she condescendingly accepted), took her leave. As the former quitted the room, Miss Cripps muttered something about its being "easy to see through *that*—the mean-spiritedness of ear-wigging editors—fishing for a puff of her new conundrum."

"Masculine-minded creature!" exclaimed Hoppy, with a gesture of admiration.

"Thinks for herself upon all points, moral, political, and social!" exclaimed Rummins.

"Not a prejudice remaining!" responded the M.C., "and has no more religion than a horse!"

"Woman of mind!" exclaimed the banker; "and to my certain knowledge, Miss Scrubbs will not be nineteen till the end of next month.—Pray, my dear Hoppy, did you ever see her baby that is at nurse in the Vale of Health?"

"Saw it yesterday," replied the M.C.; "and a fine child it is for only five months old."

"Noble-minded creature!" exclaimed the banker. "Her whole income is but forty pounds a year—you know, she *cashes*

at our house—yet she maintains it at her own expense, rather than——"

Here Miss Cripps interfered. "I can't help saying, Mr. Rummins, that—*considering—circumstances*—I am by no means pleased at your inviting *her* when you expected *me*."

"You surprise me, Miss Cripps!" replied the F.S.A. "You, who yourself are a woman of mind, ought to know that women of mind are above the vulgar prejudices by which women of common intellect submit to be governed. It is the peculiar privilege of mind, of original thinking, of daring investigation, to —to emancipate itself from a—I should say from the——"

"Miss Cripps's lantern!" cried the little maid, just popping her head in at the door. She did not add, "stops the way;" but what, unfortunately, indeed, its arrival, *did* stop, was Mr. Rummins's speech. Whilst the lady was busied outside the room, in putting on her clogs, and affixing to her head a contrivance which, in form, mechanism, and almost in size, resembled the hood of an old-fashioned one-horse-*shay*, Mr. Yawkins said to Hoppy,—

"Very unfeeling on the part of Miss Cripps to be so hard about poor Miss Scrubbs, when it is very well known that she herself——"

"But that happened so *many* years ago, she has naturally forgotten all about it," replied Hoppy.

"Ay, that's true, rejoined the banker: "so, as she herself has forgotten all about it, she naturally supposes that nobody else remembers it."

"Miss Cripps does not stand alone in that happy delusion," thought I.

"What *I* blame her for," said the F.S.A., "is, that being *herself* a highly-gifted creature—for I look upon the bad English she writes, and her faults in pro*noun*ciation, as owing merely to her want of education and breeding—what *I* blame her for is—Hush! here she comes."

Miss Cripps curtsied and withdrew, accompanied by the M.C., who, as he handed her downstairs, whispered to her, that the evening would have been perfect, had there been a little dancing. "But," added he, "the fault of these meetings is, that most people come for the purpose of showing themselves off. Now, though I was dying to play two or three of my new quadrille-tunes, and had actually got my flageolet in my pocket for the purpose, I could not, for the soul of me, get an opportunity."

"Well, my dear Rummins," said the banker, "I have to

thank you for another great treat. Talented creatures! People of mind! Would give the world to be able to understand what they talk about! But, though I myself don't pretend to be anybody or anything,"—(here he once more jingled the money in his pocket),—"I'm never so happy as when I am in the company of intellectual people,"—(here he yawned),—"Good night, my dear Rummins. Nothing was wanting to make the evening perfectly delightful but a rubber at sixpenny *longs*. Good night."

It was now my turn to thank the F.S.A. for the treat I had enjoyed.

"I can't say much for it, sir," replied he. "Nobody admires poetry, and music, and the fine arts, more than I do, but one may have too much of them. They ought not altogether to supersede more important matters. What between Miss Cripps, and Daubson, and Snargate, and my illustrious friend, Jubb,—who, by-the-bye, is *much* too fond of reading his own productions,—I was prevented reading a *ra*ther interesting paper of my own, wherein I cite two hundred and fifty-three authorities to prove that our church was built in 1694—not 1695, the date usually assigned to it: thus, sir, thus proving its greater antiquity by one entire year!"

The rain pouring down in torrents! No umbrella. Mr. Rummins's taken by Mr. Hoppy, who will not return it till the morning. No sending to the nearest stand for a hackney-coach, for the satisfactory reason that, there being no hackney-coaches here, there is no stand to send to. There is, indeed, one fly kept in the town—*that*, it must be acknowledged, is a considerable convenience—but it is never let out after ten at night, unless bespoke in the morning. Endeavour to grope my way home in the dark: find myself in the Vale of Health, and over the ankles in water! Meet *the* new policeman, to whose vigilance (*vice* two old watchmen, deposed) is intrusted the safety of the whole town. Sets me on my right road. Find myself in mine inn. Wet through. Desire to have a glass of brandy-and-water very hot. Told by Boots that, it being *eleven* o'clock, everybody but himself (who had sat up purposely to let me in) was in bed; that the kitchen fire was out, and the bar locked up; that I could have nothing at *such* a time of night, but that I might rely upon having what I had asked for the first thing in the morning. In reprobate London, now——But, no reflections; so, supperless and comfortless, to bed.

Bethought me of the words of the landlady at Squashmire

Gate—"Ah! sir, if all the world were Lippleton, it would be too fine a place, and too good for us poor sinners to live in!" I have passed three entire days in this the *beau-ideal* of a country town: I have seen all it has to show of places, things, and people: I have observed its society in all its modes, forms, and grades, carefully noting their habits, their manners, their feelings, and their characters. Now, without a partiality or a prejudice to indulge, I declare that——But, it being past eleven, it is, in a place like Little Pedlington, the decent and proper thing to go to sleep.

Thursday, June 18th.—I am again in London; and, sinner as I am, LONDON, with all its naughty doings, and all its wicked people in it, is good enough for me.

CHAPTER X.

Inducement to re-visit Little Pedlington—Expectations wisely moderated—Advantage of travelling by a Patent Safety-coach—Arrival at Scorewell's—Interesting event: opening of the Theatre—The Play-Bill: a master-piece in that department of Literature.

SAUNTERING by the Regent's Circus, my attention was attracted by a bill in the window of one of the coach-offices, announcing "an elegant, new, light, four-horse Patent Safety-coach to Little Pedlington, through Doddleton and Guttlebury." It was now three years since I visited the interesting town, to which this elegant, new, light coach was bound; and, although I left it with feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction at finding its inhabitants not much better, upon the whole, than us Londoners, I had often wished to see it once again. What, then, prevented my gratifying that wish? Frankly, it was the dread of having to re-encounter the miseries of Poppleton End and Squashmire Gate: when one goes out for the express purpose of "pleasuring," he feels less pleased than upon other occasions at being made superlatively uncomfortable. But here was offered me a conveyance which avoided both those detested places by at least fifteen miles, so I instantly availed myself of it, and booked a place to Little Pedlington, for the following day.

"For the town itself," thought I, "it is, unquestionably, the perfection of a small provincial town. If it did not furnish me with everything I required as readily as I might have procured it in London; if I could not get an iced-cream in the dog-days, unless by giving four-and-twenty hours' notice of my want; if, having *immediate* occasion to refer to the army list, I was assured that there was not one in the whole place of less mature age than eighteen months, and consoled by the promise of an obliging bookseller, that he would get the latest for me within a fortnight —why, these were trifling inconveniences, for which I ought to

have been prepared, knowing that they are incident to every town distant from, and not quite as large as, the metropolis. And for the people—if I did not find them one mass of unalloyed virtue, it is to my own unwise and over-excited expectations that I ought to attribute my disappointment. Pedlingtonians are, after all, but men, subject to human feelings, swayed by human passions. Had I expected less, I might have enjoyed more. I ought, at least, to have dealt out to them the same measure of indulgence that I would have done to my own fellow-Londoners, and this time I will."

At the time when I made these reflections I was in a most amiable mood, for the sky was bright, and the atmosphere so unusually pure, that, from the Regent's Circus, I could clearly distinguish the Duke of York's column. Lord help the Little Pedlingtonians had it been a murky day in November!

The day for my journey, fine. Took my place on the coach-box. Driver an agreeable, chatty man. During some hours, from the moment of our quitting London, he entertained me with accounts of all the dreadful accidents which had lately occurred on railroads and in steamboats; swore that, for safety—to say nothing of its gentility—there was no conveyance comparable with an elegant, light, four-horse coach. At this moment, being within seven miles of Doddleton, the horses took fright at an old woman in a scarlet cloak, and galloped off at race-horse speed. Whatever we met on the road avoided us as if a pestilence had been approaching. At half a mile's distance from the village, the elegant, new, light, four-horse Patent Safety-coach was upset, and we the outsides (inside passengers there were none), were tossed over a hedge into a field of standing corn. We were all more or less hurt by sprains and bruises; but none of us sufficiently so to prevent our assisting the driver, who lay senseless on the ground, with a broken leg and a dislocated shoulder. He was conveyed to Doddleton, where he immediately received surgical assistance. The coach was so much damaged that it could not continue the journey, so another was provided to carry us forward. Certainly, for safety, there is nothing like an elegant, light, four-horse coach.

At my last visit to Little Pedlington I stayed at Scorewell's hotel. There was either a Bible or a volume of religious tracts ostentatiously placed upon a table in every room in his house, and his charges were proportionably high; to say nothing of an attempt (which I successfully resisted) to impose upon me a charge for two or three things which I had not had. But as

these little accidents are not peculiar to Scorewell's hotel, but common to all houses of entertainment where the comfort of a volume of religious tracts is provided for one; and as I would rather be cheated (in moderation) than exchange familiar faces for new ones, I resolved upon taking up my old quarters at Scorewell's.

The coach stopped at his door, and out came mine host, who gave me a cordial welcome—innkeepers are very kind in this respect—and reminded me that three years had elapsed since my last visit, adding, "I see, sir, I see; you have come from London on purpose for the occasion."

"For what occasion?" inquired I.

"What occasion, indeed! Why, sir, to-night our theatre is to open for the season! It has set all Little Pedlington agog; and, surely, you must have heard of it in London!"

"I can assure you," replied I, "that excepting the few whom Fashion carries to talk at the opera, or to sleep at a French play, the good Londoners are scarcely conscious of the opening, or the being open, of their own theatres. However," continued I, "the opening of the theatre of a place like this is an interesting event; so I am delighted at being here to witness it."

It being already nine o'clock (P.M.), I ordered some supper, and went early to bed.

Monday.—Immediately after breakfast I sallied forth to visit all my favourite spots. This I did with that eager interest which every one has felt on his first return, after long absence, to a place endeared to him either by its own intrinsic charms, or by the stronger charm of association. The Crescent, the Market-place, the New Pump, the Vale of Health, Yawkins's Skittle-ground, each and all received from me the homage of a glance. Time would hardly permit more: for, to become fully and satisfactorily acquainted with the beauties, natural and artificial, of a place of the extent of Little Pedlington; to inspect with care and accuracy its libraries, its museum, its Zoological Garden, &c., would require the devotion of a considerable portion of a day to the task. Even as it was, when I had made the tour of the entire town, and intersected it in every possible way, devoting a minute or two to the examination of one remarkable object, a minute or two to the consideration of another, I found it was almost one o'clock. "Thus doth Time fly!" as a moralist would say.

On coming into Market Square, I perceived numbers of persons divided into separate crowds of two, three, nay, in some places, four, with their faces all eagerly turned towards the walls,

or the shop-windows. I was at first astonished at this singular sight, but my astonishment was not of long duration: the circumstance was presently accounted for; the people were all pressing to get a sight of the play-bills announcing the evening's performances at the theatre. The hand-bills exhibited in the shop-windows—such as, for the *convenience* of the spectator, are sold in the theatre—were scarcely four feet long; but the posters—those pasted on the walls—somewhat exceeded four yards. At the head of these was a spirited woodcut, representing the interior of a cow-house, with a man (holding a hatchet in one hand, and the head of a female, young and lovely, in the other) standing astride the decapitated body of the massacred milk-maid!

This interesting document (a copy of which I subjoin) is avowedly the composition of the manager, Mr. Strut, himself. And here I must confess that, in attributing to Mr. Hoppy the authorship of the announcement of the Del Squeaki,* I was guilty of an act of injustice towards Mr. Strut, to whom I find the M.C. was indebted for it. Indeed, upon a comparison of the two papers, it will be evident that they both are the product of the same elegant pen: in these matters "none but himself can be his parallel;" and to Strut, therefore, must all the praise bestowed upon Hoppy be transferred.

* Vide p. 112.

THEATRE ROYAL,

LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

MR. STRUT has the heartfelt gratification of announcing to the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public in general, that he has once more the honour of assuming the direction of this Theatre, which will open this Evening, and takes the liberty to flatter himself that the

VARIOUS AND NUMEROUS NOVELTIES,

ALL ENTIRELY NEW!!

which are in preparation, and which will succeed each other

IN RAPID SUCCESSION,

and which will be produced in a style of

SPLENDOUR! MAGNIFICENCE! AND GRANDEUR!

hitherto unprecedented and without example in the annals of Theatricals, and which will be got up

REGARDLESS OF EXPENSE,

AND WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF OUTLAY!

and which, in point of

SCENERY! DRESSES! DECORATIONS! AND PROPERTIES!

which, as they will be prepared on a scale of extent which was never before attempted, and which is now undertaken for the first time, cannot fail to form a pivot of attraction to

DEFY COMPETITION!!!

In addition to this he has the pleasing gratification to announce, that he has, without any view to the consideration of expenditure, succeeded in bringing together,

IN ONE PHALANX,

A COMBINATION OF COMBINED TALENT!!!

such as has never yet been amalgamated within the arena of the walls of any theatre, and constituting a simultaneous

IMPETUS OF COMBINED ATTRACTION!!!

WHICH MUST SET ALL RIVALRY AT DEFIANCE!!!

MR. STRUT has the satisfaction to announce that, in addition to many other valuable engagements which he is thinking of having it in contemplation to enter into, he has secured the talents of the following distinguished *élites* :—

Messrs. SNOXELL,
WADDLE,
EUGENE STRUT,
AUGUSTUS STRUT,
STANISLAUS STRUT,
STRIDE,
STAGGER,
AND
TIPPLETON.

Mesdames BIGGLESWADE,
STRUT,
E. STRUT,
T. STRUT,
WARBLE,
Mlle. SARA DES ENTRECHATS.

Messrs. Higs, Nigs, Pigs, Wigs, Gigs, C. Gigs, T. Gigs, R. Gigs, Brigs, and Knigs.

Mesdames Nobs, Hobs, Dobs, F. Dobs, L. Dobs, J. Dobs, Wobs, Phobs, and Snobs,

AND

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES,

(*Her first appearance on any stage*).

The performances will commence with an entirely new ORIGINAL domestic Melodrame, never before performed, and now acted for the first time, founded on the affecting, barbarous, and interesting murder of Martha Squigs, to be called

THE HATCHET OF HORROR;

OR,

THE MASSACRED MILKMAID.

Principal characters by the following unprecedented cast ! ! !

MESSRS. SNOXELL, WADDLE, STRIDE, EUGENE STRUT, AND STAGGER.

MESDAMES BIGGLESWADE, T. STRUT, MISS WARBLE,
(*with a Song*).
MLLE. SARA DES ENTRECHATS (*with a Pas Seul*).
AND THE PART OF
MARTHA SQUIGS (*the Massacred Milkmaid*) by MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

In the course of the piece will be introduced a new and splendid representation of

THE FATAL COW-HOUSE,

in which the Murder was committed!
Together with the identical
BLOOD-STAINED HATCHET, WITH A LOCK OF THE VICTIM'S HAIR STICKING TO IT!!
with which the Murder was committed!!!
And the identical
FAVOURITE COW OF THE MASSACRED MILKMAID!!!!
for which the Murder was committed!!!!!
At the conclusion of the piece a favourite Song by

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

After which, an entirely new and elegant Burletta, without songs or any musical accompaniment whatever, in one Act, to be called

ALL ROUND MY HAT.

With the following powerful cast!!!
MR. TIPPLETON,
Messrs. Pigs, Gigs, and Brigs; Mesdames Hobs, Phobs, and Snobs,
and (*with a Song*)

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

Previous to which, for the first time, a fashionable Interlude, to be called

WHO ARE YOU?

The principal characters by

MESSRS. TIPPLETON AND GIGS,
AND
MISS JULIA WRIGGLES,

To be preceded by an occasional Address, to be spoken by

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

Prior to which, the favourite

BROAD-SWORD HORNPIPE,

BY

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

In the course of the evening, *a laughable comic Song* by

MR. AUGUSTUS STRUT.

The whole to conclude with, never acted, a laughable Farce, to be called

SHE *SHALL* BE AN ACTRESS.

Colonel Dash, by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!
Harlequin by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!
Venus by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!
Molly O'Rooney (an Irish Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!
Jeannie M'Bride (a Scotch Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!
Eugenie La Belle (a French Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!!
Matilda Schwabstz (a German Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!!!

AND

Lady Clara Lovely (an English Lady of Fashion), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!!!!

The Orchestra, as is usual at this Theatre, will be numerous and efficient, consisting of Ten Performers!!!

On this occasion Mr. SNOXELL *and* Mrs. BIGGLESWADE *will perform.*

On this occasion, Mr. TIPPLETON *will perform.*

On this occasion Miss JULIA WRIGGLES, Miss WARBLE, *and* Mlle. SARA DES ENTRECHATS *will perform.*

On this occasion Mr. TIPPLETON and Miss JULIA WRIGGLES WILL PERFORM IN TWO PIECES!!!

On this occasion the WHOLE of the POWERFUL and UNPRECEDENTED COMPANY *engaged at this theatre, and announced as above, to perform in the evening's performances,* WILL PERFORM!!!

The interest excited by this promise of elegant recreation was evidently intense. All Little Pedlington seemed disposed to attend the theatre. "I wish I knew where to get an order!" exclaimed one: "I wish I knew somebody who could pass me in!" said another: a third, with an air of determination which indicated the inveterate play-goer and the true patron of the drama, exclaimed—"I, for one, am resolved to go—if I can contrive to get in for nothing." Inferring from these and similar manifestations of anxiety to witness the night's performances that there would be a crowded house, I thought it prudent to go to the box-office to secure, if possible, a place.

CHAPTER XI.

Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington: the Manager's room—Patrons of the drama—Tempting terms—More patronage—Elegant epistle—a Manager's bed of roses—Rival Tragedians: the heart-rending Snoxell; Waddle—Contentions and compromises—The versatile Mrs. Biggleswade: the Manager inexorable—Petticoat government: the Manager's manager—Dramatist and donkey-man, each befittingly treated—Consultation with the treasurer—Privilege of the free-list valuable and complimentary—The facetious Tippleton, the plural-singular: his complaints: disinterested zeal for the concern—Success unquestionable.

THIS being the opening day for the season of the Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington, all within its walls is bustle and activity, while crowds of suitors for an interview with the manager are impatiently waiting without. Amidst the din of hammers and the grating of saws, the tragedians are on the stage rehearsing an entirely new melo-drama, to be called the *Hatchet of Horror; or, the Massacred Milkmaid.* In the green-room, Miss Warble, assisted by the director of the orchestra, is practising the song "incidental to the play;" in the painting-room, Mr. Smearwell is giving the last touches to the scene "painted expressly for the occasion;" in the saloon, Miss Sally Jumps—or, as she is described in the play-bill, Mademoiselle Sara des Entrechats—is endeavouring to place her right foot on her left shoulder, and performing others of the ordinary exercises preparatory to the execution of a grand *pas seul;* whilst, in a small shed connected with the stage, are the machinist and the property-man, sewing up a donkey in a cow's hide, to represent the "identical favourite cow" of the massacred milkmaid. But let us proceed to the manager's room.

At a table covered with play-books, manuscripts, and letters,

in an easy chair is seated Mr. Strut, the "enterprising and spirited" manager. With evident satisfaction he is contemplating the bill of the night's performances. At each magniloquent phrase he rubs his hands; his eyes sparkle with delight as they are attracted by the lines which stand prominent, in the full dignity of large capitals; and, as he counts the notes of admiration, which bristle on the paper like pins in the ornamental cushion of a lady's toilet-table, his imagination riots in the promise of nightly overflows throughout the season.

"This will do!" exclaimed Strut, as he finished the reading of that extraordinary announcement. "This *must* do. If this don't bring them it is all over with the legitimate drama."

Mr. Strut rang the bell for Stumps, the messenger of the theatre.

Strut.—Is Mr. Dumps, the treasurer, in the theatre?

Stumps.—Yes, sir; he is up in the treasury, very busy sorting the checks for to-night.

Strut.—Tell him I wish to see him when he is at leisure. And, Stumps! is Mr. Tippleton arrived yet?

Stumps.—I have not seen him, sir. But I believe that in that heap of letters you will find one from him.

Strut.—Letters! Ha! I have not had time to open them. One—five—ten—fifteen—twenty—twenty-three! Twenty-three letters to read and reply to! If I were not apprehensive that my correspondents would suspect that I could not write a common letter with common propriety, I would follow the example of Scrubs, the manager of the Theatre Royal, Fudgeborough, and mount a private secretary. Let me see! Ha! this is it! Confound the long-winded, prosing fellow! Three closely-written pages, containing a detailed account of how he chanced to miss yesterday's coach, by which accident he was prevented being at Little Pedlington last night; and one line (in a post-script) informing me of all I care to know—"Shall be with you in time for rehearsal to-morrow!"—Now, as soon as Mr. Tippleton comes, let him be sent to me. And, Stumps! you have a list of the persons I have appointed to see me here?

Stumps.—Yes, sir.

Strut.—Then, mind me! I am not to be seen by any one else upon any pretence whatever.

Stumps, having received his instructions, quits the room.

"And now to read my letters!" exclaims the manager. "On the day of my opening, they are doubtless all upon subjects of importance and interest to me."

He opens the first of the heap, and reads :—

"*Little Pedlington,*

"Monday morning.

"DEAR SIR,

"As a lover of the drama, and a well-wisher of yours, permit me, though almost a stranger to you, to express my delight at your having resumed the management of our theatre. *The drama must be supported ;* and the magnificent bill you have just issued, confirms, what never has been doubted, that, under your liberal and spirited management, it will *deserve* support. Pardon the liberty I take in thus wishing you success, and assuring you that no one is more anxious to promote it than

"Yours, faithfully,

"JAMES TUPKIN."

"Upon my word," says Strut, "this is gratifying! After this, who shall say there is no patronage for the theatre in Little Pedlington? But stop! here is something more:"—

"Please turn over.—Postscript. *Could* you oblige me with an order for two for your opening night?"

"Ha! one of the true patrons of the drama. Under such auspices I *must* succeed. Well! to the rest."

"*Vale of Health, L. P.*

"Monday morning.

"MISS CRIPPS presents compliments to Mr. Strut—would be obliged by an order for two for to-night. Miss C. wishes two places *to be kept for her* on the front row of one of the stage-boxes—whichever may be most convenient to Mr. S.—though the left-hand side is her favourite side of the house.

"Should Mr. S. happen not to be in the theatre when this note arrives, he will have the kindness to send the orders to the V. of H. by his messenger, as Miss C. cannot conveniently send for them, her maid being engaged washing."

"Well! cool, it must be acknowledged!" cries Strut. "My announce-bills are scarcely dry, the last year's dust is scarcely

swept from the stage, ere I am thus beset by my friends and patrons! Come! to the next.—Business, at last!—From Bellowmore, the great tragedian who leads the business at Dunstable. This is worth attending to."

"SIR,

"It is not my intention to play anywhere this summer"—[*Then why the plague does he write to me?*]—"my health, owing to my great exertions for some time past, rendering it imperative upon me that I should remain quiet for a few weeks. No doubt you have learnt from the newspapers that I have drawn immensely wherever I have acted,"—[*Oh!*]—"and my last night at Dunstable produced *the greatest receipt ever known!*"—[*Ah!*]—"But I must consider my health; and, so resolved to do, I have *refused engagements* OF THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS KIND, which have been PRESSED UPON ME from all parts of the country."—[*Ah! ha!*]—"My apothecary prescribes a few weeks of the air of Little Pedlington:"—[*I see.*]—"and, should my health improve by it, perhaps I might have no objection to go the round of my principal characters. I have, over and over again, refused *eight-tenths* of the *clear receipts*, and a *free benefit*, for a twelve nights' engagement, in theatres *holding more than yours*. If you could make it worth my while, by advancing upon these terms, *and my health should so much improve as to enable me to encounter the fatigue of twelve performances*, perhaps I should have no objection to treat with you.

"Yours,

"AUGUSTUS FRED. BELLOWMORE."

"Favour me with your immediate reply, *as I am not quite decided* whether to *rusticate* at L.P. or at Fudgeborough, where (as I understand) Mr. Scrubs is *straining every nerve* to secure attraction."

"Tragic and dignified," observes Strut. "Worth consideration, though. Let me see. Eight-tenths? That will leave two-tenths to be divided amongst the rest of the company, the orchestra, painters, tailors, carpenters, servants, &c.—and myself.—I must consult Dumps upon the matter. Now, to the next."

"My Dear Strut,

"Perhaps you may remember meeting me one evening, many months ago, at one of poor Rummins's *conversaziones*, where I enjoyed half-an-hour's very delightful chat with you. You may recall the circumstance to mind—though my name may have escaped your recollection, as we never met but that once—by my having had the good fortune to agree entirely with you in everything you said upon every subject, and by my requesting you (at the end of our *confab.*) to take me behind your scenes, and to give me an order for the following night's performance—both which requests you most politely, obligingly, and good-naturedly granted. I like your bill amazingly—it must carry all Little Pedlington before it. I should like much to bring Mrs. A. and my young folks to witness your first night's triumph,—which will be a glorious one, and well do you deserve it, my dear fellow,—but, as they are just cleared of the sick-list, you can, perhaps, spare me a private box for them. However, should this be at all inconvenient to you, use no ceremony about saying so; in which case, orders for six must content us, and we must do the best we can for ourselves, in the *public* boxes. On occasions like this, one is bound to make some sacrifice of one's own convenience for the advantage of the house.

"Wishing you every success, believe me, my dear fellow,

"Yours very sincerely,

"Andrew Askenough."

"P.S. Do drop in some evening and take a friendly dish of tea with us."

"Confound his impudence!" exclaimed Strut, as he threw down the letter. "This from a man who, according to his own confession, never spoke to me but once in his life, and who doubts whether I shall even recollect his name! Well: there are many more like him in Little Pedlington. Now, to proceed;" and he continued to open and read his letters.

"Captain Sniggerston's best compliments * * * * orders for two."

"Mrs. Stintem presents her kind regards, and * * * * orders for four."

"Dr. Drench presents his very best respects * * * congratulates him * * * spirit and enterprise * * * success * * * every true lover of the drama * * * oblige him with orders for three, or so."

"Mr. Snargate, Sen., will esteem it a favour if Mr. Strut will send him orders for himself and lady. He would not trouble him, but that, fond as he is of a play, he is free to confess, that these are not times for people to spend money for theatrical amusements. He sincerely wishes Mr. Strut every success."

"All singing to the same tune, by the Lord Harry! So, because these are not times for people to pay for their amusements, I am expected to open a theatre *gratis!* One-half of Little Pedlington—the *patrons* of the drama—are of this opinion; the other half—the would-be fashionables, the little Great, who imagine that when they have voted the theatre *vulgaw*, they have established their own claim to be considered genteel—never go to a play at all. Thus, between the two parties, my chances of success are in a hopeful way! Well; on with my correspondents."

"Sir,

"Being out off an engagment shud be glad to engag in yor kumpny if yo can find Rome to engag me. i hav led the Bisnies inn Mr. Scrubs kumpny att Fudgebery for 2 ears besids staring att other plasis inn my Princeple Pats. Left Mr. S. kumpny becas Mr. S. find me 2 shilans & deduckt out off my sallyry last sataday becas i refus to leaf the stag wen i was rehorsing Richard the 3rd upon Mrs. S. haven the impotence toe order me toe goe toe the Buchers toe fetch the muton chopps for thare dinner & i apel toe yo Sir if i warnt write to uphold my digginty & refus toe goe toe fetch the chopps haven to play Richard that very nit. Sir i dont pretend to kompar mysulf with Mr. Tipiltin and Mr. Snoxil but I send you a peas cut off the Fudgebory Gazete toe shoe what they sed off me att my bendyfit when i plaid Archer inn the Bostrantygem after which lipt threw a Noop 15 feet i. Also sung 2 komac songs with grat aplaws—after which Othelio in 2 ax—the hole to conklud with litel pikel inn the Spile chile. Sir i inclos a list of 103 pats

wat i am quit component to play & am quit up inn them & cud get out off my bed any nit and play them at a mommins notas. & opin for your reply i am Sir yor most humbil servent toe comarnd

"CHAS. SEYMOUR ST. EGREMONT."

"P.S.—i can also manige the gash lites, dans the tit rop, & mak fire works."

"So, so, Mr. St. Egremont! A gentleman who can play everything, from Archer in the 'Beaux Stratagem,' and Richard the Third, down to Little Pickle in the 'Spoilt Child'—sing comic songs, and leap through a hoop fifteen feet high, into the bargain—is worth attending to. But as to the praises of the 'Fudgeborough Gazette,' on the occasion of your own benefit, I have been manager of a playhouse long enough to know how to value that."

Here was a loud tap at the door.

"Come in!" cried the manager; and Mr. Snoxell, the leading tragedian, with a painted wooden hatchet in his hand, entered the room.

"Mr. Strut," said the tragedian, in an angry tone, "I have a complaint to make — two complaints — in short, sir, I have many complaints to make. In the first place, sir, look at this hatchet."

Strut.—Well, sir, what 's the matter with it?

Snoxell.—Matter, sir! Do you expect that I should go on at night with such a thing as this for a hatchet?

Strut.—Why, really, Snoxell, it seems to me that the property is remarkably well made.

Snoxell.—Well made! well made! See this, sir (*pointing to a play-bill*)—you have made a line of it in your bills. The public will expect something. One little dab of red ochre, one paltry, small tuft of horse-hair glued to it! Why, sir, the blood and the hair won't be seen by the third row in the pit.

Strut.—Rely on it, my dear Snoxell, it will *tell* exceedingly well at night.

Snoxell.—Very well, sir—I have only this to say: I have a reputation at stake in Little Pedlington, and I *will—not*—go on at night with such a thing as this for a hatchet.

Strut.—Sit down for a minute, Snoxell; we'll see about it.

Mr. Strut rang the bell, and desired Stumps to send Squeaks,

the property-man, to him. Squeaks, a little man, with a voice like that of Punch in a showbox, speedily appeared.

Strut.—Come here, you scoundrel! Is this a property fit to be given to such a person as Mr. Snoxell?

Squeaks.—Why, sir, I made it agreeable to the order I got from Mr. Siffle, sir, the prompter, sir.

Strut.—And what was his order, you rascal?

Squeaks.—Why, sir, he ordered me to make the identrical blood-stained 'atchet, sir, with a lock of the victim's 'air sticking to it, sir, with which the murder was committed, sir: and there's the blood, sir, and there's the 'air, sir, and that's all I can say about it, sir.

Strut.—Get along, you little villain, and put more red paint, and another tuft or two of horse-hair to it.

Squeaks.—Very well, sir, if you please, sir; but I can only say, sir, that 'ere property, sir, will come to near ninepence, as it is, sir, and Mr. Dumps, the treasurer, sir, will grumble at *that*, sir, and if it comes to any more, sir, Mr. Dumps 'll stop it out of my salary o' Saturday, sir, and that 'll be very 'ard upon me, sir.

Strut.—Get out, you scoundrel, and do as you are ordered!

Squeaks, with his blood-stained hatchet, withdrew.

Strut.—There, Snoxell, I hope you are satisfied.

Snoxell.—Yes—perhaps.

Strut.—Now, what more have you to say?

Snoxell.—Why, I have next to say, I will not act Grumps in the new piece.

"Not act Grumps!" exclaimed Strut, with astonishment. "Bless my soul, Mr. Snoxell!—how can you possibly object to the part? It is a very fine part, and so you said at the reading."

Snoxell.—And so I thought; but it does not come out in the acting, and I won't play it.

Strut.—Won't! *Won't*, indeed! Either, *I* am manager in my own theatre, Mr.—aw—Snoxell, or—aw—you are! (and as he uttered these words, Mr. Strut put his hands into his breeches pockets, glided gently down his chair, his head falling back, and his feet sliding under the table).

Snoxell.—Sir, I will not play the part.

Strut.—You won't! Does it occur to your recollection, Mr.—aw—Snoxell, that there is such a word as "forfeit" in your articles—and that if you refuse a part, sir, I can forfeit you ten shillings?

Snoxell.—Forfeit—forfeit! Do you say forfeit, sir? Forfeit me! Snoxell!—"the heart-rending Snoxell," as I am generally desig-

nated. That word again, Mr. what's-your-name, and I'll throw up my engagement.

It must here be observed that, but for the letter just received from Bellowmore, the manager would no more have ventured, at such a juncture as the present, to assume the tone he did towards his leading tragedian, than have attempted to swallow him alive. He used the circumstance adroitly, and the conversation thus proceeded.

Strut.—Throw it up, if you please, sir.

Snoxell.—Throw it up! Mr. Strut—you—surely you are not in earnest. Who could you find to lead the serious business?

Strut.—Bellowmore.

Snoxell.—Bellowmore! What! Is he in Little Pedlington?

Strut.—No: but here is a letter I have just received from him.

Snoxell.—What can *he* want?

Strut.—An engagement. I can have him at an hour's notice, and upon my own terms.

Snoxell.—Ha! ha! ha! Bellowmore! I have a great respect for him—think highly of his talents—but he can no more lead the tragic business in such a place as Little Pedlington than ———. I should be the last man in the world, my dear Strut, to throw any impediment in the way of your opening, as my retirement from the theatre just at this time would do; therefore ——Come—confess that—come now, confess that my retirement would——

Strut.—Why—aw—certainly—aw—I—aw—

Snoxell.—That's sufficient—I am satisfied—I'll play the part. But upon one condition.

Strut.—What's that?

Snoxell.—Why, there's that speech, a very fine speech, in the part of Growler, which Waddle is to play: the speech, you know, when he discovers me, with the hatchet in my hand, lifting the latch of the cow-house door—you know the speech I mean—beginning—

> "Rumble thou hurricanous wind, and shake
> The trembling stars from out their firm-set hemispheres,
> Till all in one black ruin clouded is."

Now, I'll tell you in confidence: Waddle can do nothing with that speech. It is too much for him: it is riding fifteen stone on a pony. He'll not get a hand to it—let me speak it, and I'll bring down three rounds.

Strut.—Very well, Snoxell. Speak to Dowlas, the author of the piece, about it, and settle it as you please.

Snoxell.—Bellowmore, indeed! My dear Strut, with that speech in the part, I'll make such a thing of Grumps as shall astonish even Little Pedlington.

Not only soothed but satisfied, Snoxell quitted the room.

The manager left to himself, prepared to answer his correspondents. Scarcely had he taken pen in hand, when he was startled by a violent thump at the door.

"Come in," cried the manager; and Mr. Waddle rushed into the room. For some minutes Waddle was unable to speak. With hurried and unequal step he paced the apartment; he rubbed his face with his handkerchief, drew his fingers through his hair, and occasionally gave a twitch under the cuff of his coat-sleeve, as if a little snow-white Holland had been there to appear at the summons.

Strut.—Now, Waddle; what is it you want? You see I am very busy.

Waddle.—Want, sir? Want, indeed! Why, sir, what I want is this: do you expect me to play Growler to Mr. Snoxell's Grumps? That's what I want, sir.

Strut.—Certainly I do, sir.

Waddle.—What, sir! and cut me out of the speech about "hurricanous wind!" Why, sir, it is the only bit of fat I have in my part: twenty lengths,* and all the rest as flat as a pancake—no possibility of getting a hand. I have a great respect for Mr. Snoxell—very great—and think highly of his talents; not but that I *do* think there is somebody else in the theatre who *could* play Grumps—fine as the part is—as well as he. But to add my only *telling* speech to such a part as his—where every line would be a hit, if he knew what to do with it—why, it is absolutely putting butter to bacon.† However, sir, as I have a reputation at stake in Little Pedlington, I have thrown the part down on the prompter's table.

Strut.—Very well, sir; then when you go into the treasury next Saturday, you will find yourself *minus* ten shillings.

Waddle.—Why, sir, it is not only my own opinion that I am not well treated in the matter; but everybody at rehearsal, from Mrs. Biggleswade, down to little Laura Dobs, who goes on in the choruses, thinks so, too. The speech had better have been

* A *length* is about forty lines.

† A stage-phrase, more remarkable, perhaps, for its expressiveness than its elegance.

given to Miss Julia Wriggles at once, and that would have made the thing perfect.

Strut.—I desire, sir, you will make no impertinent allusion to that young lady.

Waddle.—I don't intend it, sir. But even Mrs. Biggleswade says, that the whole bill is sacrificed to her, and that every one in the company is made to hold up her train.

Strut.—Do you mean to play the part, or not, sir?

Waddle.—Why, sir, as my salary is but twenty shillings a week—although Snoxell has twenty-five—I can't afford to pay forfeit. But I'll tell you what, sir; as I know that withdrawing my name from the piece would be fatal to it, I'll play the part *without* the "hurricanous wind," on condition that you put me up to sing the "Little Farthing Rushlight" in the course of the evening.

Strut.—Very well, very well; sing a hundred-weight of rush-lights, if you choose.

Waddle.—But I must be announced in as large letters as Mr. Tippleton.

Strut.—You shall, you shall.

Waddle.—And I must not come *after* Miss Wriggles's song

Strut.—Very well.

Waddle.—Nor *before* her broadsword hornpipe.

Strut.—Very well, very well.

Waddle.—Nor *between* her——

Strut.—You shan't, you shan't. Now, d—nation! do but leave me to my business, and you may come on and sing your song at three o'clock in the morning, and have the house all to yourself.

Waddle.—I'm satisfied. There is not much left in Growler, to be sure; but I see where I *can* hit them; and if I don't stick it into Snoxell in a way to astonish all Little Pedlington, you may send me on to carry messages—that's all.

The door had hardly closed on Waddle when there was a gentle knock, which being duly responded to by the permissive "come in," Mrs. Biggleswade—both the Siddons and the Jordan of the company—entered the room, and took a seat at the table opposite to Strut.

Mrs. B.—My dear soul, I see you are busy. I have but one word to say. I have been up into the wardrobe, and there is not a dress I can wear for Dame Squigs, in the "Hatchet of Horror." I must positively have a new one made for me; and so Mrs. Tinsel, the wardrobe-keeper, says.

Strut.—My dear Mrs. Biggleswade, I cannot afford anything new, in the way of dresses, for this piece—not a quarter of a yard of sixpenny ribbon. I am at a ruinous outlay in the getting-up, as it is: if I get clear for seven pounds I shall think myself fortunate.

Mrs. B.—Then, my dear creature, what *is* to be done? There is nothing in the wardrobe that comes within a hundred miles of the thing: besides, you advertise dresses, and so forth, entirely new.

Strut.—Ay, that is a matter of course; we do that upon all occasions.

Mrs. B.—But the public, whom you so much respect, as you tell them in your play-bills, will expect that——

Strut.—The public be d—d: leave me to humbug the public.

Mrs. B.—Well, then, I suppose I must go on for Dame Squigs in my Lady Macbeth dress; for Mrs. Tinsel declares *she* can do nothing to help me. Now, my dear soul, what *am* I to do?

Strut.—Why, my dear madam, *according* to your *articles*, you are bound to find your own dresses; and——

Mrs. B.—Why, yes, but—this is a sort of character-dress, you know, and—Indeed the only thing Mrs. Tinsel thinks *can* be done is to put the skirt I wore in the "Blue Posts" to the body I wore in the "Cruel Murderer," with the trimmings from my "Ferocious Farmer" dress. It *may* look very well at night; and if you think *that* will do, why——

Strut.—O, it will do very well.

Mrs. B.—Then we'll manage it so. But, my dear soul, you will allow me to have a new——

Strut.—Not a pin that is not found sticking in my wardrobe; so let us say no more about it.—How is your rehearsal going?

Mrs. B.—Very well; very well, indeed.

Strut.—And—pray—and—how is Miss Wriggles getting on?

Mrs. B.—That little girl will do Martha charmingly—considering. But don't you think my niece, little Phobs, would have been better in the part?

Strut.—Miss Phobs! Miss Phobs!! A girl at four shillings a week, who goes on in the choruses! Why, bless my soul! what *can* you be thinking about! In my opinion, Miss Wriggles is the very thing for it, in all respects.

Mrs. B.—Yes; she is tall, well-made, handsome; and, between ourselves, my dear soul, beauty is all that the public look for now-a-days.

Strut.—You don't pretend to say, madam, that she has no talent?

Mrs. B.—Bless your soul! no: she is full of talent—but raw, very raw. Though that is nothing: for *we* know very well that after three or four years' hard practice she may turn out to be a very good actress. Now—don't be angry: you know I always speak candidly, though I never say an ill-natured thing of anybody; and considering it is to be the dear child's *first appearance on any stage*—Ahem!—Wigs was saying just now, he has a *faint* notion of having acted with her for the last three years in Scrubs's company over at Fudgeborough.

Strut.—Wigs said so, did he? Very well.

[Strut writes a memorandum upon a slip of paper.]

Mrs. B.—But there is one thing you must do for her—come now, you must: she will require a pretty dress for the part, and you must let her have the best that can be found in the wardrobe.

Strut.—O, there are some new dresses being made for her.

Mrs. B.—So, I have you. Miss Julia Wriggles can have what she pleases, whilst poor Biggleswade——! O, you naughty man! But I hope poor dear Mrs. Strut has no notion——

Strut.—I must request, madam—desire, madam—no insinuations, madam——that young lady, madam, is a—a—niece of mine, and—and——

Mrs. B.—Of course, of course; and it is natural that one should do the best for one's own family.—Ahem!—But I never heard that you had a brother—or a sister; and I know poor dear Mrs. S. has not; so how can she be your niece? Ha! ha! ha! Now, don't be angry. Your cousin, your cousin, it is all one. Ha! ha! ha! Well, I mustn't keep the stage waiting. By the bye, whilst you have the pen in your hand, just write me an order for two for to-night.

Strut.—Very sorry to refuse you—not a single order will be admitted.

Mrs. B.—Very well, very well. Ha! ha! ha! O, you naughty man! But you must give an order or two to poor little Wriggles. One's own niece, and a first appearance, too! She'll require support, you know. Ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Biggleswade obeyed the call-boy's summons of "Everybody for the last scene," and quitted the room.

Again Mr. Strut resumed his pen; but he had proceeded no further in his answer to the first of his letters than—"Sir, in rep—" when (without the usual formality of tap-tap) the door was thrown open, and Miss Julia Wriggles—the talented, the accomplished, the refined, the elegant—bounced into the room.

Strut.—Well, my love, what do you want?

Miss W.—My love, indeed! What a fool you are! My *love!* Do you want to be heard all over the theatre, you stupid fool?

Strut.—Well, dear, I only spoke.

Miss W.—Spoke, indeed! Hold your tongue, do. An't I to play Colonel Dash in "She *Shall* be an Actress?" and an't I to go on in male attire? Hold your tongue. Then why an't it printed in the bills—Colonel Dash, in male attire, by Miss Julia Wriggles? Hold your tongue. Every one of them 'ere bills as is gone out, must be called in, and fresh uns, with my name in male attire, must be printed.

Strut.—Preposterous, my love! Are you aware that to *bill* such a town as Little Pedlington costs nearly eight shillings?

Miss W.—Hold your tongue: I'll have it done—at least, it must be done in the bills of to-morrow, and that's letting you off easy. Hold your tongue. Do it, or I shall just walk myself back to Fudgeborough, and then where are you? And then, again, I find the people here complain of your late hours—that they can't get to bed before eleven o'clock, and I'm not going to stand playing 'em out at that 'ere time o' night. The "Actress" must be done as a middle piece.

Strut.—But, my dear darling creature, it can't be. Mr. Tippleton—the "facetious Tippleton," as he is called here—always stipulates for the middle of the evening.

Miss W.—Hold your tongue, you stupid fool! I don't care for Tippleton, or you either. If you don't do it I walks myself off to Fudgeborough, that's all. And the dress they've made me for Martha Squigs won't do, not by no manner o' means. They must make me another. Hold your tongue. And if they dare even to show me that dress again, I'll tear it into a thousand million of atoms. Hold your tongue, and immediately give orders to Tinsel to obey my orders, and make me whatever I think proper to order; or this very day I walks myself off to Fudgeborough. And that reminds me—give me some orders.

Strut.—Really, Julia, I—I can't. Orders won't go; and I have just refused Mrs. Biggleswade.

Miss W.—I don't care for that. Mrs. Biggleswade may stand being refused; I don't, you know; so don't try to come none of your nonsense over me. Hold your tongue. Give me a dozen double box-orders; if I want more I'll send for them. Hold your tongue. I'm called. Now remember what I have told you to do; and if it an't done in less than no time at all, I just

walks myself back to Fudgeborough; and that will make you look tolerable blue, we flatters ourselves.

Miss Julia Wriggles bounced out of the room. At the same moment, the manager was cut short in the middle of a deep sigh by the entrance of Stumps.

Stumps.—The gentleman who sent the new tragedy the other day, sir, wishes to see you. He will be glad of your answer about it.

Strut.—Busy,—can't see him,—no answer, at present,—must come some other time.

Stumps.—Yes, sir. And Mr. Bray, sir, the man that belongs to the donkey, is here.

Strut.—The donkey-man! Why didn't you show him in instantly? Admit him. O, here he is. Bray, my dear fellow, how d'ye do? Devilish glad to see you. Take a seat. Well; how did your donkey get on at rehearsal: d'ye think he'll do?

Bray.—Do! Why, Master Tim, I wish some of the humane donkeys in your company would act their parts as well as my donkey will act his'n. Sew'd up in the hide, too, he looks a 'nation sight more like a cow than many of t'others will look what they've got to represent. To be sure, he set off a-braying in high style in the principal scene; but that's natural enough, you know: even a donkey, when he gets upon the stage, likes to have a bit of gag of his own.* Hows'ever, that won't do at night, so I'll muzzle him, 'cause it arn't in the natur' of a cow to bray, you know; and in this theatre natur' goes afore all. Why, don't you know, Tim, that for a cow to bray would be like his talking a foreign lingo, just the same as if me and you was to talk French—and the Pedlingtonians are deep enough to know that a real cow, as you've advertised him, would never think of doing that.

Strut.—That's true. Now, as to terms, I believe we understand each other. Two shillings a-week for the use of him.

Bray.—That's to say, I let him out to play for three nights a-week, at two shillings.

Strut.—Three nights! Nonsense! There was no such limitation understood.

Bray.—Don't care. Mine's the principal donkey in the piece, 'cause he's the only one; and he shan't injure his constitution by playing more than three nights a week unless he's paid extra

* *Gag*, in theatrical parlance, means the extemporaneous embellishments uttered by an actor beyond what is "set down" for him.

for it, just the same as the principal actors of your own. Come —fourpence for each night additional, or I goes directly and rips him out of the hide and takes him home; and if I takes away my donkey, what'll you do for a cow?

Strut.—Well; if I must, I must. Agreed.

Bray.—Now, then; what am *I* to be paid?

Strut.—You! For what?

Bray.—Why, MasterTim, you've engaged my donkey, but you haven't engaged me to drive him. Ha! ha! ha! and he'll be of no use if you don't. My donkey's as obstinate as a mule, and nobody but me can't manage him; and I can't think of taking a less salary than his'n. Ha! ha! ha! You see I have you there. No use to talk; he won't move a peg if I an't with him.

Strut.—Then I must say, this is the most unblushing piece of——*

Bray.—Stuff and nonsense, Tim; it's all fair in a the*a*tre, you know. How does my donkey know that before the week's over you won't put him upon half-salary? So it's all fair, I tell you. Besides, you can't do without *that* hanimal in the piece no more than any of the others; so pay me you must.

The manager having no refuge but in compliance with this unexpected demand, it is agreed to, and Mr. Bray takes his leave. He is presently succeeded by Mr. Dumps, the Treasurer.

Strut.—I am glad you are come, Dumps. I am expecting Tippleton, and I should wish you to be present when he comes. But, how do you like the bill?

Dumps.—Hm! Don't know. Wants cutting. Where's the use of saying at the bottom of the bill, that on this occasion Tippleton will perform, and Snoxell will perform, and so forth, when you have already said so in the middle?

Strut.—The use of it, my dear fellow! Why, look at its length! A reader might forget all that, but for such a reminder at the end of it.

Dumps.—Then, why advertise "The Hatchet of Horror" as a new piece, when you know very well it was run off its legs, two years ago, over at Fudgeborough. I don't think that's quite the thing at the Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington.

Strut.—Hush! nobody here will be the wiser for it, unless we tell 'em. But, I say, Master Tommy; I have been looking over the salary-list: it is awful!

* Not without a precedent.

Dumps.—Hm, hm!—*That* wants cutting, at any rate.

Strut.—Then cut Wigs. He's a bad actor—of no use—and—and a troublesome fellow in the company. Pay him a week's salary and discharge him. Have you seen the box-book? How does it look?

Dumps.—Hm! Why—that *don't* want cutting. Only thirteen places taken.

Strut.—Thirteen already! Why, my dear fellow, that's glorious.

Dumps.—Hm! The old set of orderlies: the Cripps's, the Stintems, the Snargates. They have all just now written to me for orders.

Strut.—To you, also? Why, confound their impudence! They have applied to me, too! Secure the best places in my boxes, and——These be your only patrons of the drama. But, see: here's a letter from Bellowmore. What think you of it?

Dumps.—"Eight-tenths of the clear receipts!" Hm! Cool. Better ask for eleven-tenths. Do no good. Never drew his salary.

Strut.—And what's your opinion of——? [*Tap-tap.*] Come in.—My dear Hobbleday, I am exceedingly busy, and can't speak to you now. Is it anything very particular you have to say?

Hobbleday.—No, my dear Strut; nothing. See you are busy. No ceremony with me. How-do, Dumps? Merely called to wish you success. Saw your bill. Splendid! All Little Pedlington raving about it. Julia Wriggles. Charming girl, I understand, eh? No doubt of your success. Pooh, pooh! can't be. All the town will come—now, mind, I tell you so. May be sure of *one* person, and that's little Jack Hobbleday. Good pair of hands, eh? Well, I see you are busy. Good bye. Wish you success. Sure of a bumper. Good bye. Make your fortune, take my word for it.—Oh! I say, Strut: could you just scribble me such a thing as an order for two for to-night?

Strut.—I'm sorry to refuse you, my dear fellow; but not an order of any kind or description whatever, will be admitted on any account or pretence whatever. However, I'll put your name on the free-list for the season.

Hobbleday.—No! Will you? Well, now—really—vastly kind—greatly obliged—most flattering compliment, I declare. Haven't words to express how much I am obliged.

Strut.—It is but fair, though, to apprize you, that on this particular occasion, and on every night of performance throughout

the season, the free-list will be altogether, entirely, and totally suspended, *in toto*.

Hobbleday.—No matter. That don't signify. A most flattering compliment, nevertheless. Greatly obliged—highly flattered. Good bye, Strut. Good bye, Dumps!

The manager and his right trusty chancellor of the exchequer had scarcely recovered from this interruption, when again they were disturbed by a tap at the door, and Mr. Tippleton (who had but just descended from the top of the coach) made his appearance.

Tippleton.—How are you, Strut? How do, Dumps? I've a complaint.

Strut.—What! You have scarcely set foot in the theatre, and already you complain?

Dumps.—Hm! What the deuce can *you* find to complain about? Haven't you the highest salary in the theatre?

Tippleton.—Yes; and that's my complaint. Look to my articles. Tippleton is to be paid the highest salary of anybody—twenty-five shillings a week. Now, I have discovered that you pay Snoxell twenty-five shillings a week, so that mine is no longer the *highest* salary.

Dumps.—Hm! And how does that affect you? Snoxell had twenty shillings; this season he is advanced to twenty-five. Would you have us reduce his salary for a point of form?

Tippleton.—No. I'll injure no man—no man shall injure me. I'll tell you how the affair may be amicably arranged: raise my salary to thirty. There.

Dumps.—Hm! And where's the money to come from? As it is, we shan't draw up the curtain under nine-pound-eighteen; and cram the house to the roof we can't get more than fifteen pounds into it.

Tippleton.—Don't care. Look to my articles. Money come from! Who bring the money? Tragedians?—No. The comedians bring the money. Who *are* the comedians? Bobby Tippleton *are* the comedians, therefore Bobby Tippleton must be paid. Don't care. Can go over to Fudgeborough—*carte blanche*—my own terms—do what I like.

Strut.—Well; I suppose I must comply. You shall have thirty shillings.

Tippleton.—I'm satisfied.—I've a complaint.

Strut.—What now?

Tippleton.—Look at this play-bill. Look to my articles. My name to be printed in the largest-sized letters. See here:—

"*All round my Hat;*"—Tippleton in italic capitals, Miss Julia Wriggles in large capitals.—Great respect for Miss Julia Wriggles—don't want her to hold up my train—won't hold up her train. Thing must be altered.

Strut.—'Tis a mistake of the printer's: it shall be set right in to-morrow's bills.

Tippleton.—I'm satisfied.—I've a complaint.

Strut.—Another!

Tippleton.—"*Who are you?*" Tippleton and Gigs in one line—Miss Julia Wriggles in a line by herself. Great respect for Gigs, also; but Tippleton must stand alone. Offered my own terms at Fudgeborough, remember.

Strut.—Well; that also shall be altered.

Tippleton.—I'm satisfied.—I've a complaint.

Strut.—And what—the—devil—more—can you find to complain about?

Tippleton.—You've sent me a part in a new piece to study.

Strut.—And a very fine part it is.

Tippleton.—Don't say the contrary; but I stand to my articles. Willing to oblige; in these times an actor ought to put his shoulder to the wheel; I put *my* shoulder to the wheel: so if it be a good part, and the very best part in the piece, and I happen to like the part, and the part should please me in every possible respect, why I have no objection to——

Dumps.—Hm, hm! But there's no such clause as *that* in your articles, I'll swear; though there *is* something about a fine for refusing a part.

Tippleton.—Don't care for articles. Fines are all very proper—never could get through business in a theatre without them:—any performer, high or low, who refuses a part, fine him—all right—only you mustn't fine Bobby Tippleton. Scrubs, over at Fudgeborough, has offered me——

Strut.—You are a pleasant fellow, Master Bobby! Now, suppose I sign a blank sheet of paper, and allow you to fill it up with terms, conditions, and stipulations, entirely according with your own wishes—will that content you?

Tippleton.—Can't say—must look to my articles. Well—I'm called to rehearsal. Good day.—Stop! I've a compl——No matter: I'll think it over, and let you know by and by. [*Tippleton withdraws.*]

Strut.—Well, Dumps, what think you of the appearance of affairs *now?*

Dumps.—Hm! I'll tell you what I think: Tippleton and

Snoxell, and Mrs. Biggleswade and Miss Wriggles—pull altogether as hard as they will—won't draw expenses into the house.

Strut.—Psha! With such flattering assurances—(*he points to the pile of applications for orders*)—of the support of the worthy townspeople;—with such friendly, such zealous, such disinterested co-operation on the part of the company—the THEATRE ROYAL, LITTLE PEDLINGTON, must succeed.

Dumps.—Hm, hm, hm! I wish you may get it.

CHAPTER XII.

Only one place vacant! Just in time—The Arch-Humbug of Little Pedlington again—Secrets touching the Dancer and the *Débutante*—Awful consequences of the tittle-tattle of a busy-body: a lady's dignified resentment—Irreparable loss: death of Rummins—Jubb's Elegy thereon: unavoidable co-incidences of thought—Important distinction in the orthography of names--Intimacies of authors and actors with critics: suspicious?—How to form an opinion: "My paper says."

"HAVE you any place in the boxes for to-night, sir?" inquired I of the box book-keeper.

"How many do you want, sir?" inquired he in return.

"Only one for myself," replied I.

"Luckily," continued he, "I have one place, which has just been given up."

"Because," said I, inquiringly, "it was not worth keeping—a seat on a back row at the top of the house?"

"Beg pardon, sir, it most luckily happens to be a seat on the first row of the centre dress-box."

"I am fortunate, indeed!" exclaimed I. "You expect a great house?"

"Tremendous, sir! Every place taken."

Not having any silver, I tendered a half-sovereign in payment for my ticket—the price of admission to the boxes being two shillings.

The functionary opened a drawer, in which there were two or three stray shillings. He then felt successively, though not successfully, in each of his pockets. Upon my telling him, in reply to his inquiry whether I could oblige him with such a thing as two shillings in silver, that I had no silver at all, he expressed his regret at having given away all his small money *in change*. [It somehow happened that I saw neither notes nor gold in his drawer]. He then desired a boy to go into the treasury, and see whether Mr. Dumps had change for a half-sovereign *there*. After some delay, the boy returned, and accounted for his long absence, by stating that he had been obliged to go for change to Yawkins's Bank.

That the only vacant place in the house, that place being also the very best in it, and that place, again, having fortunately been relinquished by its first proprietor, should fall to my lot, formed a combination of lucky circumstances, upon which I could not but congratulate myself.

Strolled into Yawkins's library; there I saw my old friend Hobbleday.

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed Hobbleday—"most happy, most delighted to see you! When did you arrive?"

"Last night," replied I.

"Of course you come to make a stay," said he.

"Probably I shall go away to-morrow," replied I, though not intending any such thing.

"To-morrow! No, no—you will stay till Wednesday," continued Hobbleday; "or must you *positively* go to-morrow?"

"Positively, sir—I shall leave Little Pedlington to-morrow," I answered.

"That's decided, is it?" said he. "Well, dear me! that is very provoking; for I intended to ask you to dine with me on Wednesday. However, since you can't, you can't."

Here the exquisite little humbug was interrupted by Yawkins, who, after a few words of recognition and of welcome, said,—

"Ah! sir, the world has sustained an irreparable loss since last you were here. That great luminary, that master-spirit, is extinguished. The immortal Rummins is dead! Died, sir, on the first of April last."

"Dead!" I exclaimed. "Rummins dead!" I turned aside, and—shall I confess it?—shed a tear.

"*And* a most extraordinary coincidence!" said Hobbleday. "Our cockatoo at our Zoological Gardens died on that very same day! Poor Rummins! We had him stuffed; and there he is on a perch in a glass-case, looking all but alive."

"Stuff'd?" exclaimed I. "Simcox Rummins, F.S.A., stuffed! Embalmed (you would say), as an antiquary so learned and profound deserved to be."

"Rummins!" cried Hobbleday; "no, the cockatoo. Ever see a stuffed cockatoo? Most curious thing! The only one in all this place. Come," continued he, taking me by the arm—"come with me and see it."

"I thank you," said I; "but I cannot at present."

"But why not? What is there to prevent you?" said he.

"I have not the time to spare, Mr. Hobbleday."

"Pooh, pooh! it won't take long. Come, now; do come. It is not far—it will be a nice little walk for us. But *why* won't you go?"

After enduring twenty more "why's" and "what's-your-reasons," I thanked him for his pertinacious politeness, and turned to speak to Yawkins.

"Your theatre has put forth a very attractive bill," said I; at the same time pointing to one which was hanging in the shop, and which reached nearly from the ceiling to the floor.

"Never before, sir," replied Yawkins, "was there such a company collected together in Little Pedlington. Why, sir, Tippleton is in himself a host; Snoxell is a host; Waddle is a host; Gigs is a host; Mrs. Biggleswade is a host; Mrs. ——In short, there is scarcely one in the whole company but is singly a host."

"Mademoiselle Sara des Entrechats, who is to dance, is, of course, from Paris," said I.

"Why, no; not exactly from Paris," replied Yawkins; "she comes from Fudgeborough, and her name is Sally Jumps. But, Lord, sir! the connoisseurs of Little Pedlington would as soon allow that a woman could dance gracefully and well with a wooden leg as with an English name."

"I say, my dear fellow," said Hobbleday in a half-whisper to me (twitching my sleeve, and giving me a knowing wink at the same time), "that Mamzell *Ontershaw* is a charming little girl. —Ahem!—I say, my dear fellow; if you should happen to see a certain person in a French bonnet and shawl walking about the Vale of Health, or a mile or so on the Snapshank road, arm in arm with another certain person—ahem!—who is not *very* far from you

at this moment, do you pretend not to notice us—*them*, I should have said."

I assured Mr. Hobbleday that I was discretion itself.

Yawkins drew me aside and whispered:—"To my certain knowledge he never spoke to her in his life, sir. She has been scarcely three days in the town."

I made no remark upon this little piece of illustrative information, but again turned to the play-bill, saying:—

"This Miss Julia Wriggles, whose name occurs so frequently in the bill; who not only acts in tragedy, comedy, and farce, sings a song, delivers an address, and dances a broad-sword hornpipe; but concludes her labours by acting eight parts in one piece—that is to say, by playing the whole piece herself—this Miss Julia Wriggles, I say, must be a young lady of pre-eminent ability. Why, to execute well what she has undertaken to perform, would seem to require the combined powers of any six actresses I ever heard of."

"A wonderful person indeed, sir," replied Yawkins; "and a great favourite———"

"Favourite!" exclaimed I; "why, this is announced as her first appearance on any stage!"

"——of the manager's," continued Yawkins, somewhat drily. "But as to a first appearance, sir, I can't say much for that; for it is whispered, in the best-informed circles, that she has been acting these three years past over at Fudgeborough. One thing, however, is certain, Mr. Strut, the manager, has discharged Mr. Wigs, a very promising young actor, for merely saying so; and that, I think, gives an appearance of probability to the thing.

"Theatrical news travels fast in Little Pedlington," thought I.

"But she must be a prodigious genius," continued Yawkins: "for Mr. Strut has opened the theatre chiefly on her account—which he would not have done this season unless he had had the good fortune to secure her services."

"Fortunate Strut!" thought I.

"What a charming, domestic creature is poor Mrs. Strut!" said Hobbleday. "I say, Yawkins, you have heard that she has determined to sue for a separate maintenance?"

"Now, really, Mr. Hobbleday," cried Yawkins, "this is too bad! It was I myself who, not an hour ago, mentioned to you, *in strict confidence*, that such a proceeding was probable. I gave you no authority to repeat it: yet, no doubt, by this time you have trotted all over Little Pedlington to disburthen yourself of the information."

"Not I, I assure you, sir," cried Hobbleday, with an air of offended dignity; "not I, sir; am incapable of such a proceeding. Have mentioned it but to one person—to whom it could be no secret—Mrs. Strut herself."

"Impossible! And you told her you received the report from me?"

"No, sir; did *not* tell her I received it from you. Did not say, *Yawkins* told me—pooh, pooh! have too much tact for that—merely said, 'I heard it *at* Yawkins's.'"

"So, sir, you left my shop, full puff, for the express purpose of——"

"No sir; not for the purpose. This is how it happened, sir: my friend Strut has had the politeness to put my name upon the free-list; but as the free-list is 'Entirely and totally suspended *in toto*,' as the bills say, I waited about the stage-door in the hope of meeting with somebody who could give me an order. Presently saw Mrs. Strut. Could not help saying how sorry I was at hearing such a report—should have been a brute if I could—and requested an order for two, which she most kindly gave me. And that is the whole truth of the matter."

Hobbleday had not finished speaking when a boy entered the shop, threw a note down upon the counter, and, without uttering a word, went out again. Whilst Yawkins was reading the note, Hobbleday said—

"Of course, you'll be there to-night. Like to go behind the scenes, eh? I'll take you. Show you the green-room. Introduce you to all the principal performers. I'll look out for you in the theatre. What say you?"

Recollecting his promise, upon a former occasion, to introduce me to all the eminent people of the place, when, as it afterwards appeared, he himself was but slightingly considered by them, I declined his kind offer.

"Here, sir," cried Yawkins, in a voice trembling with rage (at the same time holding out the note in one hand, and striking his counter heavily with the other): "here, Mr. Hobbleday! these are the awful consequences of your busy tittle-tattling! Listen, sir!"

Mr. Yawkins read the note, which was in the words following:—

"Mrs. Strut desires Mr. Yawkins will *instantly* send in his bill for the two cakes of Windsor soap, also the tooth-brush she owes him for, as she intends to withdraw her custom from his *shop*, and give it somewhere where people have enough to do *to*

mind their own business without troubling themselves about *other people's*. Mrs. S. also informs Mr. Y. that she does not intend to renew her subscription to his library when her present week is out, as people *taken up with pleasant conversation* naturally forget to send *new* works when *bespoke*. Mrs. S. also informs Mr. Y. that *she* has struck his name off the free-list of the theatre, which she has STILL a right to do, *whatever Mr. Y. may report to the contrary*. Mrs. S. desires Mr. Y. will be sure to *receipt* the bill, as people who trouble themselves so much *with what does not concern them* MIGHT forget to scratch it out of their books, *when paid*, and she is not fond of *disputes*."

Hobbleday did not wait to receive the reproaches which Yawkins was preparing to shower upon him; but, pretending to hear himself called by some one who passed the door, he bustled out of the shop.

"That, sir, said Yawkins, "is the most pestilent little gossip in the town. A secret runs through him like water through a sieve. He is not happy till he has got it, and is miserable till he is rid of it. He is worse than forty old women. You cannot be sure of the duration of a common acquaintance for a day, if he gets between you. He is a sort of cholera in social life; and, when he 'breaks out' in a place, he 'carries off' friendships by the dozen. Ah! sir, you ought to be very happy that you have no Hobbledays in London."

"In London," said I—(glad of an opportunity of elevating the character of *that* pretty town in the opinion of a Pedlingtonian)—"in London, we entertain a virtuous horror of slander, scandal, tittle-tattle, and old-apple-woman gossip; so that *there*, sir, a Hobbleday would not be endured; he could not exist; he would fail from the utter want of encouragement."

"Happy London!" exclaimed the eminent bibliopolist.

"Heaven forgive me!" thought I, reflecting on the enormity of my assertion.

I took up a book which lay on the counter. It was "Jubb's *Pedlingtonia*, a new edition, with additions." The only considerable addition, however, was an 'Elegy on the Death of Rummins.' Here it is. It is remarkable for its sweetness, its pathos, its elegiac tenderness; but, by the generality of readers, it will, perhaps, be most admired for its originality.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;
No more illustrious Rummins shall I see!
O, Simcox Rummins, senior, F.S.A.,
Why leave the world to darkness and to me!

In vain thy Jubb thy 'Life and Times' shall write,
For since, O Simcox, thou'rt no longer there
To join in thy biographer's delight,
He wastes his sweetness on the desert air.

Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The height which thou, my Rummins, didst attain!
All say in prose what Jubb now sings in rhyme—
We ne'er shall look upon thy like again.

A man thou wast to all the country dear;
Great was thy learning and profound thy lore;
And, passing rich with ninety pounds a year,
Thou gav'st relief that Heaven might bless thy store.

One morn I miss'd thee on th' accustom'd hill,
Near yonder copse where once the garden smiled,
Ah! ruthless Death! and couldst thou Rummins kill!
In wit a man, simplicity a child.

Since, then, I'm doom'd my dearest friend to lose,
In Pedlington no longer stay I can.
The world is all before me where to choose—
Pity the sorrows of a poor old man!"

I purchased the volume, thought of the illustrious defunct, paid half-a-crown—and sighed.

At this moment, Mr. Rummins, son of the *great* Rummins, and editor of the Pedlington newspaper, came into the shop. He was accompanied by a gentleman short and stout. It was Waddle, the tragedian! who was that night to enact Growler in the "Hatchet of Horror!" Rummins, after saying a few words to Yawkins, was invited by the latter to stay dinner.

"Can't," replied Rummins; "I dine with Waddle."

"Then will you come and sup after the play?" said Yawkins.

"Can't," again replied Rummins; "I sup with Waddle."

The editor was about to quit the shop, when I took the liberty of reminding him that, on my former visit, I had had the honour of an introduction to him at a *conversazione* at the house of his late illustrious father. He condescended to make me a remarkably polite bow, and, with becoming dignity, wished me good morning, and went away.

"Upon that same occasion," said I, turning to Yawkins, "I had the pleasure also of meeting Miss Cripps, the poetess."

"At that time, sir," said Yawkins, "Miss Cripps and he were

great friends, and she used to invite him to all her tea-parties; but since then they have quarrelled."

"Indeed!" exclaimed I; "I am sorry to hear that. What was the cause of the rupture?"

"Why, sir," replied Yawkins, "Miss Cripps wrote some very charming verses on the death of the cockatoo in our Zoological Gardens; and Mr. Rummins, in his notice of them, said that they were far superior to Milton, but not quite equal to Jubb. At this, Miss Cripps took offence, and she has never since invited Mr. Rummins to tea. For my own part, I think her in the wrong; for a poem may be very fine, yet inferior to the compositions of such a writer as Jubb. And to say the truth, Miss Cripps is one of those ladies who are never satisfied with anything short of the very top of the tree. However, he is now all in all with Miss Jane Scrubbs, the lady who writes riddles and charades, and things of that sort."

"I had the pleasure of meeting her, too. Pray is she any relation of the manager of the Fudgeborough theatre?"

"Not in the least; and nothing offends her more than that it should be thought she is. Besides, sir," continued Yawkins, with a solemn nod of the head, "Scrubs has only *one* b in *his* name, whilst Miss Scrubbs spells hers with *two*."

"That's an important and an honourable distinction," said I.

"Sir, sir, sir," suddenly cried Yawkins, "did you ever see Mr. Snoxell off the stage?"

"Never," said I; "which is he?"

"You see those three gentlemen arm in arm, crossing the square," said Yawkins. "The middle one is Mr. Fiat, who writes the 'Dictator;' he on his right arm is Mr. Dowlas, author of the melodrama, the 'Hatchet of Horror,' which is to be acted to-night; the gentleman on his left is Mr. Snoxell."

With becoming admiration I looked at them, till, by turning a corner, they were lost to view.

"But what *is* the 'Dictator?'" I inquired.

"O, very true, sir, I remember," replied Yawkins. "When last you were here we had but one paper—the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer,' edited by Rummins the Younger, the gentleman who just now looked in. We have now another—the 'Little Pedlington Dictator,' written by Mr. Fiat. It is a publication exclusively devoted to politics, literature, the drama, the fine arts, science, political economy, geology, zoology, conchology, pathology, craniology——"

"Stop, stop, for Heaven's sake, Mr. Yawkins," cried I.

"Surely you do not pretend that Mr. Fiat himself writes upon all those subjects?"

"Indeed, but I do, sir," replied he; "and upon all with equal knowledge, taste, and judgment. In his criticisms upon acting, he is, for tragedy, a Snoxellite; for comedy, a Tippletonian. Rummins, on the contrary, is a Waddleite and a Gigsite. What they will say about Miss Julia Wriggles is a mystery; but my own private opinion is, that Rummins, being a friend of the manager's, the 'Observer' will be all on her side; whilst Fiat, who (between ourselves, sir) is said to be over head and ears in love with little Laura Dobs—a pretty little girl who sings in the choruses—will be against her."

"And pray, Mr. Yawkins," inquired I, "which, in your opinion, is the greater actor of the two: Snoxell or Waddle?"

"Why, really, sir," replied he, "that is a question which it is utterly impossible to answer. When I had but one paper to read ('The Observer') I was convinced that Waddle was the better; but since 'The Dictator' has been established, which gives the preference to Snoxell, I am greatly perplexed."

"But have you no opinion of your own?" inquired I, with some degree of astonishment.

With an appearance of equal astonishment Yawkins echoed —"An opinion of my own? Bless me, sir, what an extraordinary question! Where is the use of reading a newspaper if one is to be at the trouble of thinking for oneself after all? No, no, sir; we are not such fools in Little Pedlington as that comes to; and happy are they who are content to read but one paper, for, in that case, they know exactly *what* to think."

"Then," said I, "you Pedlingtonians are very wise people. Far different is it with us in London. *There*, no one is newspaper-led; and such a phrase as 'But my paper says,' is never heard. Well; I wish you good morning, Mr. Yawkins. I shall go to the theatre this evening. To-morrow I will write to my friends what *I* think of the performances; and at the same time send them the criticisms both of the 'Observer' and the 'Dictator.'"

I returned to Scorewell's; took a hasty dinner; and at half-past five—the performances being to commence at six o'clock precisely—proceeded to the THEATRE ROYAL, LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

CHAPTER XIII.*

"And Sessions-papers tragedize my style."

BRAMSTONE'S *Man of Taste.*

THE OPENING NIGHT—Impartial criticism intended: how attainable—Exemplary architect: singular accuracy of a building-estimate—Useful knowledge for the rising generation—On crowds—Unprecedented conduct of a box-opener—Conversation with Hobbleday concerning London theatricals—Destitute condition of the London actors deplored: their emigration defensible—Cliques and coteries—Miss Scrubbs's *last*—The "*Encore*" [query] *nuisance*—Great reception of Miss Julia Wriggles: the Wreath [query] *humbug*—Analysis of the "Hatchet of Horror," with remarks thereon, *passim*—Its morality, and the beneficial effects of this school of Drama on the lower orders insisted upon—Symptoms of party feeling: Speeches of Snoxell and Waddle—The terms "Original" and "Domestic" explained—Discriminating compliment: the Call-for-actors [query] *nuisance*—Summary of the performances.

MONDAY NIGHT—QUARTER PAST ELEVEN.—Just returned from the theatre. Now, whilst the impression of all that I have witnessed is strong upon my mind, I will transfer it to the pages of my journal. I shall claim for my record a reliance on its fidelity and impartiality, for I have not the honour of a personal acquaintance with Snoxell or with Waddle; I dine neither with Tippleton nor with Gigs, nor do I sup with either Mrs. Biggleswade or Miss Julia Wriggles; I never spoke to Mr. Dowlas, the author; I know not Mr. Strut, the manager; have no desire to come out at his theatre, or to go in—without paying for my admission; moreover, never having perpetrated a dramatic work, I have no "acceptation" to hope for, no "rejection" to fear—the contrary of all or any of which circumstances might, possibly, give a slight bias to my statements. Not being a critic by profession, it would, of course, be presumptuous in me to make the smallest claim to infallibility; my opinions, therefore, may be open to objection, honest though they be; but what I state as fact, is fact, and this I will maintain, even though such high

* The five chapters in this volume, upon the Little Pedlington theatricals, were written prior to the month of April, 1837.

authorities as Mr. Fiat, of the "Little Pedlington Dictator," and Mr. Rummins, of the "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer," should combine to gainsay me.

Formerly (according to the Guide Book) the performances took place "in a commodious outhouse belonging to Mr. Sniggerston, the brewer, tastefully fitted up for the occasion;" but since my last visit here, an elegant theatre has been erected. It is the work of Mr. Snargate, the celebrated architect of this place, and does infinite credit to his taste and skill. According to a minute estimate made by that gentleman, it was to cost exactly £671. 15*s.* 7½*d.*; and the estimate having been formed with the accuracy for which Mr. Snargate is upon all occasions distinguished, the edifice, when finished, actually cost no more than £1,343. 11*s.* 3¾*d.*—only one farthing more than double the sum originally required! This money was raised in shares of five pounds each, for which the subscribers were to receive five *per cent.* interest—when they could get it—*and nothing more.* And it is gratifying to be enabled to add, that (such is the prosperous state of theatricals in Little Pedlington!) the *latter* condition is punctually fulfilled.

"Tremendous! Every place taken!" was the reply I received this morning to my question to the box book-keeper, as to whether he expected a full house. This information, in addition to the notification at the foot of the play-bill, that the free-list would be suspended, and that not an order would be admitted, induced me to be at the theatre by half-past five precisely, the hour appointed for the opening of the doors; for, although I had paid for, and secured, a place on the front row of the centre dress-box, I prudently considered that, in case of a rush, my precaution might be of but little avail. I did not repent the resolution I had taken; for, on arriving at the theatre, which was not yet opened, I found crowds assembled at the doors. At the pit-door I counted five persons, at the gallery seven, whilst at the box-entrance was a dense mass, composed of no fewer than eighteen or (I think I may venture to say) twenty.

Poaching, smuggling, highway-robbery, and murder, being the staple of the principal piece to be acted, I need scarcely say that, of the seven persons collected at the gallery-door, six were children, girls and boys, of from ten to twelve years of age, aspirants for the honours of the hulks and the halter.

"Sweet the task
To teach the young idea how to shoot!"

It seems to be the principle of a crowd, whether large or small, whenever or for whatever purpose collected, to make each other as uncomfortable as they can. If fifty people are assembled at the entrance to a place which they know to be capable of accommodating five thousand, they will squeeze, jostle, shove; push forwards, backwards, sideways; they will do anything but stand still, although perfectly convinced they can "take nothing by their *motion*"—save a few needless bruises or a broken rib. I never but once heard a satisfactory reason for this propensity. "Pray, sir," said a person who till that moment had been the backmost of a crowd, to another who had just joined it—"Pray, sir, have the kindness not to press upon me; it is unnecessary, since there is no one behind to press upon you!" "But there may be, presently," said the other; "besides, sir, where's the good of being in a crowd if one mayn't shove?" The good people here seemed to be of the same opinion; for the five who were assembled at the pit-door (which, by the bye, is quite wide enough to allow conveniently of one person entering at a time, if they would but take the matter coolly), were jostling, squeezing, and kicking each other, as vigorously as if their lives depended upon who should be first.

But the great struggle was at the box-entrance, which is between the other two. When the door—for there is but one, though of double the width of the last mentioned—when the door was thrown open, the rush was overwhelming. Little Jack Hobbleday was in the midst of the crowd; and, fairly carried off his legs, squeezed upwards and turned round by the pressure, he was borne along with his head above the others, and back foremost. An idea of the intensity of the pressure will be best conveyed in the words of Hobbleday himself. Gasping for breath, he cried, "This is awful! Tremen*duous!* Shall be squeezed as flat as a pancake; pooh, pooh! know I shall. Never saw such a crowd in Little Pedlington since the day I was born!" I followed the stream and entered. That turning to the left, I did the same. A voice proceeding from a head ensconced in a sort of pigeon-hole in the wall on the opposite (the right-hand) side, cried, "*Orders* this way!" There was a simultaneous rush of the whole party in that direction, and I was left standing alone. "*Money* this way!" exclaimed another voice issuing from a similar hole on the left-hand side. There I presented the ticket which I had purchased in the morning, and was admitted. I thought this arrangement judicious, for there was not a soul at the pay-door to incommode me.

I took my seat. Presently I heard the voice of Hobbleday. He was conversing, in an under tone, with the box-opener.

"Every place taken, I assure you, sir," said the latter.

"Pooh, pooh! my dear Jobs," said Hobbleday, "but you *must* find a seat for *me*. There" (pointing to the bench on which I was sitting), "there, next to that gentleman. Particular friend of mine. Expects me. Something of great importance to talk about."

"Quite impossible, Mr. Hobbleday," said Jobs; "every place in that box is taken and paid for."

"Come now, my dear Jobs," continued the unextinguishable Hobbleday, "see what you can do for me; and when your benefit comes—ahem!—you'll know where little Jack Hobbleday is to be found."

"First company!" cried Jobs, throwing open the box-door: "Mr. Hobbleday's place: front row." And Mr. Hobbleday took his seat beside me.

"Glad to meet *you* of all people," said my old acquaintance. "Well, here we are in whole skins. What a crush! At one time thought I should give up the ghost. Worse inside the house than out. Such a crush at the free door! Lucky for you, you paid—you escaped it. Miss Cripps got one of her sharp elbows stuck so deep in my ribs, I thought I felt it coming through on the other side—did, as I hope to be saved. Never get in the way of a woman with sharp elbows, if you can help it. Too bad of the manager, though! He ought to be ashamed of himself for not making some better arrangement for the accommodation of parties who come with orders. I've a great mind to write a letter to the 'Dictator' about it, and sign myself AN INDEPENDENT PLAY-GOER."

"You will have half the town on your side, sir," said I.

Hobbleday made no reply to this, but looking round the house said, in a tone of triumph, "Well, what think you of our *new* theatre?"

"I cannot judge of it by comparison," replied I, "for I never had the good fortune to see the old one; but it is a pretty little theatre."

"Pretty!—Little!" exclaimed Hobbleday; "you mean splendid, immense! Why, it is more than double the size of Sniggerston's out-house, in which the company used to perform! Little!—It will hold nearly three hundred people. *Little*, indeed! Complaint generally is, that it is too large—that one can neither see nor hear so well as in the old one. But the fact

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AND

THE PEDLINGTONIANS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "PAUL PRY," "THE COMIC SKETCH-BOOK," ETC.

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"A chield's amang ye takin' notes,
And faith he'll prent it."—BURNS.

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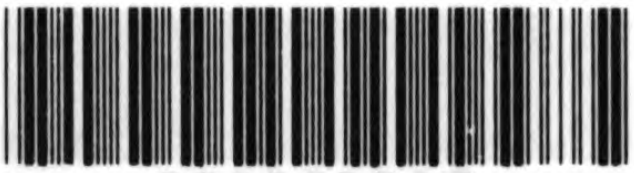
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PREFACE.

POPE, in his Advertisement to the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, says: "Many will know their own pictures in it; but I have, for the most part, spared their names, and they may escape being laughed at if they please."

I cannot say so much for the record of my two visits to Little Pedlington: "many will know their own pictures in it," but that will be owing to no skill of mine in the art of portraiture, but simply to the circumstance of my having adopted the inexpert sign-painter's expedient, and named them outright. Having no motive for concealment, I have concealed nothing; and I here declare in the face of the whole world, Little Pedlington not excepted, that Hobbleday is Hobbleday; Rummins, Rummins; Daubson, Daubson; Fiat, Fiat; Strut, Strut; Miss Cripps, Miss Cripps; Tippleton, Tippleton—and so of the rest. Had I fastidiously taken refuge in such poetical personifications as Humbug, Quackery, Morbid Vanity, Cant, Puffery, Affectation, Unmitigated Selfishness, and others, the Pedlingtonians themselves would have seen through the hollow device, and applied those abstractions with tolerable precision; whilst certain wicked-minded Londoners might have distributed them amongst

their own acquaintance, each according to his fancy—*a danger particularly to be avoided.*

I am less anxious concerning incidents and events, which I have accurately narrated; the habits and manners of the great mass of Little Pedlingtonians, and their amusements in public and private, which I have faithfully described; their Theatricals, *some branches* of their Literature, and *some portions* of their Critical Press; of all which I have treated largely, as becomes their importance, and exhibited many specimens for (as I trust) imitation;—concerning all these I am less anxious: and should any ingenious reader choose to amuse himself by imagining parallels to them elsewhere, he is at perfect liberty to do so.

Little Pedlington I first visited as long ago as July, 1835; and notes of that, and of a subsequent visit, were published, from time to time, between that period and January of the present year. In arranging the papers for publication collectively, it became necessary to add, to alter, and to retract; yet, notwithstanding great care in the work, I fear I have to apologize for some few trifling, though almost unavoidable, repetitions.

In the course of these volumes are so many allusions to the "Guide Book,"* that for the assistance of such readers as are unacquainted with it, and to whom, consequently, those allusions would be unintelligible, it has been deemed expedient that it should be inserted in the Introduction; they, therefore, who, by its aid, or haply, by a visit to the place, are already familiar with the history and localities of Little Pedlington, will pardon its re-appearance in favour of those who are less fortunate.

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* Once already *re*-published in "Sketches and Recollections."

Cant, Puffery, Humbug, and Quackery, words which I have already used, are, undoubtedly, very ugly words; but, as is the case with some faces, their ugliness is fully redeemed by their expressiveness. The qualities which they represent I detected—must I confess it?—even in Little Pedlington. I have taken the liberty to laugh at them. Should the reader laugh with me, I shall be satisfied.

J. P.

LITTLE PEDLINGTON

AND

THE PEDLINGTONIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

FELIX HOPPY, Esq., Master of the Ceremonies at Little Pedlington, has conferred upon the world in general, and upon me in particular, a never-sufficiently-to-be-appreciated favour, by the publication of the Little Pedlington Guide. At the approach of the summer season,—that season when London (and since the pacification of Europe, all England) is declared to be unendurable by all those who fancy that they shall be happier anywhere than where they happen to be, and who possess the means and the opportunity of indulging in the experiment of change of place; at the approach of that season, this present, I found myself, like Othello, "perplexed in the extreme." The self-proposed question, "And where shall I go *this* year?" I could not answer in any way to my satisfaction. I had visited, as I believed, every spot in Europe which celebrity, from some cause or other, had rendered attractive. I had climbed many thousands of feet up Mont Blanc, and stood on the very summit of Greenwich Hill; I had "swam on a gondola" at Venice, and "patienced" in a punt at Putney; had found my way through the dark and tangled forests of Germany, and lost it in the Maze at Hampton Court; bathed in the changing waters of the Rhone, and floundered in the *consistent* mud of Gravesend; beheld the fading glories of old Rome, and the rising splendours of New Kemp Town; I had heard the *Miserere* performed in the Sistine Chapel, and the hundred-and-fourth psalm sung by the charity boys in Hampstead church; I had seen the Raphaels at Florence, the Correggios at Dresden, the Rembrandts at Rotterdam, and the camera-obscura at Margate; I had tasted of caviare on the shores of the Black Sea, and of white-bait on the banks of Blackwall; I had travelled on a Russian sledge and in a Brentford omnibus; I had been everywhere (in Europe—the boundary of all my travelling projects), done everything,

seen everything, heard everything, and tasted of everything. Novelty and change of scene are the idle man's inducements to travel: for me there remained neither: I was—to use a melancholy phrase I once heard feelingly uttered by a young nobleman who had not then attained his twentieth year—*blasé sur tout!* Still the unanswerable question recurred—"And *where* shall I go *this* year?"

As for the hundredth time I exclaimed, "And where shall I go this year?" a packet was sent to me by my bookseller, who has a general order to supply me with all voyages, travels, journeys, tours, road-books, guides, and atlases, as soon as published. The parcel contained new editions of "Denham's Travels in Africa," of "Humboldt's in South America," and of "Parry's Voyages;" together with, just published, and almost wet from the press, "The Stranger's Guide through Little Pedlington, by Felix Hoppy, Esq., M.C." Throwing aside the rest as unimportant to my present purpose, I, on the instant, perused this last.

I was much pleased with the amiable understanding that seemed to exist between this and all other guide-books which I had ever consulted. It is but altering the name of the place in the title-page, as occasion may require, and the same book will carry you very creditably through every watering-place in England. You have in each a High Street, and a North Street, and a Crescent; a parish church, a poor-house, and a charity school; the best supplied market in the kingdom; the most highly-talented apothecary in Europe; the most learned parson in Christendom; the most obliging circulating-library-keeper in the known world; the most accommodating mistress of a boarding-house in the universe; and the most salubrious of climates, adapted to the cure of every imaginable disorder and to the improvement of every possible constitution. It is true that the tradesmen recommended to you by one Guide-book are severally named Scarsnell, Larkins, and Simcoe, (the town's-people usually consisting of ramifications of about three families;) whilst by another you are referred to nothing but Tupfords, Ruffens, and Whiffnells. This certainly is a remarkable difference, but it is the only one which I could ever discover in these polite Ciceroni; all other points, or, at least, nineteen out of every twenty, being notices of precisely the same things in precisely the same language, and the twentieth hardly ever worth the trouble of a distinction. But here is Mr. Hoppy's:—

THE STRANGER'S GUIDE

THROUGH

LITTLE PEDLINGTON:

COMPRISING

ITS HISTORY FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE PRESENT TIME;

TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF

Its Antiquities, Curiosities, Amusements, Promenades, &c.,

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"Hail, Pedlingtonia! Hail, thou favoured spot!
What's good is found in thee; what's not, is not.
Peace crowns thy dwellings, Health protects thy fields,
And Plenty *all* her cornucopia yields."

Pedlingtonia: *a Descriptive Poem by the Rev. J. Jubb.*

JAMES YAWKINS, LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

183—.

HISTORY.

The Universal Deluge, which transformed the variegated and smiling face of our terrestrial globe into one unvaried and monotonous mass of the aqueous element, and which, in its ruthless and unpitying course, overwhelmed and swallowed up cities, empires, and nations, sparing neither the monarch's palace nor the peasant's hut; and which bowed down alike the gentle hill and the giant mountain, rooting up not only the tender plant of the garden, but also the mighty oak of the forest; and which, unlike the genial and beneficial showers of spring, which beneficently foster the fruits of the earth for the use of man; but which, more like the raging cataract, converted our rolling planet into one wide, vast, waste of waters, disfigured also the fair spot on which now stands the town of Little Pedlington.

But to descend to a later period.

Little Pedlington (or, as it has at various times been written, Peddle-le-town, Peddle-in-town, Piddletown, Peddletown, and Peedletown), (it is now invariably called by its more euphonious appellation of Pedlington), is situated in the county of ——, at the distance of — miles from London. And here, reflecting on these successive changes, we cannot refrain from quoting that apt line of the Swan of Avon,*—

"Each doth suffer a sea change."

But to proceed.

Of the extreme antiquity of this place there can be no doubt, for our ingenious townsman, Simcox Rummins, Esq., F.S.A., has clearly proved, in his learned and elaborate Essay on that subject (a *few* copies of which may still be obtained by an early application to Mr. Yawkins, Bookseller, Market Square), that the *identical ground* on which the present town is built existed long prior to the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar! And, if further proof were wanting, it might be adduced in an ancient coin, dug up about thirty years ago by some workmen, who were employed in removing Hob's Pound, which formerly stood at the north-east corner of South Street, and of which the curious visitor may still discover some faint traces. Of such antiquity is this precious

* We need not inform our poetical readers that we allude to the mortal Shakspeare.

relic, that one side of it is worn perfectly smooth, whilst, on the other, nothing more can be perceived than the almost imperceptible outline of two heads, and these remains of the legend, which have baffled the attempts of the most profound antiquaries to determine to which epoch of Roman greatness to refer it:

GUL—US ET M—R—

The sneers of a certain bookseller not a hundred miles from South Street, who has published *what he calls* a Pedlington Guide, and who describes the coin as nothing more than a William-and-Mary's shilling, we treat with the contempt they deserve. It is in the possession of the eminent gentleman we have already mentioned, who, with his well-known liberality, is always happy to offer it to the inspection of intelligent visitors, who will know how to decide between the ignorant assertion of a Sn-gg-rst-n and the opinion of a Rummins!

During the Civil Wars between the rival houses of York and Lancaster, as well as in the later conflicts between Charles and the Parliament, indeed, in every case where courage and wisdom were called into action—

> "O that dissension should our land divide!"
>
> PEDLINGTONIA.

it does not appear, from any positive record, that our town took any part;—but who can doubt that it did? "The fortifications," (see *Rummins*,) "if any did ever exist, must long since have been demolished, for not the slightest traces of any are to be found. I must, however, except the ditch which traverses the north end of High Street, and which, although it now be dry, and so narrow as to allow of one's stepping across it, must, if ever it had been a military work, have been so wide and deep as to be capable of containing a considerable quantity of water. Nor must I conceal the fact that, not many years ago, two *sword-blades and a cannon-ball were therein discovered:* these are now in my possession." The testimony of so impartial a writer to the prowess of the Pedlingtonians cannot be too highly valued; nor must their modesty recoil if we again quote the unrivalled poem from whence we have extracted our motto:—

> "Fair are thy daughters, and thy sons how brave!
> *No Pedlingtonian e'er will be a slave.*
> Friend to his country, and his King's well-wisher,
> At Glory's call he'll serve in the militia."

But it is only of late years that Little Pedlington has assumed its present importance, and justified its claims to be ranked amongst those towns and cities which adorn and dignify the British empire; and, if it yield the palm for extent and splendour to the metropolis of England,* it will confess itself second to no other for antiquity, beauty, and salubrity; nor need it fear to enter the lists in honourable competition with *any*, for the meed due to intellect and refinement, boasting, as it does, of possessing in its bosom a *Rummins* and a *Jubb*, a few copies of whose unrivalled and truly classical Poem, called PEDLINGTONIA, descriptive of the beauties of the place, may still be had at Yawkins's Library, price 2*s*. with a plate, and for which an early application is earnestly recommended.

"We have no hesitation in declaring it as our impartial opinion that, for classic purity of taste and style, nothing, since the days of Pope, has appeared worthy of comparison with this Poem: it is truly Doric. Without intending to decry B-r-n, C-mpb-ll, M—re, R-g-rs, or Sc-tt, we will venture to prophesy that this work will operate a reform in the public taste, bring back poetry *to what it ought to be*, and obtain for its author a deathless fame. We are proud to say it is the production of our highly-gifted Curate and townsman, the Rev. Jonathan Jubb."—*See the Pedlington Weekly Observer, June 17th.*

THE TOWN.

The entrance to Little Pedlington from the London road is by High Street, and presents to the astonished eye of the visitor an aspect truly imposing; nor will the first impression thus created be easily obliterated from the "mind's eye."† On one side, after passing between two rows of well-grown elms, stands Minerva Mansion, a seminary for young ladies, kept by Miss Jubb, sister of the Rev. J. Jubb, under whose able superintendence is Birch House, in the Crescent, a seminary for young gentlemen, the terms of both of which may be had at Yawkins's Library; and on the other, the view is met by the Green Dragon Inn, kept by Mr. Scorewell, whose politeness and attention are proverbial, and where travellers may be sure of meeting with every accommodation on very reasonable terms.

Passing along, we come to East Street, West Street, North Street, and South Street, so named from the several directions they take (see *Rummins*), all converging into a focus, designated

* London. † Shakspeare.

Market Square (now one of the fashionable promenades), the market having formerly been held on the identical spot now occupied by the New Pump; of which more in its proper place.

But, if we are at a loss to which of these noble streets to give the preference, whether for regularity or cleanliness, in what terms shall we describe the Crescent? Well may it be said, that Englishmen are prone to explore foreign countries ere yet they are acquainted with their own; and many a one will talk ecstatically of the marble palaces of Venice and Herculaneum, who is ignorant of the beauties of Little Pedlington. The Crescent, then, is at the end of North Street, and is so called from the peculiarity of its form (we are again indebted to *Rummins*), it being somewhat in the shape of a half-moon. It consists of twenty-four houses, mansions we might say, uniformly built of bright red bricks, which, when the sun is full upon them, are of dazzling brilliancy. There are bow-windows to all the edifices; and each having a light green door with a highly-polished brass knocker, three snow-white steps forming the ascent, an effect is produced which to be admired need only to be seen, and which, though some other places may perhaps equal, none certainly can surpass.

We cannot quit the Crescent without calling the attention of the literary pilgrim to the second house from the left-hand corner, No. 23. THERE LIVES JUBB!

> "A something inward tells me that my name
> May shine conspicuous in the rolls of Fame;
> The traveller here his pensive brow may rub,
> And softly sigh, 'Here dwelt the tuneful Jubb.'"
>
> PEDLINGTONIA.

THE BOARDING-HOUSES, LIBRARIES, PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS, ETC.

Proceed we now to matters which, albeit of less stirring interest, are yet not devoid of pleasure and utility. And first, to the

BOARDING-HOUSES.

The principal Boarding-house is kept by Mrs. Stintum, and is delightfully situated No. 17, Crescent. This excellent establishment combines elegance with comfort, and nothing can exceed the care and attention of the proprietress to her guests, who will find

under her fostering auspices all that their own homes would afford. This house is always thronged with the most elegant company.

Mrs. Starvum's Boarding-house, which yields to none for comfort, and which for elegance few can excel, is most beautifully situated No. 11, South Street. The attention and assiduity of Mrs. Starvum are proverbial. As none but the *haut ton* are received here, we need not add, that visitors will not find a deficiency in any of those comforts and conveniences which they have been accustomed to in their own houses.

LIBRARIES.

Yawkins's Library, in Market Square, has long been known to the frequenters of Little Pedlington; and, if an excellent collection of books, urbanity, all the new publications, attention, all sorts of choice perfumery, tooth-brushes, dispatch in the execution of orders, Tunbridge-ware, &c., &c., all at the most moderate prices, can claim the suffrages of the public, we have no hesitation in requesting their patronage of Mr. Yawkins.

Nor should we be just in failing to recommend Snargate's long-established Library in High Street. Here will subscribers be furnished with both old and *new* publications with the utmost readiness, and with a politeness highly creditable to the proprietor. And, if moderate charges for Tunbridge-ware, perfumery of the best quality, &c., &c., &c., are a desideratum, Mr. Snargate will be certain of an ample share of support. Here also is the Post-office.

There is also (as we are told) a *minor* establishment in Market Street, kept by a person of the name of Sniggerston, the publisher of a *would-be* Pedlington Guide. It would ill become *us* to speak of the work itself, which abounds in errors of the grossest kind, and will be found altogether useless to the traveller; but of the establishment we are bound in fairness to say, that nothing can be urged against it, as we are informed that it is resorted to by *some* of the respectable TRADES-PEOPLE of the town, and the FARMERS and COUNTRY-FOLKS on *Market-days*.

THE THEATRE.

From time immemorial the drama has been a chief source of amusement to the intellectual and the enlightened; nay, the Greeks and Romans patronized this innocent refuge from the busy cares of life; and it is beyond dispute that theatres were to

be found in the kingdoms both of Rome and Athens. No wonder is it, therefore, that Little Pedlington should languish for a fitting temple for the reception of Thalia and Melpomene;* and that Yawkins's timber-yard should be contemplated as a convenient site for its erection. Mr. Snargate, the architect, has already executed a plan for a theatre, which will, in every respect, be worthy of our town: *we need say no more;* and Messrs. Yawkins, Snargate, and Co., our obliging bankers, have *liberally* consented to *receive* subscriptions for that purpose. At present, Mr. Strut's inimitable company, from Dunstable, perform in a commodious outhouse belonging to Mr. Sniggerston, the brewer, which is tastefully fitted up for the occasion. Ere long, however, we hope to receive the facetious Tippleton, the heart-rending Snoxell, and the versatile and incomparable Mrs. Biggleswade, in an edifice more becoming their high deserts.

YAWKINS'S SKITTLE-GROUND.

Nor should the lover of skittles and the fine arts fail to visit this place. On entering, he is astonished at beholding, at the further extremity, a Grenadier, with firelock and fixed bayonet, standing, as it were, sentry. "What!" he involuntarily exclaims, "the military in these peaceful retreats!" But, on nearer approach, he discovers it to be—what?—incredible as it may seem, nothing more than a painted canvass! Such is the illusion of art! For this unrivalled work we are indebted to the pencil of Mr. Daubson, portrait-painter, No. 6, West Street, where likenesses are taken in a superior style at five shillings to one guinea, and profiles done in one minute, at only one shilling each.

Yet, will it be believed! a certain jealous body of artists, in London, refused to exhibit this production, now the pride of Little Pedlington! Such is the force of jaundiced envy! Well might our "tuneful Jubb" thunder out the satire, which, should it demolish them, it will be well for modest merit, like our Daubson's, and they will have no one to thank for it but themselves.

> "'Where seek him' (cries th' astonish'd stranger here),
> 'Who drew this all-but breathing Grenadier?'—
> Not where, in academic pride, we see
> Sir David Wilkie and Sir Martin Shee,

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* The Goddesses of Tragedy and Comedy.

Briggs, Phillips, Landseer, Pickersgill, and, yea!
Turner, and R. R. Reinagle, R.A.
His works they hide in darksome nook, while they
Exhibit *theirs* in all the blaze of day;
His hang they high upon their highest wall,
Or, such their envy! *hang them not at all.*
Stand forth, my Daubson, matchless and alone!
And to the world in general be it known
That Pedlingtonia proud proclaims thee for her own!"

PEDLINGTONIA.

INNS.

Of the inns, we have already mentioned the Green Dragon. No way inferior to it for accommodation, civility, and reasonable charges, is Stintum's Golden Lion in East Street; and truth compels us to pass the same encomium upon the Butterfly and Bullfinch, in Market Street, kept by Snargate.

BATHS.

That immersion in water, or, as it is commonly called, bathing, was practised, both for health and cleanliness, by the ancients, is clearly proved by the existence of baths in Rome, still bearing the names of the emperors for whose use they were constructed —emperors long since crumbled into dust! But *baths*, properly so called, were reserved for the use only of the great; the middling and lower classes plunging (such is the opinion of our learned townsman, *Rummins*) into the Tiber.* Our town, however, can boast of *two* establishments, to which *all* classes may resort; and if we hesitate to say that Mrs. Yawkins's hot and cold baths, No. 22, West Street, are unequalled for comfort and cleanliness, it is only because we must, in justice, admit, that nothing can exceed the cleanliness and comfort to be found at the cold and hot baths kept by Widow Sniggerston, No. 14, Market Square.

THE MARKET.

The Market is in Market Street, which (as *Rummins* has ingeniously observed in his *Antiquities of Little Pedlington*, a work which no traveller should be without) appropriately derives its name from that circumstance. This edifice is well worthy

* A river in Rome.

the inspection of the curious. It is an oblong building, *with a roof*, which effectually protects the various articles exposed for sale from the inclemencies of the weather. Formerly, the market was held in the open air, to the great inconvenience of both purchaser and vendor, as well as to the injury of property; when it struck the intelligent mind of our townsman, Mr. Snargate, the builder (to whose patriotic exertions we are indebted for the present edifice), that an *enclosed* building would at once obviate all those inconveniences—an example which, we doubt not, will be followed in other parts of the kingdom. A subscription was soon raised for the purpose; and the Market of Little Pedlington now stands an eternal monument to his fame. Here are stalls for the sale of the finny tribe, the feathered creation, the produce of the earth, &c., &c., *all separate from each other;* and in such abundance, and so reasonable, that, not only for occasional visitors, but for the continual residence of families, especially of limited incomes, we should recommend this place as preferable to any other in England.

CURIOSITIES, ETC.

A few years ago, the STOCKS, which had stood, time immemorial, at the church door, were removed, and the present Cage was substituted in their place. *Mr. Rummins*, however, with praiseworthy zeal, anxious to preserve a relic of the venerable machine which had confined the legs of so many generations of offenders, petitioned the competent authorities of the town for leave to place one of the sliding-boards in his collection of curiosities. This was granted; and Mr. R. is always happy to exhibit this interesting fragment to respectable persons, between the hours of twelve and two, on any Friday during the season.

The NEW PUMP, which stands in the centre of Market Square, is an elegant and conspicuous object, as seen from the further end of any of the four leading streets; but it will amply repay the curious for a close and attentive inspection. It is composed *entirely of cast iron*, its predecessor having been merely of wood: such is the progress of luxury and civilization! It is in the form of an obelisk, or nearly so, on the top of which is a small figure of Neptune brandishing his trident, the attitude of which is much admired. The spout represents a lion's mouth; and the effect, as the water flows from it, is as pleasing as it is appropriate. The handle is in the form of a dolphin's tail—fitting

emblem! On the front, towards South Street, is the following inscription, for which we are indebted to the classical pen of *Mr. Rummins*:—

"THIS PUMP,

THE OLD ONE BEING WORN OUT,
ON THE 1ST OF APRIL, 1829,
WAS PLACED WHERE IT NOW STANDS
AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PARISH OF LITTLE PEDLINGTON.
THOMAS YAWKINS, CHURCHWARDEN,
HENRY SNARGATE, OVERSEER."

To the disgrace of human nature, we regret to add, that, shortly after its erection, the ladle which was suspended to it, that "the thirsty might drink," was stolen by some monster in human form!! This circumstance gave rise to dissensions which disturbed the town for many months, one party supporting the motion *for* a new ladle, the other as warmly opposing it. We rejoice to say, however (for we make no secret of our opinions on *that* subject), that a new ladle, with a strong double chain, was affixed to the pump, and that all rancorous party-feeling is fast subsiding, notwithstanding the efforts of a certain publisher of a certain Guide to prolong it. The robbery is finely and indignantly alluded to by Mr. Jubb, in his galling satire on a certain magistrate who opposed the restoration:—

"I'd rather be, than such a thing as Cr*mp,
The wretch that stole the ladle from the pump."

THE ENVIRONS.

Having conducted the stranger through the town, we will now lead him to its environs, and point out those spots most worthy of a morning's drive or walk. And first to the Vale of Health.

There is, perhaps, no place in Europe which can boast of so salubrious an air as Pedlington. Such, indeed, is the declared opinion of those eminent sons of Esculapius, Drs. Drench and Drainum, of this town. But the Vale of Health is paramount; and for invalids suffering from asthma, fits, tooth-ache, indigestion, corns, weakness of sight, gout, and other disorders of the same class, no other spot can be so safely recommended. It is most delightfully and conveniently situated near the new and extensive

Burying-ground (the old churchyard having long been full) which was planned by Doctors D. and D., who had the honour of laying the first stone of the entrance-gate, and is distant little more than a quarter of a mile from the town.

Nor should any lover of the picturesque leave us without visiting Snapshank Hill. There is no carriage-road to it; and, the path being broken and uneven, full of holes and ruts, consequently not altogether safe for horses, we would recommend a pedestrian excursion, as by far the most agreeable. It is exactly five miles distant from the Pump in Market Square, and the path is for the whole of the way a tolerably steep ascent. On arriving at the summit of the hill, a scene presents itself which the world cannot equal. But, since prose is too tame to do justice to it, we must borrow the exquisite description by our poet:—

"Lo, Snapshank Hill! thy steep ascent I climb,
And fondly gaze upon the scene sublime:
Fields beyond fields, as far as eye can spy!
Above—that splendid canopy, the sky!
Around—fair Nature in her green attire;
There—Pedlingtonia and its antique spire!
I gaze and gaze till pleasure turns to pain:
O Snapshank Hill! I'll now go down again."

We now take our leave.

Respecting the subscriptions to the Master of the Ceremonies' book, which lies at Yawkins's and at Snargate's libraries, as also to his weekly balls, it is not for *us* to speak; we therefore refer the visitor to those exceedingly obliging and attentive persons, who will candidly acquaint the inquirer with what is *proper and customary* on the occasion, as well as furnish him with his terms for teaching the pleasing art of tripping on the light fantastic toe. We cannot more appropriately conclude than by repeating the charming lines which we selected for our motto:—

"Hail, PEDLINGTONIA! Hail, thou favoured spot!
What's good is found in thee; what's not, is not.
Peace crowns thy dwellings, Health protects thy fields,
And Plenty *all* her cornucopia yields."

CHAPTER I.

Personal Narrative of the Journey to Little Pedlington—Pleasures of Poppleton-End—Blind Bob: a Job's Comforter—An agreeable Morning at Squashmire-Gate—The practice of receiving Money at Show-houses, defended—The Lippleton "Wonder"—Arrival at Little Pedlington.

No longer was I doubtful concerning my "whereabout." Little Pedlington, thought I, must be a Paradise! And had not my desire to visit this heaven upon earth been sufficiently excited by the exquisite lines, so aptly quoted by the M.C. from the charming poem of the "tuneful Jubb,"—

> "Hail! Pedlingtonia! Hail, thou favoured spot!
> What's good is found in thee; what's not, is not!"—

had not the promise of so much to gratify as well the intellect as the senses induced me thither; a feeling of shame, the consciousness that the bitter reproof uttered by the M.C. himself applied in its fullest force to my case, would alone have urged me to make the *amende honorable* by an immediate journey to the place.

"Well may it be said," he exclaims, "that Englishmen are prone to explore foreign countries ere yet they are acquainted with their own; and many a one will talk ecstatically of the marble palaces of Venice and Herculaneum, who is ignorant of the beauties of Little Pedlington."

True, true, indeed! and, myself standing in that predicament, I felt the sarcasm the more acutely. It was a suffering of a nature not long to be borne with patience; so I resolved to book a place for that same evening in the Little Pedlington mail.

Not a little was my astonishment on learning that there was *no* mail to that celebrated place; but great indeed it was when I was informed that there was no public conveyance whatever *direct* thither! However, I found that the Winklemouth coach (which ran nearer to it than any other) would set me down at Poppleton

End; that there I should be *pretty* sure of meeting with some one who would carry my luggage to Squashmire-Gate, a short three miles; and that from thence to Little Pedlington, a distance of eight miles—there or thereabouts—a coach ran regularly three times a-week during the season. Too happy to get there in any manner, I took a place in the Winklemouth coach, and, shortly afterwards, was rattling on towards the goal of my desires.

Between four and five in the morning the coach pulled up at the corner of a narrow cart-road, of no very inviting appearance, the soil being of clay, and the holes and wheel-tracks filled with water by the late heavy rains. A slight drizzling rain was falling then. The country for miles round was a dead flat, and not a house or shelter of any kind, save here and there a tree, was to be seen.

"Poppleton-End, sir," said the guard, as he let down the step.

"What! is *this* Poppleton-End?" said I.

"Yes, sir," replied he (adding, with a leer, which clearly indicated that he was satisfied of the excellence of his joke), "and has been, time out of mind."

"But I have a heavy valise with me," said I, as I alighted.

"Yes, sir," replied the guard, taking it down from the top of the coach, and placing it against the boundary-stone at the corner of the lane; "it is precious heavy, indeed."

"Well—I was informed that I should find somebody here who would carry it to Squashmire-Gate; but there is no person within sight, and I can't carry it myself."

"Why, no, sir, I don't very well see how you can; at least," continued he, in the same facetious tone, "it wouldn't be altogether pleasant. Hows'ever, sir, you have a very good chance of Blind Bob coming up with his truck in about half-an-hour or so."

I hate the phrase "or so." It is a cheat, an impostor, a specious and an insidious rogue. In all matters involving an inconvenience, I have invariably found that it is an aggravation of the original evil at least threefold. Thus, your "three miles, *or so*, further," to the place of your destination, after a wearisome walk in a strange country, may usually be computed at nine; "a guinea or so," in an uncertain charge, at three; if waiting the arrival of your bride, "an hour or so," at a day, a week, a year; if of your wife—but that is a case dependent upon peculiar circumstances.

"And pray, guard," inquired I, rather peevishly, "where am I to wait during that half-hour—or so?"

"Why, sir, if you should chance to miss Blind Bob, you might perhaps find it a *leetle* awkward with that large trunk of yours; so if you'll take my advice, sir, you'll wait where you are. Good morning, sir. I don't think it will be *much* of a rain, sir. All right, Bill; get on." So saying, he mounted the coach, and left me seated, beneath my umbrella, on the boundary-stone at Poppleton-End, at half-past four of the morning, in a drizzling rain.

They who travel much must be prepared to meet with difficulties; sometimes to encounter dangers: these carry a compensation with them in the excitement which they produce, and the exalted feelings they inspire. But one sinks under a tame and spiritless *inconvenience:* one's fortitude sneaks off, as it were, and one's temper oozes away. At five, at half-past five, at six o'clock, there I still sat, and not a human creature had come near me. The abominable rain, too! Rain! it was unworthy the name of rain. A good, honest, manly *shower*, which would have made one wet through-and-through in five seconds, I could have borne without complaint; but to be made to suffer the intolerable sensation of *dampness merely*, by a snivelling, drivelling, mizzling, drizzling *sputter*, and that, too, by dint of the exercise of its petty spite for a full hour-and-a-half——! There are annoyances which, it is said, are of a nature to make a parson swear; but this would have set swearing the whole bench of bishops, with their Graces of York and Canterbury at their head.

At length, I perceived, at some distance down the lane, a man dragging along a truck, at what seemed to me a tolerably brisk pace, considering the state of the road. He drew it by means of a strap passing over his shoulders and across his chest: and he carried in his hand a stout staff, which he occasionally struck upon the ground, though apparently not for support. He was rather above the middle height, broad, square, and muscular,—a cart-horse of a fellow. On arriving within two steps of my resting-place he stopped, and, with a voice of ten-boatswain power, shouted—

"Any one here for Squash'ire-Gate?"

"Yes," said I, almost stunned by the report, "don't you see? I am here."

"I wish I could," replied he; "but as I have lived Blind Bob all my life, Blind Bob I shall die."

The guard's description of my intended guide and carrier as "Blind Bob" had certainly not prepared me for the phenomenon

I was now to witness. Had I, indeed, paid any attention to it, the utmost I should have expected, as a justification of it, would have been a deduction of fifty *per cent.* from the usual allowance of eyes, in the case of the party in question. But here was a guide stone blind! *

"Blind!" I exclaimed; "under such circumstances, you have chosen a strange occupation."

"We can't choose what we like in this world, sir; if I warn't blind I'd never ha' chose to get my living by being a guide, that I promise you."

On my informing him that I had a portmanteau with me, and indicating the spot where it stood, he moved towards it, and, lifting it up, he tossed it, heavy as it was, over his shoulder into the truck, and instantly set forward towards Squashmire Gate.

"The "short three miles" turning out, as a matter of course, to be "a long five," and the whole of the road for that agreeable distance, being ankle-deep in mud, it was nearly nine o'clock when we came to the end of this portion of the journey. The conversation of my companion on the way might possibly have proved to be pleasant could I have afforded to purchase it at his price, which was—from the extraordinary loud tone of his voice—to suffer a smart box o' the ear at each word he uttered: this was beyond my power of endurance, so that, after a question and a remark or two, I remained silent. I called to mind a certain person, who being accosted in the street by a blind clarionet-screecher with "Have pity on the poor blind," replied, "I would if I myself were deaf!"

Squashmire Gate cannot, with strict regard to truth, be termed a pretty place; but as it puts forth no claim to that character, and as it is, moreover, the last stage on the road to Little Pedlington, it would be ungrateful as well as unjust to criticise it severely. It consists merely of a small public-house, of the most modest pretensions, situate on one side of a crooked road, slushy and miry; a small farriery on the other; a barn, a pigsty, and a horse-trough. And such is Squashmire Gate, where I was doomed to exist, as best I could, till the arrival of the coach—a term (I was *told*) of three mortal hours!

Tell not me of the clock or of the dial as the true indicators of

* Many persons may have seen the blind man who is (or lately was frequently to be found at the "Bull" at Stroud, and who acted as *guide* to strangers across the country between that place and Mereworth. *His* services were scarcely ever required except on dark nights, when he led the way with a lantern in his hand.

the progress of time. Nay, there are periods in every one's existence when the very sun himself is a "lying chronicler." There are occasions when, between his rising and his setting, months, years, ages, drag slowly along—in hope, doubt, or anxiety—in sickness or in sorrow—or when waiting the arrival of the Little Pedlington coach at such a place as Squashmire Gate!

Well! breakfast would beguile the half of an hour; so I ordered breakfast, which I took to the accompaniment of a "concord of sweet sounds:" the squeaking of a child cutting its teeth, the croaking of a raven in a wicker cage, the creaking of the sign-board on its rusty hinges, the occasional braying of a donkey; and the ceaseless yelping of a cur confined in a cupboard.

Breakfast ended, and only half-past nine! What was to be done next? "Are there any books in the house?"—"No, not one."—"A newspaper?"—"No."—"Then bring me pen, ink, and paper." They were "quite out" of paper, the cat had just broken the ink-bottle, and, somehow, they had mislaid *the* pen—a circumstance the importance of which was considerably diminished by the two previous accidents.

I turned for amusement to the window-panes. There was not a line, nor a word, nor a letter, nor a scratch to be seen. The vulgar scribble upon the glass, by which one is usually offended at country inns, would to me, in my then desolate condition, have been delight ineffable. To have been informed that "*J. P. and C. S. dind hear on the* 13*th of Februry;*" or that "*Ephraim Trist lovs Jane Higs;* or that "*Susen Miles is a beatifull cretear;*" or even such tender exclamations as "*O Mariar!*" or "*O Poly!!*"—this, the smallest information, would not only have been thankfully received, but it would have become to me matter of profound interest. But not a line, not a letter.

At length, after a considerable lapse of time, it came to be ten o'clock.

"And pray, my good woman," inquired I of the hostess, "is there no chance of the Little Pedlington coach coming through this place earlier than twelve to-day?"

"Not *earlier*, sir; indeed I shouldn't wonder if its *arter* instead of *afore*, seeing the state of the roads!"

"What!" shouted Blind Bob, who was in the kitchen and overheard our short colloquy—"What! *afore!* and with them 'ere roads! The Lippleton 'Wonder' won't be here afore three to-day. *Blesh* you, it *can't.*"

"Three!" I exclaimed; "it is impossible to remain here till three o'clock; I shall die of impatience and *ennui*. Can I have a chaise, or a gig?"

"No, sir," replied the woman; "we have nothing of *that* sort. To be sure, we have a one-horse kind of a cart"—here was a prospect of escape—"but our horse died Friday-week, and my good man hasn't yet been able to suit himself with another."

"Then," said I, "as the rain has ceased, I'll leave my portmanteau to be sent on by the 'Wonder,' and will walk the eight miles to Little Pedlington."

"What!" again shouted my evil genius—for as such I now began to consider him; "eight mile? It's thirteen good mile any day of the year; and as you must go round by Lob's Farm, 'cause of the waters being out at Slush-lane, it's a pretty tightish seventeen just now." Had it so chanced that Job had espoused Griselda, and I had been the sole offspring of so propitious a union, sole inheritor of their joint wealth of patience, my whole patrimony would have been insufficient to answer the exorbitant demands now made upon it. To find my journey lengthening in nearly the proportion in which it ought to have diminished; to be *mud*-bound in a place like this, without a resource of any kind, corporeal or intellectual, to beguile the time; and, in aggravation of these annoyances, to be condemned to the ceaseless infliction of the combined yell, yelp, squeak, screech, and scream of the sick child, the sorry puppy, and the other performers, animate and inanimate, in the cruel concert which I have before alluded to—! I know not how my imagined parents would have acted under a similar pressure of ills; but, for my part, I surrendered at discretion to the irresistible attack, and striking the table with a force which caused the astonished teapot to leap an inch high—

"And must I," I exclaimed, "*must* I remain in this infernal place for the whole of this miserable day?"

The poor woman, evidently hurt at the opprobrious term which I had cast upon her *village* (for such, I suppose, she considered Squashmire Gate to be), slowly shook her head; and with a look of mild rebuke, and in a corresponding tone,—

"Sir," she said, "all the world can't be Lippleton; if it *was*, it would be much too fine a place, and too good for us poor sinners to live in."

I would not be thought to undervalue the great work of Felix Hoppy, Esq., M.C.; but admirable as it is for the elegance

of its style, and unrivalled for the graphic (that, I believe, is the word now commonly in use upon these occasions), the graphic power of its descriptions, I declare that that one simply eulogistic phrase of my hostess would as effectually have excited my desire to behold the beauties and the wonders of Little Pedlington, as had already been accomplished by the more elaborate temptation offered by the illustrious Hoppy himself.

Although this was adding fuel to the fire of my impatience, I was at once overcome by the gentleness of the woman's manner; and unwilling that she should consider me as an incarnation of slander and detraction, I "explained," somewhat after the Parliamentary fashion, assuring her that by the phrase "infernal place," I meant nothing more than that it was the sweetest spot on earth, but that I was anxious to proceed on my journey.

And now, having satisfied her that I meant no offence to Squashmire Gate,—"Consider," said I, "consider that I have yet five hours to remain here: you cannot furnish me either with books, or paper, or with any earthly thing which would serve to lighten the time"—(adding, in the most imploring tone I could assume); "tell me, tell me, what *can* I do to amuse myself?"

The landlady looked at me as if she felt my appeal in its fullest force; then, fondly casting her eyes on the sick, squalling child, which she carried on her arm; then, again looking at me, she said, "I'm sure I hardly know, sir, *what* you can do; but if you would like to nurse babby for two or three hours you are heartily welcome, indeed you are, sir."

Nothing, perhaps, could more strikingly illustrate the forlorn and helpless condition to which I was reduced, than that it should have instigated one human being to venture such a proposal to another. Inviting as was the offer, I declined it, taking due credit to myself for so exemplary a display of self-denial.

The weather cleared, and the impartial sun shed a portion of its brightness even upon the ugliness of Squashmire Gate. The landlady seized the auspicious moment to vindicate the reputation of the place, and, leading me to the door, exclaimed, in a tone of triumph, "*Now* look, sir! It stands to reason, you know, that no place can look pretty in bad weather."

Yet could I not exult in my position. Perhaps, the first impression may have produced an unfavourable prejudice in my mind; yet, a barn, a horse-trough, a pigsty, and a smithy, with here and there a stunted tree, were not materials out of which to extract beauty, or capable of exciting pleasurable emotions.

No; in these my cooler moments of reflection, I still maintain that Squashmire Gate is *not* a pretty place.

I walked, or rather waded, outside the house. I peeped into the pigsty, looked into the barn, examined the smithy, and counted the ducks in the pond. Next, to vary my amusement, I began with the barn, then proceeded to inspect the pigsty, then on to the duck-pond, and so forth. But, by the greatest possible exercise of my ingenuity, I could not force the time on beyond half-past eleven. "And here I must needs remain till three!" thought I.

Upon occasions like the present, when one happens to be coach-bound, or otherwise detained in a country place, the churchyard is an infallible resource, and an epitaph-hunt will generally repay the labour of the chase.

I inquired whereabouts was the church.

"Just over at Hogsnorton, sir."

"And what's the distance to Hogsnorton, ma'am?"

"We call it five mile; but it may be five mile and a half."

"Hogsnorton five and a half!" shouted Bob; "it's seven mile or so, any day."

The "or so" was sufficient; so I decided against a pilgrimage to Hogsnorton.

"But, la! sir, how *could* I come to forget it?" exclaimed the landlady, upon the impulse of a sudden recollection; there's Dribble Hall you might see, if it warn't that the roads are so bad."

"And what, and where, is Dribble Hall, pray?"

"La! sir; have you never heard of Dribble Hall, as belongs to Squire Dribble. Why, sir, folks come from far and near to see Dribble Hall. Such picturs! and such statties! and such grounds! and such a person as the Squire himself is! Dear me; if it warn't for the roads——"

"Never mind the roads," said I (delighted at the chance of an agreeable mode of getting through this intolerable morning); "never mind the roads, if the place be within a reasonable distance."

"It's only two mile and a half," replied she.

"What!" roared Blind Bob (I expected that, as usual, he was preparing to multiply the distance by three; but this time I was agreeably disappointed). "What! two mile and a half! that's going by the road; but if the gentleman takes by the green gate, it an't much more than a mile."

"And pray, Bob, which way must I go?"

"Why, sir, when you get out, keep on straight to the left till you come to the green gate—green gate, mind,—and then turn smack to the right, and that takes you up to the house, across the squire's meadows; but be sure you turn to the right as soon as ever you come to the green gate, or you'll chance to be getting back again to Poppleton End."

"But when I have been at the pains of walking to Dribble Hall, will the squire allow me to see his place?"

"O yes, sir," replied the landlady, "and glad enough too; for all that the housemaid—the house-*keeper* she is called at the Hall—who receives no wages—gets less than ten pound a year from visitors, the Squire is obliged to make good to her; whilst whatever she gets above that, he shares with her,—which is but fair, you know, sir."

In a commercial country, where everything is considered relatively to its money-value, it certainly is "but fair" that noblemen and gentlemen, whose mansions and their contents are worth an inspection, should allow their servants to make a charge for the exhibition of them. I do not pretend that such a proceeding is noble, or dignified, or handsome, or, indeed, at all worthy of a person of high station, but, merely and strictly, that it is *fair*. We pay for seeing the sights in the Tower, the lions in Wombwell's booth, and in that in Drury Lane; a charge is made for showing Westminster Abbey, and the wax-works at Madame Tussaud's rooms; and upon what principle, either of justice or equity, are we to expect that the Duke of A. or the Earl of Z., if they allow us to see their galleries or their grounds, should grant us such an indulgence *gratis?* The notion is preposterous. There are, indeed, certain thriftless proprietors of what are called show-houses, who are so inconsiderate as to do this, but they form an exception to the general rule; and, happily for the honour and integrity of the maxim, "Give nothing for nothing," such instances of improvidence are not numerous. Yet I cannot help thinking that Squire Dribble pushes the practice a *little* too far, though he deserves some praise for honestly avowing the principle upon which it is founded.

"Well; I set forth for Dribble Hall, along a road which one might have imagined had been constructed of boot-jacks, for, at each step I took, my boots were half-drawn off my feet by the necessary effort of extricating them from the tenacious soil. Following Bob's directions with punctuality equal to their precision, I kept *to the left;* but after walking—if struggling such a road may be so termed—for considerably more

than an hour, I had not arrived at a green gate—the point at which I was to change my course *for the right*. Gates of all colours, black, white, and brown, I had passed, and occasionally a road branching off in a different direction, but no green gate had I seen. Nevertheless, confiding in the instructions of my blind guide, I proceeded; when, lo! at the expiration of another hour, I found myself in the lane which I had traversed in the morning, about mid-way between Squashmire Gate and Poppleton End! "O, Little Pedlington!" thought I; "a paradise before the fall must thou be to compensate me for all that I have this day endured for thy sake!"

Disappointed, wearied, and vexed, I returned to my *hotel* at Squashmire Gate; and there, on a bench before the door, sat Blind Bob.

"Rascal!" I exclaimed; "how dared you thus deceive me? how dared you send me on this wildgoose chase?"

"Couldn't you find the Hall, sir? I told you to keep to the left till you came to the green gate, and then—"

"I did keep to the left till here I am again; but the deuce a green gate is there the whole way."

"I think I ought to know best, sir. Tell me o' no green gate, indeed! Did you notice two tall poplars, with a gate between them, leading into a meadow?"

"I did,—a newly-painted *white* gate."

"White! nonsense, sir, begging your pardon; what does that signify? *That* be the green gate, and has been always called so in these parts, time out o' mind. It's o' no use to be angry with me: it's no fault o' mine if Squire has taken and had it painted white."

Obdurate must be his heart who is not to be pacified by a reason, or something that sounds like one. Besides, Blind Bob's excuse was strengthened by the explanation of the landlady, who told me that, although the green gate had always served as a sort of road-guide, yet Squire Dribble, being "a gentleman who looked sharply after his farthings," had resolved that for the future it should be painted white—white paint being rather cheaper than green.

"Order dinner," said a generally-too-late friend with whom I had agreed to dine at a tavern one day; "order dinner at six for half-past, and I will positively be with you at seven." The Little Pedlington "Wonder" being expected up at three, it consequently arrived at half-past four. And "O! what damned minutes told I o'er" in that long interval!

The Little Pedlington "Wonder" was a heavy, lumbering coach, licensed to carry six inside and fourteen out; was drawn by two skinny horses, and driven by a coachman built after the exact fashion of the coach he drove, *id est*, lumbering and heavy.

"Full out, room for one in," was the coachman's reply to my question whether I could have a place. I expressed my disappointment at not having an outside place, as I should thus be deprived of obtaining the first possible view of Little Pedlington; nor was my disappointment diminished by coachee's remark, that that was *indeed* a sight!

"And how long will it be before you start, coachman?"

"About a quarter of an hour or so, sir," was the reply.

"What!" bellowed forth my everlasting friend, Bob; "a quarter of an hour! You'll not get away from here afore six, Master Giles, and you know you won't."

Mr. Giles was part proprietor of the "Wonder" (the only coach on that road), which he drove up one day and down the next; so, there being no opposition, he carried matters with a high hand, deferring to the wishes or the convenience of one only person that ever travelled by the "Wonder," which one was himself.

"Six!" said Giles, taking up the word of Blind Bob, "why, to be sure; mustn't I have a bit of summut to eat? and mustn't I rest a bit? and mustn't my cattle rest a bit? How *can* I get off afore six? My tits are tolerable good ones; but if I didn't give 'em a rest here and there, how'd ever they get on to Lippleton, I should like to know?"

Considering the appearance of his "tits," the load they had to drag, and the roads along which they were doomed to drag it, that question was, certainly, a poser. When I was told of the Little Pedlington "Wonder," my expectations were of a rapidity of progress second in degree only to that of flying; but in the present case, the sole claim which the vehicle could conscientiously make to the title was, that it could be prevailed upon to move at all. It was, therefore, not without trepidation that I ventured to inquire at *about* what time we were *likely* to get into Little Pedlington.

"Why," replied Giles, "we must take the long road this afternoon, on account of the waters; so we shan't get in *much* afore nine."

"And very fair travelling, too," said I, happy at length at knowing *when* this day of disagreeables was to terminate:

seventeen miles in three hours is not to be complained of, under the circumstances."

"What!" again shouted the inveterate Blind Bob; "nine! you'll not see Lippleton afore eleven to-night. Why, the 'Wonder' never does more nor four mile an hour at the best o' times, and here's the long road to take, and as heavy as putty. Besides, won't you stop three times more to rest the horses? I say you'll not see Lippleton afore eleven; it stands to reason, and you know you won't."

"Why, you stupid old fool," said Giles, you say yourself I must stop three times to rest the horses: then how *can* I get in afore eleven? Some folks talk as if they were out of their common senses." Saying which, Giles entered the house, leaving me in some doubt whether the Fates might not have determined against my ever seeing Little Pedlington at all.

Something must be contrived to pass the time between this and six o'clock, and dinner was the only expedient that occurred to me. I called the landlady, who came, as usual, with that inevitable squalling child on her arm. It was screaming as if it would have screamed its head off, and I could not avoid commencing my address by a profane parody on Shakspeare:—"First of all, my good woman, 'silence that dreadful *child*.'"

"La, sir! consider, you were once a child yourself," was her reply; a rebuke, by the by, which you invariably receive if you presume to complain of the performance of that the most intolerable music ever composed by Nature.

Now, admitting the fact that I *was* once a child myself, it by no means follows as a necessary consequence that I was a squalling child; the justice, therefore, of applying the rebuke to me I am always disposed to question. On the other hand, if I did delight in that atrocious mode of exalting my voice, my present opinion is that, for the comfort of society, I ought to have been, in some way or other—to use a favourite melo-dramatic phrase—"disposed of." I throw this out merely as a hint, though I by no means positively advise that it be acted upon in any manner that might be unpleasant to the rising generation. Query: *Was* King Herod at heart a wicked man?

Having, at the risk of a sore throat, contrived to scream louder than the child, I inquired what I could have for dinner.

"What would you like, sir?"

"A boiled chicken."

"We have never a chicken, sir; but would you like some eggs and bacon?"

"No. Can I have a lamb-chop?"

"No, sir; but our eggs and bacon is very nice."

"Or a cutlet—or a steak?"

"No, sir; but we are remarkable *here* for our eggs and bacon."

"Have you anything cold in your larder?"

"Not exactly, sir; but I'm sure you will admire our eggs and bacon."

"Then what *have* you got?"

"Why, sir, we have got nothing but eggs and bacon."

"O! then have the goodness to give me some eggs and bacon."

"I was sure you'd choose eggs and bacon, sir; we are so famous for it."

Having finished my dinner, I thought it proper, for the good of the house, to inquire what wine I could have—of course, not expecting that my choice would be much perplexed by the variety offered.

"What would you like, sir?"

"Some port."

"We have no port, sir."

"A little sherry, then."

"We don't keep sherry, sir; in short, we have so little call for wine, that we don't keep any of no kind."

"Then pray give me some lemonade."

"Yes, sir. Do you—do you prefer it *with* lemon, or without?"

"How!"

"Why—only we happen just now to be out of lemons."

Finding that I should be obliged to "malt it," I asked for—what, from its delicious flavour, is now becoming the rage with the drinkers of England's Own—Collins's Richmond Ale. Fortunately, they could supply me with *that*, so I had but little cause to regret their being "out" of the rest.

At length, the welcome moment for our departure arrived.

"I think," said Giles, as he clumsily clambered up to his box—"I think we shall have a little more rain yet."

"What!" for the last time cried our Job's comforter; "a little? You'll have rain enough to *drownd* you long afore you're half way to Lippleton, and thunder along with it; mind, if

you don't. I can feel it in my head, and it stands to reason."

I took my place inside the coach; and now, being fairly on my road to that haven of bliss, Little Pedlington, I soon forgot all the past annoyances of the day. Yet was not my position one of absolute comfort. I was jammed in between two corpulent ladies, of whom one was suffering under a violent toothache, and the other from headache. Opposite to me was a stout man with part of a strong Cheshire cheese on his knee; another, saturated with the fumes of bad cigars with which he had been regaling himself; and the third had with him a packet of red-herrings. Between the two ladies a constant dispute was maintained as to whether the glasses should be up or down: she of the tooth declaring that if the windows were open the air would be the death of her; whilst the cephalagian as eagerly contended that she should incontestably expire from the heat if they were shut; and as the contest was carried on across me, I was in imminent danger of suffocation under the weight, not of the arguments, but the arguers. In addition to the compound of odours I have mentioned, one of the fair sufferers was using camphor, and the other, ether.

We proceeded at what might be the pace of a hearse in a hurry—something short of four miles an hour. At every hovel by the roadside, Mr. Giles pulled up to enjoy his "tithe of talk" with its inhabitants. Remonstrance and entreaty on the part of us, the impatient travellers, were useless. He plainly told us, that as there was no opposition on the road, he had always had his own way; and that he saw no reason why he should be baulked of it now. Then, he stopped at one small public-house to eat, and at the next to drink, and at another to rest. A long journey, fairly performed, is not an affair to complain of; but, oh! the torments of a short one prolonged by needless delay! At ten o'clock we had yet six miles of ours to accomplish. The night was dark; suddenly, as the sea-song has it, "the rain a deluge poured," and (to continue the quotation) "loud roared the dreadful thunder," when—within about two miles of Little Pedlington—crash! the pole broke. Whether or not the horses took fright I have never had any means of ascertaining: certain however it is, they neither became unmanageable, nor did they run away; they were not in a state to do either; so, like jaded, sensible horses as they were, they stood stock-still. After considerable delay, and many fruitless attempts to repair the accident, we were compelled to walk through a pelting shower the remainder

of the way. As I approached the town (though, from the utter darkness, I could not see it), I felt as one feels on first beholding Rome, or as Bonaparte is said to have felt at the first sight of the pyramids; and when, at length, I found myself in a bedroom at Scorewell's hotel, the Green Dragon, in High-street—forgetting all my bygone troubles, I exultingly exclaimed—"And here I am in Little Pedlington!"

CHAPTER II.

Profession of the spirit in which this journal will be (as all journals are) written—First morning in Little Pedlington—Am always the *first* to complain—Visit from mine host—Already a stirring event announced—Symptoms of envy, hatred, and malice even here—The four naughty people in the town denounced—The family with the fly—Great folks in little places—Becoming attentions—Visit from a great man—Everthing to be had in a country town excepting what you want.

JUNE 15.—"All the world can't be Little Pedlington: if it *was*, it would be much too fine a place, and too good for us poor sinners to live in." Those words, which made so powerful an impression upon me when uttered by mine hostess in rebuke of my evil-speaking of Squashmire Gate—those words occurred to me, as I awoke at eight o'clock of this, the morning of the 15th of June: those words, therefore, have I placed on the first page of the journal which I now commence, and which I purpose to continue during my residence in Little Pedlington. Each night will I repeat them ere I register the events of the by-gone day; or minute down the conversations to which I may have listened, or in which I may have shared; or ere I venture to record my judgment and opinions, whether of persons or of things: so shall the Spirit of Indulgence guide my pen! And should it be my chance to encounter amongst the Pedlingtonians some whose manners, whose acquirements, or whose genius may fail to satisfy my full-strained expectation, let me remember that as all the world cannot be one entire and perfect Little Pedlington, so neither can I reasonably hope to find in every Pedlingtonian a Hoppy, a Rummins, or a Jubb. Let me, O Truth! walk hand in hand with thee! And if, haply, upon occasion I slightly deviate from thy path severe, be it only to "hide the fault I see"—be it to "extenuate," not to "set down in malice." But if to propitiate the demon Vanity—if to purchase, or to maintain, a reputation for wit or sentiment, for sensibility or sarcasm, for talent or for *tact*, I sacrifice, O Goddess! one atom

of thy divine spirit at the shrine of Detraction, may I be hunted from the High Street to the Crescent, from Yawkins's skittle-ground to the "new pump which stands in the centre of Market Square," and driven with scorn and contumely from out the peaceful precincts of Little Pedlington, never to return!

So now to proceed.

Rose at eight. With what emotions did I listen to the clock of Little Pedlington Church, as, *for the first time*, I heard it strike the hour! Thought of my own dear clock which stands on the mantlepiece in my library, in my still-remembered "home, sweet home," No. 16, —— Street, and was preparing to shed a tear, when I was interrupted by the chambermaid, who knocked at my door and inquired whether I wished for some warm water? Although the most approved method of commencing a journal, even of a trip from Gower Street to Gravesend, is by a pathetic reflection or two upon the home we have left; yet, as I didn't come to Little Pedlington to do the sentimental, I was not sorry for the interruption. The jug of warm water she brought me being a small one, I desired she would bring a larger.

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[With, perhaps, blamable fastidiousness, I suppress many points which (it may be) are not of sufficient importance to interest the *general* reader: as in the present case, for instance:—"The second jug of water not being sufficiently warm, I sent it away to be heated—nearly seven minutes before she returned with it!" And afterwards, when writing of my breakfast, I have suppressed the fact, that "one of the eggs being too much boiled, I desired that another might be sent me, boiled *only three minutes and a quarter*. A hard egg is my mortal aversion." The reflection, however, I have thought worth preserving. The suppressions I may, perhaps, print hereafter, in a separate volume, for distribution amongst my private friends.]

Having finished dressing, was in doubt whether to walk out before breakfast, or to take breakfast before walking out. After a long deliberation with myself, resolved, notwithstanding my impatience to see the place, to breakfast first; as, that operation being performed, I should then enjoy the uninterrupted command of the morning. On my way down to the coffee-room met the chambermaid. Inquired of her which was considered to be the principal inn of the place. Told me that *this* was—that there

were two others which were so-so places upon the whole, but quite *un*ferior for gentlefolks—that all the tip-top people came here. Here she was interrupted by the violent ringing of a bell. Made her excuses for being obliged to leave me so "abrupt;" but explained, that if the bell of the family with the fly were not answered on the instant, the house would not be big enough to hold them.—Could not comprehend what was meant by the family with the fly.

Went into the coffee-room—not a creature in it. Looked out at the window—not a soul to be seen. Thought the town must be deserted. Rang the bell—enter waiter—white cotton stockings with three dark stripes above the heel of the shoe, indicating the number of days' duty they had performed. Ordered breakfast—coffee, eggs, and dry toast; observing, that if they were not *au fait* at making coffee, I should prefer to take tea. Waiter, rather piqued, assured me that I was the first gentleman who had ever said O fie! at their coffee, for that it gave general satisfaction.

Strange! It has invariably been my misfortune to be the *first* to complain of anything *what*soever, at any tavern, coffee-house, or hotel *where*soever; the slightest expression of discontent at my wine, my dinner, my accommodation—no matter what—having always been met with, "Dear me, sir! that's very extraordinary! This is the very first time we have heard a complaint of *that*, I assure you." I wonder whether my case in this respect is singular?

Breakfast brought; poured out from a huge japanned tin vessel, standing eighteen inches high, a nankeen-coloured liquid. Rose for the purpose of looking into the unfathomable machine—full to the brim! Made according to the most approved English coffee-house recipe—"to half an ounce of coffee add a quart-and-a-half of water:" but as their coffee "gave general satisfaction," I would not, by complaining, risk an appearance in so remarkable a minority as *one*.

* * * * *

A hard egg is my mortal aversion.

* * * * *

"You are the first gentleman that ever complained of our *over*-boiling our eggs, I assure you, sir," said the waiter.

"Do you take a London paper here?"

"*In* course, sir; a house like ours takes a London paper. We have the *Morning Post* up to last Saturday week, sir, and shall have all *last* week's down by *next* week's carrier. But I hope, sir, you are in no hurry to see the papers!"

"And why so?"

"Because, sir, the family with the fly has got them; and it would be as much as their custom is worth to ask for them till they are quite done with."

Before I had time to ask for an explanation concerning a family so oddly distinguished, the landlord, Mr. Scorewell, came hastily into the room, and angrily said to the waiter, "Don't you hear, sir? The family-with-the-fly bell has rung twice." Away scampered the waiter, as though he had been goaded on to his duty by the combined attack of every fly of every kind in Little Pedlington.

Scorewell, with inconceivable rapidity, converted his angry frown into the sweetest innkeeper-smile I ever witnessed; and, in a tone indescribably bland, accompanied by the matter-of-course bow, he welcomed me to "Lippleton"—that being the abbreviated name of the place.

"Is this your first visit to our place, sir?"

I told him it was.

"Then, sir, I can only say, you have a great treat to come."

"Your town seems to me to be empty," said I; "excepting yourself and your servants, I have not seen a human being."

"Quite the contrary, sir—fullest season ever known."

"Then what is become of all the people?"

"Dear me, sir! didn't the waiter tell you? how very stupid of him! 'Tis his duty to tell visitors when anything particular is going on in the town. I dare say, sir, you would have liked to go?"

"What is it, and where?" I eagerly inquired.

"Why, sir, everybody is gone down to the market-place to hear Miss Cripps's bag cried. Had the misfortune last night to lose her peagreen silk bag with a scarlet ribbon and a sky-blue binding, containing two sovereigns, a silver thimble, a lump of orris-root, three shillings, a pot of lip-salve, a new flaxen front, two half-crowns, a new tooth, a paper of carmine, and eighteen sixpences. And would you believe it, sir, though the crier has been three times round the town already, and has offered one-and-ninepence reward, there are no tidings of it, high or low? Miss C. declares that it isn't the loss of the money she cares about; but she is anxious on account of the new tooth, the

orris-root, the carmine, lip-salve, and flaxen front—*which belonged to a friend of hers.*"

These latter words the landlord (checking his volubility) uttered with particular emphasis, accompanied by a comically grave expression of countenance.

"A thousand pities, sir," continued Scorewell, "that you should have missed hearing the crier; the more so, owing to the extraordinary coin*ci*dence of so interesting a thing occurring the very first morning of your being in Lippleton, when all the town, as I may say, is in a state of excitement about it."

"I am greatly annoyed at my loss," said I; "but concerning Miss Cripps's, I entertain no apprehensions; for if what I hear of your towns-people be true—that they are as remarkable for their goodness and virtue, as your town is for its beauty——"

"You may say that, sir; and though I am a Pedlingtonian myself, this I will say, that for good-heartedness, and honour, and honesty—with never a grain of envy, hatred, or malice—and as for evil-speaking, why, bless you, sir, we don't know what the thing means. Ah! it is, *indeed*, a proud thing to be able to say, that in such a prodigious population as ours (for we count twenty-nine hundred and seventy-two, men women, and children) there are only two rascals to be found."

"Then pray tell me who they are, in order that I may avoid them."

"O sir, they are very well known: one is that villain Stintum that keeps the Golden Lion; the other is that scoundrel Snargate, of the Butterfly and Bullfinch. But I suppose, sir, there must be a black sheep or two in every flock, or the world would not be the world. Foul-mouthed villains, too! Why, sir, they never mention my name without——but I beg pardon, sir—there's the family-with-the-fly bell—will be with you again in a minute."

Ere I had ceased to wonder that a community so near to perfection as that of Little Pedlington should allow itself to be thus defiled, when it might become immaculate by ejecting only two of its members, Scorewell returned.

Not choosing to inquire directly what they meant by their family with the fly, I led to the question by asking Scorewell if his house was full.

"Why, sir, I should have been full if it hadn't been for those villains who kidnaps, positively kidnaps, customers into their houses. Sending their cards about—under-charging so, that *I'm*

sure they cannot get a living profit—and then, setting about a report that my chimneys smokes, d—n 'em!——I'm a man, sir, that speaks ill of nobody, and wishes ill to no man; but as for *them*, the day I see their names in the Gazette (and it wont be long first) will be the happiest day of *my* life. And then, again, sir, those boarding-houses! Full, indeed! I'll ask you, sir, how *is* one to be full, or how is an honest innkeeper to get a livelihood with such opposition as that? Little Pedlington, sir, would be a perfect Paradise if it warn't for them boarding-houses. But they are the pest of the place; they ought to be *annilliated;* government ought to interfere and put them down. When we send members to Parliament (which we have as good a right to do as many other places), *I'll* give my vote and support to whosomever will go in upon the independent interest, and bring in a bill to put down boarding-houses. And yet, upon the whole, I can't say they do *me* much harm, for real gentlefolks don't go to them. Real gentlefolks don't like to be *pisen'd* with stale fish and bad meat. I know how much a-pound Mrs. Stintum of the Crescent-boarding-house pays for her meat; and I know how Mrs. Starvum of South-street bargains for her fish and poultry. I don't say it to their disparagement, poor devils! because people must live; and those who sell cheap must buy cheap—only, they ought to be a *little* more careful in cholera times. But go to my butcher, sir, and ask him what sort of meat Scorewell of the Green Dragon buys—my son George, who is the most pre-eminent butcher in the market; and ask my other son, Tobias, who serves me with every morsel of fish and poultry that comes into this house, what prices *I* pay for my commodities: I'm not ashamed to have *my* larder looked into before the victuals is cooked. If, indeed, they would only live and let live, as I say—but two stingy, cheating, undermining, evil-speaking old tabbies like them, who cannot bear to see anybody thrive but themselves—especially me! They are the only two nuisances in the place, and it would be better for everybody if they were out of it. The world is big enough for us all, so there's no need of envy and jealousy, and of trying to do one's neighbour harm: that's my maxim; and I wish that they, and those rascals at the Butterfly and Bullfinch, and the Golden Lion, would profit by it."

I took advantage of Scorewell's taking breath to ask him who were the visitors he had in his house.

"Why, sir," replied he, "I have not many, but they are all of the first respectability. There's Mr. and Mrs. Fitz-bobbin;

Mr. St. Knitall and *his* lady; Mr. De Stewpan; Mr. Twistwireville; *and* Mr. Hobbs Hobbs and his family—*very* tip-top people, indeed, sir—*the* family with the fly. They always honour us with their company—the fourth season they have been at my house—Mr. Hobbs Hobbs and his lady; their two daughters, Misses Eleonora and Florentina; Master William Hobbs Hobbs, the younger son, and Mr. Hobbs Hobbs Hobbs, the elder—six altogether, sir, and always travel in their own one-horse fly."

So, the mystery of the "family with the fly" was explained.

"Of course, sir," continued Scorewell, "as you are from London, you must know most of the parties—have heard of them, at any rate?"

There was a touch of aristocracy—of gentility at the least—implied by the *Fitzes* and the *Villes*, and the imposing duplication of the Hobbs; yet I could not call to mind that I had ever heard any one of those names before.

At this moment there was again a violent ringing of bells.

"Nobody answering the family-with-the-fly bell!" exclaimed the landlord. "Beg pardon for leaving you, sir, but I must attend to it myself. You know, sir, it behoves a person in my situation to be most *particularly* attentive and obliging to *carriage* company."

I felt something like a shock on learning that there were two rascals (the innkeepers) in so virtuous a town as Little Pedlington; but when Scorewell informed me that there were two ladies also in the same unfortunate category—making an aggregate of four bad characters—I was inclined to believe that the reputation of the place for goodness, however it might deserve it for beauty, had been over-rated. And yet, thought I, compared with the mass of crime, villany, and roguery, of every description, that exists in London and other great cities, four offenders in such "a prodigious population as twenty-nine hundred and seventy-two" constitute no very alarming proportion of wickedness. The guide-book of Felix Hoppy, Esq., M.C., aided by the commentary of my landlady at Squashmire-Gate, had determined me to think favourably of Little Pedlington, and I resolved not to abandon my good opinion of it for four's sake.

As I rose from my seat, and struck my hands together, as one does upon having made up one's mind with one's self, Scorewell entered the room, and, with a low bow, handed me a visiting ticket, saying, "With his very best compliments and most profound respects, he has the inexpressible honour and

greatest possible felicity in welcoming you to Little Pedlington."

Heavens! what did I behold? It was from the illustrious M.C. himself!—a card (somewhat larger than Hardy's Great Moguls), beautifully glazed and richly embossed, having at the top an Apollo's head, at the four corners, respectively, a lyre, a French-horn, a fiddle and bow, and the Pandean pipes; these connected at the sides by true-lovers' knots and roses placed alternately. In the midst of this vast combination of elegance and splendour, there appeared in characters of gold—as such a name deserves to appear—

MR. FELIX HOPPY, M.C.
No. 4,
WEST STREET,
LITTLE PEDLINGTON.
Please to ring the bottom bell.

"A great man, sir!" said my loquacious host; "and a dancing-master. Lippleton, sir, would never have been what it is without him—I mean for elegance and fashion. He has made the Lippleton ladies what they are. You may tell his pupils a mile off by their walk. Bless you, sir, he makes them turn their toes out till they almost come behind their heels! And then such a dancer as he is himself! I sometimes read in the London papers about the opera; and Lord! the fuss they make with their *Cooluns* and *Elslums* and *Tagglenonis!* I wish they'd just come to Lippleton and see the great Hoppy: he'd soon take the shine out of them, I promise you. Ah, sir! there ar'n't many Hoppys in the world, you may rely upon *that*."

"I was not aware of his excellence in that way," said I; "my admiration of him is grounded upon his book,—his 'Little Pedlington Guide.'"

"A book, indeed. Ah, sir, you may well call it a book! Not many books in the world like that, eh, sir? But, as the saying is, man's work is never perfect; there are two terrible faults in it, and I once made bold to tell him so. How *could* he make mention of

the Butterfly and Bullfinch, and the Golden Lion,—and those rascally boarding-houses, too! But it shows his good nature. But, after all, sir, for *writing* you must see our Jubb—'Pedlingtonia's Pride,' as he calls himself somewhere in his poetry. And Rummins, too—the great Rummins! Of course, you'll stay here till Friday, if it's only to see his museum. But be sure you ask him to show you the sliding-board of the old stocks that were removed when the new cage was built: there you see the holes that the folks' legs used to go through, as plain, ay, sir, as plain as if they were only made yesterday. Antiquities are wonderful things, sir, ar'n't they?"

"As I came not only to see the place, but its celebrated inhabitants also, I shall endeavour to obtain introductions to Mr. Rummins and Mr. Jubb; and to your painter, Daubson, too!"

"There, again; Daubson! a great creature, indeed! Some of your Lunnuners—saving your presence, sir—come down here as big as bulls, talking of their celebrated 'this' and their great 't'other;' but when they have seen what we can show in *Lippleton*, they soon draw in their horns, that I can tell you, sir."

"Well," said I, somewhat impatiently (for, to confess the truth, although I was prepared to pay due homage to the great men of Little Pedlington, I was growing envious of their superiority to all the rest of the world),—"well, Mr. Scorewell, that will do for the present. I will now, guide-book in hand, pay a visit to the town; at five o'clock I will return; and since (as I perceive by the book) you have a well-supplied market——"

"The best in the whole universe, sir."

"Well, then, you will let me have a nice little dinner; some fish and——"

"Fish! To-day is Monday, you know, sir, and Wednesdays and Saturdays are our fish-days. Couldn't get fish to-day in Lippleton for love or money. But I'll tell you what, sir; if Joe Higgins should bring any gudgeons in to-morrow, I'll take care of 'em for *you*,—unless, indeed, the family with the fly should want 'em."

"A veal cutlet then, and——"

"Veal! We only kill veal in Lippleton, sir, once a week, and that's o' Tuesdays. But if you'd please to leave it to my cook, sir, she'll send you up as nice a little dinner as you could wish to sit down to."

I adopted the landlord's suggestion. As I was preparing to depart, he exclaimed, "Dear me, sir! I was near forgetting to remind you—but, if Miss Cripps's bag should'nt be found before twelve o'clock, you'll be sure to hear it cried then, if you go down to Market Square. As these things don't happen every day, they are the more interesting, you know, sir. Besides, when——but, beg pardon, sir:—there's the family-with-the-fly bell again."

CHAPTER III.

An interesting ceremony—Little Pedlington bank: obligingly give change for a Bank-of-England note to an utter stranger—Pedlingtonians apparently not theatrical—New Pump—Caution in criticism—A pleasant acquaintance: little Jack Hobbleday, a thorough-going Pedlingtonian—Civilities proffered: to be introduced to the magnates of the land—Mr. Shrubsole—Something like scandal—Hobbleday's candid opinion of his friend Shrubsole—Zoological Garden: monkey-mania of the Pedlingtonians—New burying-ground—Symptoms of a *bore*—Shrubsole's candid opinion of his friend Hobbleday—Evidence of the salubrity of the Vale of Health—Mineral spring *discovered*—Universal Knowledge Society—Rival confectioners—Mr. Yawkins, the eminent publisher: important new works in progress—Miss Tidmarsh, and a tale of horror—Daubson's celebrated picture visited and criticised—Culpable conduct of the R.A's.

WENT first of all to the*****
Next went to see the*****
Afterwards went to look at the*****

[Upon comparing my own notes with the masterly descriptions of the M.C., I find them so decidedly inferior to his, that (with only one or two exceptions) I shall suppress them; confining myself chiefly to events, characters, and conversations.]

Nearly twelve o'clock. Crowds of persons, with countenances eager and anxious, hurrying from all quarters to Market Square. Joined them. Exclamations of "Cruel loss!" "Unparalleled villany!" "Poor Miss Cripps!" "Serve her right!" "It will be the death of her!" &c., &c. Guessed the cause of the assemblage. As the clock struck twelve the crier appeared. Sudden silence,—almost awful, from its contrast with the previous buzz. The crier carried a bell, which he sounded thrice, each time exclaiming (as nearly as I could understand the words), "O Yes!" Here some heartless reprobate in the crowd cried out, "O *no*, if you think the bag will ever come to light." Symptoms of just indignation, and cries of "Shame! shame!" The crier then proceeded; and after detailing, in a

tone of voice interestingly monotonous, the contents of the bag, as already described to me by Scorewell, he concluded by offering a reward of two-and-three-pence for its recovery (an advance of sixpence upon the first tempting inducement to an honest proceeding), and declaring, that "no higher reward won't be offered." Altogether an impressive ceremony. Would not have missed it for worlds.

Went into a shop to purchase a pair of gloves. Found one of my pockets turned inside out and my purse gone. Could not have been better done in London. Assured by the glover—who was a hardware-man also, and vendor of Burgess's fish-sauces and Day and Martin's blacking—that "It was never no Pedlingtonian what did that—they were above such things." My nasty, suspicious mind doubted, for a moment, whether Little Pedlington were *much* better than other places, after all. Four not over-good people in it, by Scorewell's own admission,—and he a staunch Pedlingtonian, too. Psha! it must have been the work of one of the London swell mob. Fortunately, my pocket-book was safe.

Went to Messrs. Yawkins, Snargate, and Co. (the "obliging bankers," as they are truly designated in the guide-book; agents also to the London Salamander Fire-office, and for the sale of James's powders), to change a twenty-pound note. Asked me how I chose to take it. Replied, "Sovereigns." Mr. Snargate, the junior partner, went into the back office. In a few minutes returned with Mr. Yawkins, the head of the respectable firm. Mr. Yawkins regretted that at that moment they were *rather* short of specie. Obligingly paid me nineteen of their own notes (with a beautiful picture of the new pump upon them), a half-sovereign, seven-and sixpence in silver, and half-a-crown in halfpence. Suspect I must have looked rather queer at the notes, for Mr. Yawkins, without any other provocation, assured me they were "as good as the Bank." "Which?" thought I. Obligingly offered to send their "head clerk" (a scrubby-headed boy, who was watering the shop), with the halfpence to my inn. "Obliging bankers," indeed!—a lesson for Lombard-street. Inquired how the subscription for the erecting of a new theatre went on. Mr. Yawkins shook his head. Said that although Mr. Ephraim Snargate, the architect (proposer of the scheme), had patriotically headed the list with a subscription of one-pound-one,—although Mr. Luke Snargate, the builder, had nobly followed his example,—although the learned Rummins had kindly promised an inscription for the

foundation-stone, and the celebrated Jubb a poetical address for the opening night,—nay, although their "house" had voluntarily offered to *receive* subscriptions, he was sorry to add that "the Pedlingtonians *did—not—subscribe.*" Shook *my* head in reply, and took my leave. Sighed as I reflected upon such neglect of the drama even in Little Pedlington.

Being so near the new pump, took the opportunity to examine it. Deserves all the praise that has been bestowed upon it: with its lion-mouthed spout, dolphin-tailed handle, and the figure of Neptune brandishing his trident on the top, it is certainly far superior to any pump I have seen in London, scarcely even excepting that in Burlington Gardens. Aware as I am that it is not very agreeable to the inhabitants of any strange place one may visit to express an unfavourable opinion (although it be a true one) touching even so small a matter as a pump-ladle, yet, at the risk of being charged with want of candour, with malevolence, and ingratitude, I must say that I think the *form* of the ladle attached to the latter is preferable; *certainly the bowl is more capacious.* Perhaps a Pedlingtonian would not admit this; but as this point is one, not of mere taste, but of positive depth and circumference, an actual measurement of both ladles would settle it with mathematical precision, should any serious dispute arise on the subject: let us hope, however, that such will never occur. Made sketches of the pump from three different points of view. Whilst I was thus engaged, was accosted by a fat, rosy, round-faced little man in a nankeen jacket and trousers, white waistcoat, and brown cloth foraging cap. Name (as I afterwards learnt) Hobbleday — familiarly called little Jack Hobbleday. He had been observing me for several minutes, and with evident satisfaction.

"Man of taste, I perceive—intelligent traveller—laudable curiosity—*you* don't pass over the wonders of nature with half an eye. From London, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Never saw London; in fact, never was out of Little Pedlington. Had the honour of being born in the place—have had the honour of passing all my life in it—hope to have the honour of laying my bones in it. Should have no objection, though, to pass two or three days in London, just to see the sights, and yet, a Pedlingtonian needn't break his heart if he never did. You can show nothing there like *that*, I take it," (pointing to the pump). "Pooh, pooh! you know you can't."

"I don't think we can, sir—exactly."

"Well, well, Rome wasn't built in a day; but as I understand you are making great improvements there, why, one of these days, perhaps—sir; *I* am old enough to remember when we had nothing but a draw-well here; then came the old pump—a wooden thing with a leaden handle, which, in those days, we thought a very fine affair; *at* length—but you behold it. Ah, sir, this is a wonderful age we live in! If my poor father could rise out of his grave and see this, where would he fancy himself? certainly not in Little Pedlington. By-the-bye, sir, my dearest friend, as I am proud to call him, Mr. Simcox Rummins, the celebrated antiquary, has got the old pump-handle in his museum, and I'm sure he'll have great pleasure in showing it to you; *but*—*but*—you must not attempt to take a drawing of it; *that* he *won't* allow."

"Perhaps, sir," said I, "as I am a stranger here, whose chief object in this visit is to see your great men, and Mr. Rummins is a friend of yours, you would favour me with an introduction to him."

"With the greatest pleasure in life, sir."

"And to the Reverend Jonathan Jubb, your great poet?"

"Why, that is rather more difficult, for he is literally torn to pieces by the curiosity of strangers to see him; however, as I am proud to say he is the best friend I have in the world, I will."

"I fear you will think me indiscreet; but Mr. Daubson, the celebrated painter——"

"Daubson? proud to say the oldest friend I have in the world—introduce you with pleasure."

"As for Mr. Hoppy——"

"Dear, darling Hoppy! proud to say my most intimate friend—will introduce you. Most elegant creature! perfect gentleman! On Wednesday he gives a public breakfast at Yawkins's skittle-ground; you ought not to miss that—the prettiest sight in all Pedlington, Daubson's greatest work is there, you know—the "Grenadier," so finely described by Jubb. They'll fire the gun off, too—an immense cannon. They *do* say it is a four pounder, but, for my part, I only believe half I hear. And that extraordinary creature too, *he'll* exhibit his wonderful talents—a man, sir, who actually plays on the Pandean pipes and beats a drum at the same time—true, I assure you. Ah, Shrubsole," said he, to a person who approached us, "anything new to day?"

"Yes," replied Shrubsole, "Mrs. Sniggerston was brought to bed of twins, at two minutes past ten this morning."

"Queen Anne's dead," said the other; "that's old news to me; *long* before a quarter past I heard of it. But what about Miss Cripps's bag?"

"No tidings of it. I just called there, but she is in such a state of mind she doesn't see anybody—wouldn't even see *me*."

"Ahem!—I say, my dear S., now, between you and me, what is *your* opinion about the two sovereigns which she *says* were in the bag?"

"She *says* so, so no doubt there they were; but as I said just now to Mrs. S. 'who ever saw Cripps with gold in her purse?' You know her whole income is but fifty-five pounds a year, and her quarter won't be due till next Wednesday week. Besides, *I* know a certain person who wanted two pounds of her on Friday, when she had not got them to pay; and *you* know that when her money *does* come in, nobody pays more punctually than poor dear Cripps. But the false front, the tooth, the rouge, *and* the orris-root! that is a cruel exposure, to be sure. My little woman was right: she always insisted that Miss Cripps wore a false front, and now the murder's out."

"Pooh, pooh! that's nothing," said *my* friend; "but the orris-root—that's *very* odd. Though, I say, my dear Shrubsole, —isn't it good for the breath?"

"So I've heard; and, as all Little Pedlington knows, she was always gnawing it. Well, good day, Hobbleday; I must go home. Mrs. Applegarth has just put up her *new* drawing-room curtains, and I have promised to take Mrs. S. to see them. *I* think they are the old ones dyed in turmeric; and I'll answer for it my little woman will be of the same opinion." And away went Mr. Shrubsole.

"To give you my candid opinion of that Mr. Shrubsole, sir," said Hobbleday, "he and his 'little woman' are the most insufferable gossips in the place, and censorious to a degree! The Mrs. Sniggerston he mentioned—the twin lady—is the wife of Sniggerston, the library-keeper, who once tried to set up a guide-book in opposition to Hoppy's—wouldn't do—my friend Hoppy's carried all before it. Well, sir, she *and* Tupkin, the butcher there in the market—ahem!—How poor Sniggy can be so blind *is* astonishing, when the affair is talked of from one end of Little Pedlington to the other! But she comes of a bad stock —she's a Shrapnell; her father, Tom Shrapnell, the grocer, formed a connection with Mrs. Rumble, an actress in Strut's company here—turned his wife (a dear good soul) out of doors—and compelled her to live upon a separate maintenance of fifteen

pounds a year. Then, her sister Flora, who was housemaid at my uncle's at the time he had the honour of being churchwarden here, ran off with the guard of the Winklemouth coach, and has never since been heard of."

"What!" thought I, "slander and detraction, robberies, elopements, separate maintenances, and worse, in such a place as Little Pedlington!—then have honesty, honour, and virtue abandoned the world, and one might almost as well pass one's life in wicked, abominable London."

"Now, sir," continued Hobbleday, in a half-whisper, "these things would not so much matter if they were confined to our own class; but when one sees upper-servants in families, and tradesfolks—mere tradesfolks—apeing their betters, it puts an end to all distinctions, you know, sir."

After a short pause, he resumed. "Will you walk, sir? Perhaps you would like to see our Zoological Garden? The admission to strangers is two-pence; but as I have the honour of being a life-governor, I have the privilege of introducing a friend."

"There is no mention of such a thing in the guide-book," said I.

"Why, no—all done, projected and executed, within these three months; and, considering the time, we are getting on very well. Let me see—(and he counted on his fingers)—parrot, cockatoo, guinea-pig, duck—not your common duck-and-green-peas sort of duck, but a Virginia duck, I think they call it—*two* monkeys, a stuffed leopard, nearly *fifty* stuffed birds, two live canaries, and—we *shall* have an uncommon fine swan when the man has finished digging the pond for it. Getting up something of the same sort in London, I understand. Lost no time in taking our hint, eh? But will you go? Won't be at all out of my way: going to the Vale of Health to pay visits of condolence to poor Hubkins, who has just lost his wife and three children by scarlet-fever, and to Widow Grieves, whose *other* daughter is just dead of asthma. Go? All in my way—our *Zoo* is just between the Vale of Health and the new burying-ground. How do, Digges—how do? Nothing fresh about Miss Cripps's bag, eh?"

This he addressed to a tall, stout, rosy-faced man in black, who was walking along at a stately pace.

"That man, sir, ought to be the happiest fellow in Little Pedlington, for he's making a fortune. It is Digges, the undertaker—just married Dr. Drench's eldest daughter—*great* connection for him, for the doctor's practice is very extensive,

and he naturally recommends his own son-in-law. Come; now *do* go!"

To the Zoological Garden.—Cockatoo good—could not say much for the guinea-pig; but, in consideration of my new acquaintance's civility, abstained from uttering an unfavourable opinion, which might have given him pain. Like Samuel Johnson, LL.D. (who, it is at length discovered, was but a mere twaddler after all), I may be set down for "a fat old fool—a dense fool," for this: so be it: yet can't help wishing that some of my fellow-journalizers would follow my squeamish example. My conductor kindly (importunately, I had almost said) directed my most particular attention to every individual thing that was to be seen, even to the last tail of the last stuffed bird in the collection—reading their several descriptions from the well-digested catalogue (written on a slate), with which, as life-governor, he had on our entrance been furnished by the keeper, who was digging the pond for the swan. N.B.—Catalogue the joint work of Simcox Rummins, F.S.A., and Dr. Drainum; assisted (on particular points of natural history) by Mr. Chickney, the poulterer. Good-naturedly detained me upwards of ten minutes looking at the parrot swinging on a wire. "Vastly curious!" as he justly observed. Unfortunately, the monkeys sulky, and would not show. To go again on Sunday, at a quarter past one, immediately upon coming out of church, to see them do something or another which he did not exactly explain, but which, he assured me, is the most beautiful sight in the universe, worth going miles to see, and is all the rage, particularly with the ladies, in Little Pedlington.

Being so near the new burying-ground, Hobbleday kindly insisted upon taking me all over it. Was so obliging as to stop me at every individual tomb-stone, and to read aloud every word of every inscription—assuring me, now and then, that if I chose to copy any of them that *particularly* pleased me, he was not in the least hurry. This I declined, being unwilling to trespass overmuch upon his good nature. Having looked at seventy-two of these interesting memorials, I complained of the heat, which (under a broiling sun) was intense, and proposed to depart. Hobbleday put his arm through mine, and declared he could not think of my going till I had seen all—*only* about forty more to see. *Did* see all, as I thought. Yet one more, which he had reserved for the last—the *bonne bouche*—on account of its "sweetly pretty" epitaph, as he termed it, and which, he said, was attributed to Jubb. Had to traverse the whole length of

the ground to get at it. Forced me to take a copy of it, he repeating it to me :—

"Afflictions sore
Long time I bore;"—*

As he uttered these four words, involuntarily exclaimed, "You do!" *Il ne m'épargnera pas un oignon,* thought I.

"And now," said my obliging cicerone, "being so near the Vale of Health, we'll see *that.*" Endeavoured to excuse myself, on the score of the trouble to *him,*—fatigue, and the inconvenience of the heat, to myself; but in vain. On to the Vale of Health. Upon our way thither, I expressed my admiration of the virtues of the Pedlingtonians, as proved by the "short and simple annals" recorded on the tomb-stones of the departed who reposed in the new burying-ground: they being the "best of husbands," the "most affectionate of wives," the "most dutiful of children," or the "most faithful of friends." "True," said Hobbleday; "and it is something for us to be proud of. 'Tis the same thing, too, in the old burying-ground—they were angels upon earth, rest their souls! I wish, though, we could say as much of the live ones: I could name a few of them, who, when *they* go, won't be quite so favourably mentioned. Stop—pardon one moment, whilst I leave my compliments of condolence over the way."

Left me for a few minutes. Took refuge in my own reflections. Not comfortable at hearing this slur upon some of the live Pedlingtonians. Felt certain misgivings as to whether this retired country-town were much more moral, or, in other respects, much better than "populous cities proud."

Whilst I was waiting the return of Hobbleday, Mr. Shrubsole came up to me.

"I think, sir," said he, "that was my friend Hobbleday who just left you?"

I told him it was.

"I dare say you find him a charming companion. What a tongue he has! I wish, though, he didn't sometimes make so ill a use of it; for, to give you my candid opinion of that Mr. Hobbleday, he is the most censorious little wretch in the place;

* Having since been informed by an intelligent friend that this epitaph is to be found in two or three other places in England besides Little Pedlington, I suppress the remainder.

slanderous, malicious, malignant! Well, he may say what he pleases about me; thank my stars, he can say nothing to my disadvantage. Good mor—— Oh, when Hobbleday returns, pray tell him that my little woman and I have just seen the *new* window-curtains, which, as we suspected, turn out to be nothing but the old ones died in turmeric, after all. But that old woman is the vainest, the most boastful—in short, the greatest liar in all Little Pedlington. Good morning, sir."

In one respect, I was not sorry to learn that Mr. Hobbleday was of somewhat a censorious turn: it gave me hope that some of the live Little Pedlingtonians might be better than his report of them. He returned. I delivered the message, but suppressed the opinion. Took me all over the Vale of Health. Must admit that we have nothing at all like it in or near London—if, indeed, we except a cow-field near Camden-town. Eighteen small houses, scattered about, chiefly occupied by invalids, who retire thither on account of the superior salubrity of the spot. At a very pretty cottage, called Hygeia Lodge, saw two mutes standing at the door.

Taken to the extreme corner of the Vale. A man busy planting shrubs and young trees about a deep hole. Wondered what *that* was for. Informed by Hobbleday that Doctors Drench and Drainum (their celebrated physicians, and the proprietors of that portion of the ground) had had the good fortune to discover there a mineral spring of the nastiest water you ever put to your lips. "I've tasted it," continued Hobbleday; "enough to poison a dog! so it will be the making of the place, as they say. But what is to become of Cheltenham, Harrowgate, Tunbridge Wells, and such places?—however, poor devils! that's their affair." Fancied I smelt something like the detestable odour of a tan-yard. Peeped through the window of a small shed, the door of which was fastened by a strong padlock. Saw a box of sulphur, a couple of bags of iron filings, a pile of stale red-herrings, some raw hides cut into strips, and a quantity of bark, such as the tanners use. Wondered what *that* was for. As Hobbleday wondered also, I was nothing the wiser for my inquiry.

Went by the way of High Street; returned by the Crescent. Crescent worthy of all the praise bestowed upon it by Felix Hoppy. Mr. Hobbleday regretted that the sun had "gone in," so that the "highly-polished brass knockers" did not shine half as much as he had sometimes seen them. Beheld the house where "dwelt the tuneful Jubb!" An odd feeling, which I

shall neither attempt to describe nor account for, comes over one upon these occasions. Contemplating the abode of genius! At this moment, perhaps, the bard of Pedlingtonia is in a raptured trance.

Walked down South Street. Hobbleday directed my attention to a painted board just underneath the first-floor window of No. 18: it bore the words, "Little Pedlington Universal-Knowledge-Society;" and these were surmounted by a Britannia (evidently copied from a penny-piece), with a trident in the left hand, and a cockatoo held forth in the right. With a slight inclination of the head, accompanied by a complacent smile, he said, "*I—I*, sir, have the honour of being a member, conjointly with Rummins, Jubb, Hoppy, Daubson—in short, all the big-wigs of Little Pedlington. We have meetings—*conversyshonys*—twice a week: a library, too:—Murray's 'Grammar,' Entick's 'Dictionary,' Guthrie's 'Geography,' and (besides other useful works) we have the 'Penny Magazine,' *complete from—the—very first.*"

"But what is the meaning of that figure, sir?" said I, pointing to the Lady Britannia.

"Ha! thought you'd notice that. That, sir, is the work of our own Daubson: needn't go out of Little Pedlington for such things. The figure, I needn't tell *you*, is Minerva—'fitting emblem!' as Hoppy says of the dolphin's tail for our pump-handle."

"Minerva!—and with a cockatoo in her hand!"

"Dear me! that's very odd. You are almost the first person—a visitor, I mean—who ever noticed that. Of course, *we* know very well it ought, in strictness, to be an owl; but Daubson, who is the *arbitrator elegantium* of Little Pedlington, thought that a cockatoo would be a prettier thing; and as we luckily happened to have one in our Zoo for him to paint from, why——. I say, how naturally he has got the yellow tuft on the head, and the red spot on the neck! Clever creature! clever creature! *Shall* we go at once to the skittle-ground, and see his *great* work—the famous grenadier?"

This I declined, pleading, as my excuse, fatigue and the intense heat.

"Well, then," said my obliging companion, "to-morrow. You must allow me to call upon you to-morrow, and I'll show you more of the beauties and curiosities of our place. No denial, now—no trouble to me. Never so happy as when I am in the company of an *intelligent* visitor"—(here he bowed)—"who can

appreciate—you understand. Besides, from my position in society, I enjoy opportunities which——. For instance—Rummins's public day for his Museum is Friday: now *I*, from my position, as I said, am allowed the privilege of introducing a friend there any day in the week: for, besides being a member of the Knowledge Society, and a life-governor of the Zoo, I have the honour, sir, to be—ahem!—Deputy Chairman of the Little Pedlington Savings Bank. Good morning; I wish you a *very* good morning. Ha! a rush at Yawkins's library. Shouldn't wonder if they have news of Miss Cripps's bag." And to the library Mr. Hobbleday proceeded.

Dying of heat and thirst. Inquired of a boy, who was carrying a band-box, whether they had a confectioner in the place?

"What!" said he, "a confectioner in such a place as Lippleton! Where do *you* come from, I should like to know? *We* have *two* in *our* place—Stintum's over the way, and Mrs. Shanks's, in Market Square. I say, Bill"—(this was addressed to another boy who happened to pass)—"here's a gentleman wants to know if we hav'n't never a confectioner in Lippleton. That's a good one, isn't it?"

To Stintum's.—A confectioner! Gingerbread, raspberry-tarts, hard biscuits, and three-cornered puffs on the counter; bottles of lollipops, sugar-candy, bull's-eyes, and coloured sugar-plums on the window-shelves;—a clear case of a Gunter adapted to the capacity of the rising generation. Mr. Stintum told me, in answer to my request for an iced cream, that he had nothing to do with such nonsense, nor had his father before him; that he didn't want to get himself into the *Gazette*, by going out of his line, though a certain person in Market Square might. He didn't care to make a fine show in *his* window: all he desired was, to maintain his character as an honest tradesman. "I don't want to speak ill of a neighbour," continued he: "every one must look after their own soul; I've done nothing in this world to forfeit mine. I can sleep at night, because I've nothing weighty upon my conscience; and if it were the last word I had to speak"—(what horrid crime can that unhappy Mrs. Shanks have committed, thought I, that should excite the fears even of a rival pastrycook for her salvation?)—"if it were the last word I had to speak, I could safely say that I never put *salt* butter into *my* tarts."

Went to the shop of Mrs. Shanks, in Market Square; in all respects, except one, worthy of Little Pedlington. Window decorated with an exquisite model, in barley-sugar, of the new

pump in Market Square, and paste figures innumerable of Apollos and Venuses, shepherds and shepherdesses, &c. &c. Announcements in various parts of "Suppers provided on the shortest notice," "Confectionary of all sorts," "Water ices and iced creams." Mrs. Shanks, a skinny little woman, perched on a high chair behind the counter; yellow face; green patch over the right eye; curly, flaxen wig, encircled by a wreath of faded artificial roses; pale-blue silk dress; huge gilt neck-chain and bracelets; a jug before her, with flowers in it. Reminded me of the once celebrated divinity of the *Café des Mille Colonnes* in the *Palais Royal*. Lamentable to reflect that the soul contained in such a body should be in jeopardy, and all on account of a little salt butter smuggled into a tart.

"What ice can I have, Mrs. Shanks?"

"Whatever you please, sir."

"Lemon-water, then."

Mrs. Shanks opened a long, narrow book, in a parchment cover, dipped a pen into the ink, and inquired, "When for, sir? and how much do you wish to have?"

"Now, if you please; and one glass to begin with."

"Oh! we don't keep ices ready-made, sir; but we can make you any quantity you please, not less than a quart, at only one day's notice."

Assuredly Little Pedlington possesses many advantages; yet, oh! *dear* London!

"Is there any other shop in the town where I may get some? I'm dying for it."

"No, sir; ours is the only house in the line in all the place where *respectable* people can go. *We* don't make our pastry with mutton dripping; *we* don't use red-lead and copper to colour our sugar-plums; *we* never gave poor little Susan Gobbleton—the sweetest child in the world!—the colic it died of. But I'm certain that monster Stintum, sir, can't sleep in his bed; and that's the comfort of it."

Little more than twelve hours, sleeping and waking, in this place,—"too good for us poor sinners to live in,"—and have already heard of as much vice, immorality, and roguery, great and small, going on in it, as if it were a wicked, large town; yet not the convenience of procuring an iced cream on a hot day (excepting, indeed, by ordering it a day before-hand) as a set-off against it all!

Four o'clock. Went to Yawkins's library. Subscribed for a month. Set my name down also in the M.C.'s book. Wished

to know the present station of the —th dragoons, as I was desirous of writing by that night's post to a friend who was in it, and requested Mr. Yawkins to let me see the Army List. Fortunate in subscribing with him, for his was the only library in the place that possessed one. Produced the list for last November twelvemonth. Yawkins deserves his character for "urbanity," (*vide* "Guide,") for he told me, if I *particularly* wished to see it, he would order a new one down, along with the magazines, next Tuesday week. Purchased Jubb's "Pedlingtonia," price two shillings, and Rummins's "Antiquities of Little Pedlington," price one-and-sixpence. Yawkins assured me they were the two greatest works that had ever issued from the Little Pedlington press—Hoppy's "Guide" scarcely excepted. Yawkins expressed some astonishment that neither of those works had been noticed either in the "Quarterly" or the "Edinburgh." Thought such marked neglect of the two master-minds of the age a manifestation of a paltry spirit. Altogether above such pettiness at Little Pedlington. The Pedlington "Weekly Observer" *had* spoken of Rogers, and Moore, and Campbell, of Hallam, Lingard, and Southey, and such like;—ay, and with great kindness, too, notwithstanding. "I verily believe," he continued,—"I verily believe, there are but two men in our town who would *not* have acted with equal generosity, and those are Snargate and Sniggerston, who keep an inferior sort of circulating libraries here: but they are, notoriously, a couple of paltry fellows, and I have no hesitation in saying so!"

"What! two more of them!" thought I.

"And pray, Mr. Yawkins, is Mr. Rummins engaged upon any new work?"

"A work which will produce a powerful sensation, sir; especially here in Little Pedlington. Rummins is writing the 'Life and Times' of his great contemporary, Jubb."

"And Mr. Jubb?"

"Jubb, sir, is writing the 'Life and Times' of his illustrious townsman, Rummins. Rummins, you know, sir, is an F.S.A., so that the world will naturally look for a biography of *him!*"

"Would not the 'Table Talk' of such a man be interesting?"

"Why—aw—to speak candidly, I *do not* think that—to the generality of readers, at least—I don't think it would; for, to say the truth, he—aw—never says anything at all. No, sir; he is one of your thinking men, as you may gather from his writings.

But Jubb, now—Jubb's 'Table-talk,' indeed! But I have reason to believe Hoppy is engaged upon that work, and the very man for the purpose. I have lived in Little Pedlington all my life, sir, yet, I give you my honour, such another talker as Jubb *I never met with.* Wonderful, truly wonderful!—I have heard him talk for three hours without stopping; and so profound, so amazingly profound, is his conversation, that one-half of what he says his hearers cannot understand, whilst he himself does not understand the other. Truly wonderful, indeed!"

At this moment, a tall, thin, elderly lady, in deep mourning, entered the shop. One end of a long black ribbon she held in her hand, and to the other was fastened a fat, waddling French poodle. The lady was attended by a jaded-looking footman, in an orange-coloured coat, profusely ornamented with green worsted lace: he carried a large, wadded, black silk cloak, a shawl, a book, a bag of biscuits, a camp-chair, and a footstool.

"Good morning, mem," said Yawkins, as the lady took a seat; "I hope you are a little better to-day?"

"I shall never again be the person I was,—at least in this world, Yawkins. I shall never recover from the effects of it."

"It was a heavy blow,—a sad loss indeed, mem. And that the monster who perpetrated the crime should have escaped undiscovered! But justice will overtake him, sooner or later, take my word for it, mem."

"That will be a benefit to society, Yawkins, but no consolation to me. That won't restore him to life."

"Poor lady!" thought I; "some relation, or dear friend, barbarously murdered!"

The lady continued:—"Is the first volume of the 'Sad Story' at home yet? I have been upwards of a month 'down' for it."

"No, mem; but as soon as it does come home, you shall have it."

"Remember that, now; for you know I read the two last volumes first, to oblige Miss Cripps, who was waiting for them."

"Why, mem, you know if subscribers didn't accommodate each other in that way, we shouldn't get on at all. Talking of Miss Cripps, sorry to say that the report so general, about an hour ago, of her having recovered her bag, is not true."

"Poor Cripps! I'm very sorry for it,—not that I believe a word about the two sovereigns. Pray, Yawkins, how does the raffle for the tea-tray and patent snuffers get on?"

"Why mem, you know the list hastn't been up above a fortnight, and forty chances, at a shilling a piece, take a long while

to fill up. However, we are getting on: eighteen down already, and I have every reason to expect that Mrs. Hobbs Hobbs and Mrs. Fitz-Bobbin—visitors from London—will each take two chances. They *are* considering about it."

"Well, Yawkins, it is but fair to tell you that, on Saturday, I tea'd with Mrs. Hobbleday, in the Crescent; there was a large party; the whole evening we talked about little else but your raffle; and the general opinion was, that you would have done much better with eighty chances at sixpence."

"How, mem!" exclaimed Yawkins, with an air of offended dignity; "much obliged to Mrs. Hobbleday and her *party:* a sixpenny raffle might do very well at such a place as Sniggerston's, or Snargate's, but I should like to know what the company at *Yawkins's* would say to such a thing. No, mem"—(here he turned his eyes up to the ceiling, and placed his hand on his heart)—"no, mem; rather than so compromise the respectability of *my* establishment, I would almost sooner return the eighteen shillings to the subscribers, and sell the tea-tray and snuffers at prime cost."

The lady, after feeding the fat poodle with a couple of biscuits from the bag, withdrew—having first sent her unhappy servant forward with her commands that he would place her chair and foot-stool ready for her at the sunny corner of the Crescent.

"That's the Miss Titmarsh you must have heard so much about in London, sir," said Yawkins.

"I never heard the name till now," replied I. "But what is the nature of the calamity which has befallen her?"

"Why, *that* is it, sir. Dear me! it's very extraordinary you should not have heard of it in London! Why, sir, it kept all Little Pedlington in a ferment for a month. Except about that atrocious affair of stealing the pump-ladle,—which, of course, you must have heard of,—I never knew the town in a state of such tremendous excitement. She had a most beautiful French poodle, sir—twice as fat as the one she has got with her now—such a quantity of hair, too, and as soft as silk! She was in this very shop with it, sir, only the day before it happened. Well, sir, one morning she missed the dog: about two hours afterwards the poor thing returned, but in what a state! Conceive her horror—conceive the agonizing shock to her feelings! Some monster, some fiend in human form, had cut all its hair off—got hold of Miss Titmarsh's poodle and shaved it—shaved it, sir, as smooth as the palm of your hand!"

"Horrible, indeed!" I exclaimed: "and that an event of

such 'stirring interest' in Little Pedlington should remain unknown to *us!*" Adding, "But strange as it may seem to you, Mr. Yawkins, it is my fixed belief that were a troop of monsters, a legion of fiends in human shape, to shave all the dogs of every description that infest one-half of London, the other half would probably never know anything of the occurrence."

"Then blessed be Little Pedlington!" replied Yawkins, where everybody is acquainted with everybody else's affairs, at least as well as with his own."

Yet half-an-hour to spare before dinner. Time enough, perhaps, to see Daubson's grand picture—the grenadier. Inquired whereabouts was Yawkins's skittle-ground. Informed that it was an immense way off—quite at the further end of the town. Hopeless for to-day, thought I; but asked what the distance might be. Told, nearly four minutes' walk. Went; stood before the "all-but-breathing Grenadier," as it is designated by Jubb. Hard to describe its first effect upon me. As I approached it, involuntarily took off my hat. Thermometer 84° in the shade. Daubson certainly an original genius: unlike Reynolds, Lawrence, Phillips, Briggs, or Pickersgill. Neither did his work put me *much* in mind of Titian or Vandyke—*not in the least of Rembrandt.* No servile imitator—in fact, no imitator at all. Perhaps a military critic might object that the fixed bayonet is *rather* longer than the musket itself: be this as it may, owing to that contrivance, it appears a most formidable weapon. In order that the whole of the arms and accoutrements may be seen by the spectator, the painter, with considerable address, has represented the cartridge-box and the scabbard of the bayonet *in front.* Scabbard about one-third the length of the bayonet—judicious—needless to exaggerate in this—nothing formidable in the appearance of a long scabbard, whatever may be thought of a long bayonet. Legs considerably thicker than the thighs—grand idea of stability—characteristic of a "grenadier standing sentry." Upon the whole, a work worthy of its fame, notwithstanding its rejection by that envious and exclusive, that much and justly-censured body, the R.A.'s.

Took my leave of the Grenadier, resolving to "put in" for a chance for immortality, by having my profile in black, done by the unrivalled hand of the Pedlingtonian Apelles.

CHAPTER IV.

Summer-dinner at a country inn—Mr. Hobbleday, the kind and obliging: his call *merely to look at the clock*—Invite him to wine—A charming member of society described—Modern abbeys, castles, &c.: why so designated—Old acquaintance: Colonel Dominant and Mr. Truckle—Hobbleday a "humbug"?!—News worth waking for.

Five o'clock. Returned to "as nice a little dinner as I could wish to sit down to." Such was I promised by mine host. Thermometer inveterately holding to 84°. Huge hot round of beef, which filled the room with steam; hot suet dumplings, and hard; hot carrots, each as big as the grenadier's leg; scalding hot potatoes *in their skins*. Nice little dinner indeed—for the season!

Five minutes past five. Finished dinner and ordered some wine. Wine fiery as brandy, and warm: complained of it. Scorewell assured me it was the very same wine he was in the habit of serving to the family with the fly, and that *they* never complained of it. Indeed, neither did the St. Knitalls, nor the Fitz-Bobbins, nor Mr. Twistwireville, nor even Mr. De Stewpan (who was remarkably particular about his wine),—in short, this was the first time his (Scorewell's) wine had ever been complained of by mortal man. Such authorities it would have been downright insolence to oppose. Said no more, but simply ordered a little weak brandy-and-water. Scorewell undertook to "try again." Whilst he was away, fancied I heard a pump-handle at work. Returned; wine by no means so strong, and much cooler. The first decanter chipped at the lip; so was this—odd coincidence. Inquired how the decanter came to be so wet outside? Scorewell replied, that he had just given it a minute in ice. That's a reason, thought I.

Whilst I was sipping my wine, and reading Jubb's "Pedlingtonia,"—(found Rummins's "Antiquities" too learned, too profound, for after-dinner reading),—Mr. Hobbleday came in. Merely looked in to see the time by the coffee-room clock.

Recollecting his civilities to me in the morning, invited him to wine. Ordered a fresh bottle. "Know the sort of wine Mr. Hobbleday likes," said Scorewell, as he quitted the room.

"Good creature that Scorewell," said Hobbleday, "and this one of the best inns in Little Pedlington."

"Then I am fortunate," said I, "in having accidentally been brought to it. The other innkeepers are but moderately honest —at least so I am told by Scorewell; and for a stranger, as I am, to have fallen upon the only one who——"

"What I say, understand me, I say in confidence. Good creature—capital inn; but call your bill every morning—that is, if you should find it *possible* to stay at it for more than a day or two. Call it, I say, every morning—you understand. In the hurry of business, people sometimes forget what you have *not* had, and down it goes into the bill. After a week or so, you can't tax your memory as to whether you had such or such a thing, or not; and, rather than dispute about it, why you—— ahem! Now, Scorewell, what have you done for us, eh? Is that some of Colonel Dominant's wine?"

Scorewell assured us that it was, and left us.

"Who is Colonel Dominant?" inquired I.

"What!" cried Hobbleday, with astonishment; "*who* is Colonel Dominant? Pooh, pooh! you can't ask that question seriously. *You* know — everybody knows — must know him. Great man—lately returned from the East Indies—was governor of Fort Popan'gobang. Should like the colonel to hear anybody ask *who* he is?"

"From India! That somehow brings the name to my mind."

"I was sure you had heard of him, sir," said Hobbleday. "Why, he is a descendant of the great Drawcansir: his crest is a sledge-hammer, and his motto, 'All this I can do because I dare.' Has got a place about ten miles off—Guttlebury Abbey."

"Guttlebury Abbey! Some interesting ruins to be seen there, eh, Mr. Hobbleday?"

"Ruins! Pooh, pooh! They say there *was* an abbey there, or thereabouts, millions of ages ago, but there is not a stick or a stone remaining of it."

"Then why does the gallant colonel call his place an abbey?"

"First," gravely replied Hobbleday, "because it's the fashion; and, secondly, because it's a small, square, red brick house, standing in a cabbage-garden."

The second being as good a reason as is frequently to be found for nicknaming residences of similar pretensions manors, abbeys, places, and castles, I was satisfied with it.

"He is here now," continued Hobbleday; "he generally passes the fashionable season here: stays at Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house. You should dine there some day: there you would see him in all his glory. Extraordinary creature!—has got a tail."

"Got a tail!" exclaimed I; "the monster!"

"Pooh, pooh! I don't mean that sort of tail; but a *tail*, you know,—obsequious followers; *toadies*, as we call them here. He has only to say that black is white, and they must swear to it."

"Poor devils!" I exclaimed. "But why call this wine Colonel Dominant's? Is he a wine-merchant?" inquired I.

"No," replied Hobbleday; "but he says it is the only wine in the place fit to drink, and he knows everything better than anybody else—at least, he thinks he does: consequently, everything he may choose to say about all things in the world is like the law of the Medes and Prussians in Little Pedlington——at least, he thinks it ought to be."

"Is he, then, a man of such exquisite taste, such extensive knowledge, such unerring judgment, such——"

"Of course," replied Hobbleday,—"at least, he thinks he is. He is the man that came over in two ships, *that* I can tell you,—at least, he thinks he did. Pleasant, amiable creature, though, and easily satisfied upon the whole: requires nothing more than to have everything exactly his own way; and, at Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house, especially, he will have it,—at least, as often as he can get it. When he can't, why, he naturally growls at everything and everybody."

"An agreeable companion for the other guests at Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house," said I.

"Have you any of the Dominant family in London?" inquired Hobbleday.

"I never met with one," replied I; "nor do I think that an animal such as you have described would long be tolerated there in any society possessing the slightest respect for itself, or the power of relieving itself of so offensive an associate."

At this moment, Hobbleday, starting from his seat, exclaimed, "There he goes!" I looked out into the street, and beheld, strutting along, the identical Colonel Dominant, whom I had accidentally met a few years before, and whose name had just now struck me as being not altogether unknown to me.

Picard, in the preface to one of his pleasant comedies, says of a certain character—"It was drawn from the life: its original paid me a visit one morning; almost whilst he was speaking I wrote down his words—*et voilà la scène.*" Thus, of the three following short scenes, I may say, that they are literal transcripts from what I actually witnessed. Of the *names* of the *dramatis personæ* I shall say nothing; but the *dialogue* I give without exaggeration, and I really believe without the alteration of a material word.

If with unblushing effrontery I can confess, not only that I know where is Bloomsbury Square, but that I have been in it: if I have the hardihood to acknowledge as my friends, human beings who absolutely reside there: nay, more; if, without the slightest sense of shame or of remorse, I own that, upon occasion, I positively visit them, it will be the less wondered at that I should be capable of declaring in the face of all Europe that once I was at Margate. But as Goldsmith's bear danced to "none but the genteelest of tunes," so did I appear at none but the genteelest of places—the French Bazaar, Bettison's Library, Clifton's Bathing-Rooms,* and Howe's (The Royal) Hotel. By the bye, I am informed that, since I was there, the hotel and the library, both being ruined, are closed; the consequence of which is, that not a soul is to be seen in or near Hawley Square, wherein they are situated. But ought not this desertion of the neighbourhood to be attributed rather to the circumstance of the theatre (which is near it) being *open?* It is so elsewhere.

It was at Margate, then, that scenes the first and second occurred.

I was taking my dinner in the coffee-room at Howe's Hotel. At a table opposite to mine (the only other table in the spacious apartment that was occupied) sat two gentlemen, Colonel Dominant and Mr. Truckle. The former was a tall man, thin and stiff, with red hair cut very close, large bilious-looking eyes, and complexion of the colour of the very best pickled mangoes. He wore a blue coat, buff waistcoat, buttoned close up to the throat, white duck trowsers, and a black military stock. He was reclining back in his seat, reading a newspaper, with his feet, each resting on the back of a chair, elevated to a level with his

* A certain person at this place being once shown into a bath-room by no means remarkable for its cleanliness, with much simplicity inquired of the proprietor—"Pray, sir, where is it people go to wash, after bathing here?"

own nose. He had lately returned from the East Indies after many years of profitable service—to himself at least.

Mr. Truckle was a small, slight man, of about five-and-forty years of age, with a head entirely destitute of hair, a good-humoured blue eye, and a perpetual smile upon a countenance strongly indicative of its owner's willingness to be pleased and happy as long as the world would let him. He was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat (not of the newest), white trowsers, and a white cravat, ornamented with a huge bow and ends. His voice, like himself, was small, and his manners mild and unassuming in the extreme. He sat opposite to the colonel, with his hands resting on his knees, and his legs unostentatiously tucked under his chair. He was a distant relation of the colonel's, who certainly did not seem inclined to diminish the distance between them by any inviting approaches on his part; and that he was the poor relation also, his attitude and demeanour, as contrasted with those of the former, sufficiently attested.

Generally speaking, there is nothing of the humorous or the ludicrous in a display of unfeeling domination on one side, of the "all this I can do because I dare,"—and of helpless acquiescence on the other: pity for the oppressed, and disgust or hatred of his petty, paltry tyrant, are the only emotions it excites. There does not at this moment occur to me a more remarkable illustration of this than the early scenes between Sir Giles Overreach and Marall in the "New Way to pay Old Debts;" though there, perhaps, somewhat of contempt for the interested subserviency of the latter may mingle with one's compassion for his slavery. But in the case of Truckle it was otherwise: he was humble, submissive, and satisfied, as if he conceived it to be in the immutable nature of things that he should be so; and the *ludicrous* of the situation arose simply out of the immeasurable disproportion between his gentle attempts, now and then, to hint at a wish or a desire of his own, and the nature of the execration with which they invariably were met by Colonel Dominant.

Be it observed, that the colonel's voice, though deep-toned, was harsh, and that his utterance was abrupt and snappish, sounding like the word of command when given by an ill-tempered drill-serjeant: except, indeed, when he delivered the emphatic word of the execration alluded to, and upon that he would drawl.

It was five minutes past six. Truckle looked at the clock which was facing him, hummed part of a tune (accompanying himself by beating with his fingers on the table), and hesi-

tatingly, and in a gentle tone of voice, said—"Dear me! Five minutes past six! Well—I *think*—really I *do* think it is time they brought our dinner."

The colonel threw down his paper suddenly, thrust out his arm (extending it to its full length across the table), with his fore-finger pointed directly at Truckle's face, and vociferated,—

"What's that?—I say, sir, what's that you say?"

"Why, sir," mildly, and smilingly, replied Truckle, "dinner was ordered at six; it is now five minutes past; and as they might as well be 'punctual,' I merely ventured to——"

"D—n your ARROGANCE!! Punctual! Have the poor devils here nothing to do but attend upon you? Have *I* complained? Am I in any hurry for *my* dinner? Yet *you* talk about 'punctual!' D—n your arrogance!"

"True, sir, you didn't *say* you were in any hurry, but I—I thought, sir——"

"Thought! *Thought*, did you? *You* thought! *Da—a—a—a—mn* your arrogance!"

Arrogance and poor little Truckle named in the same year! He, in thought, feeling, manner, and conduct, an impersonation of humility!

Their dinner was served. Dominant helped himself, and then thrust the dish across to his companion. Just at this time I happened to call to a waiter for some Chili vinegar.

"Dear me!" said Truckle, looking into his plate, smiling, and rubbing his hands at the same time—"dear me! I think—yes, really I *do* think I should like a little Chili vinegar myself. Waiter! Bring *me* a little Chili vinegar, too."

"What's that you want, sir? I say, sir, what's that you want?" (These words were accompanied by the same gesture of pointing the finger as before.)

"Why, sir," answered Truckle, "I heard that gentleman ask for Chili vinegar, and I thought that—Chili vinegar, you know, is a very nice relish, sir; so I thought that when that gentleman had quite done with it, why—why *I* should like a little Chili vinegar."

"Chili vinegor? D—n your arrogance! Who are you, sir, that you can't eat your dinner without Chili vinegor? Do *I* ask for Chili vinegor? But it's just like you, with your insatiable desires: whatever you see or hear of you want, d—n your arrogance! Waiter! No Chili vinegor to be brought to *this* table. Chili vinegor, indeed! *Da—a—a—mn* your arrogance."

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Scene the Second.—In the evening I went into Bettison's Library. They were playing eight-shilling loo. I approached the table. Close to it, and in the front rank of a small crowd, forming three or four deep, stood Truckle. He was earnestly watching the proceedings, but did not play; though ever and anon his right hand made an ineffective move towards his breeches' pocket. A few games had "come off," and the insinuating dealer was announcing, in the usual seductive phrase, the near completion of another:—

"Now, ladies and gentleman, *only* three numbers wanting to complete this loo: 2, 3, *and* 5.—Thank'ee, sir.—Only 2 and 5 vacant.—Thank'ee madam.—Number 2 gone.—Only *one* wanting.—Number 5 vacant."

Here was a tantalizing pause. There was no bidder for No. 5. At length, Truckle exclaimed:—

"Dear me! Well, now, I think—really I *do* think *I'll* have a chance."

His hand made a desperate plunge into his pocket, and, in an instant, or ere reflection could come to his aid, his shilling lay glittering on the table. In the same second of time a voice was heard from behind the crowd:—

"What are you doing there, sir?—I say, sir, what is it you are doing there?"

There stood Colonel Dominant, his white hat seen high above the crowd in front of him; his outstretched arm reaching over their heads; and the fatal fore-finger pointing directly in the face of poor Truckle, who had turned as suddenly as if he had been *twirled* round by some mechanical power inherent in and peculiar to the voice of his tyrant.

"I say, sir, what is it you are doing there?"

Not in the slightest degree confused or abashed by this authoritative interference, public as it was, Truckle good-humouredly replied:—

"Why, sir, I—you see, sir, this is a loo; and by putting down a shilling——"

"Put down a shilling! *You*, sir,!—D—n your arrogance! How dare you put down a shilling? Take it up, sir."

"But this is a loo, you see, sir; and by putting down one shilling I may win seven; that is to say, I may win a ticket which——"

"D—n your arrogance! Win seven upon one! What right have you to try to win seven shillings of these poor people's money with one of yours? D—n your arrogance! Take it up.

Take it up, I say, *Ta—a—a—ke* it up, sir. *Da—a—a—mn* your arrogance!"

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Scene the Third.—I left Margate by the steamer. We had completed about one hour of our homeward-bound voyage when Colonel Dominant ascended the deck from the after-cabin. He set himself down on the gunwale, midway between the stern of the vessel and the paddle-box. I *believe* I have applied the term "gunwale" correctly; but not feeling perfectly at my ease concerning it, it were safer I should explain that thereby I mean the sort of paling which runs along the sides of the deck to prevent one's tumbling into the water. By this modest caution two points are gained: if the term be the proper one, it may still be unintelligible to many, whose voyages, like my own, have been limited to those seas; if otherwise, I have taken it out of the power of any seaman more experienced than myself to assail me with—"D—n *your* arrogance!"

The colonel, as I have said, was sitting on the gunwale, in that aristocratic division of a Margate steamer which lies between the paddle-box and the stern. His arms were superciliously folded across his chest; his head was erect and motionless, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left; whilst his eyes disdained to encounter any meaner object than the glorious heavens themselves. Presently I saw emerging from the *fore*-cabin, the happy, good-humoured Mr. Truckle. Smiling, and rubbing his hands together with an air of self-enjoyment, no sooner were his feet fairly on deck than, in the fulness of his delight, he exclaimed:—

"Capital breakfast! I never made a better breakfast in all my life. *And* such a beautiful morning as it is! *And* such a fine passage as we shall have!"

Trippingly he approached the colonel.

"Charming morning, sir! I'm happy to inform you, the captain assures me that ——"

On the instant, out went the arm with the portentous forefinger at the end of it.

"What do you want here, sir? D—n your arrogance! What do you want here?"

"Why, sir, as the captain told me that we shall have a delightful passage, and that we shall be at the Tower by half-past three, I thought you'd like to kn——"

"D—n your arrogance! Come here, sir."

The colonel, followed by Truckle, placed himself in front of the paddle-box, and directed the attention of the latter to certain words which were thereon inscribed; saying,

"Read that, sir. Read that, I say."

Truckle looked at the words for just so long a time as might suffice to read them, and then nodded his head in token that he had done so.

"Do you hear me, sir? Read that."

"Well, sir, I have read it," replied Truckle, with his usual smile.

"You have read it! D—n your arrogance! Read it aloud, sir."

Truckle read:

"*Whoever passes the paddle-box will be expected to pay the FIRST-CABIN fare.*"

"Then, d—n your arrogance! what do you do here? Go back, sir."

"Why, sir, as I said before, I thought you might like to——"

"And, because you presume to think, am I to pay two shillings additional for your d—d arrogance? Go back, sir; d—n your arrogance! Go back. Go back, I say; *g—o—o—o* back, *da—a—a—mn* your arrogance!"

Shortly after this, I accidentally met poor Truckle as he was descending the steps of some chambers in Paper Buildings, Temple. I amused myself for some time in fancying what could have been his business there. At length, I came to this conclusion:—He was desirous of saying to Colonel Dominant that "his soul was his own;" and had been to take opinion of counsel learned in the law as to whether he had any right to make the assertion.

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Eight o'clock. "No more wine," said Hobbleday, "I must go. We have a meeting of our Universal-Knowledge Society. Never miss it. Although I have been a member upwards of two years, I am still in want of an immense deal of knowledge—you'd be astonished to hear how many things I am ignorant of! Some of our learned members say, that I bore them to death with questions. Can't help that, you know. No use to sub-

scribe one's money to a Knowledge-Society, unless one is allowed to profit by it."

Expressed a desire to attend the meeting.

"Take you with the greatest pleasure—not to-night—'tis not my turn—any other night you choose."

Reminded him of his promise to introduce me to Rummins, Jubb, and the rest of the great Little Pedlingtonians.

"To-morrow I'll introduce you to them all. Let me see—come and take a bachelor's chop with me at five: I'll invite them to meet you—Hoppy and Daubson, too—just we six—'flow of reason, feast of soul,' eh? If they are *all* unengaged, and can *all* come—five to-morrow, eh? Let you know by twelve. Good evening. Capital wine that." (To Scorewell, who just then entered the room)—"I say, Scorewell, if you should hear anything positive about Miss Cripps's bag, send word to me at the U. N. S. Good evening."

"What does he mean by the U. N. S., Mr. Scorewell?" inquired I.

"Universal-Knowledge Society, sir. — Pleasant gentleman, Mr. Hobbleday, sir."

"And exceedingly civil to me," said I.

"Invited you to dine with him to-morrow, sir. Ahem! Nice gentleman, sir; but the greatest humbug in Little Pedlington. He never gave a dinner to anybody in his life—a tea and turn-out, now and then—and never once offered an invitation without an *if* tacked to it. He knows that to-morrow is Mr. Hoppy's teaching day, so *he* can't come: he knows that Mr. Jubb is engaged to dine with Mr. Rummins (for he heard Mr. R. order a bottle of Cape Madeira to-day for the purpose), so *they* can't come. I say again, sir, the greatest humbug in all Little Pedlington."

This was "the most unkindest cut of all." That there should be to be found in Little Pedlington roguish innkeepers, disreputable librarians, poisoning pastry-cooks, and pick-purses; the envious, the malicious, and the scandalmonger; wicked husbands and naughty wives; nay, even purloiners of pump-ladles, and shavers of pet poodles—little as I expected to hear of all or of any of these, I might, in the course of time, have reconciled myself to the circumstance. Knowing them, I might avoid them. But that there should exist in this pre-eminently virtuous town one of that contemptible race so emphatically named by mine host—a race (as I had hitherto imagined) peculiar to London!—"As soon should I have expected!" I exclaimed, "to

hear that you have amongst you one of those uttermost miscreants, who are at once the scorn of the honourable profession which they disgrace, and the despised of the society they infest—a pettifogging attorney!"

"Unhappily for us, sir," said Scorewell, "we *have* one. To-morrow I'll tell you some of the rogue's tricks. His name is Hitch——beg pardon, sir; I hear the family-with-the-fly bell."

Regretted that I didn't hear his name at length. Resolved to inform myself of it to-morrow; and (together with the account of his tricks, with which Scorewell is to favour me) to insert it in my journal, that it may stand as a "Beware" to all future visitors to Little Pedlington.

* * * * * * *

Ten o'clock. Finished reading "Pedlingtonia," and felt inclined for bed; fatigued (no doubt by the excitement of the day), and there being a busy morrow in store for me. Rang for chambermaid. Mem. Inquire of Hoppy (when I shall have the honour and happiness of seeing him) who and what those *Fitzes* and *Villes* really are. From a momentary glimpse I had of Hobbs Hobbs, Esq., fancied there was something of the valet cut even about *him*. Chambermaid, to "marshal me the way." Met Scorewell in the passage. Had just returned from the office of the "Pedlington Weekly Observer." Nothing certain yet about Miss Cripps's bag. Editor keeps the press open till the last possible moment, in order to give his readers to-morrow the latest intelligence concerning it. Happy Pedlingtonians! An affair of ten times this "stirring interest" would scarcely produce a perceptible effect upon us poor, over-excited Londoners. Desired they would let me have the paper in the morning, to extract anything *remarkably* interesting. "Good night."

Half-past twelve. A loud knocking at my door.

"Are you asleep, sir?"

"I was, and soundly too, till you disturbed me. Who is it, and what do you want?"

"Please to get up, and open the door ajar, sir. It's chambermaid."

"Ugh! There—now—what's the matter?"

"Master thought you'd like to know, sir: Miss Cripps has got her bag safe, with everything in it—except the money."

CHAPTER V.

A COUNTRY NEWSPAPER.

LITTLE PEDLINGTON WEEKLY OBSERVER:—Anxieties of an Editor: obstinacy and provoking indifference of Crowned Heads—Distressing event, and editor's singular delicacy and impartiality touching the same—Awful calamity—Extraordinary phenomenon—Providential escape—Literary, learned, and artistical—To the lovers of champagne—Notices to correspondents—The theatre—Foundling hospital for the muses: poetical contributions—The journalizer ventures a few remarks suggested by some of them—Advertisement of a magnificent property confided to the hammer of Mr. Fudgefield, the great auctioneer of Little Pedlington.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16TH.—Found the "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer" on my breakfast-table. Surely that Emperor of Russia must be an obstinate, pig-headed fellow, and the editor of the paper the most enduring of men! Were I the latter, I would at once abandon the poor infatuated creature to his unhappy fate, for advice and remonstrance seem to be utterly lost upon him. For my own part, I declare that there is nothing I can imagine in the power of the world to bestow which would induce me to undertake the direction of the conduct of folks of that stamp, who, after all, *will* do just as they please. Yet here is Mr. Simcox Rummins, junior (the editor in question, and son of the great antiquary), sacrificing his time, temper, and patience, his health and his peace of mind,—or, in that most expressive of old-woman's-phrases, "worrying his soul to fiddle-strings,"—and all because an Emperor of Russia won't do as he bids him! As exhibiting at once the editor's temper, the power and the elegance of his style, and the practical utility of his labours, I extract the following passage from his leading article:—

"Once more we call the attention of his imperial majesty to what we have so often said, and what we have repeated above; shall we add, *for the last time?* But, no; for though patience,

like the eagle, which wings its airy flight through the boundless realms of ether, must descend at length to rest its weary wing, yet shall ours still soar upwards whilst, with the piercing eye of hope, we behold a ray of expectation that our advice will not, like the sands of the desert, be eventually lost upon him. He may continue to *not* notice us in any of his decrees or manifestoes, and thus *affect* to be indifferent concerning what we say to him; but we have it on the best authority that he is frequently seen thoughtful and musing—not, indeed, in his moments of noisy revelry, when immersed in the vortex of pleasure, and surrounded by flatterers, who, like locusts, would bar our honest counsel from his ear, but in the nocturnal solitude of his chamber. There it is that our warning voice, wafted on the wings of the viewless wind, pierces the perfumed precincts of the palace of Petersburg, and carries conviction, like the roaring of the rushing cataract, into his mind. And if the 'Little Pedlington Observer' does sometimes address the autocrat in terms of more than usual severity, let him remember, that we do so 'more in friendship than in anger;' that we regret the necessity we are under of giving him pain, but that, 'like skilful surgeons, who,' " &c.

Decidedly I would not for the universe be the editor of the "Little Pedlington Observer." What an anxious life must he lead! Upon reading on, I find he takes just the same trouble to manage the King of the French, the King of the Belgians, the Emperor of China, &c., not one of whom (if I may judge from his complaints of their indifference to his counsel) seems to mind him a whit more than he of Russia. Surely, it must be a subject of ceaseless mortification to him, that, notwithstanding the infinite pains he is at to settle, or to reform, the government of every country in the known world, his advice is so little, if at all, attended to. O ye monarchs, and ye ministers to monarchs! were I he, I would let you go to ruin your own way, nor raise a finger to save you.

Under the head of LITTLE PEDLINGTON, I find the following:—

"DISTRESSING EVENT.—Yesterday, our peaceful town was thrown into a state of excitement, which it far transcends our feeble powers to describe, by one of those events which, fortunately, as they do not often happen, so do they not frequently occur. Late on Sunday evening it was whispered about in the

best-informed circles—though We were in possession of positive information of the fact as early as a quarter past nine—that our amiable and talented townswoman, Miss Honoria Cripps (whose virtues are the theme of universal admiration, and whose numerous fugitive little offspring are the chief ornaments of our 'Foundling Hospital,' which this day is again enriched with one of her charming effusions), had had the misfortune to lose her silk bag, containing many articles of no use to any one but the owner; and, 'though last, not least,' as Shakspeare hath it, a sum amounting nearly to three pounds! But whatever doubts might have existed in certain quarters as to the correctness of the report on Sunday night, the truth was placed beyond the remotest shadow of dispute yesterday morning, at eight o'clock, by a circumstance which, we will venture to say, must have convinced the most incredulous; the bag was cried about the town by the indefatigable Coggleshaw, whose accuracy in describing its contents was the theme of general approbation; though we must say that we object to his holding, at least in these times, the office of crier *and of sexton also;* especially if, as it is rumoured, any addition is to be made to his fees in the latter capacity, more particularly when a person, whom we can conscientiously recommend as fit for the employment, is willing to undertake it upon the existing terms. But, for more upon this subject, we refer our readers to an admirable letter, signed 'An Anti-Pluralityarian,' in another part of this day's paper, which, by a strange coincidence, recommends the very person we have alluded to; which expresses also the identical opinions we entertain on the subject; and must, therefore, carry conviction to every unprejudiced and reflecting mind.

"The appeal of the crier was not attended with that success which every *honourable* and *feeling* mind desired. At twelve o'clock, again was the same experiment repeated, but, alas! with the same much-to-be-lamented result. From that time till a late hour in the evening, groups of anxious inquirers might be seen in Market Square, in the Crescent, and at the public libraries, their countenances expressive of the deepest interest in the event. Judge, then, what must have been the feelings of the amiable lady herself! However, last night, at five minutes before twelve, the bag was *clandestinely* dropped down Miss Cripps's area, when it was discovered that the lip-salve, the tooth, the false front, the carmine, in short, that everything was restored to her, except—and we must add, to the everlasting disgrace of our town—except the money! But indignant as we are at this

act, we cannot, in the present excited state of our feelings, venture any remarks upon it; we shall, therefore, reserve them as the subject for the leading article in our next, when, as impartial journalists, we shall be happy to publish any letters we may receive, free of postage, either *for* or *against* an assertion we have heard in more quarters than one,—viz., that the money in the bag at the time it was lost *did not amount to anything like the sum stated by the fair lady herself.* Till then, as in fairness bound, we shall offer no opinion upon the subject."

The following extracts are from the miscellaneous department:—

"Awful Calamity.—On Thursday last, this town was visited by a terrific hail-storm. Several of the stones were picked up of a size truly tremendous. The devastation it occasioned was awful. At Mrs. Stintum's boarding-house, five panes of glass were broken; four at Yawkins's library; a like number at Mrs. Hobbleday's, in the Crescent, who had the misfortune, also, to have the top of a cucumber-frame *literally smashed to pieces!* But the greatest sufferer by the calamity is Mr. Snargate, the builder, twenty-nine panes of whose green-house are entirely destroyed, and fourteen others more or less injured. Many persons have visited the scene of destruction. Such is the irresistible power of the elements!"

"Extraordinary Phenomenon.—In a litter of pigs which we have lately seen at Mrs. Sniggerston's, the keeper of the baths, there are actually two without tails! Such are the extraordinary freaks of Nature!"

"Providential Escape.—On Wednesday afternoon, as a labourer in the employ of Mr. Luke Snargate, the builder, was crossing the Snapshank Road, about a quarter of a mile from High Street, his foot slipped, and he fell with such violence, that, for a few minutes, the poor fellow was unable to rise. He, however, soon recovered himself. Providentially, the accident did not occur on a dark night, at the moment when our heavily-laden coach, the 'Wonder,' was passing, or the unfortunate man would, in all human probability, have been run over and killed on the spot, leaving a disconsolate widow and nine helpless children, totally unprovided for, to deplore his loss."

"LITERARY, LEARNED, AND ARTISTICAL.—The last meeting of the 'Little Pedlington Universal-Knowledge Society' was most particularly interesting. Our celebrated poet, Jubb, read a portion of his forthcoming 'Life and Times of Rummins,' our well-known antiquary; and Rummins favoured the members by reading a portion of his forthcoming 'Life and Times of Jubb.' Our eminent painter, Daubson, exhibited a very curious drawing, which he has lately completed. It is a profile in black, which, looked at one way, represents a man's head in a cocked hat, and with a large bow to his cravat; but, when turned topsy-turvy, shows the face of an old woman in a mob-cap! Who shall presume to set bounds to the ingenuity of art? But the thing by far the most interesting was, what was stated by our learned antiquary, Mr. Rummins, to be a helmet of the time of King John. It was dug from the ruins of an old house lately pulled down, in North Street, and is now the property of Mr. Rummins himself. It is corroded by the rust of ages; and, except that it has no handle, is in form not unlike a saucepan of our own days. Mr. R. read a learned memoir, which he has drawn up upon the subject (and which, together with a drawing, he intends to forward to the Society of Antiquaries), wherein he states, that when he was in London, and saw the play of 'King John' acted, the principal actors wore helmets of *precisely that shape*. Its authenticity is thus proved beyond all manner of doubt. But, upon these points, who shall presume to question the judgment of a Rummins?

"The presentations to the library, and for the sole use of the members, were, 'Goldsmith's History of England,' abridged for the use of schools, and Tooke's 'Pantheon' (an account of *all* the heathen gods and goddesses, *with numerous cuts*), both the gift of our munificent townsman, Mr. Yawkins, the banker.

"On the motion of Mr. Hobbleday, the question was put and carried, that Entick's 'Spelling Book' being much worn by constant use, the said book be newly bound at the expense of the Society."

"TO THE LOVERS OF CHAMPAGNE.—We cannot too strongly recommend that admirable substitute for Champagne, the gooseberry-wine made and sold by Hubkins, the grocer, in Market Square. We speak from our own knowledge, as he has obligingly sent us six bottles as a sample. We can say nothing of his other home-made wines, which he only *mentions to us*, as we cannot, with a conscientious regard to our duty as impartial journalists,

venture an opinion which we do not possess the means *of verifying by a trial.*"

These from the

"NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"*** The letter from a certain oilman in East Street, requesting us to give a favourable opinion of his pickles, anchovy paste, &c., must be paid for as an advertisement. We cannot compromise our independence by praising what he has not given us an opportunity of tasting."

"*** We are obliged to our valuable correspondent, *Philo-Sphynxius*, for the answer to the charade in our last, which is *Skittles*. Perhaps he will favour us by exercising his ingenuity on our charade of this day."

"THE THEATRE.

"We are at length enabled to state, that Mr. Sniggerston (in consequence of the present amount of the subscription towards building a new theatre not being sufficient to warrant the undertaking), having again kindly consented to grant the use of one of his commodious outhouses, though, at what seems to us to be a rather exorbitant rent, our liberal and spirited manager, Mr. Strut, from Dunstable, will positively open his campaign on the 15th of next month; though, in our opinion, it would answer his purpose much better did he delay the opening till the 18th, not but that he might open with great advantages on the 15th, or even the 12th. The preparations are on the most extensive scale; and a new drop-scene (of which we have been favoured with a private view) has been painted by our unrivalled Daubson. The subject is a view of the new pump, in Market Square, as seen from South Street; though, it seems to us, the painter would have done better had he represented it as seen from North Street; not but that we think South Street a very favourable point for viewing it, and no man has greater taste in these matters than Daubson, when he chooses to exercise it. The manager has done well in engaging all our old favourites, the most prominent of whom are, 'the facetious Tippleton, the heart-

rending Snoxell, and the versatile and incomparable Mrs. Biggleswade,' as they are aptly characterized by our tasteful Master of the Ceremonies in his 'Guide Book;' but why has he not also engaged Mrs. Croaks, the celebrated vocalist, who, we understand, is unemployed? This he must do. Yet if, as we are told, she requires twice as much as has ever been paid to any other performer for doing only half the usual work, we must say that Strut is right in resisting such a demand; though we admit that talent like hers cannot be too highly remunerated, and are of opinion she is perfectly justified in making her own terms; nevertheless, we recommend her to follow the example of moderation set by the three eminent performers we have named, they having liberally consented to take each a fourth of the clear receipts, allowing the remaining fourth to be divided amongst the rest of the company *in any way the manager may think proper*, after deducting one-third of *that* for himself. Tippleton, with his usual disinterested zeal for the good of the concern, has consented to play any part whatever which may be likely to conduce to that end, provided, in the first place, it be a good part in itself; secondly, that it be the only good part in the piece; and lastly, that the part be, in every possible respect, to his own entire and perfect satisfaction. The only *particular* stipulations he has made are, that no person shall have a clear benefit *but himself;* that no person shall be allowed to write as many orders nightly *as himself;* that no person shall have their name printed in the play-bills in large letters *but himself;* and that he shall not at any time be expected to do anything to serve anybody—*but himself.*

"With such spirited exertions on the part of the management, and such liberality and zealous co-operation on that of the performers, the concern must succeed; though we would recommend the manager not to act so much himself as he did last season; though we admit that his assistance is usually indispensable. However, as far as we are concerned, Strut may rely on having our support—for, indeed, he deserves it; not that we altogether approve of the arrangements he has made, which, in our opinion, are, in many respects, faulty in the extreme; nevertheless, he is an enterprising manager, and ought to be patronized by the Pedlingtonians; not that we should recommend them to go into a hot theatre, to see plays, sometimes, to say the truth, indifferently acted—nor, indeed, can he expect that they should."

Admired the profoundness of the critic's reflections, the extent and minuteness of his information, the wisdom of his advice, and,

above all, his beautiful consistency. Fancied I had somewhere occasionally read something in a similar style — could not recollect where.

These from the

"FOUNDLING HOSPITAL FOR THE MUSES.

"*To Doctors Drench and Drainum, on their grand discovery of a Mineral Spring in the Vale of Health.*

" Galen and Esculapius men may praise,
(Apothecaries great in by-gone days ;)
But you, my friends, O Drainum ! and O Drench !
At once the flambeaus of their merit quench.
They no chalybeate for our use e'er found
On Pedlingtonia's health-restoring ground :
That task the gods, to Pedlingtonia true,
Reserved, my Drainum and my Drench, for *you!*
So shall *your* names for aye *their* names outshine,
Immortal in the poet's deathless line !
That task, thrice-favour'd Jubb, that happy task be mine !

"JONATHAN JUBB."

"A CHARADE.

" A member of the feathered race,
With half a certain well-known place,
If rightly you do guess, I ween,
You'll name the pretty thing I mean.

"ENAJ SBBURCS."

"*** The following charming, pathetic little gem, composed several days ago, assumes a most peculiar feature of melancholy interest, when we consider the present distressing state of mind laboured under by the fair poetess, the full particulars of the loss of whose reticule (containing—besides a large sum in money, of her own—a lump of orris-root, a pot of lip-salve, a new flaxen front, a new false tooth, and a paper of carmine, *belonging to a friend of hers*), we have given in another part of our (this day's) paper.—ED.

"O, gentle Strephon, cease to woo!
O spare poor Chloe's virgin heart!
O tempt me not! but cease to sue;—
In pity spare me, and depart.

O do not praise the roseate blush
On Chloe's grief-worn cheek displayed!
Alas! 'tis but a hectic flush,
Which soon, too soon, in death must fade.

O speak not of the teeth that shine
Like pearls, 'twixt lips like cherries twain,
Tinted with Nature's pure carmine:
Alas! fond youth, 'tis all in vain.

Nor praise no more the balmy breath
Thou dost to orris sweet compare,
When soon the icy arms of death
In the cold grave those sweets must share.

Urge not thy suit, but fly me now,
Fond youth! nor praise those locks of flax
Thou say'st adorn my ivory brow—
Leave me to die—'tis all I ax.

"HONORIA."

A punctilious critic would, perhaps, raise an objection to the "locks of flax," and (with a greater show of right on his side) to the concluding word of Miss Cripps's "charming little gem." But surely this would not be the case with a candid reader, inclined (as I own I always am) to be pleased. By the "locks of flax," it is clear the Sappho of Little Pedlington means *flaxen locks*, whatever may be the exact import of the words she uses; and with respect to the other point, it is to be defended on the plea of necessity. "Any port in a storm," says the sailor; and, driven by stress of rhyme, I think the lady is fortunate in not having been forced into a less commodious haven; for the most fastidious ear must be satisfied with the rhyme, which is perfect; whilst the only objection that can be made to the word *ax* (as a word) is, that the Exclusives, the Almacks of the Dictionary, refuse to acknowledge it as a member of their super-refined Society. But I fear I entertain a dislike of the general tone of the poem, exquisite as it is in detail. Why need the lady be so confoundedly—I cannot help swearing at it—so confoundedly dismal? Why should she everlastingly (as I perceive by a former number of the "Foundling Hospital")

be tampering with such disagreeable matters as "death," and "the grave," and "the canker-worm," and "the blighted hope," "the withered heart," "the seared soul," and a thousand other such uncomfortable fancies? If her woes be real, most sincerely do I pity the poor lady, and the sooner her gloomy aspirations after death and the grave are gratified, the better it will be for her; if feigned, I shall say no more than I wish that, for the pleasure of the readers of the "Little Pedlington Observer," she would exercise her imagination upon subjects of a more agreeable character. I am aware I may be told that Miss Cripps is, *par excellence*, the "Songstress of Woe;" that she "strings her lyre with tears;" and that much also will be said about "finer sensibilities," "poetical temperament," "flow of feeling," and "outpourings of soul." Fiddle-de-dee! the mere commonplace twaddle of criticism. Could the performances on this tear-strung lyre be restricted to the hand of Miss Cripps alone (the inventress of the instrument, and its mistress also), I should not so much object to an occasional movement *doloroso;* but her genius, as it is evinced in the effusion which has occasioned these passing remarks, might, unhappily, beget a brood of imitators, who, like imitators in general, would select only the worser qualities of their model: then should we have every young lady in Little Pedlington whimpering about "blighted hopes" at fourteen; at fifteen, invoking death, and sighing for the quiet of the cold, cold, grave; and, at sixteen, running off with a tall footman, or a haberdasher's mustachio'd "assistant." Rather than these things should occur, I would suggest—since extremes provoke extremes—an Act of Parliament to prohibit lady-poets from meddling with any other subjects than silver moons, radiant rainbows, blushing roses, modest violets, and the like; and to restrict them, in their gloomiest moods, to illustrations the most sad and dismal of which should be—a cloudy night in summer.

Amongst the advertisements, the following is the most prominent. My attention was first attracted by that portion of it which is printed in capital letters, and which I read (as I would recommend all readers to do) independently of the context in humbler type. "Magnificent property, indeed!" thought I. As I have never met with anything of the kind at all comparable with it, I think it worth extracting:—

CHATSWORTH AND BLENHEIM

Are not likely either speedily or soon to be brought to the hammer, but a most desirable Freehold Property in the Vale of Health,

WILL BE SOLD BY AUCTION,

On the premises, on Monday next, at twelve o'clock precisely,

BY MR. FUDGEFIELD.

It seldom falls to the fortunate lot of an auctioneer to have to offer to the public a property, to describe which puts to the utmost stretch of extension the most sublime and inexhaustible powers of description for to describe; and which, to convey an idea of sufficiently adequately, would be required to be described by the unequalled and not to be paralleled descriptive powers of a

LORD BYRON.

What then, must be the feelings of Mr. Fudgefield on the present occasion, when he has to offer for sale that most desirable residence, situate in the Vale of Health, and known by a name as appropriate as it is befitting, and well merited as it is most richly deserved,

PARADISE HOUSE!

The particulars of this most desirable and charming residence, which may truly be called

A PERFECT RUS IN URBE *A LITTLE WAY OUT OF TOWN,*

will, in the course of this advertisement, be stated fully and at length; and which Mr. Fudgefield owes it as a duty to his employers to state as circumstantially as he would if it were a

MAGNIFICENT MANSION,

Fit for the residence of

A NOBLEMAN'S FAMILY.

Being near the town and in its immediate vicinity, where everything that Nature's multitudinous desires can wish for can be obtained when wanted, it is not necessary, and scarcely requisite that it should boast of

THREE DOUBLE COACH-HOUSES

AND

ACCOMMODATION FOR TWENTY HORSES;

Nor, indeed, should it be expected, when the town can boast of two confectioners, that it should possess a

WELL-CONSTRUCTED ICE-HOUSE.

It is also the opinion of many persons that, as it occasions great expense, outlay, and disbursement, to maintain and keep up

ONE OF THE FINEST PINERIES IN THE KINGDOM,

NUMEROUS GREENHOUSES AND CONSERVATORIES,
A WELL-STOCKED FISH-POND,

AND

AN AVIARY WORTHY THE ATTENTION OF ALL EUROPE,

None but such as those whose fortunes are equal, and whose means are adequate, to such

AND OTHER LUXURIES,

Ought to encumber themselves with them. From this rule is not to be excepted

A CHOICE COLLECTION OF RARE BOOKS,

ALL IN COSTLY BINDINGS,

when from any of the circulating libraries in the town any book to convey pleasure to the understanding, instruction to the imagination, or information to the intellect, may be obtained at the cost of a moderate and not unreasonable subscription. The same observations would apply to

A SMALL BUT TRULY SELECT SELECTION OF

CHINA,

FROM THE FAR-FAMED AND WELL-KNOWN MANUFACTORIES OF

SEVRES AND DRESDEN;

And one of the

MOST SPLENDID COLLECTION OF PICTURES,

BY THE OLD MASTERS, EVER BROUGHT TO THE HAMMER:

Including several by

RAPHAEL ANGELO, LUNARDI DE VINSY, PAUL VERYUNEASY, THE THREE STORACES, VANDYKI, RUBINI, PAUL POTTERER, SEBASTION PLUMPO, JULIET ROMANO, TITAN, JERRY DOW, GEORGE ONY, OLD PALMER, DON MYCHINO, AND OTHER SPANISH, ENGLISH, AND ITALIAN ANCIENT OLD MASTERS.

For the reasons above adduced, and as Mr. Strut's unrivalled company are shortly to exhibit their well-known talents in a theatre of their own, a

SMALL BUT ELEGANT PRIVATE THEATRE

Would be supererogatory and superfluous; as also, considering the

CHARMING DRIVES AND RURAL PROMENADES,

Reminding the enchanted eye of the enraptured beholder of the

ELYSIAN FIELDS,

Which are to be enjoyed at every turn in the neighbourhood of Little Pedlington, an

EXTENSIVE PARK AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

Would hardly compensate the Purchaser for the immense cost which he must be at for planting and laying out perhaps as many as would

COMPRISE 10,000 ACRES!!!

It is only necessary further to add, that

PARADISE HOUSE

Consists of four rooms, small but commodious; with wash-house and most convenient kitchen, detached: with a garden of a quarter of an acre in extent, more or less; from which (should they ever honour the Vale of Health with a visit) the fortunate purchaser of this most desirable Property would be enabled most distinctly to see the

QUEEN AND ALL THE ROYAL FAMILY

CHAPTER VI.

Little Jack Hobbleday calls—Specimens of the Art of boring, *passim*—Hobbleday's pressing invitation—Advantages of the possession of a little musical talent—Stoppage of the Little Pedlington Bank and its disastrous consequences—Too friendly by half—Equivocal compliment—Sit to the matchless Daubson—Cant of connoisseurship—"Your *candid* opinion, sir," and its customary consequences—No professional envy in *this* place—Daubson's cool contempt for the Royal Academy, and a hint worth the attention of that exclusive body—Remarkably kind note from Hobbleday.

SCARCELY had I finished the reading of my newspaper when Scorewell, bill-of-fare in hand, entered the room, and thus addressed me:—

"Mr. Hobbleday wishes to see you, sir. Bill-of-fare, sir. What would you choose to have for dinner, sir?"

"It is probable, Mr. Scorewell," replied I, "I shall not dine at home. You may remember Mr. Hobbleday invited me to dine with him to-day, for the purpose of meeting some of the worthies of this place."

"Yes, sir, with an *if*, sir. That's why I ask you what you would please to order, sir. Mr. Hobbleday, as I said last night, sir, is a nice gentleman, but the greatest humbug in Little Pedlington. And then, sir, if I might make free to tell you, sir, don't say anything to him you would wish to keep secret, sir."

"I never do, landlord, to anybody," said I.

"What I mean is this, sir: he is very intimate with Mr. Simcox Rummins, junior, sir, the editor of our newspaper, sir; and people suspect that whatever he hears he——But here he is, sir."

Mr. Hobbleday made his appearance—stopped short in the middle of the room—thrust his hands into his pockets—looked at the clock—then at me—smiled with an air of self-satisfaction—again looked at the clock—when then (to adopt a Miltonic form of phrase), "when then thus Hobbleday:"—

"Do you see that? Told you I would be here at twelve, and twelve it is to a minute. That's what I call punctuality. Pride myself on being punctual. To be sure, it is no great merit in me to be so—nothing else to do—no business, no occupation—gentleman at large, as I may say—a ninety pounds a-year, independent. And yet it is something to be proud of, nevertheless, eh? But I'm afraid I interrupt you—you were reading the paper. Now, no ceremony with me—if I do interrupt you, say so. Never bore anybody, if I know it—hate to be bored myself. But some people have no tact. Ahem!"

It must here be noted that before and after every "ahem," Mr. Hobbleday paused for a second or two—a habit which gave additional importance, if not interest, to what he was pleased to call his conversation; and which, at the same time, contributed to allay any feeling of impatience that might otherwise have arisen in his hearers.

"Ahem! No man is better acquainted with his faults than I am with mine—sorry to say I have many; but this I may safely say for myself, whatever else I may be, I am anything but a bore. But all owing to tact, eh? Can't endure a bore; and now, if I *do* interrupt you——"

Assured him he did not, reminded him that I was prepared for his visit, and requested he would take a seat. Deliberately seated himself opposite to me—deliberately placed his straw hat upon the table—deliberately unbuttoned his nankeen jacket, and deliberately took off his gloves. Seemed—like rain, when one least desires it—regularly set in for the day.

"Sure, now, you have finished reading your newspaper? Resemble me in one respect, I dare say. Reading a newspaper is all very well, but prefer conversation, eh? Well, then, won't apologize for the interruption. Nothing equal to pleasant conversation; for my part, I may almost say I live upon it!—Ahem!—Breakfast not removed—you breakfast late, eh? Now I breakfast at eight in summer, at nine in winter; and, what is very remarkable, have done so as long as I can remember. Now I'll tell you what my breakfast consists of."

Obligingly communicated to me the fact, that he took three thick slices of bread-and-butter, one egg, and two cups of tea; adding to the interest of the information, by a minute detail of the price he paid for the several commodities, the quantities of tea and sugar he used, the time he allowed his egg to boil, and his tea to draw; and also, by a particular description of the form and size of his teapot. Though early in the day, I experienced a

sensation of drowsiness, for which (having slept well at night) I could not account.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Hobbleday, as the clock struck; "one o'clock, I declare! How time flies when one is engaged in pleasant conversation! But, perhaps, I'm boring you, eh? If I am, say so.—Ahem!—By the bye—a sad disappointment—never so put out by anything in my life. Had made up my mind to one of the pleasantest afternoons imaginable. But Jubb can't come—engaged to dine with Rummins. No matter, we must arrange for some other day. I won't let you off; so, let me see—or, no—fix your own day—now, come; fix a day you must. But don't say to-morrow—to-morrow is Hoppy's day for his public breakfast at the skittle-ground; and on Thursday I'm engaged at a rout at Mrs. Applegarth's, who shows off her new drawing-room curtains—sad ostentation!"

"Well, then," said I, "on Friday, if you please."

"That's Rummins's day for showing his museum; and on Saturday I *tea* with Miss Shrubsole. Can't say, though, that her parties are at all in my way." Here he shook his arm, as if in the act of dealing out cards, and, with a grave look, continued:—"You understand;—tremendous play! Like a quiet, old-fashioned rubber very well;—have no objection even to a round game, when played in moderation; but when it comes to three-penny *shorts*, and when, at loo, the lady of the house is so *fortunate* as to turn up pam almost every time she deals—ahem!—But, to the point. Sunday, of course, is out of the question; and—a——"

"And on Monday, at the latest, I must return to town."

"No, no, I can't consent to that: I must not be deprived of the pleasure of introducing you to my eminent friends. Do you *positively* leave us on *Monday?*"

"Positively; business of importance, which will require my presence——"

"No, no! pooh, pooh!—won't listen to such a thing; won't, I tell you: for on *Tuesday* I shall consider you as engaged to dine with me. A week's notice to my eminent friends will secure their company."

"Your politeness and hospitality," said I, "deserve a suitable return on my part. Since you are so pressing in your invitation, it would be ungracious in me to refuse it; so I will write to town by this night's post, and, even at the risk of some inconvenience, will remain here till——"

"Ahem!—aha!—Never so flattered by anything in all my

life; but, no—won't listen to it—wouldn't put you to inconvenience for all the world;—say no more about it; never mind my disappointment; we shall see you in Little Pedlington again. Sadly disappointed, indeed: but don't you let that interfere with your arrangements. Come, will you take a turn?"

Scorewell, who just before had come into the room, and heard the concluding part of the conversation, again presented his bill-of-fare, with—"Bill-of-fare, sir. *Now* what would you choose to have for dinner, sir?"

Puzzled to guess what he intended by his emphasis upon the "now;" neither could I understand what he meant by the odd twinkle of the eye with which he accompanied his question.

Whilst I was doubting over Scorewell's bill-of-fare, Hobbleday amused himself by breathing upon one of the window-panes, and making marks thereon with his fore-finger.

"Draw?" said he, in an inquiring tone.

Told him I did.

"Pretty accomplishment. I've a taste that way myself.—Ahem!—Play the flute?"

Told him I did not.

"Pity: you'd find it a great comfort. Besides—gets one into the best society—at least, I find it so in Little Pedlington. For instance, now, there's Yawkins, the eminent banker, hates me, yet invites me to all his music-parties. You'd think that odd, perhaps—not in the least. Why? Because he can't do without me. His daughter is a very fine performer on the pianoforte, I admit—first-rate—no more taste, though, than a bagpiper; yet, what would be the 'Battle of Prague,' or the overture to 'Lodoiska,' without little Jack Hobbleday's flute accompaniment? Pooh! pooh! nothing, I tell you.—Ahem!—malicious little creature that daughter of his. Never stops for you when she finds you sticking at a difficult passage, but rattles on, and finishes five minutes before you, merely to show her own skill. I had my revenge, though, the other evening. Caught *her* at fault—ha! ha! ha!—my turn now, thought I; so on I went; and hang me if I didn't come to my last tootle-tootle-too, while she had still nearly a whole page to play. Tit for tat, eh?"

"But what cause can Mr. Yawkins have for hating you, as you say, Mr. Hobbleday?"

"I did him a service, my dear sir; and, with some people, that is cause sufficient. You must know that—ahem! You don't want Scorewell, eh? Scorewell, you may leave the room."

Scorewell, with some reluctance, and a glance at Hobbleday, bespeaking no very wonderful affection for that gentleman, took the hint and withdrew.

"That is the most impertinent, prying rascal in all Little Pedlington," continued Hobbleday. "He pretends to be busied in dusting the wine-glasses and decanters on the side-board, when, in fact, he is listening to your conversation. Whatever he hears, he reports to our newspaper, and for that he receives *his* paper *gratis*. Between ourselves, he is not the only one in this place I could mention who does the same thing."

"Are these rivals in the same trade?" thought I, "or which of them is it that belies the other? Oh! Little Pedlington! Ah! Little Pedlington! if these be thy doings——Yet, no; Scorewell shall, upon Hobbleday's testimony, be written down a publican of moderate honesty; Hobbleday, upon the word of Scorewell, shall stand recorded what eye, methought, had never seen, what tongue had never named, in this all-perfect place—a humbug; but that either of them, or that any other Pedlingtonian should be suspected of betraying——No, no, no; they are labouring under some strange delusion, and know not what they say. This, for mine own happiness, I must and will believe."

Hobbleday resumed:—"But respecting Yawkins. You remember the panic a few years ago, which, as Jubb describes it, 'Like roaring torrent overwhelmed the *Banks!*' Up at six in the morning, 'my custom (as Shakspeare aptly says), my custom always in the afternoon.' I was the first in Little Pedlington to hear of the great crash. Saw a traveller just arrived from London, long before the post came in—told me of *this* bank going in consequence of a run upon it, and of *that* bank going in consequence of a run upon it. Thought of my friends Yawkins, Snargate, and Co. No fear, though, for such a firm as *that*,—sound as a roach, at bottom. Yet prevention is better than cure, thought I; for if the Little Pedlington bank *should* go, the credit of the world's at an end. Well, sir, what does little Jack Hobbleday do? I'll tell you what he does. He runs to his friend Shrubsole, and knocks him up two hours earlier than his usual time. 'Shrubsole,' says I, 'don't be alarmed; there's a tremendous run upon the banks all over England; the consequence is, they are smashing like glass. I know you have cash at Yawkins's, but be calm, *and don't press upon them*, and your money will be safe; but should there be a run upon them to-day, they must be ruined. You know my

friendship for old Yawkins in particular: follow my advice, and I shall take it as a personal favour.' From him I run to my friend Chickney,—knock *him* up. 'Chickney,' says I, 'don't be alarmed; there's a tremendous,' &c. &c. &c. Well, sir, from him I run to my friend Stintum,—knock *him* up. 'Stintum,' says I," &c. &c. &c.

Two o'clock.—Hobbleday had already mentioned the names of nineteen persons to whom he had run, and repeated to me the same speech in precisely the same words as he had delivered it to each of them; always commencing with—"Well, sir, from him I run," &c.

Greatly admire this method of telling a story, as I do my friend Major Boreall's manner of narrating; who, for instance, is a longer time in telling you of his ordering a dinner than it would take you to eat it. As thus:—"First of all I say to Kaye, 'Kaye,' says I, 'you will be very particular in letting us have a tureen of very nice spring-soup at one end of the table;' then I say to Kaye, 'Kaye,' says I, 'you will be very particular in letting us have a tureen of very nice *soupe-à-la-reine* at the other;' then I say to Kaye, 'Kaye,' &c." and so on, through the whole service, even to a biscuit with the dessert. The great advantage of this system is, that a vast deal of time is consumed by it; and they will not be disposed to object to it whom experience has taught that human life is considerably too long for any useful purpose, and who have found that, but for expedients of this kind for "beguiling the time," many hours would have been left at their own disposal for which they must have sought employment. Long live the Borealls and the Hobbledays of the world for relieving us of this care!

Continued his story, in precisely the same form, through thirteen names more, and then proceeded:—

"Well, sir, having taken all this trouble to prevent a run upon the house of this ungrateful man, it was near eight o'clock; so home I go and get a mouthful of breakfast. Look at my banker's book—find I have eleven pound two in their hands. Eleven pound two, as I hope to be saved! Bank opens at nine, thinks I; post won't be in till ten; probably the firm will know nothing of what is going on in London till then. Eleven pound two a great deal to me, though not much to a house like the Yawkins's—I'll go down quietly, as if I knew nothing, and draw *my* balance—*that* can't hurt them. Go—get there at a quarter before nine—what do I see?—I'll tell you what I see: I see Shrubsole, I see Chickney, I see Stintum, I see [here he

recapitulated the whole of the two-and-thirty names he had already mentioned, ending with] and I see Sniggerston; all, with consternation painted on their faces, crowding about the door. Notwithstanding my request that they would not press upon my friend Yawkins, there they all were—and before me, too! What was the consequence? I'll tell you. The consequence was, the first ten or a dozen that contrived to squeeze in were paid; but that could not last, you know; human nature couldn't stand it. Pooh! pooh! I tell you it couldn't: so after paying nearly two hundred pounds—stop! a regular stoppage, sir. I was at the tail of the crowd; and when I saw the green door closed you might have knocked me down with a feather. However, at the end of two years, although the outstanding claims amounted to nearly a thousand pounds, a dividend was paid of four shillings in the pound: and now, Snargate drives his gig again, old Yawkins rides his cob, and, to the honour of our town be it said, the Little Pedlington Bank is as firm and sound as any in Europe. Never kept cash there since, though; no more bankers for me—eleven pound two—the sight of that green door—no, no—one such fright in a man's life is enough. Ahem!"—Here he paused.

"But," said I, "you have not told me the point of the story—the cause of Mr. Yawkins's hatred of you, which led you to favour me with these interesting details."

"Dear me—no more I have—forgot the point. You must know, then, that he has always declared—mark the black ingratitude!—that if I had not gone running all over Little Pedlington, frightening his customers by telling them not to be alarmed, and thus causing them to take him by surprise, he needn't have stopped payment—till he thought best."

Here was another pause. Clock struck three.

"Three o'clock, as sure as I'm born!" exclaimed my entertaining acquaintance. Now who'd have thought *that?* But, as I said before, time does fly when one is engaged in pleasant conversation. Have not enjoyed so agreeable a morning for a long while. Afraid I've kept you at home, though; lost all your morning,—eh?—Ha! there goes Shrubsole. Ahem! the greatest bore in Little Pedlington. He'll sit with you for three hours, and not say a word—man of no conversation. But you are thinking about something—eh?"

Hobbleday right. Thinking about Sir Gabriel Gabble, a *chattering* bore, and Major Mum, a *silent* bore. One will sit with you *téte-à-téte* through a long winter's evening, as mute as

if he had but just issued from the cave of Trophonius, and (as Charles Bannister said of Dignum) *thinks* he's *thinking*; the other will chatter your very head off—his matter compounded of dull trivialities, commonplace remarks, and the most venerable of old woman's gossip, all which he calls conversation. Query 1. Which of the two is the *least* to be endured? Query 2. Were you to be indicted for that you did accidentally toss them both (or any of the like) out at window, whereby did ensue "a consummation devoutly to be wished," would not a jury of any sensible twelve of your countrymen return a verdict of "Justifiable *Bore-icide?*"

Hobbleday rose to depart—but didn't. Almost wished he would. Expressed an apprehension that I was trespassing too far upon his patience and good-nature by *detaining him*. Assured me I didn't in the least. Sorry, indeed, to leave me; but it was past his dinner time. Slowly drew on one glove, smoothing each finger separately with the other hand: drew on the other glove with (as the French say) *le méme jeu*. Deliberately took up his hat, looked into the crown of it, and whistled part of a tune. Reiterated his regrets that I didn't play the flute; and repeated his assurance that I should find it a *very* great comfort. Made a move—("At last!" thought I)—but not towards the door. His move, like a knight's at chess, brought him, by a zigzag, only into another corner. Made the circuit of the room, and read all the cards and advertisements that were hanging against the walls, whistling all the time.

"Well, now—go I must. Sorry to leave you, *for the present.*"

Can't account for it; but, on hearing these three words, you might—(to use Hobbleday's own expression)—you might have knocked me down with a feather.

"By the bye, promised to take you to see my dear friend Rummins's museum on a *private* day. Can't to-morrow. Thursday, I'm engaged. Let me see;—ay, I'll send you a letter of introduction to him—'twill be the same thing—he'll do anything to oblige *me*. Now remember; anything I can do to be agreeable to you whilst you stay in our place—command me. Sorry our little dinner party can't take place *this* time; but when you come again to Little Pedlington—remember—come you must—positively won't take *no* for an answer. Everybody knows little Jack Hobbleday. Pooh, pooh! I tell you they do. Always willing to—always anxious to——good bye—see you at Hoppy's public breakfast to-morrow—good bye."

Really he is an obliging creature; and not to avail myself of his proffered civilities would be an offence.

Strolled out—(four o'clock, and the thermometer at 82°) and found the town deserted. Informed it was the fashionable day for walking to Snapshank Hill to see the view,—only five miles distant. How unfortunate am I that Hobbleday didn't acquaint me with this! for, as I am informed, having reached the top of the hill, one may look back again, and, with a tolerable telescope, discover the spire of Little Pedlington church—that being the chief purpose of the pilgrimage, though the spire, with the church into the bargain, may be seen without any trouble at all, from any one of the four corners of Little Pedlington churchyard.

Approached a window wherein were exhibited several profiles in black, and a notice that "Likenesses are taken in this manner, at only one shilling each, *in one minute*." There was a full-length of Hobbleday—no mistaking it—and of Mrs. Shanks, the confectioner; and of Miss Tidmarsh, with her poodle; and of many others, the originals of which I knew not, but all unquestionable likenesses, no doubt; for the works before me were Daubson's! Recollected his "all-but-breathing grenadier;" recollected, too, Jubb's noble apostrophe to him, commencing with

"Stand forth, my Daubson, matchless and alone!"

and instantly resolved to sit to him for a black profile.

My request to see Mr. Daubson was answered by a little girl, seated at a little table, and employed in preparing the happy canvas destined to receive immortality from the hand of the great artist: in other words, she was cutting up a sheet of drawing-card into squares of different sizes.

"Mr. Daubson can't possibly be disturbed just yet, sir," said she, with an air of importance befitting the occasion; "he is particularly engaged with a sitter."

"Then," replied I, "I will call again in an hour or two, or to-morrow, or the next day."

"But," continued she (not noticing what I said), "if you will take a seat, sir, for half a minute or so, he will see you. The lady has been with him nearly a minute already!"

Recollected Daubson's expeditious method of handing down to posterity his mementos of the worthies of his own time—"perpetuating" is, I believe, the word I ought to use.

And this word reminds me of an untoward circumstance which occurred (not in Little Pedlington, but at another equally well-known place—Paris) upon the occasion of a Welsh friend requesting me to take him to the studio of the Chevalier G——, (unquestionably the best portrait-painter in France), whose works he expressed a great desire to see. The name of the party introduced, which was well known, would have been a sufficient passport to the chevalier, even had it not been countersigned by me, and he was received with flattering attention—the painter himself conducting him through the studio, and carefully exhibiting to him his choicest productions. The chevalier's portraits were of high merit as works of art, yet, I must admit, he had been somewhat unfortunate in his originals, who certainly had not furnished his pencil with the most beautiful specimens of the "human face divine." My friend examined the pictures with great minuteness, but made no remark, although the chevalier understood English perfectly well. Having completed the tour of the gallery, the painter, whose vanity was scarcely less than his politeness, turned towards his visitor with an evident, and no unnatural, expectation of some complimentary observation. The latter, having given one last and general glance around him, exclaimed, — "*Monsieur le Chevalier*—what devilish infatuation can induce people to desire to perpetuate their d—d ugly faces!—*Monsieur le Chevalier*, I wish you good morning."

Resolved that the recollection of this anecdote should not be lost upon me on the present occasion.

Ushered into the presence of the great artist. As it usually happens with one's preconceived notions of the personal appearance of eminent people, mine, with respect to Daubson, turned out to be all wrong. In the portrait of Michael Angelo, you read of the severity and stern vigour of his works; of tenderness, elegance, and delicacy in Raphael's; in Rembrandt's, of his coarseness as well as of his strength; in Vandyck's, of refinement; in all, of intellectual power. But I must own that, in Daubson, I perceived nothing indicative of the creator of the "Grenadier." Were I, however, to attempt to convey by a single word a general notion of his appearance, I should say it is *interesting*. To descend to particulars:—He is considerably below the middle height; his figure is slim, except towards the lower part of the waistcoat, where it is protuberant; his arms are long, and his knees have a tendency to approach each other; face small, sharp, and pointed; complexion of a bilious hue, the

effect, doubtless, of deep study; small gray eyes; bushy black eyebrows; and head destitute of hair, except at the hinder part, where the few stragglers are collected and bound together pigtail-wise. Dress:—coat of brown fustian; waistcoat, stockings, and smalls, black; silk neckerchief, black; and, I had almost added, black shirt, but that I should hardly be warranted in declaring on this point upon the small specimen exhibited. Manners, language, and address, simple and unaffected; and in these you at once recognized the GENIUS.

Having told him, in reply to his question whether I came to be "done?" that I had come for that purpose, he (disdaining the jargon, common to your London artists, about "Kitcats," and "whole-lengths," and "Bishop's half-lengths," and "three-quarters," and so forth) came at once to the point, by saying—

"Do you wish to be taken short—or long, mister?"

Told him I should prefer being taken short.

"Then get up and sit down, if you please, mister."

I was unable to reconcile these seemingly contradictory directions, till he pointed to a narrow, high-backed chair, placed on a platform, elevated a few inches above the floor. By the side of the chair was a machine of curious construction, from which protruded a long wire.

Mounted, and took my seat.

"Now, mister, please to look at that," said Daubson; at the same time pointing to a Dutch cuckoo-clock which hung in a corner of the room. "Twenty-four minutes and a half past four. Head *stiddy*, mister."

He then slowly drew the wire I have mentioned over my head, and down my nose and chin; and having so done, exclaimed, "There, mister, now look at the clock—twenty-*five* minutes and a half. What do you think of *that?*"

What could I think, indeed! or what could I do but utter an exclamation of astonishment! In that inconceivably short time had the "great Daubson" produced, in profile, a perfect outline of my bust, with the head thrown back, and the nose interestingly perked up in the air. "Such," might Hoppy well exclaim, —"such are the wonders of art!"

"Now, mister, while I'm giving the finishing touches to the pictur',—that is to say, filling up the outline with *Ingy*-ink,—I wish you'd just have the goodness to give me your *candid* opinion of my works here. But no flattery, mister;—tell me what you *really* think. I like to be told of my faults; I turn it to account; I improve by it."

Can a more agreeable task be assigned to you than that of delivering to an artist, an author, or, indeed, to anybody, a *candid* opinion of his productions; especially if, in the excess of your candour, you temper a hundred-weight of praise with but one little grain of censure? Let mine enemy walk through the rooms of the Royal Academy arm-in-arm with an exhibitor, and try it—that's all.

Looked at the profiles hanging about the room. Said of them, severally, "Beautiful!"—"Charming!"—"Exquisite!"—"Divine!"

"So, so, mister," said Daubson, rising, "I've found you out: you are an artist."

"I assure you, sir," said I, "you are mistaken. I am sorry I cannot boast of being a member of that distinguished profession."

"You can't deceive me, mister. Nobody, excepting one of us, can know so much about art as you do. Your opinions are so just, it can't be otherwise. But these are trifles not worth speaking of—though they may be very well in their way, mister—and though, without vanity, I may say, I don't know the man that can beat them. But what think you of my great work—my 'Grenadier,' mister? Now, without flattery."

Encouraged by the praise of my connoisseurship, and from so high a quarter, I talked boldly, as a connoisseur ought to do; not forgetting to make liberal use of those terms by the employment of which one who knows little may acquire a reputation for connoisseurship amongst those who know less; and concluding (like the last discharge of rockets at Vauxhall) by letting off all my favourite terms at once.—"Mr. Daubson," said I, "I assure you, that for design, composition, drawing, and colour,—for middle distance, foreground, background, *chiar'-oscuro*, tone, foreshortening, and light and shade,—for breadth, depth, harmony, perspective, pencilling, and finish, I have seen nothing in Little Pedlington that would endure a moment's comparison with it."

"Where could you have got your knowledge of art, your fine taste, your sound judgment, if you are not an artist? I wish I could have the advantage of your opinion now and then—so correct in all respects—I am sure I should profit by it, mister. Now—there is your portrait: as like you as one pea is to another, mister."

"Yes," said I, "it is like; but isn't the head thrown rather too much backwards?"

Daubson's countenance fell!

"Too much backwards! Why, mister, how would you have the head?"

"My objection goes simply to this, Mr. Daubson. It seems to me that, by throwing the head into that position——"

"Seems to *you*, mister! I think I, as a professional artist, ought to know best. But that is the curse of our profession: people come to us, and would teach *us* what to do."

"You asked me for a candid opinion, sir; otherwise I should not have presumed to——"

"Yes, mister, I did ask you for a candid opinion; and so long as you talked like a sensible man, I listened to you. But when you talk to a professional man upon a subject he, naturally, must be best acquainted with——backwards, indeed! I never placed a head better in all my life!"

Reflecting that Daubson, "as a professional man," must, consequently, be infallible, I withdrew my objection, and changed the subject.

"How is it, sir," said I, "that so eminent an artist as you is not a member of the Royal Academy?"

"D—n the Royal Academy!" exclaimed he, his yellow face turning blue: "D—n the Royal Academy! they shall never see me amongst such a set. No, mister; I have thrown down the gauntlet and defied them. When they refused to exhibit my 'Grenadier,' I made up my mind never to send them another work of mine, mister; never to countenance them in any way: and I have kept my resolution. No, mister; they repent their treatment of me, but it is too late; Daubson is unappeasable: they may fret their hearts out, but they shall never see a pictur' of mine again. Why, mister, it is only last year that a *friend of mine—without my knowledge*—sent them one of my pictur's, and they rejected it. They knew well enough whose it was. But I considered that as the greatest compliment ever paid me,—it showed they were afraid of the competition. D—n 'em! if they did but know how much I despise 'em! I never bestow a thought upon 'em; not I, mister. But that den must be broken up;—there will be no high art in England whilst that exists. Intrigue! cabal! It is notorious that they never exhibit any man's pictur's, unless he happens to have R.A. tacked to his name. It is notorious that they pay five thousand a-year to the *Times* for praising *their* works and for not noticing mine. D—n 'em! what a thorough contempt I feel for 'em! I can imagine them at their dinners, which cost them thousands a-year;—there they are, Phillips, and Shee, and Pickersgill, and Wilkie,

and Briggs, laying their heads together to oppose me! But which of them can paint a 'Grenadier?' D—n 'em! they are one mass of envy and uncharitableness, that I can tell you, mister."

"Happily, Mr. Daubson," said I, "those vices scarcely exist in Little Pedlington."

"Unheard of, mister. I don't envy *them*—I envy no man—on the contrary, I'm always ready to lend a hand to push on any rising talent that comes forward;—though, to be sure, I'll allow no man to take profiles in Little Pedlington whilst *I* live: that's self-preservation. But they!—they'd destroy me if they could. But, bad as some of them are, the worst are those envious fellows, Turner and Stanfield. They have done their utmost to crush me, but they have not succeeded. Why, mister, last summer I began to do a little in the landscape way. No sooner were my views of the Crescent and of Little Pedlington Church mentioned in our newspaper, than down comes a man from London with a *camera-obscura* to oppose me! Who was at the bottom of that? Who sent him? Why, they did, to be sure. The envious ——! But I didn't rest till I got him out of the town; so that scheme failed. No, no, mister; they'll not get me amongst them in their d—d Academy, at least, not whilst they go on in their present style. But let them look to it; let them take care how they treat me for the future; let them do their duty by me—they know what I mean—or they may bring the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer' about their ears. For my own part, I never condescend to bestow a thought upon them! D—n 'em! if they did but know the contempt I feel for them!"

Here another sitter was announced; so I received my portrait from the hands of the great artist, paid my shilling, and departed.

"So then," thought I, "genius, even a Daubson's, is not secure from the effects of envy and persecution (real or imaginary) even in Little Pedlington!"

Six o'clock. Returned to mine inn. In the course of the evening received a note from Hobbleday, enclosing *sealed* letters to Rummins and Jubb.

"Dear Sir,—Sorry cannot have pleasure of accompanying you to my dear friend Rummins, neither to my worthy friend Jubb. Send letters of introduction,—spoke in warmest terms,—all you can desire. Sorry sha'n't see you to dine with me

this time,—next time you must,—no denial. Believe me, my dear sir, your most truly affectionate friend,

"JOHN HOBBLEDAY.

"P.S.—*Do* think of my advice about flute,—*do* turn your mind to it—will find it a great comfort."

Will not believe otherwise than that Hobbleday is a warm-hearted, sincere little fellow.

To-morrow to Hoppy's public breakfast, where I shall meet all the beauty and fashion of Little Pedlington. Afterwards with my letters to Rummins and Jubb. With such warm introductions from their friend Hobbleday, what a reception do I anticipate!

CHAPTER VII.

Awful conflagration—Pleasures and advantages of early rising—Charity unexampled—Meet a great man. Who?—Jack Hobbleday's marketing: well-considered economy—The great man no less a personage than Felix Hoppy, M.C.—How to get your money's worth—Another of the advantages of early rising—A visit to Simcox Rummins, F.S.A.—Projects of the F.S.A.: all disinterestedly and praiseworthily *pro bono publico* — Avail myself of Hobbleday's introduction and present his flattering letter: results—"O, Mr. Hobbleday!!!"

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17TH.—Aroused by a violent knocking at my door. "What *is* the matter?" said I, startled by the noise.

"Get up, sir, for Heaven's sake, get up," cried the chambermaid: "the house is o' fire!"

"The house on fire! What's o'clock?" inquired I.

"Almost six, sir. Get up, get up, get up!"

"Only six o'clock? and the house on fire!" To this there was no reply; for the chambermaid having fulfilled her duty by communicating the intelligence to me, was proceeding in her laudable occupation of alarming such of the lodgers as were still (to speak poetically) "in the arms of Morpheus."

Albeit unused to pay my respects to the sun at his levée, the present provocation was irresistible. Rising early for the idle purpose of "brushing with early feet the morning dew," and listening to the matin song of the lark, is one thing; performing the same disagreeable exploit to avoid being burned in one's bed, is another; so I arose and dressed. Expected, as the smallest compensation for this untimely disturbance, that I should be enabled to enrich this my journal with an account of the dangers I had to encounter in making my way through clouds of curling smoke and volumes of the "devouring element"—of rushing along corridors and down staircases

enveloped in flame—haply of snatching a female, young and beautiful, from the "awful jaws of destruction." Alas! no such good fortune was mine. On opening my door I was regaled, to be sure, with a very disagreeable odour of soot; but, disappointment ineffable! I walked down stairs uninterrupted by either of the antagonists for whose opposition I had prepared myself. Nowhere was a blaze, nor even a single spark of fire, to be seen; and (to render my mortification complete), in reply to my anxious inquiries concerning the whereabout and the extent of the *conflagration*, I was informed by Scorewell that it was only the kitchen-*chimley* which had been o' fire, but that he, assisted by the waiter, had succeeded in extinguishing it with a bucket of water or two!

"And was it for this?" thought I, with a sigh.

In about half-an-hour after the event—time enough to have allowed of the "Green Dragon" being burned to the ground—three ragged little boys, headed by the parish beadle, came dragging along a fire-engine somewhat bigger than a wheelbarrow. Having waited for some time, with eyes anxiously fixed on the building, and nothing occurring to require their services, "Come, boys," with a shake of the head, and in a melancholy tone, said the liveried guardian of the public safety, —"come, boys, take the engine back again: *there's no hope.*"

This reminded me of the *naïve* complaint of a certain person (well known as a subscriber to most of the public charities, a follower of the public sights and amusements of London, and a constant attendant at the parks in the skating season), that although he had been a life-governor of the Humane Society for nearly four months, and visited the parks every skating day, he had not yet been lucky enough to see any one drowned!

There is, generally speaking, a beautiful proportion in things. The destruction of the Houses of Parliament by fire was, for some time, the prevailing topic of conversation in London: in like manner, the fire in Scorewell's kitchen-chimney obliterated the remembrance of the losing and the finding of Miss Cripps's bag, and became the talk of all Little Pedlington during the whole of this day. Compared with the relative extent, population, and importance, of the two towns, the interest of the two events is about equal. The political economist, perhaps, and the statistician, may think lightly of this notion; yet I apprehend there is something in it which might be worth the consideration of the moralist or the observer of manners, nevertheless.

Well, having been at the trouble of rising at six o'clock, I would not go to bed again, although it was then no more than seven. I have occasionally heard the pleasures and advantages of early rising extolled, especially by the Hobbledays of my acquaintance. I must be unlucky, indeed, thought I, if I do not derive *some* benefit from this experiment; though, as it is my first, my expectations shall be wisely moderate.

Walked into the town. Had the satisfaction of seeing the shutters taken down from several shop-windows—a very pretty sight; though, as none of the various commodities intended for sale are exhibited till later in the day, that is all there was to see. Passing a door, was almost choked by a cloud of dust and dirt suddenly broomed out by a young gentleman who was sweeping the shop. A little farther on, encountered another young gentleman, who, with a huge watering-pot, was describing large figures of eight on the pavement, whistling all the while. Endeavouring to skip out of reach of his fountain, first on one side, then on the other, received at each attempt a plentiful supply of water about the legs. Unacquainted, as yet, with early-morning etiquette, as the young gentleman did not beg *my* pardon, but, with an unconcerned air, continued to whistle and to water, I thought it might be proper to beg *his*. Did so. "No offence," said the young gentleman. Turning the corner of a street, came in contact with a chimney-sweeper; my appearance not improved by the collision. "All right again!" exclaimed a facetious baker, who ran against me within the same minute. An admirable illustration of the principle of compensation, certainly. A butcher's boy, turning suddenly round to nod to an acquaintance, struck me a smart blow on the head with the corner of his tray, out of which a leg of mutton was jerked by the concussion: received at the same time a well-merited rebuke, though in not very choice terms, for my awkwardness. Nearly thrown down by the milkman of Little Pedlington swinging one of his sharp-rimmed pails against my legs; the consequence was, a bruised shin, the injury of my trowsers, and a copious effusion of milk. Preparing to express my displeasure at the man's carelessness, but it being the unanimous opinion of three market-women, a bricklayer's labourer, the dustman, an itinerant tinker, the chimney-sweeper aforesaid (who strengthened the evidence against me by crying out, "Vy, he run against *me*, just now," and pointing to my dress in support of his testimony), together with an old lady with a basket of matches, a young one selling watercresses, the brickdust man, and the knife-grinder, by all of whom I was imme-

diately surrounded—it being the unanimous opinion, I say, of this respectable asssmblage, that I ought to make the man some compensation for the loss of his milk, I gave him half-a-crown, rubbed my shins and walked on.

Proceeded to a less frequented part of the town—the Crescent. Counted seven housemaids beating the dust out of seven door-mats, and five others trundling mops. Did'nt suffer much inconvenience from either of those operations, as I contrived to keep as far as possible out of the sphere of their influence, by walking in the muddy carriage-road. Saw several pretty heads peeping through the iron railings of the areas, in close conversation with juvenile butchers, bakers, grocers, and other *chargés d'affaires* of various tradesmen, occupied, no doubt, in delivering their mistresses' orders for the day. Witnessed an interesting incident—an act of charity !—a footman giving broken victuals to a beggar-girl. Concealed myself behind a projecting doorway, and paused to moralize the scene.

The beggar-girl was pretty, and, though all tattered were her garments, her person was plump and sleek, whilst her cheek glowed, not with the artificial hue borrowed by the wealthier and happier of her sex from the emporium of Hendry or Delcroix, but with the tinge which the finger of Hygeia herself had implanted there. In one hand she carried an empty basket covered with a cloth, the other bore one single bunch of matches. Small was the fan-like bundle of the slender and sulphur-pointed shreds, as might well befit a maiden's hand to bear; but the osier-woven pannier was capacious. "A footman has a heart," thought I. "Yes, ye lords ! who for your tyrannous oppression and manifold crimes are, ere long, to be unlorded—gainsay it as you will, I call Nature to witness, a footman has a heart!"

The beggar-girl approached and held towards him her now uncovered basket, whilst he—his ready hand obeying the impulse of his benevolent heart—threw into it the remnants, swept in disdain, perhaps, from the groaning table of his pampered and o'er-fed lord—those all-despised remnants which, to her, poor want-stricken maiden ! were an epicurean banquet. She covered her basket—in an ecstasy of gratitude she approached the benevolent youth—he (his compassionate heart swelling with rapture as he contemplated the object whose life, perhaps, his charity had saved) pressed his lips to hers—a bell was heard as from within the house—he, the oppressed slave to its tyrant summons, rushed headlong to obey it—she, the fair and virtuous daughter of want and woe, startled at the sound, fled like the

timid deer aroused by the insatiate hunter's horn—and vanished from my sight.

With truth may Jubb exclaim, that for Pedlingtonia,

"Plenty *all* her Cornucopia yields!"

when the very "broken victuals" (as such donations are termed) bestowed in the present instance, consisted of a rump-steak undressed, a cold roasted fowl *minus* a wing, a quantity of uncooked vegetables, an uncut quartern loaf, and *a silver fork and table spoon!* These last articles in the list prove, not only that a footman has a heart, but that his heart may be susceptible of the most refined delicacy of attention towards the fair sex. "In Little Pedlington alone," thought I, "could be witnessed a scene so interesting and so edifying: never, surely, hath Charity in form so refined been known to walk up the steps of a *London* area."

Walked on towards the market. On my way thither met a gentleman, who, from his dress, was evidently returning home from a very late party, for it was not yet much past seven o'clock. In walking he turned out his toes in a most exemplary style; and trod as lightly as if the streets of Little Pedlington had been paved with burning coals. As he passed, he honoured me with a very low bow: his bow was remarkable. He lifted his hat, at arm's length, from his head, and, in stooping, almost swept the ground with it. On turning to look after him, found that this act of politeness was not intended as a singular compliment to me, for that he did the same thing to every person he met: so that his hat was never out of his hand, and no sooner on his head than off again. Any common observer would have wondered that he did not wear out his hat; my wonder was he did not wear out his head: the constant friction *had,* indeed, worn out his hair, for his head was bald. His person was small, but finely proportioned; and his dress calculated to exhibit it to the utmost advantage. Black coat, fitted to his form with an accuracy which might have excited the envy of one of those wooden blocks we see at the doors of the London emporiums for cheap fashion; waistcoat white, from which rushed a cataract of shirt-frill, ornamented, as Mr. Fudgefield, the auctioneer of Little Pedlington, would describe it, with an unparalleledly large [*mock*] diamond [*which if it were real would be*] worth, at least, five hundred pounds; black smalls; open-worked black silk stockings, which set off a leg of exquisite form, though a

fastidious eye, perhaps, might deem it superabundant in calf; and dancing-pumps decorated with huge rosettes of black riband. Between the fore-finger and thumb of the left hand he held a small black cane, with a large black silk tassel depending from it; and, as if to show that he used it as an ornament merely, and not for support, he carried it with his fore-arm extended forward, and his elbow resting on his hip. Wondered who he could be: satisfied he was not one of the *nobodies* of the place.

In the market saw Hobbleday. Intended to inquire of him who was the remarkable gentleman I had just passed; but, as he was busily occupied—(for he was running about from stall to stall, and, with an earnest countenance, examining the various articles exposed for sale; whispering questions to the market-people, and mysteriously placing his ear to their lips to receive their replies)—I felt it would be ill-timed and improper to divert his attention from what was clearly an affair of some importance to him. Could account for the extraordinary trouble he was giving himself upon one of only two suppositions: either that Hobbleday was official inspector of the market; or that he had undertaken, as steward for some great entertainment to be given, to purchase the choicest commodities at the most reasonable prices. Did not long remain in doubt, for I was speedily joined by my obliging acquaintance.

"Ha! so you're here, eh?" said Hobbleday. "Well, everything must have a beginning—sure you'll like early rising when you get used to it. Yet it is a pity you are so late."

"Late!" exclaimed I; "why, it is hardly half-past seven!"

"Bless your soul, my dear fellow; I've been here these two hours—since half-past five—saw the first basket of cabbages opened; pooh-pooh! tell you I did."

"He is Inspector, then," thought I.

"Prodigious advantage in coming here early—save fifty *per cent.* in one's purchases."

Withdrew my too hasty conclusion, and resolved that the other supposition must be the true one.

"Now see here," he continued, at the same time drawing a lettuce from his pocket: "now guess what I paid for this?"

"I am not expert at guessing," replied I; "besides, as I am not a housekeeper, I am miserably ignorant of the usual cost or value of such commodities."

"But guess:—*do* guess."

I would not for worlds have it imagined that Hobbleday is a

bore; yet, as a bore *would have done*, he eleven times reiterated his desire that I would "guess." At length he continued—delivering the conclusion of his speech with an emphasis worthy the importance of the occasion:—

"Well, since you can't guess, I'll tell you. Sir, I paid for this fine lettuce, such as you see it, *only—one—penny!*"

"And is it possible, Mr. Hobbleday," exclaimed I, with astonishment, "that you have been at the trouble of coming here at five in the morning to purchase a penny lettuce?"

"Trouble, my dear sir! Bless you, it is no trouble to me: one must do something, you know. Besides, as I said before, I save fifty *per cent.* by it; I must have paid three halfpence for it at a shop."

"But surely that is not your only purchase?"

"My only purchase! Why, sir, this lettuce will serve me two days. Now I'll tell you how I contrive with it. The first day I take my lettuce and——"

Here the obliging creature favoured me with a long detail (which occupied twenty minutes) of his method of coaxing one penny lettuce into the performance of two days' duty. But as I have mislaid my notes relative to this point, I will not venture to trust my memory upon so important a matter.

"Pray pardon my curiosity," said I: "you come here at five in the morning; I find you busied in inspecting all the stalls, and asking questions of all the market-people; yet the upshot of all this is the purchase of——"

"What of that, my dear sir?" said Hobbleday (accompanying his words with a poke in my ribs); "it isn't for what I *buy;* but one gets at the price of things; one stores one's mind with knowledge—information. I'm no boaster; but"—(here he drew me down by the collar of my coat till he had brought my ear close to his mouth, when he added, in an emphatic whisper)—"but though I don't buy much, there's no man in all Little Pedlington knows the price of things so well as little Jack Hobbleday; and that's something to be able to say, eh?"

At this moment the gentleman whom I had lately passed crossed the market, bowing and bowing and bowing, as before. Inquired of my companion who he was.

"Who!—he!—that!"—exclaimed Hobbleday, in evident amazement at my ignorance. "Who *should* he be? *That*, my dear sir, is our Hoppy!"

With becoming reverence I looked after this celebrated personage till he had bowed himself out of sight.

"Judging by his dress," said I, "he must have been up all night at some party or assembly."

Hobbleday looked at me with an expression of countenance, and a shake of the head, which convinced me that I had not, by my remark, raised myself in his estimation—at least for my notions of the proprieties of society.

"Assembly!—Party! Pooh! pooh! What can that have to do with his dress? Never saw him dressed otherwise in my life: sunshine or rain; morning, noon, or night. *Really*, my dear sir, you seem to forget what he is. Dancing-master, and Master of the Ceremonies, too, of such a place as Little Pedlington! how *should* he dress? Must excuse me for saying a cutting thing: but clear to see you have no Master of the Ceremonies of London."

Abashed by the rebuke, and unable to boast of such a functionary for poor London, I abruptly changed the subject of conversation. Thanked him for the letters of introduction which he had sent me to Rummins and Jubb. Told him that, after breakfast, I should avail myself of them.

"Oh—ah!" said Hobbleday, with something like a show of confusion, which I attributed to regret at having just now so deeply wounded my feelings; "ah!—surely! Have said all you can desire.—Ahem!—But you say after *breakfast*. Thought you were going to Hoppy's Public Breakfast, at Yawkins's skittle-ground, at one o'clock."

"So I intend," replied I; "but I shall take breakfast at my inn."

"I see, you mean *only* to make a dinner of it, eh?"

"Nor dinner neither," said I.

"How odd! Don't you see what the bill says?" said Hobbleday, directing my attention to a posting-bill which announced the Grand Public Breakfast.

"Yes, Mr. Hobbleday, I see: 'Admission, two shillings, refreshments included'——"

He interrupted my reading with—"Refreshments?—Tea and hot rolls, my dear fellow—ham and eggs. You must pay two shillings whether you eat or not; so I always make it a rule to——"

I continued to read: "Refreshments included, *ad libitum*."

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed he; "limit 'em indeed! The bill says so, to be sure; limit who they please, they don't limit little Jack Hobbleday, that I can tell you. No, no, my dear fellow; pay my two shillings—no trifle, you know—so I make

it serve me for breakfast and dinner both. And, I say,"—(here he brought my ear in contact with his mouth, as before, at the same time honouring me with another poke in the ribs)—"and, I say, half the people who go there do the same thing, that I can tell you, *too*."

After a moment's pause, "Now," continued he, "I'll carry home my lettuce, and then I'll go to our Universal Knowledge Society, and read 'Guthrie's Geography' for an hour or two; and then I'll take a nap for an hour or two; and that will just fill up the time till the Breakfast."

"A nap so early in the day!" exclaimed I, somewhat astonished.

"Of course," replied he; "Nature is Nature"—(a philosophical reflection which I was not at the moment prepared to dispute); and he continued: "Ah! my dear fellow, I perceive you know nothing of the pleasures—of the *advantages* of early rising. Ah! for shame! You, who lie in bed till nine or ten, are as fresh as a lark all day long, eh?—in the evening ready for anything—read, talk, sing, dance,—no wish for bed; no enjoyment of your natural rest, as I have. But I, when eight o'clock comes, can't keep my eyes open; and am half asleep all the rest of the day into the bargain."

* * * * *

Eleven o'clock. Two hours to spare between this and the time fixed for the Master of the Ceremonies' Breakfast. Rummins's public day for exhibiting his museum is Friday; but as his "dear friend," and my most obliging acquaintance, who already does me the honour to "my dear-fellow" me, and (who has, as he assured me, "the privilege of introducing a friend there on *any* day of the week") has furnished me with a flattering letter of introduction to the great antiquary, I will at once avail myself of the advantage of it. Under such auspices as Hobbleday's, I feel confident of an agreeable reception. But, for my own satisfaction, let me once more refer to the exact words of Hobbleday's kind note to me.

"Sorry cannot have pleasure of accompanying you to my dear friend Rummins, neither to my worthy friend Jubb. Send letters of introduction—spoke in warmest terms—all you can desire. * * * *

"Your most truly affectionate Friend,

"JOHN HOBBLEDAY."

"Most truly affectionate friend!" Kind, obliging, warm-hearted Hobbleday! Yet this is the man stigmatized by Score-well as a humbug! O friendship! spontaneous as it is disinterested and pure! O shades of Castor and of Pollux! O Pylades! and Orestes, O! You, ye sublime exemplars of the noble passion! If ever——about to proceed to Rummins's, I have not time to work out my apostrophe in a way worthy of the subject; but what I mean to say is this, let those who complain that friendship is not to be found on the surface of our wicked world—a complaint which I do most devoutly believe to be rarely well grounded, except in the case of such as do not deserve to find it—let them, I say, try Little Pedlington.

To the residence of Simcox Rummins, Esq., F.S.A. The door opened by a little, slim woman, aged and tottering—the finest specimen of the living antiquities of the place I had yet seen—an appropriate appendage to the domestic establishment of the F.S.A. Her age (as I was afterwards told) ninety-four. Asked me if I wanted to see "little master."

"Little master! No," replied I. "My visit, my good lady, is to Mr. Rummins, the elder, who is, as I am informed, a gentleman of near sixty."

"That's him, sir," rejoined the old woman, as she ushered me into a small parlour: "but that's the name he has always gone by with *me*, and it's natural enough, for I was his nurse and weaned the dear babby when he was only three weeks old—as fine a babby as ever *war*—and he has never been out of my sight never since." (Without halting in her speech, she pointed to a drawing suspended over a buffet.) "There he is, bless him! done when he was only three years old over the cupboard with a dog behind him in sky-blue jacket and trowsers with sugar-loaf buttons running after a butterfly in a brown beaver hat just afore he was taken with the small-pox with a Brussels lace collar to his shirt and an orange in his hand which he bore like an angel though the poor dear babby's sufferings——"

"Thankee, thankee, thankee," cried I, forcing a passage through her speech; "but if you will have the kindness to inform Mr. ——"

It was in vain: for (unlike the generality of ladies of her vocation, who are usually not over-communicative of their information concerning the early diseases, sufferings, and escapes, of their interesting charges) she bestowed upon me a particular account of the "poor dear babby's" (the present illustrious F.S.A.'s) progress through the small-pox, chicken-pox, measles,

hooping-cough, rush, rash, thrush, mumps, dumps, croup, roup, and forty other sublime inventions, which I had, or had not, before heard of, for diminishing the numbers of the infantine population; nor did she cease till she had safely conveyed him through the scarlet fever which "took him"—happily, not off—in his fifteenth year. She then withdrew to inform Mr. Rummins of my visit.

Cannot say that I felt at all obliged to the old lady for the information, since it must, to a certain extent, diminish my interest in little master's "Life and Times," which is preparing for the press by Jubb, who will, doubtless, treat of those matters with becoming minuteness.

Being left alone, read the various printed "Schemes," "Projects," and "Prospectuses," which were scattered about the tables. The great antiquary's learning almost equalled by his philanthropy and patriotism. All conceived with a view to the benefit of the empire at large; but, as might be expected, to that of Little Pedlington more particularly; and—as it somehow struck me—*most* particularly to the advantage of Simcox Rummins, Esq., F.S.A., himself. Amongst many others were the two or three following:—

PROSPECTUS

OF A

NATIONAL EDITION

OF

Rummins's Antiquities of Little Pedlington.

When we reflect upon the march of intellect: when we reflect upon the spread of intelligence: when we reflect upon the improvements in the arts of printing and engraving: when we reflect upon steam-boats and rail-roads: when we reflect upon the facility with which all nations of the civilized world are brought into intercourse with each other by these means: when we reflect upon their mutual anxiety, in consequence of such facility, to become acquainted with each other's *Topography* and *Antiquities:* above all, when we reflect upon the growing importance of Little Pedlington, it cannot but be a matter of wonder and of regret that, although TROY has been illustrated by its Gell, and ATHENS by its Stuart, OUR TOWN should not as

yet have put forth a work worthy of its station in the map of Europe, and capable of satisfying the growing desires of society in its present more enlightened state. It is true that Mr. Rummins's 'Antiquities,' in a small duodecimo volume (to be had of the author, price one-and-sixpence), may be 'an admirable *vade-mecum* and pocket companion for the traveller, and which no traveller should be without,' (see 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer,' 25th April), yet, as that intelligent journal adds, 'a splendid edition, worthy of our town, and fit for the shelves of the library, is still a desideratum: and it is disgraceful to our country that no such monument exists,' &c. &c.

Mr. Rummins, feeling deeply for the honour of his natal town, and of the kingdom at large, is resolved that this reproach shall no longer have cause for existence; and, regardless of time, labour, and expense, has determined to publish an enlarged and improved edition of his work.

TERMS.

THIS NATIONAL EDITION, in one volume, post octavo, *embellished with four elegant lithographic engravings*, to be published BY SUBSCRIPTION, price four shillings; one-half to be paid at the time of subscribing, and the other half to be paid on delivery of the copies. Only five hundred copies will be printed; and, to prevent delay, the work will go to press as soon as four hundred and ninety-nine copies are subscribed for. To prevent trouble, subscriptions will be received by the author only.

Patriotic Rummins!

PLAN FOR AIDING THE FUNDS OF THE LITTLE PEDLINGTON ALMS-HOUSES.

Mr. Rummins,—having learnt, with the deepest and most heartfelt regret, that the eloquent sermon delivered on Sunday last by our highly-gifted curate, the Rev. Jonathan Jubb, in favour of the above-named charity (although it melted the hearts and drew tears from the eyes of a numerous congregation), did not (from a variety of adverse causes) produce (in a pecuniary point of view) the effect anticipated (only four shillings and twopence having been collected at the church-door), Mr. R. submits to the nobility, gentry, visitors, and towns-

people of Little Pedlington, who are ever foremost in the heart-soothing work of charity, the following plan for supplying the deficiency :—

MR. R. PROPOSES TO PUBLISH,

IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF THE SAID INSTITUTION,

An elegant Engraving of his lately-acquired treasure,

THE HELMET OF THE TIME OF KING JOHN.

The drawing will be made on stone by Mr. R. himself; and, after five hundred copies are sold, at one shilling each, to defray the necessary expenses, Mr. R. will PRESENT all that may afterwards remain, *together with the copyright in the stone itself*, to the trustees for the management of that praiseworthy institution; *the whole of the profits thereof to be applied in aid of its funds!*

Philanthrophic Rummins!

BEAUTIFYING OUR ANCIENT AND VENERABLE CHURCH.

The churchwardens and overseers of the parish of Little Pedlington having, in the most prompt and liberal manner, complied with the wish of several of the parishioners, 'that the roof of our ancient and venerable church be whitewashed,' Mr. Rummins suggests that a general meeting of the inhabitants of the place be held at the Green Dragon, on Wednesday next, at one o'clock, for the purpose of passing a vote of thanks to those gentlemen. Mr. R., regardless of all personal inconvenience to himself, will take the chair, and hopes and trusts that the meeting will be as numerous as the occasion requires.

Mr. R. having had the said vote of thanks (which he has *gratuitously* drawn up) printed on an elegantly-embossed card, each person, on entering the room, will have an opportunity of becoming possessed of this memorial of the occasion, *price only sixpence.*

Disinterested Rummins! Find me such an F.S.A. elsewhere than in Little Pedlington!

"Little Master" entered the room. Six feet two, and stout in proportion. Port and demeanour dignified—I had almost said

pompous—but what else ought I to have expected in so great a man? Speech, slow and solemn;—pro-nun-ci-a-ti-on precise, accurate even to inaccuracy, and so distinct as to be almost unintelligible—at least, to one accustomed, as I had hitherto been, to the conversation of ordinary people, who utter their words in an every-day sort of manner. The great antiquary delivered each syllable separately,—upon its own responsibility, as it were,—disconnected from its companions in the same word: in short, as a child does when it first gets into "words of three syllables" in its spelling-book. He wore a green shade over his eyes.

Slowly raising his head, so as to enable himself to see me from beneath his green shade, he pointed amongst the papers on the table, to the prospectus for his national edition, saying, in a sort of taking-it-for-granted tone, "For this;" at the same time he put a pen into my hand. Unable to comprehend what he meant, I at once delivered to him Hobbleday's kind letter of introduction, and said, "No sir—for this!" accompanying my words with a bow, and the involuntary "a-hem" which usually escapes one on feeling perfectly satisfied that *that* (such or such a thing) settles the business. Rummins first raised the letter to the tip of his nose, then slowly lowering it, held it out at arm's length, turned it up, down—examined it lengthways, breadth-ways—looked at the superscription, the seal; at length he made the solemn inquiry,—

"From whom?"—(pronouncing it *woom*)—"and what may be its ob-ject or pur-*pawt?*"

"It is, sir," replied I, "a letter of introduction to you, with which your friend Mr. Hobbleday has favoured me. I, like the rest of the world, am desirous of viewing your museum; but, as my stay in this place till Friday, your public day, is uncertain, and Mr. Hobbleday being allowed by you to introduce a friend on *any* day——"

Here I was interrupted by a long-drawn "*He!!!*" growled forth in a tone of mingled astonishment and disdain. I paused in awful doubt of what might next occur.

The F.S.A. having made three strides, which carried him from one end of the room to the other, and three strides back again, desired I would read the letter to him, the state of his eyes (in consequence of a cold he had taken) rendering it inconvenient to him to undertake the task himself: and he concluded with—"*He* in-tro-de-oos to the Rumminsian Museum!"

Either (thought I) Hobbleday, carried away by his enthu-

siastic love of obliging—perhaps by his scarcely-merited friendship for me, has promised a *little* beyond his power to fulfil; or, it may be, that I have chosen my time unluckily—have disturbed Mr. Rummins in his moments of profound meditation; in short (and reason sufficient), it may be, that Mr. Rummins is "not i' the vein." But here is Hobbleday's letter to the "dearest friend he has in the world," and, doubtless, that will set the matter right. Reassured by this reflection, I opened the letter, and read.

"Sir,——"

Somewhat disappointed that it was not "Dear Rummins," or "My Dear Friend," or, at worst (that lowest degree in the scale of friendship), "Dear Sir."

"Sir,

"Pardon liberty—not my fault—bearer wants to see your museum on a private day—wouldn't take such a liberty for myself; but you know how one is sometimes pestered—one don't like to refuse—so promised him letter of introduction. *Onternoo*, as the French say, don't know much of him—just took some wine with *me* at Scorewell's, t'other afternoon; so do as you like—don't put yourself to smallest inconvenience on account of,

"Sir,

"Your very respectful, humble Servant,

"John Hobbleday."

"P.S.—Can say you're busy. Leaves Lit. Ped. end of *this* week, so please say, will be happy to oblige me any day *next* week, for won't be here. Please read this to yourself, and please destroy when read."

Utterly confounded! Looked at Rummins. Rummins (who, in the excess of his astonishment, removed the green shade from his eyes) looked at me. I explained, and, as briefly as possible, stated the circumstances of my acquaintance with Hobbleday. Showed him Hobbleday's *kind* letter which had enclosed the introductions to himself and Jubb. Broke open the introductory note to Jubb, and found it in substance a counterpart of the other.

"Ex-tra-or-di-na-ry!" exclaimed the F.S.A.; "neither I nor my illustrious friend admit him to our houses; he is a bo-er."

"And," said I, apprehensively, and with hesitation,—for I felt deeply anxious for the purity of Little Pedlington in this one respect,—"and a—humbug?"

"E-mi-nent-ly so," replied Rummins.

"And is it so?" I mentally exclaimed; and a transitory wish crossed my mind that I were back again in London.

There was a pause, during which Mr. Rummins twiddled the corner of the subscription-sheet for his National Edition.

"Unpleasant for you, sir—very. If, sir, you had an in-tro-duc-ti-on to me—*any sort* of in-tro-duc-ti-on—"—and his eyes involuntarily fell on the subscription-sheet.

Bewildered as I was, and scarcely conscious of what I was doing, I wrote down my name as a subscriber for two copies, and paid the subscription-money in full.

At the end of a flattering speech from the learned antiquary (how I had come to merit it I know not), I received an invitation for that very evening, at six o'clock, to *tea;* when not only should I see his museum, but I should also meet Jubb himself!

This piece of good fortune, seconded by an hour's brisk walking on the Snapshank road, restored my spirits and my temper. On my return, I found parties of the beauty and fashion of Little Pedlington hastening to Hoppy's public breakfast, at Yawkins's skittle-ground. I joined the crowd. Mr. Hobbleday had informed me he should be there: and having resolved upon the course I should pursue with respect to him, I paid my two shillings and entered.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOPPY'S PUBLIC BREAKFAST—The M.C.'s announce-bill, a model for that style of writing—Signor Rumbello del Squeaki, the unrivalled foreign *Artiste*—His *third* last appearance—Unparalleled rapacity of the foreign Artiste: Who's to blame?—A hitch in the scenery, and symptoms of dissatisfaction amongst the M.C.'s generous patrons—Meet Hobbleday, and overwhelm him with shame and confusion—A hitch again: another disobedient performer—Unreasonable demands of the generous patrons: successfully resisted—Indispensable ceremony—The family with the fly—Altercation between the fashionables—Precedency: a point worthy of the consideration of the Ladies Patronesses of Almack's or the Herald's College—Awful expo*zee*.

UPON entering Yawkins's skittle-ground, where Mr. Felix Hoppy gave his seventh public breakfast, a printed programme of the morning's entertainments was presented to me. The principal object of attraction appeared to be that "extraordinary creature who" (according to Hobbleday's description of him) "actually played upon the Pandean pipes and beat a drum at the same time!" And, judging by the London estimate of a performer's talents, which are justly considered to be in exact proportion to the size of the letters in which his name is announced, this Pandean-piper must be one of unparalleled ability, for each letter of his was a foot long. Though an enthusiastic admirer of both the instruments performed upon, I do not pretend to a practical knowledge of either, nor, indeed, to a very nice judgment of the superiority of one performer upon them over another: therefore, as in all similar cases, I bow to the large letters, make an unconditional surrender to them of my own opinion, and applaud vehemently. Besides, were I sceptical or ignorant enough to doubt, or sufficiently learned to decide, I should be a bold man indeed to do either, when these are the very terms in

which the master of the ceremonies himself speaks of the *artiste** he has engaged for the delight of Little Pedlington. By the way, it cannot be doubted that this well, nay, elegantly-written announcement is the work of Mr. Hoppy himself: his taste and refinement are apparent in every line. Never did he draw more copiously from the "Well of English undefiled," than upon this occasion; and, upon the whole, never, perhaps, were his literary powers, of which he is justly proud, exhibited to greater advantage.

"RE-ENGAGEMENT FOR THIS MORNING ONLY,

And positively the LAST *last appearance*

OF THE UNRIVALLED AND NEVER-EQUALLED

SIGNOR RUMBELLO DEL SQUEAKI,

Principal Pandea-tympanist to his Majesty the King of Naples.

"The Master of the Ceremonies has the pleasing gratification of announcing to his numerous most honoured Friends and Patrons, that (in consequence of the unexampled crowd of visitors at the *first* last appearance, and in compliance with the most earnest request and entreaty of numerous families of distinction who were unable to obtain admission, in consequence of the unprecedentedly immense overflow, at the *second* last appearance, of this most unrivalled foreign *Artiste*, whose astonishing performance on the Drum and the Pandean Pipes *at the same time* has set all competition at defiance, and is, unquestionably, in the opinion of all competent judges, the most perfect *morceau* of musical skill that has ever electrified a British audience) he has fortunately succeeded, regardless of expense, in prevailing upon the SIGNOR to condescend to accept an engagement for *this morning only*,

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* *Artiste:* an admirable word (albeit, somewhat Frenchified), of late applied, with nice discrimination, to every species of exhibitor, from a rope-dancer or an American Jim Crow, down to a mere painter or sculptor. On looking into little Entick (my great authority in these matters), I find we have already the word *artist;* but, with stupid English perversity, we have hitherto used that in a much more restricted sense than its newly-imported rival, which it is now the excellent fashion to adopt. It is questionable, however, whether tumblers, buffoons, and the clowns in Ducrow's circle, will feel themselves much gratified at being comprehended under the same general term with such folks as Baily, Chantrey, Turner, Shee, Landseer, Wilkie, and the like.

being *positively* his *very* last appearance here, as he is compelled to leave Little Pedlington this evening, having received orders from

HIS EXCELLENCY THE NEAPOLITAN AMBASSADOR

to return immediately to his post in

LE CAPELLO DE LA ROI DE LE NAPLES.

"Upon this occasion, SIGNOR RUMBELLO DEL SQUEAKI will perform several of the most admired fashionable airs, and will also *condescend* to accompany the dancing from two o'clock till four, the commencement and conclusion of which will be notified by the

FIRING OF A REAL CANNON.

"*** On Wednesday next will be given the Eighth Public Breakfast of the Season, being for the

BENEFIT OF SIGNOR RUMBELLO DEL SQUEAKI,

And MOST POSITIVELY his last appearance."

What! more last words! a *third* last appearance this morning; off for Naples to-night; and another last appearance on Wednesday next! How are these seeming contradictions to be reconciled? or how is the intended journey to be performed? However, as I never interfere with what does not immediately concern me, I shall ask for no explanation of the difficulty; but merely note it down that the thing seems *odd*, and that they have a method peculiar to themselves of arranging these matters in Little Pedlington.

No sooner had I entered the ground than Mr. Felix Hoppy, tripping on tip-toe, came to welcome me to what he called "the Property." He was dressed precisely as I had seen him this morning, at seven o'clock, in the market-place. The loss of two front teeth gave an interesting lisp to his utterance, which (together with what, for want at the moment of any more expressive term, I shall call a mincing manner) was in the highest degree becoming a dancing-master and Master of the Ceremonies. Each word or two was accompanied with a bow. He completely fulfilled the idea conveyed by Hobbleday's brief, but forcible, description of him—"an elegant creature."

"Highly honoured—paramountly flattered—most welcome to the property—most exceedingly flattered by your honourable patronage, excellent sir."

Having thanked him for his polite reception of me, I expressed my regret at witnessing so thin an attendance—at the apparent backwardness of the public to reward his exertions for their amusement: there being, as I guessed, hardly fifty persons present.

"Pray condescend to pardon me, obliging sir; but this is the fullest attendance of the season—forty-three paying visitors—upwards of four pounds already taken at the door! With such honourable patronage 'the Property' *must* succeed. At the same time, I can *credibly* assure you, kind sir, that our expenses are enormous. In the first place, there's our great gun——"

"As to that, Mr. Hoppy," said I (with an obtuseness to the figurative at which, on consideration, I blushed),—"as to that, as your great gun is fired only twice, I don't perceive how——"

"Pray condescend once more to pardon me, honourable sir; by our great gun I mean the Del Squeaki. On his first engagement, we paid him five shillings a day, double the sum we had ever paid to any musician before; at his second, he insisted upon having his dinner into the bargain; and now, finding he is of some use to us"—(this he added with a sigh)—"*now* he has advanced upon us to three half-crowns!"

"To the honour of our country," exclaimed I, "*native* talent, in that department, is less rapacious."

To this remark the Master of the Ceremonies replied only by a slight shake of the head; and I continued,—

"But, doubtless, in proportion to your outlay for the amusement of the Pedlingtonians, you are rewarded by their patronage?"

"Sorry I must once more entreat your pardon, considerate sir; but the fact is, we depend for support entirely upon noble and illustrious visitors from London. The tradespeople and shopkeepers of the place are, of course, excluded from an elegant assemblage like this; and for the gentry, as most of them live in the Crescent, it would be preposterous"—(here again he heaved a sigh, which seemed to proceed from the very bottom of his dancing pumps)—"it would be out of human nature to expect *they* should come."

Unable to perceive the slightest connection between the consequence and the imputed cause—to understand why it should be "out of human nature" to expect a person's attendance at a public entertainment simply because he happened to reside in a crescent—I ventured to the M.C. a hint of my difficulty.

"See there, good sir," said he (at the same time pointing to the back of a row of houses, the windows of which, occupied by men, women, and children, commanded a view of the skittle-ground)—"see there! a heart-breaking sight it is; and yet one can hardly expect that people should pay to see my dancing and my fireworks, and hear my music, when they can enjoy it all from their windows, free—gratis—for nothing."*

"But yonder I see Mr. Hobbleday," said I; "with whom, by the bye, I must presently have a few words of explanation: he, at least, is, as he tells me, one of your constant patrons."

"Hobbleday?—*Gobble*day!" exclaimed Mr. Hoppy, with a fierceness of manner strikingly inconsistent with the previous blandness of the Master of the Ceremonies. "Patron, indeed! He comes in upon a free admission; devours eggs and ham in the most unfeeling manner; finds more fault with the entertainments than our newspaper critic himself; and is laid up with a fit of the gout once a year—which invariably happens to be on the night of my annual benefit-ball."

I had the authority of the Master of the Ceremonies himself for the fact, or I could not have believed that such instances of illiberality and unmitigated meanness were to be found in Little Pedlington.

Here our conversation was interrupted by cries, from various of the company, of "Shame! shame!" "Begin! begin!" "Mr. Hoppy!" "Master of the Ceremonies!"

Mr. Hoppy, looking at his watch, explained to me that it was ten minutes past the time when the *signor* ought to have com-

* By an association of ideas less remote than that which I have just alluded to, bethought me of an anecdote related by the grandfather of the present young Earl of D. His lordship had had some dispute (respecting the right of shooting over certain grounds) with one of his tenants, the back of whose house happened to be close upon his lordship's preserves. Some time afterwards the good-natured earl met the man, who was about to pass him with a sulky bow, and thus accosted him: "What! not stop and talk to me, B——! Although I wouldn't allow you to shoot, I told you that you might at any time have game for your family by sending to my keeper for it. Why haven't you done so? Never bear malice, man."—"Not I, thank you, my lord," replied the *independent* farmer; "I'll accept none of your game. Your lordship's pheasants come and roost o' nights in the trees under my windows; when I *want* a bird I put my hand out o' window and quietly pull one in by the tail: so you see I'm not the man to be under an obligation to the best lord in the land. Good day, my lord."

menced his performance, and that the company were impatient of the delay.

Mr. Hoppy left me, and, hat in hand, tripped towards the discontents. He bowed and simpered with overpowering elegance: what he said, I know not; but almost on the instant of his interference order was restored. From them he went, bowing all the way, to a bench at a short distance, on which was seated Signor Rumbello del Squeaki himself. The "Principal Pandea-tympanist to his Majesty the King of Naples" was appropriately habited in the costume of an Italian brigand; though, to my unpractised eye, his dress appeared to be a cast-off from the wardrobe of one of the London theatres. Some minutes elapsed, during which they were in conversaton; and, as I inferred from their gestures, and the sulky air of the signor, in no friendly mood. On approaching, I heard the M. C. in an imploring tone say to the *artiste*—

"But, my kind signor, allow me to entreat you—consider—it is nearly twenty minutes past time—the disappointment—the ——you may rely upon having it *after* the performance, *upon my honour*." These latter words he accompanied with a profound bow, and by placing his hand upon that part of his white waistcoat beneath which, he would have the signor to understand, was to be found a heart incapable of deception.

To this the "unrivalled FOREIGN *artiste*" replied—

"Come, come, Muster 'Oppy, it's o' no use your trying to gammon me. I'm agreed to 'ave three ha'-crowns for playing 'ere, and not a thump o' my drum or a blow o' my pipes do you get till I've got my money safe in 'and."

Astonished at the language of this address, I could not help exclaiming, in the words of Shakspeare—"Extant, and written in *choice Italian*."

"But, my good signor," resumed the M. C., "if you will but have the condescension to recollect our agreement——"

"Ay, ay; our agreement *ware* as I *ware* to 'ave 'alf my money down, and the rest arterwards; but on second thoughts, I'll 'ave it all. I ar'n't the chap to run no risk, not I. Suppose, ven all vas over, you vos to pocket the cash and run avay, as Joe Strutty did at Branford Fair? then I mought vistle, you know. So 'and over the stuff, or you gets no play out o' me."

The visitors again becoming clamorous, and the "unrivalled foreign *artiste*" continuing obdurate, Mr. Hoppy was reluctantly compelled to comply with the demand.

The Del Squeaki now adjusted his pipes to his chin, and slung

his big drum across his shoulders. Already had he set one foot upon the small platform on which he was to exhibit: there was a profound quiet, disturbed only by loud cries of "Silence! silence!" when he turned to the Master of the Ceremonies, and abruptly declared, that he would not begin unless he gave him a pot of ale!

"This is perfectly preposterous!" lisped the M.C.; "that is *not* in our agreement."

"No matter for that, Muster 'Oppy; I've just taken it into my 'ed, and I'll 'ave it." He withdrew his foot from the platform, and continued: "Give me vot I ax, or, as sure as my name's Rob Squeaks, I'm off to join my master vot I'm engaged to,—that's to say, the famous Muster Richar'son, at Vinklemouth Fair—and then there'll be a row in your garden. You can't do without me; so, you see, give me a pot of ale vot *an't* in my agreement, or I von't play: and then the company vill break your benches and tables—and sarve you right."

Mr. Hoppy now threw himself upon the opinion of his generous patrons, and, in terms pathetic, and with imploring looks, entreated them to support him in resisting such impudent extortion—so gross an attempt to take an unfair advantage of his helpless condition. To this his generous patrons unanimously replied, that that was no affair of theirs: that, indeed, they conceived it to be quite in order that an "unrivalled foreign *artiste*" should be humoured in everything he might desire: that as the Neapolitan ambassador [*id. est*, according to signor's own account, Mr. Richardson] had commanded his immediate return to his post in *Le Capello de la Roi de le Naples* [*id. est*, according to the same authority, Winklemouth Fair], they would not relinquish the present opportunity of hearing him; and that, in short, having paid their money for that purpose, they would insist upon it that Mr. Hoppy should, by all means, and at whatever sacrifice, fulfil *his* contract with *them*—Mr. Hobbleday (who had come in with an order) being one of the most strenuous in maintaining the justice of these positions. The Master of the Ceremonies consented to the new demand of the Del Squeaki. As he was proceeding to issue his mandate to one of the waiters to convey a pot of ale to the *artiste*, the latter, perceiving that the advantage was on his side, naturally, and as is usual in such cases, made the most of it: accordingly—"*And* summut to eat, also," vociferated the signor.

This supplementary *request* being also complied with, the Del Squeaki went through his astonishing performance; and the

auditors were delighted, enraptured, ecstasized, &c., &c., &c., as never before had auditors been delighted, enraptured, ecstasized, &c., &c., &c., in this sublunary world!

Found, upon subsequent inquiry, that the liberal *entrepreneur*, after paying expenses (including the three half-crowns, &c., to the Del Squeaki), was a loser of no more than four-and-sixpence by the morning's entertainment. Told also that Mr. Hoppy complained of even this moderate loss. Plague on the man! how much less did he wish to lose? But it is a trite observation that some people are never satisfied. Told, moreover, that the M.C. complains of what he calls the "tyranny and oppression" to which he has been obliged to submit!

Now, with submission, this is somewhat unreasonable. Be-praised and be-puffed, even to his own amazement, the "unrivalled *artiste*" very wisely doubles his terms: these complied with, he very considerately trebles them: compliance with this begets a natural demand for a pot of ale, although it be not "so nominated i' the bond;" and thence, as was decent and proper, the Principal Pandea-tympanist to his Majesty the King of Naples (or, as it might more truly have been set forth, his itinerant Majesty, Richardson, King of *Boothi*a), insists upon being supplied with an unstipulated "summut to eat also." Ah, Mr. Hoppy! if I might venture to perpetrate a profane parody on a line in the immortal "Tom Thumb," I should whisper in your ear—

"You make the giants first, and then *can't* kill them."

* * * * * * * *

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," and well was it for Hobbleday that there is much truth in this. I had not been unperceived by him, but he was too busily engaged to come to me, being laudably employed in diminishing the labour of the waiters—that is to say, by packing inside himself a quantity of eggs, ham, hot-rolls, and coffee, which, but for such considerate assistance, they must have undergone the trouble of removing. At length, the breakfast-tables being cleared preparatory to the commencement of the dancing, he approached me. His mouth was full; in one hand he bore a huge ham-sandwich which he had constructed for himself, and in the other a cup of coffee.

"Ah! my dear fellow," said he (talking and eating at the same time), "you're here, eh? But not eat anything! How odd! Must pay just the same whether you do or not, you know. Pooh, pooh! I tell you, you must! I say, little Jack Hobbleday was right, eh? Extraordinary creature that Signor del——"

"That *extraordinary* creature, Mr. Hobbleday," replied I (emphasizing every other word or two, as is the practice when one is savagely bent upon cutting a person to the very soul),—"that *extraordinary* creature, sir, by his 'concord of sweet sounds,' has so *calmed* my *irritated feelings*—so completely *subdued* the *rage* and *indignation* that were rising in my breast, that I shall take no further notice of your *very—extraordinary—behaviour*, than just to *return* you your *very flattering* letters of introduction to your *friends* Rummins and Jubb." And with these words I presented to him both his letters open.

Conscience-striken, with some difficulty he bolted the morsel which he had in his mouth, the effort producing a violent fit of coughing, which greatly alarmed me for his safety; and that, in its turn, by the convulsive movement which it communicated to his arms, causing him to jerk the lumps of ham from out their envelope of bread-and-butter, and to spill the entire contents of his cup over his nankeen trousers. When he was sufficiently recovered to articulate a few words, abashed and confused, he thus attempted to excuse himself, crossing his address to me with a disjointed apostrophe to his damaged nankeens:—

"My dear fellow—really, my dear sir—did you ever see such a mess?—Indeed, sir, if you'll believe me—wet through and through, as I hope to be saved!—most improper conduct of theirs to show my confidential letters—it will give me my death of cold.—As for Rummins, his age protects him, else, may I perish if—cost sixteen-and-sixpence, and new on only yesterday. Can take no notice of Jubb; his cloth protects *him*.—They'll wash, to be sure; but their beauty's gone for ever!—But don't set me down for a humbug, don't. If there's one character I despise more than another, it's a—awful accident, indeed! Can't conceive how uncomfortable one feels with one's—No fault of mine, 'pon my life; and, rest assured, that next time you visit our place—All eyes are upon me; must go.—Between ourselves, his museum not worth seeing—pooh, pooh! I tell you it isn't! and *that's* the reason why I—Can't stay to dance in such a mess; though I know my dear friend Hoppy has set his heart upon little Jack Hobbleday's dancing—No, no, I'm anything but a humbug; and if there's anything else whatever I can do for

you, *except* Rummins and Jubb—Good-bye, my dear fellow—Awful accident!—a thousand pities! The best fit I ever had in all my life!"

Symptoms of dissatisfaction again. Two o'clock has struck, and the signal for the commencement of dancing ("the firing of a real cannon") not yet made. Calls for the Master of the Ceremonies, and a repetition of the customary cries of "Shame! shame!"

For the honour of the M.C., I am bound to declare my opinion that the blame for the delay ought not to have been attributed to him. For the last four or five minutes he had been sedulously poking at the touch-hole of the piece with a lighted candle fastened to the end of a very long pole—a precaution which, as he made no pretensions to considerable skill in the science of gunnery, he had prudently adopted, in order to keep himself as far as possible out of the dangers necessarily attending such an undertaking. But the gun would not go off; it was evident (to use a theatrical phrase) there was a hitch in the scenery.

"Had he put any gunpowder into the cannon?" inquired one.

"Plenty,' was his reply.

"Which had he put in first—the powder or the wadding?" asked another.

After a moment's reflection, Mr. Hoppy declared, that "he was pretty clear—nay, he was positively certain, he had put the powder in first."

"Perhaps he might have omitted the trifling ceremony of priming?"

"No: he always made it a rule to prime the gun before he fired it."

Then, in that case, the company could come to but one conclusion: the devil was in the gun.

But the unlucky gentleman who is generally held answerable for the ill consequences of our own blunders, or negligences, or offences, could establish his innocence, in the present instance, by proving an *alibi;* for, upon a careful inspection, the true cause of the disobedient conduct of the obstinate four-pounder appeared to be, that some dull perpetrator of practical jokes had abstracted the priming, and, in place of it, filled the touch-hole with wet tea-leaves! Hereupon hisses, groans, and, from four or five persons (sounds most fearful to the ears of an M.C.!) calls of "Return the money!" These latter declared that, never having witnessed the ceremony of letting off a gun, they

had come upon that inducement only—reminding me of a certain intelligent person who made Paris his residence during an entire summer, for no other purpose than to eat melons and see balloons let off.

Mr. Hoppy now mounted a bench, and entreated the indulgence of his "honourable, noble, and illustrious patrons." He assured them that in the whole course of the many years he had "belonged to the Property," such an accident had never before occurred, and that he would raise heaven and earth to prevent a similar accident occurring again: that there was nothing he would not willingly do or suffer—no sacrifice he would, for a moment, hesitate to make—to satisfy the wishes of such an assembly as the one he had the honourable gratification of addressing. But (he continued) as to returning the money, he most humbly requested permission to take the liberty of assuring them, in the most respectful manner, that that was a moral impossibility, and altogether inconsistent with the long-established usages of "the Property." Moreover, he hoped he might be allowed to remind his munificent patrons that they had already enjoyed the breakfast which he had had the satisfaction of providing for them: as also to hint to two or three of those kind friends who had condescended to honour "the Property" with their presence, and who were the most clamorous in demanding the return of their money —that *they* had come in with orders!

The reasonableness of this address, seconded by its master-of-the-ceremony-like politeness and elegance, lulled the rising storm, and the preparations for dancing proceeded.

In a place like Little Pedlington, and at such an entertainment as a public breakfast given by the Master of the Ceremonies in Yawkins's skittle-ground, it may not unreasonably be supposed that "noble and illustrious visitors from London," who attend it, are tenacious concerning the etiquette of precedency. And although, in the confusion of a rush of upwards of forty persons, each struggling to secure the most advantageous place for listening to the ravishing performance of the Del Squeaki; or even in the scarcely more regular arrangement of the breakfast table (at which each naturally takes possession of any seat nearest to the cold ham or the hot rolls, which may chance to be vacant), the observance of such ceremony is not insisted upon: it is, nevertheless, important, if not absolutely indispensable, to the existence of polite society, that, when persons are brought together for the *dance*, the laws of precedency should be rigidly adhered to.

It appears that hitherto the place of honour had been unhesitatingly conceded to Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs Hobbs (Scorewell's "family with the fly," it may be remembered), except, indeed, when Colonel Dominant condescended to honour the garden with his presence. Upon such occasions the colonel, although he did not dance, would just occupy the enviable place for a minute or so—"Just to prove his right to it," as he said—and then retire. Before *his* pretensions, even those of the Hobbs Hobbses quailed.

Upon the present occasion, the Master of the Ceremonies was sorely perplexed by the several and contending claims of distinguished persons who had this day for the first time honoured him with their company; these being people of no less importance than Mr. St. Knitall and his lady, and Mr. and Mrs. Fitzbobbin. Colonel Dominant not making his appearance, Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs Hobbs were proceeding to their usual station, when Mr. and Mrs. Fitzbobbin rushed passed them and took possession of it.

"Come out o' that," said Mr. Hobbs Hobbs: "them 'ere is our places."*

"We shan't," fiercely replied Mr. Fitzbobbin; at the same time pulling on a white kid glove in a way that clearly showed he was not the man to be put down: "we shan't: we paid our money as well as you, so the place is as much our'n as your'n."

"If some folks don't know how to behave themselves when they get into genteel company, perhaps there's other folks as 'll teach 'em," said Mr. Hobbs Hobbs.

"I wish you may get it," coolly observed the other, who did not appear to be in the least intimidated by the implied threat.

"My dear Mr. Hobbs Hobbs," said Mrs. H. H., "don't bemean yourself by getting into a con*tor*tion with such folks. Leave the Master of the Ceremonies to settle the *pint*. You may see as how they have never been at Little Pedlington afore. Margate—by the steamer. Ha! ha! ha!"

* The gallant achievement of cramming *four* grammatical blunders into only seven monosyllables stands, as yet, I believe, unrivalled.—"So," said a certain person (in the presence of several others who can vouch for the fact) to a well-known and wealthy patron of the opera;—"So, I understand you are going with * * * * to the opera, to-night?"—"*Him* and *me has took* two stalls," was the reply.

The altercation had proceeded thus far when, fortunately, the Master of the Ceremonies arrived to interpose his authority. This he exercised with so much judgment, and with decision so tempered by suavity, that though he could not exactly please both parties, even the dissatisfied acquiesced in his decree. He awarded the contested place to the Hobbs Hobbses upon two grounds: first, by right of long-maintained possession; and next, and chiefly, for that they travelled in their own one-horse fly, which the other party did not. As Mrs. Fitzbobbin receded, she said with a sneer, "Of course, my dear Fitz, we must give up to *carriage* company! But *sitch* carriage company! One-horse fly! Ha! ha! ha! Carriage company! All round my hat."

"Ha! ha! ha! That's a teazer, I think," said Mr. F. with an approving chuckle at his lady's wit: "and what'll you bet we can't buy 'em out and out—fly and all? Ha! ha! ha!"

"I shouldn't wonder," quietly observed Mr. Hobbs Hobbs, and scarcely deigning a look at his adversary. Then, turning to his lady, he said in an affected whisper, yet so loud as that every one should hear him: "When we relate this 'ere scene to our *friend* Lord Squandermere, I think he won't laugh a bit." (!!!)

During these disputes, Mr. Twistwireville and Mr. De Stewpan (the latter being the gentleman mentioned by mine host of the Green Dragon as "remarkably particular about his wine") were standing arm-in-arm, picking their teeth, and looking on with an affectedly careless air. Occasionally they indulged in a titter, smiled, turned up their noses, and whispered each other: by all which it was clear they would impress you with a notion how exceedingly amusing were the disputes of *such* people to men of *their* quality.

But here a new difficulty arose, and one, apparently, less easy of settlement than the former. Mrs. St. Knitall, though she willingly conceded the right of the first place to the party with the imposing duplication of name, and the friends of a lord, moreover, still thought she had quite as good a right to the second as Mrs. Fitzbobbin—for who *was* Mrs. Fitzbobbin, she should like to know?

The point for the M.C. now to decide was one of sufficient nicety to perplex a herald at a coronation, or even the conductors of Almack's, namely: Whether or not a *Fitz* had a right to take precedence of a *St.* A question turning upon so delicate a point might have puzzled a wiser head than even Mr. Hoppy's; so Mr. Hoppy did not hesitate to confess himself puzzled

exceedingly. He suggested that, setting aside that distinction, the party whose name appeared first in his subscription-book should have precedence. To this Mr. St. Knitall objected; knowing, probably, that his did not. Hereupon high words occurred between Mr. St. K. and Mr. Fitz B. This altercation was not carried on in the playful and neatly-sarcastic style which had distinguished the previous one: here was no small-sword fence, but the bludgeon: in this case the gentlemen had recourse to language which—in short, they regularly O'Connellized each other.

Cards were hastily (and as the event proved, inconsiderately) exchanged; and fatal might have been the consequences had not the M.C. adroitly seized them both in their transit. He suggested that the gentlemen should permit him to throw both cards up into the air; and that whichever first fell to the ground should determine the disputed point in favour of its owner. This was agreed to; when, lo! it appeared that "Thomas Knitall, hosier, Leadenhall Street," was the victor in the contest for precedence with "Samuel Bobbin, haberdasher, Tottenham-court Road."

Upon this discovery the Hobbs Hobbses withdrew; declining to dance "in *sitch* company," as Mr. Hobbs Hobbs expressed it.

"I say, De Stewpan," said Twistwireville, with a titter, "here's a precious expo*zee!* *Por*sitively *ridiclus!*"

"*Eme*zingly *ridiclus*," replied his companion—he the "remarkably particularly about his wine."

"Well," exclaimed the late Mr. *Fitz* Bobbin, who had prudently concealed his knowledge of the other parties for so long as he had his own trifling disguise to maintain, but who now was resolved not to fall alone—"well, at any rate we are as good as Mr. Twistwire, the birdcage-maker of Holborn, or Dick Stewpan, a cook at the Lunnun Tavern, let out on an 'oliday for a week in the dull season."

At this moment a groom in livery rushed in, crying to the doorkeeper, "I am not going to stay: I only want to speak a word to Mr. Hobbs."

"George Hobbs," said he, addressing the family-with-the-fly gentleman, "your holiday's cut short: Lord Squandermere has sent me to order you up to town immediately: *Mounseer* is taken suddenly ill, and till you return, my lord has nobody that he can fancy to tie a shoe-string for him." And away went the groom whistling Handel's "Every *Valet* shall be exalted."

The sky had been louring for some time, and presently, a

heavy shower came down, which abruptly terminated the morning's amusements—an interruption not disagreeable, perhaps, to certain of the company.

Being engaged for this evening at Mr. Rummins's, returned home to an early dinner:—wondering by the way whether pretensions upon a similar scale, or a smaller, or a greater, though upon no better foundation, are ever asserted in other places besides Little Pedlington.

CHAPTER IX.

RUMMINS'S CONVERSAZIONE.

A time-serving innkeeper: delicate attentions.—A CONVERSAZIONE—Introduced by the great antiquary to all the big-wigs of Little Pedlington—A prodigy: a juvenile "Controller of Destinies"—Abstraction, poetical and scientific—The RUMMINSIAN MUSEUM exhibited—Its rare contents described, and learnedly descanted on by the F.S.A.—Antiquarian arguments, as usual, unanswerable—Symptons of jealousy and impatience, unexampled at a *conversazione*—Song by Miss Cripps, the Pedlingtonian Sappho: the most approved [English] method of singing—Patronizing Capitalist—Cant of Criticism: its usefulness—Astounding discovery: "Garth did not write his own Dispensary"!—Pretty compliment from Sappho—Each partial to his own pursuits: a rational distinction touching the collecting-mania—His *pictur'* neglected, Daubson departs in dudgeon—Snargate's grand architectural project explained: an objection ventured; consequences; awful denunciation of vengeance by the Controller of Destinies—Rare occurrence: *i.e.*, toadying a critic—Envy incompatible with true genius: Rummins and Jubb—Jubb impatient to recite his "Ode to Patience"—Qualified praise dangerous—Sappho and the Conundrumist women above vulgar prejudices: interesting proofs thereof—N.B. Never to quit a *conversazione* till the last: "I leave my character behind me."—Bid farewell to Little Pedlington; and why.

HAVING ordered for my dinner nothing more than a veal-cutlet, I was not a little astonished at the parade with which the repast was served. Heard Scorewell withoutside calling, in an authoritative tone, "Now—Number Sixteen's dinner—look sharp." Presently the door was thrown open, and there entered, in procession, Scorewell with a dish of cutlets, who was succeeded by the head-waiter carrying a dish of broccoli, who was followed by a boy with a couple of potatoes, who was followed by another boy with a butter-boat. These things being placed in due form upon the table, Scorewell and his satellites hopped and skipped

round and round it; one officiously moving the pepper-castor half an inch to the right of the place where it stood; another shoving the vinegar-cruet half an inch to the left; a third taking up a spoon and laying it down again with an air of busy-ness,—each doing something which did not need to be done. This display of good-for-nothing activity ended, the assistants left the room; and Scorewell, after a short preparatory cough (at the same time, with a sort of chess-playing action, displacing and replacing every article on the table), said,—

"Hope you'll excuse what's past, sir—attendance in future shall be better than it has been, sir—no fault of ours, sir; but now that that family-with-the-fly is gone, as I am happy to say, sir——Plague on 'em! The gentleman—I mean that man, that Hobbs, who has no more got two Hobbses in his name than I have, turns out, after all, to be nothing more than valet to Lord Squandermere! But I was right: I thought from the first they were nobody. Your real gentlefolks never give no trouble, never complain. But, as for them, nothing was never good enough for 'em; and as for waiting on, I'm sure the little profit I have got by 'em will hardly pay for the bell-wires they have worn out. Ahem! What wine would you choose to take to-day, sir?"

"Remembering what you told me a day or two ago," replied I—(and to my shame I confess it, it is with malice prepense that I did so)—"remembering *that*, Scorewell, I shall not pretend to a choice; so give me a little of the wine which you are in the habit of serving to Mr.—Mr.—I forget his name, but I mean the gentleman who is so 'remarkably particular about his wine:' Mr. *De* Stewpan, I think it is."

"Particular, indeed! Another bird of the same feather, sir. Cook at the London Tavern, sir. But he never deceived *me*. From the first moment I saw him, sir, I thought he was no *real* gentleman, for all the *De* to his name. And his friend Twist-wire, the birdcage-maker, with a *ville* tacked to his! A pretty show-up of the whole party, indeed, there has been at Mr. Hoppy's public breakfast this morning. When great folks go into a strange place incog. they make themselves look little; your little folks have nothing for it, therefore, upon such occasions, but to look big. But I saw through them from the first, and glad am I that they have taken themselves off. Of course, they could not stay in this place after such an exposure."

"And yet, if I remember rightly, it was but a day or two ago

you described them all to me as being 'very tip-top people indeed.'"

"O—yes—true, sir—that's to say, they spent a good deal of money; but I never meant that they were gentlefolks. No, no, sir; my occupation sharpens a man's wits; and, for my part, I have seen so much of the world (as is natural in a place like Little Pedlington), that I can make out what people are with half an eye. Ahem! I think you told me yesterday, sir, that you were not in the army—nor the navy—but that you—that you——" He hesitated and paused.

"I told you nothing on the subject."

"And I am sure you are not in the church, sir, by your wearing a blue coat. No, no, sir; Scorewell has seen too much of the world to be mistaken on such points.—Ahem!—I have heard it said, sir, that the bar is a very fine profession; and I should think *you* ought to know, sir."

"I have no better means than any one else of knowing it," replied I, resolved to throw him upon his own self-vaunted penetration for making *me* out.

Having been at fault in the army and the navy, in divinity and law, he tried physic, the arts, science, commerce, each with no better success.

"Very odd!" said he; "very: I'm confident, quite confident, sir, *you* have nothing to conceal" (and this he said with a lengthened countenance and a suspecting look which belied his professions of confidence); "*but*——"

"You asked me what wine I should choose to take," said I (pretending not to have noticed his hint). "Let me have some claret. Good wine, I know, can only be obtained at a good price; and I have already seen enough of you, Scorewell, to be satisfied that I may trust to you for its quality."

"The best in Europe, sir. No, no, sir, as I said, quite sure *you* have nothing to conceal, *for*"—(here was an adroit change of one little word)—"for, as I said to my wife, the moment you came into the house, *that* is none of your shim-shammies."

"A time-serving rogue of an innkeeper even in virtuous Little Pedlington!" thought I, as I swallowed a couple of glasses of incontestable raspberry-juice.

As the learned antiquary *teas* at six, it was now time for me to betake myself to his house. At the door of the Green Dragon was accosted by mine host:—

"Going to Mr. Rummins's *conversationy*, I understand, sir. At what time shall I send the boy with the lantern to you, sir?"

"Send a boy with a lantern!" exclaimed I.

"Why, sir, Mr. Rummins's parties are always very late—sometimes, indeed, they don't break up much before eleven—and as we naturally don't light the lamps in Little Pedlington till after Michaelmas, and as there will be no moon to-night——"

"I'll contrive to find my way home in the dark, Scorewell."

"As you please, sir. Then, if you will have the kindness to ring the *night*-bell, sir, you will find boots sitting up for you, sir."

O for the comforts and conveniences of a dear little country-town! Send a boy with a lantern! In London, now, one might break forty legs (if one had them) in the course of a walk home, on a dark night, for the want of such an accommodation. To be sure, there *is* a gas-lamp here and there. Then, again, to ring the *night*-bell at *eleven*, when I shall find poor boots drowsily waiting to let me in! A volume could not say more in favour of the moral habits of these peaceful Pedlingtonians than is implied by these few words. They have no time, indeed, for vice or wickedness, great or small; for at an hour when the reprobate knockers of London are scarcely yet vocal for the nightly revel, *they* are virtuously "reclining" (as Miss Cripps would express it) "in the arms of Morpheus." But I must hasten to Mr. Rummins's *Conversazione*.

On my way thither indulged in the pleasing reflection, that if anywhere a meeting of the kind could be free from the intrusion of spleen, envy, malice, pretension, or affectation, it must be in *such* a place as this.

"I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs," says Childe Harold. With feelings not less strongly excited, I apprehend, than his upon that occasion when, for the first time, he beheld the fairy city, did I find myself standing opposite to a small door on the first floor of Mr. Rummins's house. Upon this door, which was the entrance to a small back room, was pasted a square bit of paper, bearing, in German text, carefully written, the words—

RUMMINSIAN
MUSEUM.

The little girl who had conducted me up stairs (telling me by the way that master and the company were at tea in the museum) announced my arrival.

The learned F.S.A. received me with all the civility due to a subscriber for two large-paper copies of his work, and introduced me to each of the distinguished persons present. His appearance and manner, as well as his peculiar, but appropriate mode of uttering and pronouncing his words, I have already attempted to describe. First of all I was *in-tro-de-oos'd* to—"One whom I am proud, sir, to call my son: Rummins the younger, conductor of that tremendous engine of power, the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer.'" He added in a whisper—"And marvellous is it, that the destinies of Europe should be controlled by one so young, he being barely twenty. His yesterday's castigation of the Emperor of Russia cannot fail to produce effects which—— But more of this anon."

Although I abstained from expressing it, my own private opinion nevertheless is, that there is nothing marvellous about the fact. For such a controller of destinies, whether they be the destinies of a people or a play-house, an autocrat or an actor, twenty is a mature age; and (whatever a fond father, in his partiality, may imagine to the contrary) the time gives it proof. Here and there, indeed, may be found one who, with childish timidity, has delayed to set up as a "Controller of destinies," till having lived long enough to see much, hear much, and learn much, and leisurely to compare and reflect, he at length conceives himself to be in some degree qualified for the undertaking. These, however, form but the exceptions to the rule: consequently, Mr. Rummins, the elder, may be assured that his son is not a Phœnix in his generation.

"Our Daubson," continued the F.S.A., pursuing the ceremony of introduction; "our Daubson, whom I find you know, as he informs me that——"

"Yes," said the painter, "he had the honour of sitting to me yesterday for his profile." Then, with an uneasy recollection of my criticism upon it, he said to me, "The head thrown too much back, eh, Mister? If you have the work with you, we'll by-and-by take the unbiassed opinion of all present upon that point; and we shall then see who will dare to pretend to know better than me."

"Mr. Felix Hoppy, also, you have met before," continued Rummins. "Not in his capacity of Master of the Ceremonies, which I esteem not, do I receive him as my friend; but as he is the author of the Little Pedlington Guide, a work, sir, which——"

Mr. Hoppy blushed, bowed, drew his well-perfumed hand-

kerchief across his face, and entreated Mr. Rummins to "spare him."

I was next presented to Miss Cripps ("our Sappho," as she was designated by Rummins), whose exquisite verses I copied from yesterday's "Observer" into my journal. Miss C., tall and slender, and apparently on, what I shall take the liberty of calling, the *sedate* side of fifty. She was reclining back in her chair; her arms were folded across her bosom, and her eyes fixed with an air of abstraction on Mr. Rummins's ceiling. Her countenance bore the traces of recent and still-existing sorrow. The Pedlington newspaper has recorded the loss of her bag. Dress—pink muslin gown, trimmed with pale blue ribands, yellow sash, shoes of red morocco, and a wreath of roses, crimson and yellow alternately, bound around her curly flaxen—[Private mem. *Wig*]—hair.

Mr. Rummins proceeded—

"Mr. Yawkins, the head of our bank. Mr. Snargate, the architect, of whom I need say no more than that he furnished the design for our new pump."

Mr. Snargate drew himself up to the height of nearly five feet.

"Miss Jane Scrubbs, whose name is so universally known that——"

I fear my looks must have betrayed my culpable ignorance of so celebrated a name; for Mr. Rummins, drawing me a little aside, said in an under-tone—

"My dear sir!—Is it possible?—Why, sir, that lady is the *Enaj Sbburcs*, who does the charades and conundrums for our newspaper. Ignorant of *her* name! Bless my soul!—But, now, sir—*now*—I am last of all to *in-tro-de-oos* you to my illustrious friend, the Reverend Jonathan Jubb—the Bard of PEDLINGTONIA!—(Here again followed what is theatrically termed an *aside*.) "Simple in appearance, unaffected in manners—instead of the popular poet, you would be inclined to set him down for nothing more than one of yourselves—ahem!—rather than one of us. But so it ever is with genius of a high order."

And, truly (though contrary to my reasonable expectations), there sat the illustrious poet, neither attitudinizing, nor sighing, nor looking either sad, solemn, or sentimental, nor in any manner striving after effect, but unaffectedly swallowing tea and munching hot muffins, with as much earnestness as if (to repeat Rummins's phrase) he had, indeed, been nothing more than one of ourselves!

Shortly after the conclusion of the ceremony of introduction,

Rummins desired his servant to "take away the tea-things." "Then," said he, "I will exhibit to you the Rumminsian Collection."

The little girl, having made the circuit of the room, and collected on a japanned waiter the emptied tea-cups, approached Miss Cripps; but "Sappho," still rapt in meditation, did not observe her. Having for some time stood unheeded, the girl put her lips to Miss Cripps's ear, and screamed, "Done with your tea-cup, ma'am?" Miss Cripps, startled, let drop her cup and saucer, both of which were demolished by the fall, and drawing her hand across her forehead, exclaimed, with a sigh—

"'Tis gone, 'tis lost; the fairy chain is broken."

"Yes, madam," angrily said the F.S.A., "and so is my crockery. I *do* wish, Miss Cripps, that, for the future, you would not fall into your poetic reveries till after tea. This is the fourth time the thing has occurred, *and always when a stranger has happened to be present.*"

Miss Cripps made no reply, but, slowly shaking her head, patiently resumed her Madonna-like attitude.

At the same moment, *Enaj Sbburcs*, who also had been absorbed by meditation, though, as was presently shown, upon a subject infinitely more abstruse, suddenly started from her chair, and exclaimed, "Pig's pettitoes!"

"That's it, that's it!" cried the editor, adding, with a condescending nod to the lady, "Without flattery, Miss Scrubbs, there is no one in all Little Pedlington who can approach *you* in your *own* way; and *my* opinion upon these matters is, as you know——"

"You overwhelm me, Mr. Rummins," replied Miss S. "Your favourable judgment might well make any one proud—at least, if one had not the good sense to know, that when one has passed a life in these studies, a *little* superiority must be the consequence."

Miss Jane Scrubbs's exclamation of "Pig's pettitoes," neither the meaning nor the merit of which did I immediately perceive, was, as it was afterwards explained, the solution of an enigma, which had for the last five weeks baffled the ingenuity of all the wits of Little Pedlington.

The *Rumminsian Collection* is contained partly in an old-fashioned book-case, with glazed doors, and partly in a corner-cupboard, on the shelves of which the various articles—amounting,

I may venture to say, without fear of exaggerating, to eighty in number—are systematically arranged. In the department of natural history, it is not remarkably rich, possessing only a stuffed lap-dog and parrot, a dried snake, a feather of a peacock's tail, the skeleton of a monkey, and the skin of a cat, the latter chiefly interesting from the circumstance of its original wearer having been, during fourteen years, the prime favourite of the antiquary's grandmother. Indeed, he himself admits that, in this portion of his museum, he cannot compete with the *Zoo*, meaning thereby their Zoological-gardens; but in mineralogy he can boast of no fewer than a dozen specimens of the ores of tin, copper, and iron, "all curious" (as Rummins profoundly observed) "all curious, as showing you that sort of thing in a state of natur'."

In *Numismatics*—for each compartment of the book-case and corner-cupboard is appropriately labelled—in numismatics the museum contains, first, the "antique Roman coin" which occasioned so fierce a controversy as to whether it were such, or, in reality, nothing more than a plain William-and-Mary's shilling; for the particulars of which, *vide* Hoppy's "Guide Book." Secondly, a farthing, which Rummins pronounces to be one of the famous three of Queen Anne, boldly challenging the world to prove, from any internal evidence, the contrary, inasmuch as it is worn perfectly smooth on both sides. Third, and lastly, a *medal* (in form and size, and in general appearance, indeed, resembling those local tokens which many years ago were issued for the purpose of supplying a deficiency in the copper coinage), bearing on one side the head, and the name also, of Brutus (the Elder), and on the reverse, a cap of liberty, with the figures 1793. That it is a genuine medal of the time of the worthy whose effigies it bears, Mr. Rummins entertains not the smallest doubt; and with respect to the numerals (the only difficulty in the case), which by the ignorant might be mistaken for the date of the period when it was struck, the F.S.A. learnedly inquires, "How is it possible for us at this time of day to tell what they meant by them?" The estimation in which these three objects are held by their fortunate possessor is sufficiently marked by the circumstance of each being carefully preserved beneath the inverted bowl of a broken wine-glass.

"But we are now coming to that portion of the Rumminsian Museum," said the exhibitor, "upon which I chiefly pride myself —the Pedlingtonian relics."

The F.S.A. had been minute and elaborate—I don't mean *prosy*, as it will sometimes happen, under similar circumstances,

to the best-intentioned F.S.A.—in describing each of the objects of curiosity, as they were in succession exhibited to my astonished eyes. Fancied that in some of the party I perceived symptoms of weariness, and of impatience in others. The banker and the architect were fast asleep; Miss Cripps, with folded arms, was sighing, and looking—sonnets; Jubb drew from his pocket a huge manuscript, "a-hem'd," and thrust it in again; Daubson audibly d——d the museum, and muttered, "The daylight will be gone before I can show *my pictur'*;" Hoppy appeared greatly inclined to follow the example set by the banker; whilst the "controller of destinies" and Enaj Sbburcs were seated, literally, *tête-à-tête*, in the recess of a window, partly concealed by a curtain, making (I suppose) conundrums.

The most remarkable of the Pedlingtonian relics are the sliding-board of the old *stocks*, and the handle of the old pump, upon each of which the F.S.A. expatiated lengthily and learnedly; easily digressing from the one, to the cage which has lately been erected in the Market-Place—remarking, by the way, upon the horrors of the Bastille and the atrocities of the Inquisition;—from the other, to the Roman Aqueducts, Bernini's fountains, and "our New Pump."

To the military antiquary the most interesting objects in the collection would be the two sword-blades and the cannon-ball, picked up in a ditch at a short distance from the town; and the helmet of the time of King John. Of the two sword-blades, one is formed exactly like a sickle, the other bears some resemblance to the blade of an old-fashioned carving-knife. These circumstances sufficiently attest their antiquity; for, as Mr. R. triumphantly exclaimed, "Where do you see such swords now-a-days!" On the latter may still be traced these curious remains of an ancient inscription:—

Th-mps-n an- Co. Sh-f—ld.

Of this, the learned antiquary himself despairs of finding an explanation, modestly confessing that its meaning is lost in the lapse of ages.

The cannon-ball is of the *size* of a four-and-twenty-pounder, but wonderfully light in proportion; weighing not more, indeed, than a hollow cistern-ball of the same circumference! Well might Mr. R. observe, "The tooth of antiquity has preyed upon its very vitals."

Of the helmet of the time of King John, so curiously resem-

bling a saucepan of the time of our own gracious Queen Victoria, I need say nothing in this place, as an accurate description of it will be found amongst the extracts from the "L. P. Observer." From these military remains the learned Rummins clearly infers that, at some remote period of our history, the Pedlingtonians *must* have been engaged in a desperate conflict, in which prodigious numbers *must* have fallen on both sides, and that, at its termination, victory *must* have been declared for the Pedlingtonians. To state the arguments by which those inferences were supported would hardly be fair towards Mr. Rummins, since they are to appear in the new edition of his "Antiquities;" but I may observe generally, that the arguments whereby he attempted to prove incontrovertibly that which it is incontrovertibly impossible to prove at all, were as ingenious, and quite as convincing, as antiquary arguments, in similar cases, usually are.

The *Rumminsian MSS.*, though not numerous, are rare. Of these the most interesting are—

1st. A book containing nearly four hundred recipes (many of them unique) in cookery, confectionery, medicine, &c., &c., &c. —*all in the handwriting of the antiquary's late mother.*

2nd. A *complete collection* of Mr. Rummins's own school copy-books. "This," as Mr. R. modestly observed, "will scarcely be valued during my lifetime."

3rd. Minutes of all the public proceedings in Little Pedlington during the last thirty years; together with biographical notices of all those who have served the offices of churchwarden and overseer within the same period.

"This, I may say," said Mr. R., "is a work of profound research, and one which will be of eminent utility to the antiquary of future times. It contains, also, correct reports of all the debates occasioned by that spirit-stirring event, the abstraction of the pump-ladle—an event, sir, concerning which (although it kept this town in a state of tremendous excitement for many months) I will venture to assert you have yet many interesting particulars to learn in London."

4th, and lastly, carefully framed and glazed, the original draft, in his own handwriting, of Mr. R.'s inscription for the New Pump. There it is, with all his erasures, additions, alterations, &c.! This interesting and valuable document he has bequeathed (as he informed me) to his native town, on condition that, at his

death, it be placed over the chimney-piece of the vestry-room—there to remain for ever!

Catherine II. promised a splendid reward to one of her *emissaries* (as such disreputable cattle are styled in melo-dramas) if he should succeed in procuring (*id est*, stealing) for her, from the Barberini Palace, the celebrated vase, latterly known as the Portland vase, and which is now in the British Museum. Remember this fact, ye vestrymen of Little Pedlington, and be vigilant!

Thanked Mr. Rummins for the gratification which the inspection of *his* museum had afforded me. Observed—perhaps for want of something better to say—that I had lately passed a morning in the *British* Museum. To this the F.S.A., locking the door of his corner-cupboard, and putting the key into his pocket, carelessly replied—

"Ay—they have *some* curious things *there*, also."

"Come," said Daubson, unable any longer to restrain his impatience, "come; now there's an end of *that*, you shall see my *pictur'*."

"Pardon, my dear friend," said Hoppy (interposing with master-of-the-ceremony-like gallantry), "we must concede the *paw* to the ladies."

At the same moment the poetess cleared her voice, and the fair conundrumist smilingly drew a strip of paper from her reticule; whilst the M.C. continued:—

"Miss Cripps has written a charming song—an exquisite little effusion—of which she intends to favour us with a private hearing, and——"

"And *you*, I see, have brought your guitar to accompany it, Mr. Hoppy," said Miss Scrubbs, angrily; adding, with a sneer (at the same time thrusting her paper back into her reticule), "it is vastly polite of you to give the *paw* to the *ladies*."

"How plaguily impatient some people are to show themselves off!" whispered the painter to the architect.

"Contemptible vanity!" replied the latter, in a similar tone. "And then we shall have Jubb with his reading, and Rummins with *his* reading. I wish they were all at Jericho! The evening will be at an end before I can exhibit my great plan for the improvement of Little Pedlington."

"Now, my dear Miss Cripps, if you mean to sing, pray sing at once," said Mr. Rummins, the elder. "My illustrious friend Jubb intends to read some specimens of a new work of his—after I have read a few from one of my own."

A good quarter of an hour was exhausted by Mr. Hoppy in

tuning his guitar, and by Miss Cripps in protestations that she didn't sing, couldn't sing, never did sing—that she was hoarse, out of health, out of spirits, &c.

"Besides," she added (and in a manner resembling an ill-made salad—that is to say, containing three vinegars to one oil), "besides, my effusion has nothing to recommend it but a little *feeling*—and *sentiment*—and *imagination*. I can't pretend to such abstruse efforts as charades and enigmas."

Enaj Sbburcs bent her head in acknowledgment of the compliment. Then, turning to the editor, she whispered—

"I wonder how Miss Cripps (who certainly is not altogether an idiot) can be prevailed upon to sing her own nonsensical verses!"*

Mr. Hoppy preluded. Miss Cripps meantime looked down upon her thumbs, and, having to *sing*, she very naturally closed her teeth and lips; just leaving a small aperture at one corner of her mouth to sing *through*. The air being a well-known one, Miss Cripps's own poetry formed, of course, the chief attraction of the performance. Thanks to the lady's *method* of singing—a method which, I am informed, is commonly taught in Little Pedlington—I can answer for it that the following copy of her "exquisite little effusion" is literally correct:—

"Se tum sn en sm se,
Me o sn tam se oo,
To nm te a te me
Pe tam ta o te poo."

And these words, running through five verses, she articulated with as much distinctness as if she had been regularly educated as a singer for the English Opera.

To Mr. Hoppy, for the *precision* of his accompaniment, too much praise could not be given; for, whenever he was *out*, he requested the lady to "stop" till he had fully satisfied himself that he had got fast hold of the right chord.

Thanks to the fair poetess from all the party: though, from some of them (as I guessed from the bustle amongst them) they were tendered for that the conclusion of the performance gave them an opportunity for a display of their own—each after its

* This is not unlike the well-turned compliment paid by an eminent member of Mr. Rummins's body to the Duke of Cleveland of a former day:—"I dined at Raby Castle, Lord Darlington's. The old Duke of Cleveland with us. A cheerful old man, and in conversation *very far from an idiot.*"—PENNANT, *Tour from Ashton Moor to Harrowgate.*

kind. Miss Scrubbs alone was silent: throughout the performance she was sleeping—or pretending to sleep.

Mr. Hoppy, who had observed the trick (if trick it were), whispered to Miss Cripps—

"Offensively contemptuous!"

"No," whispered Miss Cripps, in reply, "merely envious."

Now, for my own part, I thought them both much too severe upon poor Miss Scrubbs; being generally inclined to consider such conduct (although it certainly may appear like rudeness) as nothing more than an evidence of drowsy stupidity.

"Fine song! great genius!" exclaimed the banker. "How I envy people of talent!" And he jingled the shillings in his pocket.

Being seated between the poet and the antiquary, I whispered to the latter that I was not prepared to find in Mr. Hoppy (the author of so profound a work as the "Little Pedlington Guide"), a man of such various talents, or one possessing so many of the lighter accomplishments.

"He's a charming creature, sir," replied Mr. Rummins. "But what think you of his 'Guide'?—I mean the historical and antiquarian portions of the work?"

Here was an opportunity for me to show the F.S.A. that I was not altogether ignorant of how I ought to behave myself at a literary *conversazione*. So I mumbled a reply which meant nothing in particular, but which I took care to render *telling*, by ringing the changes upon the customary common-place exclamations—"learned!" "erudite!" "profound!" "deeply-searching!" "widely-grasping!" and some others which I had heard delivered, in the same manner, upon similar occasions.

"You are an excellent critic, sir," said Mr. Rummins; "*those* portions of the work *I* wrote."

"But what may be your notion, idea, or opinion of the *descriptive* parts of the book?" inquired Mr. Jubb.

Here was another opportunity for me; so I proceeded as before, merely varying my common-places with the occasion. These were now—"picturesque!" "life-like!" "dioramic!" "vivified!" "graphic!" "spirit-stirring!" &c., &c., &c.—taking care to thrust in at least six *graphics* to any one of the others.

"I'm highly flattered: all the *descriptive* parts are mine," said the illustrious author of "Pedlingtonia!"

"Then pray, gentlemen," inquired I, "if one of you wrote the descriptive portions of the work, and the other the anti-

quarian and historical, what was there left for the illustrious Hoppy to write?"

"Nothing more, sir," answered Rummins, "nothing more than a receipt for the sum of seven pounds ten, which he paid us for our joint labours."

So, then! I have encountered the perils of Poppleton End, and tasted of the miseries of Squashmire Gate, on my journey hitherward—a journey induced, in a great measure, by an earnest desire to look upon the eminent author of the "Little Pedlington Guide," and what is my reward? What is it I behold? Strutting in all a peacock's pride, with glittering plumage dazzling the eyes of the admiring world, a peacock we pronounce him: but, frail as it is false, his ostentatious tail, surrendering at a pull, is scattered by the wind, and, lo! he stands confessed —a goose! Can London, in the plenitude of its quackery, furnish a parallel to this? "Speak, ye who best can tell!" Answer me, A——, B——, C——, D——, E——, F——; yea, all of you to the very end of the alphabet. I challenge you to the reply—*Can* London, in the plenitude of its quackery, furnish a parallel to this?

Expect the next piece of agreeable information I shall receive will be, that Rummins "did not write his own" "Antiquities," or Jubb his "Pedlingtonia."

My unpleasant reflections interrupted by Miss Cripps, who beckoned me across the room to her, and requested my *candid* opinion of the verses she had just now sung. No request more common upon such occasions, none more flattering to the taste of the request*ee*, or more easily complied with. Answered as before, but with the requisite variations. These were—"gem!" "*bijou!*" "tear-moving!" "heart-probing!" "soul-searching!" "intense!" "quintessence of grief!" "concentrated feeling!" "verge of agony!" and so forth. Miss Cripps's opinion of *my* opinion more flatteringly expressed than by words—she begged I would write something in her album which she had brought with her. Being no poet, I wrote down a portion of the fine and well-known supplication of Eve to Adam, from the "Paradise Lost," commencing, "Forsake me not, O Adam!" Miss Cripps was so kind as to say I had a pretty turn for poetry, yet she wished that I had written it in rhyme.

During this time some of the party were collected around a circular table, which was covered with Penny Magazines, and subscription-lists for various of Mr. Rummins's publications. Miss Jane Scrubbs told me she was a collector of franks: that she had

some which were *very interesting*, inasmuch as they were perfectly illegible—even to the writer's own name, which was, indeed, the most difficult of all to decipher: that she was *dying* for a frank of Mr. Mortarly Trowel's, the patriotic representative of the new constituency of Seven Dials (St. Giles's); and that she should hold herself eternally obliged to me if I could procure for her that—or any others.

"I am astonished, Miss Scrubbs," exclaimed the F.S.A., "positively astonished that a woman of your intellect should condescend to so trifling an occupation as that of collecting autographs! But I, sir," (this he addressed to me), "*I* am collecting impressions from seals. Now, if you happen to have any letters about you, and would just pick off the seals for me, *that* would be doing me a great favour indeed."

Presented him with two: one (from my friend James Jenkinson) bearing the interesting initials, J.J.; the other exhibiting the pretty device, "*Inquire within.*" With the latter, the learned antiquary expressed himself highly gratified.

Nine o'clock.—Mr. Rummins rang the bell, and desired his little maid to bring a light.

"And bring my hat at the same time," fiercely cried Daubson.

"Surely, my Daubson," said Rummins, "you are not going without showing us your new work!"

"Show you my work, mister!" replied the painter: "this is adding insult to injury. How is a work like this—a profile of a man on horseback, all at full length—how is a work like this, I say, to be seen by candle-light! An architectural plan, like Snargate's, indeed, might be——"

He was interrupted by Mr. Snargate, who, with allowable anger, said, "Enough of your scurrility, sir. I know what you would insinuate; but my works, sir,—*my* works, I am proud to say, will bear *any* light."

"You are too severe, my friend Snargate," whispered the Reverend Jonathan Jubb, in a tone of mild rebuke: "remember he is your fellow-creature, and be merciful."

"Come, come, Mr. Daubson," said the Controller of Destinies (who expected that his interference would allay the storm), "stay where you are: we—I mean *I* have a particular motive for desiring to inspect your work. Should it satisfy us—I mean *me*—as I doubt not it will, we shall give—I mean *I* shall give such a notice of it in our—I mean in *my* next, that if the Royal Academy do not instantly throw wide its portals to receive you——"

Here the rage of the unrivalled profilist became ungovernable. He stamped about the room, rolling, unrolling, and re-rolling his drawing, which he brandished like a truncheon; turning every now and then towards the editor, against whose unfortunate head his thunders were chiefly directed.

"*You* inspect my work!" he said, or rather screamed. "*You* presume to patronize a Daubson, you young puppy! *You* get me into the Royal Academy! D—n the Royal Academy! To mention such a set in my presence I take as a personal insult. They shall never see *me* amongst them; they shall never be honoured with the presence of a Daubson: no, mister; when they refused to exhibit my 'Grenadier,' I made up my mind to that. *You* get me in, indeed! No, no; this is my passport." (Here he shook his drawing above his head.) "This is what shall force open the doors of the Academy for a Daubson; here are my credentials, mister. Talk to *me* of the Royal Academy! —a despicable set! But when they get a Daubson amongst them——! Good night. You shall none of you see my work; and this is the last time you will be honoured with the presence of a Daubson at *any* of your d—d *convershonies*."

So saying, he rushed out of the room, violently closing the door behind him.

Mr. Snargate expressed his astonishment that Mr. Daubson should behave so like a fool.

Tranquillity being restored, Mr. Snargate said, that, having an engagement at half-past nine, he would at once exhibit and explain his plan.

"Let him, let him," petulantly whispered Jubb to Rummins, "and then we shall have done with it; for, in addition to my prose readings, I am anxious to recite my new 'Ode to Patience.'"

Mr. Snargate spread out his plan upon the table, and proceeded to read his explanation, which appeared to occupy about sixty folio pages. The exordium was elegantly written: it ran thus:—

"When we consider that gradual improvement—that reform, temperate as it is wise, and wise as it is moderate, are the peculiar characteristics of the age we live in: when we consider that, in the advance of knowledge, the tardy heel of one improvement is aspiringly trodden upon by the advancing toe of another: when we consider * * * * *

* * [And so on through seven pages.] * *

Mr. Snargate confidently submits to the public the following scheme for the improvement of the town of Little Pedlington. In the first place, then, he proposes——"

Rummins looked at his watch; Jubb yawned.

"It is not upon my own account," said the F.S.A., "that I remind you that the evening is getting on; but our gifted friend, here, also has something to read to us. Couldn't you contrive, therefore, without going into particulars, to tell us at once what is the great feature of your improvement?"

"That is the point I was proceeding to, sir," replied the architect, with (as I thought) a tinge of acrimony in his manner. "I shall not long detain *you* from *your* display," continued he; "and I *promise* you *you* shall *not* be *interrupted* by *me*.—In the first place, then, I propose to pull down the whole of the present town, and then to build an entirely new one at the foot of Snapshank Hill."

"Gigantic scheme!" exclaimed Mr. Rummins.

"Sweetly pretty!" exclaimed Sappho Cripps.

"Miltonic conception!" exclaimed Jubb.

"What *à-plomb!* An *entrechat-six* in its way!" exclaimed the M. C.

"Worthy of Indigo Jones!" exclaimed the banker. "What would I give to possess such talent!" And again he rattled the shillings in his pocket.

Mr. Snargate listened unconcernedly to these praises: they were his just due. He proceeded:—

"In the second place, I propose——"

Here he was interrupted by the editor of the "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer."

"My dear Snargate," said he, "allow me to stop you at the *first* place. You begin by pulling down the old town, and *then* you build a new one. Now we would inquire where you intend to put all the people in the meanwhile?"

"A pretty question, upon my word!" said the architect. "What have I to do with that? My project, sir, stands upon its own independent merits. 'Put the people,' indeed! If one is to be stopped by such petty considerations, there is an end at once to all National Improvements upon a GRAND *scale*."

"Notwithstanding that," replied the editor, "we must press our objection; for, from our position, as the leading organ of this place, we must be supposed to know *something* of these matters."

This he uttered with an air of becoming self-sufficiency; add-

ing, in a tone of patronage proper to a young controller of destinies,—

"You know, Snargate, we have always given you our support; we have always taken you by the hand; in our columns, we have always placed you in an imposing attitude, and all this we shall continue to do; but with respect to the point in question——"

"Patronizing puppy!" cried the architect. "And is a man of *my* standing, a man of *my* experience, a man of *my* reputation, to be met upon his own ground by a whipper-snapper of a boy? If you were not in your father's house, I would toss you out at the window! But Daubson was in the right; he could stand it no longer; he went off like a sensible man as he is, and I shall follow his example. I wish you all a very good night. 'Put the people,' indeed!"

So saying, he rolled up his plans and papers, and rushed out of the room, *à-la-Daubson*.

"I hope you will resent this," whispered the conundrum lady to the editor.

"Rely upon that," fiercely replied he; "we will annihilate him—in our next."

"Mr. Snargate ought to be ashamed of himself," said Miss Cripps, addressing herself to the editor, who had now crossed to where she was seated. "To dispute with one of your profound learning, universal knowledge, correct judgment, exquisite taste! ——By the bye, what do you *really* think of the trifle I attempted to sing to-night?"

"An exquisite little gem, indeed," replied the editor; "a perfect *bijou*, overflowing with——But, if you have no objection, we will insert it, together with our opinion of it, in our next."

"Then here is a correct copy of it," said the lady. Then, laying her taper fingers on his arm, she added, "I hope you have no engagement for to-morrow evening. I expect a few friends. *Do* come and tea with me, for a party is nothing without you."

"With great pleasure; for no one's parties are half so delightful as yours. Late, as usual, I suppose, eh? Half-past six, eh?"

"And—a—Rummins—bring your little critique with you; I should like to see it in *manicrips*. But be impartial; say what you *really* think of it, notwithstanding."

This conversation passed in a half whisper.

Mr. Jubb now read some extracts from his "Essay on the Literary Character of the unrivalled Rummins:" after which,

Mr. Rummins favoured us with portions of *his* "Essay on the Literary Character of the unequalled Jubb." In these, not a word of censure, not a trait of envy or of jealousy, occurred; but each, with manly frankness, did homage to the transcendent genius of the other. Informed by Hoppy that a Review, to be called the "IMPARTIAL," is about to be established in Little Pedlington: of this (*sub rosâ*) Rummins and Jubb are to be co-editors.

The capitalist, who had been sound asleep during these readings, was inhumanly disturbed by the applause which succeeded them. He started, yawned, rubbed his eyes, clapped his hands, and (again jingling his money) declared there was nothing in the world he so much desired as to be a man of talent. Then, turning to me, he asked me what I thought of the town, of the people, and whether I was not perfectly astonished at the number of great men they had amongst them?

"Yet," he added, "in a population, sir, amounting to two thousand nine hundred and seventy-two, it is scarcely to be wondered at that we——Apropos: what may happen to be the amount of the population of London?"

Expressed my regret at my inability to answer him with accuracy equal to his own, but told him it was computed at about one million and some odd hundreds of thousands.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the worthy and sapient banker; "dear me! you don't say so! Immense! Prodigious! But surely it must be much too large for anything like comfort!"

"And now," said Rummins, junior, "perhaps Miss Scrubbs will favour us with her new conundrum?"

Miss Scrubbs eagerly availed herself of the request; and, scarcely allowing the interval of a second to elapse, she dashed off with "Now, then: 'Why is a man in a blue coat and a white waistcoat, riding on a black horse, along a green lane, like a'——"

"A thousand pardons, Miss Scrubbs," said Jubb; "but, as it is growing late, allow me first to recite my new 'Ode to Patience.'" And without allowing a pause for reply he did so. It was greatly applauded by the enraptured listeners—Miss Scrubbs excepted, who, during the recitation, appeared to be absorbed in the study of a "Penny Magazine."

"The finest thing you ever wrote, sir," said the young Controller of Destinies; "it has all the sublimity of Pope, all the ease of Milton, all the polished elegance of Crabbe, all the vigour of Moore; it is equal to Campbell, and on a level with Rogers: notwithstanding, you will allow that——"

"None of your 'notwithstandings,' young gentleman, if you please," said the poet; at the same time rising and putting his manuscript into his pocket: "You would be an excellent critic if you knew where to stop; but let us have none of your 'notwithstandings.' Dear me! it is nearly half-past ten, I declare! Rummins, my illustrious friend, good night. Ladies and gentlemen, good night." And so departed the illustrious Jubb.

"I wonder how you could listen to such *stuff!*" said the highly-gifted maker of conundrums and charades. "Why, half of it was about religion! A pretty subject to touch upon in the presence of men of intellect, women of mind, original thinkers, rational beings, spirits emancipated from childish prejudices, &c., &c.; master-spirits, march of intellect, gifted creatures, enlightened age, master-minds, philosophical research, human understanding, test of reason," &c., &c.

I by no means pretend that Miss Jane Scrubbs uttered these words and phrases in the precise order in which I give them; that, however, is a matter of not the slightest importance. Suffice it to say, that without uttering one sentence possessing a grain of meaning, she did, most ingeniously and didactically, ring the changes upon them for a full quarter of an hour,—repeating the phrase, "women of mind," more frequently than any other to be found in the march-of-intellect vocabulary of cant.

Miss Scrubbs's lantern was announced. The lady, accompanied by the editor (the offer of whose escort she condescendingly accepted), took her leave. As the former quitted the room, Miss Cripps muttered something about its being "easy to see through *that*—the mean-spiritedness of ear-wigging editors—fishing for a puff of her new conundrum."

"Masculine-minded creature!" exclaimed Hoppy, with a gesture of admiration.

"Thinks for herself upon all points, moral, political, and social!" exclaimed Rummins.

"Not a prejudice remaining!" responded the M.C., "and has no more religion than a horse!"

"Woman of mind!" exclaimed the banker; "and to my certain knowledge, Miss Scrubbs will not be nineteen till the end of next month.—Pray, my dear Hoppy, did you ever see her baby that is at nurse in the Vale of Health?"

"Saw it yesterday," replied the M.C.; "and a fine child it is for only five months old."

"Noble-minded creature!" exclaimed the banker. "Her whole income is but forty pounds a year—you know, she *cashes*

at our house—yet she maintains it at her own expense, rather than——"

Here Miss Cripps interfered. "I can't help saying, Mr. Rummins, that—*considering*—*circumstances*—I am by no means pleased at your inviting *her* when you expected *me*."

"You surprise me, Miss Cripps!" replied the F.S.A. "You, who yourself are a woman of mind, ought to know that women of mind are above the vulgar prejudices by which women of common intellect submit to be governed. It is the peculiar privilege of mind, of original thinking, of daring investigation, to —to emancipate itself from a—I should say from the——"

"Miss Cripps's lantern!" cried the little maid, just popping her head in at the door. She did not add, "stops the way;" but what, unfortunately, indeed, its arrival, *did* stop, was Mr. Rummins's speech. Whilst the lady was busied outside the room, in putting on her clogs, and affixing to her head a contrivance which, in form, mechanism, and almost in size, resembled the hood of an old-fashioned one-horse-*shay*, Mr. Yawkins said to Hoppy,—

"Very unfeeling on the part of Miss Cripps to be so hard about poor Miss Scrubbs, when it is very well known that she herself——"

"But that happened so *many* years ago, she has naturally forgotten all about it," replied Hoppy.

"Ay, that's true, rejoined the banker: "so, as she herself has forgotten all about it, she naturally supposes that nobody else remembers it."

"Miss Cripps does not stand alone in that happy delusion," thought I.

"What *I* blame her for," said the F.S.A., "is, that being *herself* a highly-gifted creature—for I look upon the bad English she writes, and her faults in pro*noun*ciation, as owing merely to her want of education and breeding—what *I* blame her for is—Hush! here she comes."

Miss Cripps curtsied and withdrew, accompanied by the M.C., who, as he handed her downstairs, whispered to her, that the evening would have been perfect, had there been a little dancing. "But," added he, "the fault of these meetings is, that most people come for the purpose of showing themselves off. Now, though I was dying to play two or three of my new quadrille-tunes, and had actually got my flageolet in my pocket for the purpose, I could not, for the soul of me, get an opportunity."

"Well, my dear Rummins," said the banker, "I have to

thank you for another great treat. Talented creatures! People of mind! Would give the world to be able to understand what they talk about! But, though I myself don't pretend to be anybody or anything,"—(here he once more jingled the money in his pocket),—"I'm never so happy as when I am in the company of intellectual people,"—(here he yawned),—"Good night, my dear Rummins. Nothing was wanting to make the evening perfectly delightful but a rubber at sixpenny *longs*. Good night."

It was now my turn to thank the F.S.A. for the treat I had enjoyed.

"I can't say much for it, sir," replied he. "Nobody admires poetry, and music, and the fine arts, more than I do, but one may have too much of them. They ought not altogether to supersede more important matters. What between Miss Cripps, and Daubson, and Snargate, and my illustrious friend, Jubb,—who, by-the-bye, is *much* too fond of reading his own productions,—I was prevented reading a *ra*ther interesting paper of my own, wherein I cite two hundred and fifty-three authorities to prove that our church was built in 1694—not 1695, the date usually assigned to it: thus, sir, thus proving its greater antiquity by one entire year!"

The rain pouring down in torrents! No umbrella. Mr. Rummins's taken by Mr. Hoppy, who will not return it till the morning. No sending to the nearest stand for a hackney-coach, for the satisfactory reason that, there being no hackney-coaches here, there is no stand to send to. There is, indeed, one fly kept in the town—*that*, it must be acknowledged, is a considerable convenience—but it is never let out after ten at night, unless bespoke in the morning. Endeavour to grope my way home in the dark: find myself in the Vale of Health, and over the ankles in water! Meet *the* new policeman, to whose vigilance (*vice* two old watchmen, deposed) is intrusted the safety of the whole town. Sets me on my right road. Find myself in mine inn. Wet through. Desire to have a glass of brandy-and-water very hot. Told by Boots that, it being *eleven* o'clock, everybody but himself (who had sat up purposely to let me in) was in bed; that the kitchen fire was out, and the bar locked up; that I could have nothing at *such* a time of night, but that I might rely upon having what I had asked for the first thing in the morning. In reprobate London, now——But, no reflections; so, supperless and comfortless, to bed.

Bethought me of the words of the landlady at Squashmire

Gate—"Ah! sir, if all the world were Lippleton, it would be too fine a place, and too good for us poor sinners to live in!" I have passed three entire days in this the *beau-ideal* of a country town: I have seen all it has to show of places, things, and people: I have observed its society in all its modes, forms, and grades, carefully noting their habits, their manners, their feelings, and their characters. Now, without a partiality or a prejudice to indulge, I declare that——But, it being past eleven, it is, in a place like Little Pedlington, the decent and proper thing to go to sleep.

Thursday, June 18th.—I am again in London; and, sinner as I am, LONDON, with all its naughty doings, and all its wicked people in it, is good enough for me.

CHAPTER X.

Inducement to re-visit Little Pedlington—Expectations wisely moderated—Advantage of travelling by a Patent Safety-coach—Arrival at Scorewell's—Interesting event: opening of the Theatre—The Play-Bill: a master-piece in that department of Literature.

SAUNTERING by the Regent's Circus, my attention was attracted by a bill in the window of one of the coach-offices, announcing "an elegant, new, light, four-horse Patent Safety-coach to Little Pedlington, through Doddleton and Guttlebury." It was now three years since I visited the interesting town, to which this elegant, new, light coach was bound; and, although I left it with feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction at finding its inhabitants not much better, upon the whole, than us Londoners, I had often wished to see it once again. What, then, prevented my gratifying that wish? Frankly, it was the dread of having to re-encounter the miseries of Poppleton End and Squashmire Gate: when one goes out for the express purpose of "pleasuring," he feels less pleased than upon other occasions at being made superlatively uncomfortable. But here was offered me a conveyance which avoided both those detested places by at least fifteen miles, so I instantly availed myself of it, and booked a place to Little Pedlington, for the following day.

"For the town itself," thought I, "it is, unquestionably, the perfection of a small provincial town. If it did not furnish me with everything I required as readily as I might have procured it in London; if I could not get an iced-cream in the dog-days, unless by giving four-and-twenty hours' notice of my want; if, having *immediate* occasion to refer to the army list, I was assured that there was not one in the whole place of less mature age than eighteen months, and consoled by the promise of an obliging bookseller, that he would get the latest for me within a fortnight —why, these were trifling inconveniences, for which I ought to

have been prepared, knowing that they are incident to every town distant from, and not quite as large as, the metropolis. And for the people—if I did not find them one mass of unalloyed virtue, it is to my own unwise and over-excited expectations that I ought to attribute my disappointment. Pedlingtonians are, after all, but men, subject to human feelings, swayed by human passions. Had I expected less, I might have enjoyed more. I ought, at least, to have dealt out to them the same measure of indulgence that I would have done to my own fellow-Londoners, and this time I will."

At the time when I made these reflections I was in a most amiable mood, for the sky was bright, and the atmosphere so unusually pure, that, from the Regent's Circus, I could clearly distinguish the Duke of York's column. Lord help the Little Pedlingtonians had it been a murky day in November!

The day for my journey, fine. Took my place on the coach-box. Driver an agreeable, chatty man. During some hours, from the moment of our quitting London, he entertained me with accounts of all the dreadful accidents which had lately occurred on railroads and in steamboats; swore that, for safety—to say nothing of its gentility—there was no conveyance comparable with an elegant, light, four-horse coach. At this moment, being within seven miles of Doddleton, the horses took fright at an old woman in a scarlet cloak, and galloped off at race-horse speed. Whatever we met on the road avoided us as if a pestilence had been approaching. At half a mile's distance from the village, the elegant, new, light, four-horse Patent Safety-coach was upset, and we the outsides (inside passengers there were none), were tossed over a hedge into a field of standing corn. We were all more or less hurt by sprains and bruises; but none of us sufficiently so to prevent our assisting the driver, who lay senseless on the ground, with a broken leg and a dislocated shoulder. He was conveyed to Doddleton, where he immediately received surgical assistance. The coach was so much damaged that it could not continue the journey, so another was provided to carry us forward. Certainly, for safety, there is nothing like an elegant, light, four-horse coach.

At my last visit to Little Pedlington I stayed at Scorewell's hotel. There was either a Bible or a volume of religious tracts ostentatiously placed upon a table in every room in his house, and his charges were proportionably high; to say nothing of an attempt (which I successfully resisted) to impose upon me a charge for two or three things which I had not had. But as

these little accidents are not peculiar to Scorewell's hotel, but common to all houses of entertainment where the comfort of a volume of religious tracts is provided for one; and as I would rather be cheated (in moderation) than exchange familiar faces for new ones, I resolved upon taking up my old quarters at Scorewell's.

The coach stopped at his door, and out came mine host, who gave me a cordial welcome—innkeepers are very kind in this respect—and reminded me that three years had elapsed since my last visit, adding, "I see, sir, I see; you have come from London on purpose for the occasion."

"For what occasion?" inquired I.

"What occasion, indeed! Why, sir, to-night our theatre is to open for the season! It has set all Little Pedlington agog; and, surely, you must have heard of it in London!"

"I can assure you," replied I, "that excepting the few whom Fashion carries to talk at the opera, or to sleep at a French play, the good Londoners are scarcely conscious of the opening, or the being open, of their own theatres. However," continued I, "the opening of the theatre of a place like this is an interesting event; so I am delighted at being here to witness it."

It being already nine o'clock (P.M.), I ordered some supper, and went early to bed.

Monday.—Immediately after breakfast I sallied forth to visit all my favourite spots. This I did with that eager interest which every one has felt on his first return, after long absence, to a place endeared to him either by its own intrinsic charms, or by the stronger charm of association. The Crescent, the Market-place, the New Pump, the Vale of Health, Yawkins's Skittle-ground, each and all received from me the homage of a glance. Time would hardly permit more: for, to become fully and satisfactorily acquainted with the beauties, natural and artificial, of a place of the extent of Little Pedlington; to inspect with care and accuracy its libraries, its museum, its Zoological Garden, &c., would require the devotion of a considerable portion of a day to the task. Even as it was, when I had made the tour of the entire town, and intersected it in every possible way, devoting a minute or two to the examination of one remarkable object, a minute or two to the consideration of another, I found it was almost one o'clock. "Thus doth Time fly!" as a moralist would say.

On coming into Market Square, I perceived numbers of persons divided into separate crowds of two, three, nay, in some places, four, with their faces all eagerly turned towards the walls,

or the shop-windows. I was at first astonished at this singular sight, but my astonishment was not of long duration: the circumstance was presently accounted for; the people were all pressing to get a sight of the play-bills announcing the evening's performances at the theatre. The hand-bills exhibited in the shop-windows—such as, for the *convenience* of the spectator, are sold in the theatre—were scarcely four feet long; but the posters —those pasted on the walls—somewhat exceeded four yards. At the head of these was a spirited woodcut, representing the interior of a cow-house, with a man (holding a hatchet in one hand, and the head of a female, young and lovely, in the other) standing astride the decapitated body of the massacred milk-maid!

This interesting document (a copy of which I subjoin) is avowedly the composition of the manager, Mr. Strut, himself. And here I must confess that, in attributing to Mr. Hoppy the authorship of the announcement of the Del Squeaki,* I was guilty of an act of injustice towards Mr. Strut, to whom I find the M.C. was indebted for it. Indeed, upon a comparison of the two papers, it will be evident that they both are the product of the same elegant pen: in these matters "none but himself can be his parallel;" and to Strut, therefore, must all the praise bestowed upon Hoppy be transferred.

* Vide p. 112.

THEATRE ROYAL,

LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

MR. STRUT has the heartfelt gratification of announcing to the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public in general, that he has once more the honour of assuming the direction of this Theatre, which will open this Evening, and takes the liberty to flatter himself that the

VARIOUS AND NUMEROUS NOVELTIES,

ALL ENTIRELY NEW!!

which are in preparation, and which will succeed each other

IN RAPID SUCCESSION,

and which will be produced in a style of

SPLENDOUR! MAGNIFICENCE! AND GRANDEUR!

hitherto unprecedented and without example in the annals of Theatricals, and which will be got up

REGARDLESS OF EXPENSE,

AND WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF OUTLAY!

and which, in point of

SCENERY! DRESSES! DECORATIONS! AND PROPERTIES!

which, as they will be prepared on a scale of extent which was never before attempted, and which is now undertaken for the first time, cannot fail to form a pivot of attraction to

DEFY COMPETITION!!!

In addition to this he has the pleasing gratification to announce, that he has, without any view to the consideration of expenditure, succeeded in bringing together,

IN ONE PHALANX,

A COMBINATION OF COMBINED TALENT!!!

such as has never yet been amalgamated within the arena of the walls of any theatre, and constituting a simultaneous

IMPETUS OF COMBINED ATTRACTION!!!

WHICH MUST SET ALL RIVALRY AT DEFIANCE!!!

MR. STRUT has the satisfaction to announce that, in addition to many other valuable engagements which he is thinking of having it in contemplation to enter into, he has secured the talents of the following distinguished *élites* :—

Messrs. SNOXELL,
WADDLE,
EUGENE STRUT,
AUGUSTUS STRUT,
STANISLAUS STRUT,
STRIDE,
STAGGER,
AND
TIPPLETON.

Mesdames BIGGLESWADE,
STRUT,
E. STRUT,
T. STRUT,
WARBLE,
Mlle. SARA DES ENTRECHATS.

Messrs. Higs, Nigs, Pigs, Wigs, Gigs, C. Gigs, T. Gigs, R. Gigs, Brigs, and Knigs.

Mesdames Nobs, Hobs, Dobs, F. Dobs, L. Dobs, J. Dobs, Wobs, Phobs, and Snobs,

AND

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES,

(*Her first appearance on any stage*).

The performances will commence with an entirely new ORIGINAL domestic Melodrame, never before performed, and now acted for the first time, founded on the affecting, barbarous, and interesting murder of Martha Squigs, to be called

THE HATCHET OF HORROR;

OR,

THE MASSACRED MILKMAID.

Principal characters by the following unprecedented cast ! ! !

MESSRS. SNOXELL, WADDLE, STRIDE, EUGENE STRUT, AND STAGGER.

MESDAMES BIGGLESWADE, T. STRUT, MISS WARBLE, (*with a Song*).

MLLE. SARA DES ENTRECHATS (*with a Pas Seul*).

AND THE PART OF

MARTHA SQUIGS (*the Massacred Milkmaid*) by MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

In the course of the piece will be introduced a new and splendid representation of

THE FATAL COW-HOUSE,

in which the Murder was committed!

Together with the identical

BLOOD-STAINED HATCHET, WITH A LOCK OF THE VICTIM'S HAIR STICKING TO IT!!

with which the Murder was committed!!!

And the identical

FAVOURITE COW OF THE MASSACRED MILKMAID!!!!

for which the Murder was committed!!!!!

At the conclusion of the piece a favourite Song by

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

After which, an entirely new and elegant Burletta, without songs or any musical accompaniment whatever, in one Act, to be called

ALL ROUND MY HAT.

With the following powerful cast!!!

MR. TIPPLETON,

Messrs. Pigs, Gigs, and Brigs; Mesdames Hobs, Phobs, and Snobs, and (*with a Song*)

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

Previous to which, for the first time, a fashionable Interlude, to be called

WHO ARE YOU?

The principal characters by

MESSRS. TIPPLETON AND GIGS,

AND

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES,

To be preceded by an occasional Address, to be spoken by

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

Prior to which, the favourite

BROAD-SWORD HORNPIPE,

BY

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES.

In the course of the evening, *a laughable comic Song* by

MR. AUGUSTUS STRUT.

The whole to conclude with, never acted, a laughable Farce, to be called

SHE *SHALL* BE AN ACTRESS.

Colonel Dash, by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!
Harlequin by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!
Venus by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!
Molly O'Rooney (an Irish Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!
Jeannie M'Bride (a Scotch Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!
Eugenie La Belle (a French Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!!
Matilda Schwabstz (a German Girl), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!!!

AND

Lady Clara Lovely (an English Lady of Fashion), by Miss JULIA WRIGGLES!!!!!!!!

The Orchestra, as is usual at this Theatre, will be numerous and efficient, consisting of Ten Performers!!!

On this occasion Mr. SNOXELL *and* Mrs. BIGGLESWADE *will perform.*

On this occasion, Mr. TIPPLETON *will perform.*

On this occasion Miss JULIA WRIGGLES, Miss WARBLE, *and* Mlle. SARA DES ENTRECHATS *will perform.*

On this occasion Mr. TIPPLETON and Miss JULIA WRIGGLES WILL PERFORM IN TWO PIECES!!!

On this occasion the WHOLE of the POWERFUL and UNPRECEDENTED COMPANY *engaged at this theatre, and announced as above, to perform in the evening's performances,* WILL PERFORM!!!

The interest excited by this promise of elegant recreation was evidently intense. All Little Pedlington seemed disposed to attend the theatre. "I wish I knew where to get an order!" exclaimed one: "I wish I knew somebody who could pass me in!" said another: a third, with an air of determination which indicated the inveterate play-goer and the true patron of the drama, exclaimed—"I, for one, am resolved to go—if I can contrive to get in for nothing." Inferring from these and similar manifestations of anxiety to witness the night's performances that there would be a crowded house, I thought it prudent to go to the box-office to secure, if possible, a place.

CHAPTER XI.

Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington: the Manager's room—Patrons of the drama—Tempting terms—More patronage—Elegant epistle—a Manager's bed of roses—Rival Tragedians: the heart-rending Snoxell; Waddle—Contentions and compromises—The versatile Mrs. Biggleswade: the Manager inexorable—Petticoat government: the Manager's manager—Dramatist and donkey-man, each befittingly treated—Consultation with the treasurer—Privilege of the free-list valuable and complimentary—The facetious Tippleton, the plural-singular: his complaints: disinterested zeal for the concern—Success unquestionable.

THIS being the opening day for the season of the Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington, all within its walls is bustle and activity, while crowds of suitors for an interview with the manager are impatiently waiting without. Amidst the din of hammers and the grating of saws, the tragedians are on the stage rehearsing an entirely new melo-drama, to be called the *Hatchet of Horror; or, the Massacred Milkmaid.* In the green-room, Miss Warble, assisted by the director of the orchestra, is practising the song "incidental to the play;" in the painting-room, Mr. Smearwell is giving the last touches to the scene "painted expressly for the occasion;" in the saloon, Miss Sally Jumps—or, as she is described in the play-bill, Mademoiselle Sara des Entrechats—is endeavouring to place her right foot on her left shoulder, and performing others of the ordinary exercises preparatory to the execution of a grand *pas seul;* whilst, in a small shed connected with the stage, are the machinist and the property-man, sewing up a donkey in a cow's hide, to represent the "identical favourite cow" of the massacred milkmaid. But let us proceed to the manager's room.

At a table covered with play-books, manuscripts, and letters,

in an easy chair is seated Mr. Strut, the "enterprising and spirited" manager. With evident satisfaction he is contemplating the bill of the night's performances. At each magniloquent phrase he rubs his hands; his eyes sparkle with delight as they are attracted by the lines which stand prominent, in the full dignity of large capitals; and, as he counts the notes of admiration, which bristle on the paper like pins in the ornamental cushion of a lady's toilet-table, his imagination riots in the promise of nightly overflows throughout the season.

"This will do!" exclaimed Strut, as he finished the reading of that extraordinary announcement. "This *must* do. If this don't bring them it is all over with the legitimate drama."

Mr. Strut rang the bell for Stumps, the messenger of the theatre.

Strut.—Is Mr. Dumps, the treasurer, in the theatre?

Stumps.—Yes, sir; he is up in the treasury, very busy sorting the checks for to-night.

Strut.—Tell him I wish to see him when he is at leisure. And, Stumps! is Mr. Tippleton arrived yet?

Stumps.—I have not seen him, sir. But I believe that in that heap of letters you will find one from him.

Strut.—Letters! Ha! I have not had time to open them. One—five—ten—fifteen—twenty—twenty-three! Twenty-three letters to read and reply to! If I were not apprehensive that my correspondents would suspect that I could not write a common letter with common propriety, I would follow the example of Scrubs, the manager of the Theatre Royal, Fudgeborough, and mount a private secretary. Let me see! Ha! this is it! Confound the long-winded, prosing fellow! Three closely-written pages, containing a detailed account of how he chanced to miss yesterday's coach, by which accident he was prevented being at Little Pedlington last night; and one line (in a post-script) informing me of all I care to know—"Shall be with you in time for rehearsal to-morrow!"—Now, as soon as Mr. Tippleton comes, let him be sent to me. And, Stumps! you have a list of the persons I have appointed to see me here?

Stumps.—Yes, sir.

Strut.—Then, mind me! I am not to be seen by any one else upon any pretence whatever.

Stumps, having received his instructions, quits the room.

"And now to read my letters!" exclaims the manager. "On the day of my opening, they are doubtless all upon subjects of importance and interest to me."

He opens the first of the heap, and reads :—

"*Little Pedlington,*

"Monday morning.

"DEAR SIR,

"As a lover of the drama, and a well-wisher of yours, permit me, though almost a stranger to you, to express my delight at your having resumed the management of our theatre. *The drama must be supported ;* and the magnificent bill you have just issued, confirms, what never has been doubted, that, under your liberal and spirited management, it will *deserve* support. Pardon the liberty I take in thus wishing you success, and assuring you that no one is more anxious to promote it than

"Yours, faithfully,

"JAMES TUPKIN."

"Upon my word," says Strut, "this is gratifying! After this, who shall say there is no patronage for the theatre in Little Pedlington? But stop! here is something more:"—

"Please turn over.—Postscript. *Could* you oblige me with an order for two for your opening night?"

"Ha! one of the true patrons of the drama. Under such auspices I *must* succeed. Well! to the rest."

"*Vale of Health, L. P.*

"Monday morning.

"MISS CRIPPS presents compliments to Mr. Strut—would be obliged by an order for two for to-night. Miss C. wishes two places *to be kept for her* on the front row of one of the stage-boxes—whichever may be most convenient to Mr. S.—though the left-hand side is her favourite side of the house.

"Should Mr. S. happen not to be in the theatre when this note arrives, he will have the kindness to send the orders to the V. of H. by his messenger, as Miss C. cannot conveniently send for them, her maid being engaged washing."

"Well! cool, it must be acknowledged!" cries Strut. "My announce-bills are scarcely dry, the last year's dust is scarcely

swept from the stage, ere I am thus beset by my friends and patrons! Come! to the next.—Business, at last!—From Bellowmore, the great tragedian who leads the business at Dunstable. This is worth attending to."

"SIR,

"It is not my intention to play anywhere this summer"—[*Then why the plague does he write to me?*]—"my health, owing to my great exertions for some time past, rendering it imperative upon me that I should remain quiet for a few weeks. No doubt you have learnt from the newspapers that I have drawn immensely wherever I have acted,"—[*Oh!*]—"and my last night at Dunstable produced *the greatest receipt ever known!*"—[*Ah!*]—"But I must consider my health; and, so resolved to do, I have *refused engagements* OF THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS KIND, which have been PRESSED UPON ME from all parts of the country."—[*Ah! ha!*]—"My apothecary prescribes a few weeks of the air of Little Pedlington:"—[*I see.*]—"and, should my health improve by it, perhaps I might have no objection to go the round of my principal characters. I have, over and over again, refused *eight-tenths* of the *clear receipts*, and a *free benefit*, for a twelve nights' engagement, in theatres *holding more than yours*. If you could make it worth my while, by advancing upon these terms, *and my health should so much improve as to enable me to encounter the fatigue of twelve performances*, perhaps I should have no objection to treat with you.

"Yours,

"AUGUSTUS FRED. BELLOWMORE."

"Favour me with your immediate reply, *as I am not quite decided* whether to *rusticate* at L.P. or at Fudgeborough, where (as I understand) Mr. Scrubs is *straining every nerve* to secure attraction."

"Tragic and dignified," observes Strut. "Worth consideration, though. Let me see. Eight-tenths? That will leave two-tenths to be divided amongst the rest of the company, the orchestra, painters, tailors, carpenters, servants, &c.—and myself.—I must consult Dumps upon the matter. Now, to the next."

"My Dear Strut,

"Perhaps you may remember meeting me one evening, many months ago, at one of poor Rummins's *conversaziones*, where I enjoyed half-an-hour's very delightful chat with you. You may recall the circumstance to mind—though my name may have escaped your recollection, as we never met but that once—by my having had the good fortune to agree entirely with you in everything you said upon every subject, and by my requesting you (at the end of our *confab.*) to take me behind your scenes, and to give me an order for the following night's performance—both which requests you most politely, obligingly, and good-naturedly granted. I like your bill amazingly—it must carry all Little Pedlington before it. I should like much to bring Mrs. A. and my young folks to witness your first night's triumph,—which will be a glorious one, and well do you deserve it, my dear fellow,—but, as they are just cleared of the sick-list, you can, perhaps, spare me a private box for them. However, should this be at all inconvenient to you, use no ceremony about saying so; in which case, orders for six must content us, and we must do the best we can for ourselves, in the *public* boxes. On occasions like this, one is bound to make some sacrifice of one's own convenience for the advantage of the house.

"Wishing you every success, believe me, my dear fellow,

"Yours very sincerely,

"Andrew Askenough."

"P.S. Do drop in some evening and take a friendly dish of tea with us."

"Confound his impudence!" exclaimed Strut, as he threw down the letter. "This from a man who, according to his own confession, never spoke to me but once in his life, and who doubts whether I shall even recollect his name! Well: there are many more like him in Little Pedlington. Now, to proceed;" and he continued to open and read his letters.

"Captain Sniggerston's best compliments * * * * orders for two."

"Mrs. Stintem presents her kind regards, and * * * * orders for four."

"Dr. Drench presents his very best respects * * * congratulates him * * * spirit and enterprise * * * success * * * every true lover of the drama * * * oblige him with orders for three, or so."

"Mr. Snargate, Sen., will esteem it a favour if Mr. Strut will send him orders for himself and lady. He would not trouble him, but that, fond as he is of a play, he is free to confess, that these are not times for people to spend money for theatrical amusements. He sincerely wishes Mr. Strut every success."

"All singing to the same tune, by the Lord Harry! So, because these are not times for people to pay for their amusements, I am expected to open a theatre *gratis!* One-half of Little Pedlington—the *patrons* of the drama—are of this opinion; the other half—the would-be fashionables, the little Great, who imagine that when they have voted the theatre *vulgaw*, they have established their own claim to be considered genteel—never go to a play at all. Thus, between the two parties, my chances of success are in a hopeful way! Well; on with my correspondents."

"Sir,

"Being out off an engagment shud be glad to engag in yor kumpny if yo can find Rome to engag me. i hav led the Bisnies inn Mr. Scrubs kumpny att Fudgebery for 2 ears besids staring att other plasis inn my Princeple Pats. Left Mr. S. kumpny becas Mr. S. find me 2 shilans & deduckt out off my sallyry last sataday becas i refus to leaf the stag wen i was rehorsing Richard the 3rd upon Mrs. S. haven the impotence toe order me toe goe toe the Buchers toe fetch the muton chopps for thare dinner & i apel toe yo Sir if i warnt write to uphold my digginty & refus toe goe toe fetch the chopps haven to play Richard that very nit. Sir i dont pretend to kompar mysulf with Mr. Tipiltin and Mr. Snoxil but I send you a peas cut off the Fudgebory Gazete toe shoe what they sed off me att my bendyfit when i plaid Archer inn the Bostrantygem after which lipt threw a Noop 15 feet i. Also sung 2 komac songs with grat aplaws—after which Othelio in 2 ax—the hole to conklud with litel pikel inn the Spile chile. Sir i inclos a list of 103 pats

wat i am quit component to play & am quit up inn them & cud get out off my bed any nit and play them at a mommins notas. & opin for your reply i am Sir yor most humbil servent toe comarnd

"CHAS. SEYMOUR ST. EGREMONT."

"P.S.—i can also manige the gash lites, dans the tit rop, & mak fire works."

"So, so, Mr. St. Egremont! A gentleman who can play everything, from Archer in the 'Beaux Stratagem,' and Richard the Third, down to Little Pickle in the 'Spoilt Child'—sing comic songs, and leap through a hoop fifteen feet high, into the bargain—is worth attending to. But as to the praises of the 'Fudgeborough Gazette,' on the occasion of your own benefit, I have been manager of a playhouse long enough to know how to value that."

Here was a loud tap at the door.

"Come in!" cried the manager; and Mr. Snoxell, the leading tragedian, with a painted wooden hatchet in his hand, entered the room.

"Mr. Strut," said the tragedian, in an angry tone, "I have a complaint to make — two complaints — in short, sir, I have many complaints to make. In the first place, sir, look at this hatchet."

Strut.—Well, sir, what 's the matter with it?

Snoxell.—Matter, sir! Do you expect that I should go on at night with such a thing as this for a hatchet?

Strut.—Why, really, Snoxell, it seems to me that the property is remarkably well made.

Snoxell.—Well made! well made! See this, sir (*pointing to a play-bill*)—you have made a line of it in your bills. The public will expect something. One little dab of red ochre, one paltry, small tuft of horse-hair glued to it! Why, sir, the blood and the hair won't be seen by the third row in the pit.

Strut.—Rely on it, my dear Snoxell, it will *tell* exceedingly well at night.

Snoxell.—Very well, sir—I have only this to say: I have a reputation at stake in Little Pedlington, and I *will—not*—go on at night with such a thing as this for a hatchet.

Strut.—Sit down for a minute, Snoxell; we'll see about it.

Mr. Strut rang the bell, and desired Stumps to send Squeaks,

the property-man, to him. Squeaks, a little man, with a voice like that of Punch in a showbox, speedily appeared.

Strut.—Come here, you scoundrel! Is this a property fit to be given to such a person as Mr. Snoxell?

Squeaks.—Why, sir, I made it agreeable to the order I got from Mr. Siffle, sir, the prompter, sir.

Strut.—And what was his order, you rascal?

Squeaks.—Why, sir, he ordered me to make the identrical blood-stained 'atchet, sir, with a lock of the victim's 'air sticking to it, sir, with which the murder was committed, sir: and there's the blood, sir, and there's the 'air, sir, and that's all I can say about it, sir.

Strut.—Get along, you little villain, and put more red paint, and another tuft or two of horse-hair to it.

Squeaks.—Very well, sir, if you please, sir; but I can only say, sir, that 'ere property, sir, will come to near ninepence, as it is, sir, and Mr. Dumps, the treasurer, sir, will grumble at *that*, sir, and if it comes to any more, sir, Mr. Dumps 'll stop it out of my salary o' Saturday, sir, and that 'll be very 'ard upon me, sir.

Strut.—Get out, you scoundrel, and do as you are ordered!

Squeaks, with his blood-stained hatchet, withdrew.

Strut.—There, Snoxell, I hope you are satisfied.

Snoxell.—Yes—perhaps.

Strut.—Now, what more have you to say?

Snoxell.—Why, I have next to say, I will not act Grumps in the new piece.

"Not act Grumps!" exclaimed Strut, with astonishment. "Bless my soul, Mr. Snoxell!—how can you possibly object to the part? It is a very fine part, and so you said at the reading."

Snoxell.—And so I thought; but it does not come out in the acting, and I won't play it.

Strut.—Won't! *Won't*, indeed! Either, *I* am manager in my own theatre, Mr.—aw—Snoxell, or—aw—you are! (and as he uttered these words, Mr. Strut put his hands into his breeches pockets, glided gently down his chair, his head falling back, and his feet sliding under the table).

Snoxell.—Sir, I will not play the part.

Strut.—You won't! Does it occur to your recollection, Mr.—aw—Snoxell, that there is such a word as "forfeit" in your articles—and that if you refuse a part, sir, I can forfeit you ten shillings?

Snoxell.—Forfeit—forfeit! Do you say forfeit, sir? Forfeit me! Snoxell!—"the heart-rending Snoxell," as I am generally desig-

nated. That word again, Mr. what's-your-name, and I'll throw up my engagement.

It must here be observed that, but for the letter just received from Bellowmore, the manager would no more have ventured, at such a juncture as the present, to assume the tone he did towards his leading tragedian, than have attempted to swallow him alive. He used the circumstance adroitly, and the conversation thus proceeded.

Strut.—Throw it up, if you please, sir.

Snoxell.—Throw it up! Mr. Strut—you—surely you are not in earnest. Who could you find to lead the serious business?

Strut.—Bellowmore.

Snoxell.—Bellowmore! What! Is he in Little Pedlington?

Strut.—No: but here is a letter I have just received from him.

Snoxell.—What can *he* want?

Strut.—An engagement. I can have him at an hour's notice, and upon my own terms.

Snoxell.—Ha! ha! ha! Bellowmore! I have a great respect for him—think highly of his talents—but he can no more lead the tragic business in such a place as Little Pedlington than ———. I should be the last man in the world, my dear Strut, to throw any impediment in the way of your opening, as my retirement from the theatre just at this time would do; therefore ——Come—confess that—come now, confess that my retirement would——

Strut.—Why—aw—certainly—aw—I—aw—

Snoxell.—That's sufficient—I am satisfied—I'll play the part. But upon one condition.

Strut.—What's that?

Snoxell.—Why, there's that speech, a very fine speech, in the part of Growler, which Waddle is to play: the speech, you know, when he discovers me, with the hatchet in my hand, lifting the latch of the cow-house door—you know the speech I mean—beginning—

> "Rumble thou hurricanous wind, and shake
> The trembling stars from out their firm-set hemispheres,
> Till all in one black ruin clouded is."

Now, I'll tell you in confidence: Waddle can do nothing with that speech. It is too much for him: it is riding fifteen stone on a pony. He'll not get a hand to it—let me speak it, and I'll bring down three rounds.

Strut.—Very well, Snoxell. Speak to Dowlas, the author of the piece, about it, and settle it as you please.

Snoxell.—Bellowmore, indeed! My dear Strut, with that speech in the part, I'll make such a thing of Grumps as shall astonish even Little Pedlington.

Not only soothed but satisfied, Snoxell quitted the room.

The manager left to himself, prepared to answer his correspondents. Scarcely had he taken pen in hand, when he was startled by a violent thump at the door.

"Come in," cried the manager; and Mr. Waddle rushed into the room. For some minutes Waddle was unable to speak. With hurried and unequal step he paced the apartment; he rubbed his face with his handkerchief, drew his fingers through his hair, and occasionally gave a twitch under the cuff of his coat-sleeve, as if a little snow-white Holland had been there to appear at the summons.

Strut.—Now, Waddle; what is it you want? You see I am very busy.

Waddle.—Want, sir? Want, indeed! Why, sir, what I want is this: do you expect me to play Growler to Mr. Snoxell's Grumps? That's what I want, sir.

Strut.—Certainly I do, sir.

Waddle.—What, sir! and cut me out of the speech about "hurricanous wind!" Why, sir, it is the only bit of fat I have in my part: twenty lengths,* and all the rest as flat as a pancake—no possibility of getting a hand. I have a great respect for Mr. Snoxell—very great—and think highly of his talents; not but that I *do* think there is somebody else in the theatre who *could* play Grumps—fine as the part is—as well as he. But to add my only *telling* speech to such a part as his—where every line would be a hit, if he knew what to do with it—why, it is absolutely putting butter to bacon.† However, sir, as I have a reputation at stake in Little Pedlington, I have thrown the part down on the prompter's table.

Strut.—Very well, sir; then when you go into the treasury next Saturday, you will find yourself *minus* ten shillings.

Waddle.—Why, sir, it is not only my own opinion that I am not well treated in the matter; but everybody at rehearsal, from Mrs. Biggleswade, down to little Laura Dobs, who goes on in the choruses, thinks so, too. The speech had better have been

* A *length* is about forty lines.

† A stage-phrase, more remarkable, perhaps, for its expressiveness than its elegance.

given to Miss Julia Wriggles at once, and that would have made the thing perfect.

Strut.—I desire, sir, you will make no impertinent allusion to that young lady.

Waddle.—I don't intend it, sir. But even Mrs. Biggleswade says, that the whole bill is sacrificed to her, and that every one in the company is made to hold up her train.

Strut.—Do you mean to play the part, or not, sir?

Waddle.—Why, sir, as my salary is but twenty shillings a week—although Snoxell has twenty-five—I can't afford to pay forfeit. But I'll tell you what, sir; as I know that withdrawing my name from the piece would be fatal to it, I'll play the part *without* the "hurricanous wind," on condition that you put me up to sing the "Little Farthing Rushlight" in the course of the evening.

Strut.—Very well, very well; sing a hundred-weight of rushlights, if you choose.

Waddle.—But I must be announced in as large letters as Mr. Tippleton.

Strut.—You shall, you shall.

Waddle.—And I must not come *after* Miss Wriggles's song

Strut.—Very well.

Waddle.—Nor *before* her broadsword hornpipe.

Strut.—Very well, very well.

Waddle.—Nor *between* her——

Strut.—You shan't, you shan't. Now, d—nation! do but leave me to my business, and you may come on and sing your song at three o'clock in the morning, and have the house all to yourself.

Waddle.—I'm satisfied. There is not much left in Growler, to be sure; but I see where I *can* hit them; and if I don't stick it into Snoxell in a way to astonish all Little Pedlington, you may send me on to carry messages—that's all.

The door had hardly closed on Waddle when there was a gentle knock, which being duly responded to by the permissive "come in," Mrs. Biggleswade—both the Siddons and the Jordan of the company—entered the room, and took a seat at the table opposite to Strut.

Mrs. B.—My dear soul, I see you are busy. I have but one word to say. I have been up into the wardrobe, and there is not a dress I can wear for Dame Squigs, in the "Hatchet of Horror." I must positively have a new one made for me; and so Mrs. Tinsel, the wardrobe-keeper, says.

Strut.—My dear Mrs. Biggleswade, I cannot afford anything new, in the way of dresses, for this piece—not a quarter of a yard of sixpenny ribbon. I am at a ruinous outlay in the getting-up, as it is: if I get clear for seven pounds I shall think myself fortunate.

Mrs. B.—Then, my dear creature, what *is* to be done? There is nothing in the wardrobe that comes within a hundred miles of the thing: besides, you advertise dresses, and so forth, entirely new.

Strut.—Ay, that is a matter of course; we do that upon all occasions.

Mrs. B.—But the public, whom you so much respect, as you tell them in your play-bills, will expect that——

Strut.—The public be d—d: leave me to humbug the public.

Mrs. B.—Well, then, I suppose I must go on for Dame Squigs in my Lady Macbeth dress; for Mrs. Tinsel declares *she* can do nothing to help me. Now, my dear soul, what *am* I to do?

Strut.—Why, my dear madam, *according* to your *articles*, you are bound to find your own dresses; and——

Mrs. B.—Why, yes, but—this is a sort of character-dress, you know, and—Indeed the only thing Mrs. Tinsel thinks *can* be done is to put the skirt I wore in the "Blue Posts" to the body I wore in the "Cruel Murderer," with the trimmings from my "Ferocious Farmer" dress. It *may* look very well at night; and if you think *that* will do, why——

Strut.—O, it will do very well.

Mrs. B.—Then we'll manage it so. But, my dear soul, you will allow me to have a new——

Strut.—Not a pin that is not found sticking in my wardrobe; so let us say no more about it.—How is your rehearsal going?

Mrs. B.—Very well; very well, indeed.

Strut.—And—pray—and—how is Miss Wriggles getting on?

Mrs. B.—That little girl will do Martha charmingly—considering. But don't you think my niece, little Phobs, would have been better in the part?

Strut.—Miss Phobs! Miss Phobs!! A girl at four shillings a week, who goes on in the choruses! Why, bless my soul! what *can* you be thinking about! In my opinion, Miss Wriggles is the very thing for it, in all respects.

Mrs. B.—Yes; she is tall, well-made, handsome; and, between ourselves, my dear soul, beauty is all that the public look for now-a-days.

Strut.—You don't pretend to say, madam, that she has no talent?

Mrs. B.—Bless your soul! no: she is full of talent—but raw, very raw. Though that is nothing: for *we* know very well that after three or four years' hard practice she may turn out to be a very good actress. Now—don't be angry: you know I always speak candidly, though I never say an ill-natured thing of anybody; and considering it is to be the dear child's *first appearance on any stage*—Ahem!—Wigs was saying just now, he has a *faint* notion of having acted with her for the last three years in Scrubs's company over at Fudgeborough.

Strut.—Wigs said so, did he? Very well.

[Strut writes a memorandum upon a slip of paper.]

Mrs. B.—But there is one thing you must do for her—come now, you must: she will require a pretty dress for the part, and you must let her have the best that can be found in the wardrobe.

Strut.—O, there are some new dresses being made for her.

Mrs. B.—So, I have you. Miss Julia Wriggles can have what she pleases, whilst poor Biggleswade——! O, you naughty man! But I hope poor dear Mrs. Strut has no notion——

Strut.—I must request, madam—desire, madam—no insinuations, madam——that young lady, madam, is a—a—niece of mine, and—and——

Mrs. B.—Of course, of course; and it is natural that one should do the best for one's own family.—Ahem!—But I never heard that you had a brother—or a sister; and I know poor dear Mrs. S. has not; so how can she be your niece? Ha! ha! ha! Now, don't be angry. Your cousin, your cousin, it is all one. Ha! ha! ha! Well, I mustn't keep the stage waiting. By the bye, whilst you have the pen in your hand, just write me an order for two for to-night.

Strut.—Very sorry to refuse you—not a single order will be admitted.

Mrs. B.—Very well, very well. Ha! ha! ha! O, you naughty man! But you must give an order or two to poor little Wriggles. One's own niece, and a first appearance, too! She'll require support, you know. Ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Biggleswade obeyed the call-boy's summons of "Everybody for the last scene," and quitted the room.

Again Mr. Strut resumed his pen; but he had proceeded no further in his answer to the first of his letters than—"Sir, in rep—" when (without the usual formality of tap-tap) the door was thrown open, and Miss Julia Wriggles—the talented, the accomplished, the refined, the elegant—bounced into the room.

Strut.—Well, my love, what do you want?

Miss W.—My love, indeed! What a fool you are! My *love!* Do you want to be heard all over the theatre, you stupid fool?

Strut.—Well, dear, I only spoke.

Miss W.—Spoke, indeed! Hold your tongue, do. An't I to play Colonel Dash in "She *Shall* be an Actress?" and an't I to go on in male attire? Hold your tongue. Then why an't it printed in the bills—Colonel Dash, in male attire, by Miss Julia Wriggles? Hold your tongue. Every one of them 'ere bills as is gone out, must be called in, and fresh uns, with my name in male attire, must be printed.

Strut.—Preposterous, my love! Are you aware that to *bill* such a town as Little Pedlington costs nearly eight shillings?

Miss W.—Hold your tongue: I'll have it done—at least, it must be done in the bills of to-morrow, and that's letting you off easy. Hold your tongue. Do it, or I shall just walk myself back to Fudgeborough, and then where are you? And then, again, I find the people here complain of your late hours—that they can't get to bed before eleven o'clock, and I'm not going to stand playing 'em out at that 'ere time o' night. The "Actress" must be done as a middle piece.

Strut.—But, my dear darling creature, it can't be. Mr. Tippleton—the "facetious Tippleton," as he is called here—always stipulates for the middle of the evening.

Miss W.—Hold your tongue, you stupid fool! I don't care for Tippleton, or you either. If you don't do it I walks myself off to Fudgeborough, that's all. And the dress they've made me for Martha Squigs won't do, not by no manner o' means. They must make me another. Hold your tongue. And if they dare even to show me that dress again, I'll tear it into a thousand million of atoms. Hold your tongue, and immediately give orders to Tinsel to obey my orders, and make me whatever I think proper to order; or this very day I walks myself off to Fudgeborough. And that reminds me—give me some orders.

Strut.—Really, Julia, I—I can't. Orders won't go; and I have just refused Mrs. Biggleswade.

Miss W.—I don't care for that. Mrs. Biggleswade may stand being refused; I don't, you know; so don't try to come none of your nonsense over me. Hold your tongue. Give me a dozen double box-orders; if I want more I'll send for them. Hold your tongue. I'm called. Now remember what I have told you to do; and if it an't done in less than no time at all, I just

walks myself back to Fudgeborough; and that will make you look tolerable blue, we flatters ourselves.

Miss Julia Wriggles bounced out of the room. At the same moment, the manager was cut short in the middle of a deep sigh by the entrance of Stumps.

Stumps.—The gentleman who sent the new tragedy the other day, sir, wishes to see you. He will be glad of your answer about it.

Strut.—Busy,—can't see him,—no answer, at present,—must come some other time.

Stumps.—Yes, sir. And Mr. Bray, sir, the man that belongs to the donkey, is here.

Strut.—The donkey-man! Why didn't you show him in instantly? Admit him. O, here he is. Bray, my dear fellow, how d'ye do? Devilish glad to see you. Take a seat. Well; how did your donkey get on at rehearsal: d'ye think he'll do?

Bray.—Do! Why, Master Tim, I wish some of the humane donkeys in your company would act their parts as well as my donkey will act his'n. Sew'd up in the hide, too, he looks a 'nation sight more like a cow than many of t'others will look what they've got to represent. To be sure, he set off a-braying in high style in the principal scene; but that's natural enough, you know: even a donkey, when he gets upon the stage, likes to have a bit of gag of his own.* Hows'ever, that won't do at night, so I'll muzzle him, 'cause it arn't in the natur' of a cow to bray, you know; and in this theatre natur' goes afore all. Why, don't you know, Tim, that for a cow to bray would be like his talking a foreign lingo, just the same as if me and you was to talk French—and the Pedlingtonians are deep enough to know that a real cow, as you've advertised him, would never think of doing that.

Strut.—That's true. Now, as to terms, I believe we understand each other. Two shillings a-week for the use of him.

Bray.—That's to say, I let him out to play for three nights a-week, at two shillings.

Strut.—Three nights! Nonsense! There was no such limitation understood.

Bray.—Don't care. Mine's the principal donkey in the piece, 'cause he's the only one; and he shan't injure his constitution by playing more than three nights a week unless he's paid extra

* *Gag*, in theatrical parlance, means the extemporaneous embellishments uttered by an actor beyond what is "set down" for him.

for it, just the same as the principal actors of your own. Come —fourpence for each night additional, or I goes directly and rips him out of the hide and takes him home; and if I takes away my donkey, what'll you do for a cow?

Strut.—Well; if I must, I must. Agreed.

Bray.—Now, then; what am *I* to be paid?

Strut.—You! For what?

Bray.—Why, MasterTim, you've engaged my donkey, but you haven't engaged me to drive him. Ha! ha! ha! and he'll be of no use if you don't. My donkey's as obstinate as a mule, and nobody but me can't manage him; and I can't think of taking a less salary than his'n. Ha! ha! ha! You see I have you there. No use to talk; he won't move a peg if I an't with him.

Strut.—Then I must say, this is the most unblushing piece of——*

Bray.—Stuff and nonsense, Tim; it's all fair in a the*a*tre, you know. How does my donkey know that before the week's over you won't put him upon half-salary? So it's all fair, I tell you. Besides, you can't do without *that* hanimal in the piece no more than any of the others; so pay me you must.

The manager having no refuge but in compliance with this unexpected demand, it is agreed to, and Mr. Bray takes his leave. He is presently succeeded by Mr. Dumps, the Treasurer.

Strut.—I am glad you are come, Dumps. I am expecting Tippleton, and I should wish you to be present when he comes. But, how do you like the bill?

Dumps.—Hm! Don't know. Wants cutting. Where's the use of saying at the bottom of the bill, that on this occasion Tippleton will perform, and Snoxell will perform, and so forth, when you have already said so in the middle?

Strut.—The use of it, my dear fellow! Why, look at its length! A reader might forget all that, but for such a reminder at the end of it.

Dumps.—Then, why advertise "The Hatchet of Horror" as a new piece, when you know very well it was run off its legs, two years ago, over at Fudgeborough. I don't think that's quite the thing at the Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington.

Strut.—Hush! nobody here will be the wiser for it, unless we tell 'em. But, I say, Master Tommy; I have been looking over the salary-list: it is awful!

* Not without a precedent.

Dumps.—Hm, hm!—*That* wants cutting, at any rate.

Strut.—Then cut Wigs. He's a bad actor—of no use—and—and a troublesome fellow in the company. Pay him a week's salary and discharge him. Have you seen the box-book? How does it look?

Dumps.—Hm! Why—that *don't* want cutting. Only thirteen places taken.

Strut.—Thirteen already! Why, my dear fellow, that's glorious.

Dumps.—Hm! The old set of orderlies: the Cripps's, the Stintems, the Snargates. They have all just now written to me for orders.

Strut.—To you, also? Why, confound their impudence! They have applied to me, too! Secure the best places in my boxes, and——These be your only patrons of the drama. But, see: here's a letter from Bellowmore. What think you of it?

Dumps.—"Eight-tenths of the clear receipts!" Hm! Cool. Better ask for eleven-tenths. Do no good. Never drew his salary.

Strut.—And what's your opinion of——? [*Tap-tap.*] Come in.—My dear Hobbleday, I am exceedingly busy, and can't speak to you now. Is it anything very particular you have to say?

Hobbleday.—No, my dear Strut; nothing. See you are busy. No ceremony with me. How-do, Dumps? Merely called to wish you success. Saw your bill. Splendid! All Little Pedlington raving about it. Julia Wriggles. Charming girl, I understand, eh? No doubt of your success. Pooh, pooh! can't be. All the town will come—now, mind, I tell you so. May be sure of *one* person, and that's little Jack Hobbleday. Good pair of hands, eh? Well, I see you are busy. Good bye. Wish you success. Sure of a bumper. Good bye. Make your fortune, take my word for it.—Oh! I say, Strut: could you just scribble me such a thing as an order for two for to-night?

Strut.—I'm sorry to refuse you, my dear fellow; but not an order of any kind or description whatever, will be admitted on any account or pretence whatever. However, I'll put your name on the free-list for the season.

Hobbleday.—No! Will you? Well, now—really—vastly kind—greatly obliged—most flattering compliment, I declare. Haven't words to express how much I am obliged.

Strut.—It is but fair, though, to apprize you, that on this particular occasion, and on every night of performance throughout

the season, the free-list will be altogether, entirely, and totally suspended, *in toto*.

Hobbleday.—No matter. That don't signify. A most flattering compliment, nevertheless. Greatly obliged—highly flattered. Good bye, Strut. Good bye, Dumps!

The manager and his right trusty chancellor of the exchequer had scarcely recovered from this interruption, when again they were disturbed by a tap at the door, and Mr. Tippleton (who had but just descended from the top of the coach) made his appearance.

Tippleton.—How are you, Strut? How do, Dumps? I've a complaint.

Strut.—What! You have scarcely set foot in the theatre, and already you complain?

Dumps.—Hm! What the deuce can *you* find to complain about? Haven't you the highest salary in the theatre?

Tippleton.—Yes; and that's my complaint. Look to my articles. Tippleton is to be paid the highest salary of anybody—twenty-five shillings a week. Now, I have discovered that you pay Snoxell twenty-five shillings a week, so that mine is no longer the *highest* salary.

Dumps.—Hm! And how does that affect you? Snoxell had twenty shillings; this season he is advanced to twenty-five. Would you have us reduce his salary for a point of form?

Tippleton.—No. I'll injure no man—no man shall injure me. I'll tell you how the affair may be amicably arranged: raise my salary to thirty. There.

Dumps.—Hm! And where's the money to come from? As it is, we shan't draw up the curtain under nine-pound-eighteen; and cram the house to the roof we can't get more than fifteen pounds into it.

Tippleton.—Don't care. Look to my articles. Money come from! Who bring the money? Tragedians?—No. The comedians bring the money. Who *are* the comedians? Bobby Tippleton *are* the comedians, therefore Bobby Tippleton must be paid. Don't care. Can go over to Fudgeborough—*carte blanche*—my own terms—do what I like.

Strut.—Well; I suppose I must comply. You shall have thirty shillings.

Tippleton.—I'm satisfied.—I've a complaint.

Strut.—What now?

Tippleton.—Look at this play-bill. Look to my articles. My name to be printed in the largest-sized letters. See here:—

"*All round my Hat;*"—Tippleton in italic capitals, Miss Julia Wriggles in large capitals.—Great respect for Miss Julia Wriggles—don't want her to hold up my train—won't hold up her train. Thing must be altered.

Strut.—'Tis a mistake of the printer's: it shall be set right in to-morrow's bills.

Tippleton.—I'm satisfied.—I've a complaint.

Strut.—Another!

Tippleton.—"*Who are you?*" Tippleton and Gigs in one line—Miss Julia Wriggles in a line by herself. Great respect for Gigs, also; but Tippleton must stand alone. Offered my own terms at Fudgeborough, remember.

Strut.—Well; that also shall be altered.

Tippleton.—I'm satisfied.—I've a complaint.

Strut.—And what—the—devil—more—can you find to complain about?

Tippleton.—You've sent me a part in a new piece to study.

Strut.—And a very fine part it is.

Tippleton.—Don't say the contrary; but I stand to my articles. Willing to oblige; in these times an actor ought to put his shoulder to the wheel; I put *my* shoulder to the wheel: so if it be a good part, and the very best part in the piece, and I happen to like the part, and the part should please me in every possible respect, why I have no objection to——

Dumps.—Hm, hm! But there's no such clause as *that* in your articles, I'll swear; though there *is* something about a fine for refusing a part.

Tippleton.—Don't care for articles. Fines are all very proper—never could get through business in a theatre without them:—any performer, high or low, who refuses a part, fine him—all right—only you mustn't fine Bobby Tippleton. Scrubs, over at Fudgeborough, has offered me——

Strut.—You are a pleasant fellow, Master Bobby! Now, suppose I sign a blank sheet of paper, and allow you to fill it up with terms, conditions, and stipulations, entirely according with your own wishes—will that content you?

Tippleton.—Can't say—must look to my articles. Well—I'm called to rehearsal. Good day.—Stop! I've a compl——No matter: I'll think it over, and let you know by and by. [*Tippleton withdraws.*]

Strut.—Well, Dumps, what think you of the appearance of affairs *now?*

Dumps.—Hm! I'll tell you what I think: Tippleton and

Snoxell, and Mrs. Biggleswade and Miss Wriggles—pull altogether as hard as they will—won't draw expenses into the house.

Strut.—Psha! With such flattering assurances—(*he points to the pile of applications for orders*)—of the support of the worthy townspeople;—with such friendly, such zealous, such disinterested co-operation on the part of the company—the THEATRE ROYAL, LITTLE PEDLINGTON, must succeed.

Dumps.—Hm, hm, hm! I wish you may get it.

CHAPTER XII.

Only one place vacant! Just in time—The Arch-Humbug of Little Pedlington again—Secrets touching the Dancer and the *Débutante*—Awful consequences of the tittle-tattle of a busy-body: a lady's dignified resentment—Irreparable loss: death of Rummins—Jubb's Elegy thereon: unavoidable co-incidences of thought—Important distinction in the orthography of names—Intimacies of authors and actors with critics: suspicious?—How to form an opinion: "My paper says."

"HAVE you any place in the boxes for to-night, sir?" inquired I of the box book-keeper.

"How many do you want, sir?" inquired he in return.

"Only one for myself," replied I.

"Luckily," continued he, "I have one place, which has just been given up."

"Because," said I, inquiringly, "it was not worth keeping—a seat on a back row at the top of the house?"

"Beg pardon, sir, it most luckily happens to be a seat on the first row of the centre dress-box."

"I am fortunate, indeed!" exclaimed I. "You expect a great house?"

"Tremendous, sir! Every place taken."

Not having any silver, I tendered a half-sovereign in payment for my ticket—the price of admission to the boxes being two shillings.

The functionary opened a drawer, in which there were two or three stray shillings. He then felt successively, though not successfully, in each of his pockets. Upon my telling him, in reply to his inquiry whether I could oblige him with such a thing as two shillings in silver, that I had no silver at all, he expressed his regret at having given away all his small money *in change*. [It somehow happened that I saw neither notes nor gold in his drawer]. He then desired a boy to go into the treasury, and see whether Mr. Dumps had change for a half-sovereign *there*. After some delay, the boy returned, and accounted for his long absence, by stating that he had been obliged to go for change to Yawkins's Bank.

That the only vacant place in the house, that place being also the very best in it, and that place, again, having fortunately been relinquished by its first proprietor, should fall to my lot, formed a combination of lucky circumstances, upon which I could not but congratulate myself.

Strolled into Yawkins's library; there I saw my old friend Hobbleday.

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed Hobbleday—"most happy, most delighted to see you! When did you arrive?"

"Last night," replied I.

"Of course you come to make a stay," said he.

"Probably I shall go away to-morrow," replied I, though not intending any such thing.

"To-morrow! No, no—you will stay till Wednesday," continued Hobbleday; "or must you *positively* go to-morrow?"

"Positively, sir—I shall leave Little Pedlington to-morrow," I answered.

"That's decided, is it?" said he. "Well, dear me! that is very provoking; for I intended to ask you to dine with me on Wednesday. However, since you can't, you can't."

Here the exquisite little humbug was interrupted by Yawkins, who, after a few words of recognition and of welcome, said,—

"Ah! sir, the world has sustained an irreparable loss since last you were here. That great luminary, that master-spirit, is extinguished. The immortal Rummins is dead! Died, sir, on the first of April last."

"Dead!" I exclaimed. "Rummins dead!" I turned aside, and—shall I confess it?—shed a tear.

"*And* a most extraordinary coincidence!" said Hobbleday. "Our cockatoo at our Zoological Gardens died on that very same day! Poor Rummins! We had him stuffed; and there he is on a perch in a glass-case, looking all but alive."

"Stuff'd?" exclaimed I. "Simcox Rummins, F.S.A., stuffed! Embalmed (you would say), as an antiquary so learned and profound deserved to be."

"Rummins!" cried Hobbleday; "no, the cockatoo. Ever see a stuffed cockatoo? Most curious thing! The only one in all this place. Come," continued he, taking me by the arm—"come with me and see it."

"I thank you," said I; "but I cannot at present."

"But why not? What is there to prevent you?" said he.

"I have not the time to spare, Mr. Hobbleday."

"Pooh, pooh! it won't take long. Come, now; do come. It is not far—it will be a nice little walk for us. But *why* won't you go?"

After enduring twenty more "why's" and "what's-your-reasons," I thanked him for his pertinacious politeness, and turned to speak to Yawkins.

"Your theatre has put forth a very attractive bill," said I; at the same time pointing to one which was hanging in the shop, and which reached nearly from the ceiling to the floor.

"Never before, sir," replied Yawkins, "was there such a company collected together in Little Pedlington. Why, sir, Tippleton is in himself a host; Snoxell is a host; Waddle is a host; Gigs is a host; Mrs. Biggleswade is a host; Mrs. ——In short, there is scarcely one in the whole company but is singly a host."

"Mademoiselle Sara des Entrechats, who is to dance, is, of course, from Paris," said I.

"Why, no; not exactly from Paris," replied Yawkins; "she comes from Fudgeborough, and her name is Sally Jumps. But, Lord, sir! the connoisseurs of Little Pedlington would as soon allow that a woman could dance gracefully and well with a wooden leg as with an English name."

"I say, my dear fellow," said Hobbleday in a half-whisper to me (twitching my sleeve, and giving me a knowing wink at the same time), "that Mamzell *Ontershaw* is a charming little girl. —Ahem!—I say, my dear fellow; if you should happen to see a certain person in a French bonnet and shawl walking about the Vale of Health, or a mile or so on the Snapshank road, arm in arm with another certain person—ahem!—who is not *very* far from you

at this moment, do you pretend not to notice us—*them*, I should have said."

I assured Mr. Hobbleday that I was discretion itself.

Yawkins drew me aside and whispered:—"To my certain knowledge he never spoke to her in his life, sir. She has been scarcely three days in the town."

I made no remark upon this little piece of illustrative information, but again turned to the play-bill, saying:—

"This Miss Julia Wriggles, whose name occurs so frequently in the bill; who not only acts in tragedy, comedy, and farce, sings a song, delivers an address, and dances a broad-sword hornpipe; but concludes her labours by acting eight parts in one piece—that is to say, by playing the whole piece herself—this Miss Julia Wriggles, I say, must be a young lady of pre-eminent ability. Why, to execute well what she has undertaken to perform, would seem to require the combined powers of any six actresses I ever heard of."

"A wonderful person indeed, sir," replied Yawkins; "and a great favourite———"

"Favourite!" exclaimed I; "why, this is announced as her first appearance on any stage!"

"——of the manager's," continued Yawkins, somewhat drily. "But as to a first appearance, sir, I can't say much for that; for it is whispered, in the best-informed circles, that she has been acting these three years past over at Fudgeborough. One thing, however, is certain, Mr. Strut, the manager, has discharged Mr. Wigs, a very promising young actor, for merely saying so; and that, I think, gives an appearance of probability to the thing.

"Theatrical news travels fast in Little Pedlington," thought I.

"But she must be a prodigious genius," continued Yawkins: "for Mr. Strut has opened the theatre chiefly on her account—which he would not have done this season unless he had had the good fortune to secure her services."

"Fortunate Strut!" thought I.

"What a charming, domestic creature is poor Mrs. Strut!" said Hobbleday. "I say, Yawkins, you have heard that she has determined to sue for a separate maintenance?"

"Now, really, Mr. Hobbleday," cried Yawkins, "this is too bad! It was I myself who, not an hour ago, mentioned to you, *in strict confidence*, that such a proceeding was probable. I gave you no authority to repeat it: yet, no doubt, by this time you have trotted all over Little Pedlington to disburthen yourself of the information."

"Not I, I assure you, sir," cried Hobbleday, with an air of offended dignity; "not I, sir; am incapable of such a proceeding. Have mentioned it but to one person—to whom it could be no secret—Mrs. Strut herself."

"Impossible! And you told her you received the report from me?"

"No, sir; did *not* tell her I received it from you. Did not say, *Yawkins* told me—pooh, pooh! have too much tact for that—merely said, 'I heard it *at* Yawkins's.'"

"So, sir, you left my shop, full puff, for the express purpose of——"

"No sir; not for the purpose. This is how it happened, sir: my friend Strut has had the politeness to put my name upon the free-list; but as the free-list is 'Entirely and totally suspended *in toto*,' as the bills say, I waited about the stage-door in the hope of meeting with somebody who could give me an order. Presently saw Mrs. Strut. Could not help saying how sorry I was at hearing such a report—should have been a brute if I could—and requested an order for two, which she most kindly gave me. And that is the whole truth of the matter."

Hobbleday had not finished speaking when a boy entered the shop, threw a note down upon the counter, and, without uttering a word, went out again. Whilst Yawkins was reading the note, Hobbleday said—

"Of course, you'll be there to-night. Like to go behind the scenes, eh? I'll take you. Show you the green-room. Introduce you to all the principal performers. I'll look out for you in the theatre. What say you?"

Recollecting his promise, upon a former occasion, to introduce me to all the eminent people of the place, when, as it afterwards appeared, he himself was but slightingly considered by them, I declined his kind offer.

"Here, sir," cried Yawkins, in a voice trembling with rage (at the same time holding out the note in one hand, and striking his counter heavily with the other): "here, Mr. Hobbleday! these are the awful consequences of your busy tittle-tattling! Listen, sir!"

Mr. Yawkins read the note, which was in the words following:—

"Mrs. Strut desires Mr. Yawkins will *instantly* send in his bill for the two cakes of Windsor soap, also the tooth-brush she owes him for, as she intends to withdraw her custom from his *shop*, and give it somewhere where people have enough to do *to*

mind their own business without troubling themselves about *other people's*. Mrs. S. also informs Mr. Y. that she does not intend to renew her subscription to his library when her present week is out, as people *taken up with pleasant conversation* naturally forget to send *new* works when *bespoke*. Mrs. S. also informs Mr. Y. that *she* has struck his name off the free-list of the theatre, which she has STILL a right to do, *whatever Mr. Y. may report to the contrary*. Mrs. S. desires Mr. Y. will be sure to *receipt* the bill, as people who trouble themselves so much *with what does not concern them* MIGHT forget to scratch it out of their books, *when paid*, and she is not fond of *disputes*."

Hobbleday did not wait to receive the reproaches which Yawkins was preparing to shower upon him; but, pretending to hear himself called by some one who passed the door, he bustled out of the shop.

"That, sir, said Yawkins, "is the most pestilent little gossip in the town. A secret runs through him like water through a sieve. He is not happy till he has got it, and is miserable till he is rid of it. He is worse than forty old women. You cannot be sure of the duration of a common acquaintance for a day, if he gets between you. He is a sort of cholera in social life; and, when he 'breaks out' in a place, he 'carries off' friendships by the dozen. Ah! sir, you ought to be very happy that you have no Hobbledays in London."

"In London," said I—(glad of an opportunity of elevating the character of *that* pretty town in the opinion of a Pedlingtonian)—"in London, we entertain a virtuous horror of slander, scandal, tittle-tattle, and old-apple-woman gossip; so that *there*, sir, a Hobbleday would not be endured; he could not exist; he would fail from the utter want of encouragement."

"Happy London!" exclaimed the eminent bibliopolist.

"Heaven forgive me!" thought I, reflecting on the enormity of my assertion.

I took up a book which lay on the counter. It was "Jubb's *Pedlingtonia*, a new edition, with additions." The only considerable addition, however, was an 'Elegy on the Death of Rummins.' Here it is. It is remarkable for its sweetness, its pathos, its elegiac tenderness; but, by the generality of readers, it will, perhaps, be most admired for its originality.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;
No more illustrious Rummins shall I see!
O, Simcox Rummins, senior, F.S.A.,
Why leave the world to darkness and to me!

In vain thy Jubb thy 'Life and Times' shall write,
For since, O Simcox, thou'rt no longer there
To join in thy biographer's delight,
He wastes his sweetness on the desert air.

Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The height which thou, my Rummins, didst attain!
All say in prose what Jubb now sings in rhyme—
We ne'er shall look upon thy like again.

A man thou wast to all the country dear;
Great was thy learning and profound thy lore;
And, passing rich with ninety pounds a year,
Thou gav'st relief that Heaven might bless thy store.

One morn I miss'd thee on th' accustom'd hill,
Near yonder copse where once the garden smiled,
Ah! ruthless Death! and couldst thou Rummins kill!
In wit a man, simplicity a child.

Since, then, I'm doom'd my dearest friend to lose,
In Pedlington no longer stay I can.
The world is all before me where to choose—
Pity the sorrows of a poor old man!"

I purchased the volume, thought of the illustrious defunct, paid half-a-crown—and sighed.

At this moment, Mr. Rummins, son of the *great* Rummins, and editor of the Pedlington newspaper, came into the shop. He was accompanied by a gentleman short and stout. It was Waddle, the tragedian! who was that night to enact Growler in the "Hatchet of Horror!" Rummins, after saying a few words to Yawkins, was invited by the latter to stay dinner.

"Can't," replied Rummins; "I dine with Waddle."

"Then will you come and sup after the play?" said Yawkins.

"Can't," again replied Rummins; "I sup with Waddle."

The editor was about to quit the shop, when I took the liberty of reminding him that, on my former visit, I had had the honour of an introduction to him at a *conversazione* at the house of his late illustrious father. He condescended to make me a remarkably polite bow, and, with becoming dignity, wished me good morning, and went away.

"Upon that same occasion," said I, turning to Yawkins, "I had the pleasure also of meeting Miss Cripps, the poetess."

"At that time, sir," said Yawkins, "Miss Cripps and he were

great friends, and she used to invite him to all her tea-parties; but since then they have quarrelled."

"Indeed!" exclaimed I; "I am sorry to hear that. What was the cause of the rupture?"

"Why, sir," replied Yawkins, "Miss Cripps wrote some very charming verses on the death of the cockatoo in our Zoological Gardens; and Mr. Rummins, in his notice of them, said that they were far superior to Milton, but not quite equal to Jubb. At this, Miss Cripps took offence, and she has never since invited Mr. Rummins to tea. For my own part, I think her in the wrong; for a poem may be very fine, yet inferior to the compositions of such a writer as Jubb. And to say the truth, Miss Cripps is one of those ladies who are never satisfied with anything short of the very top of the tree. However, he is now all in all with Miss Jane Scrubbs, the lady who writes riddles and charades, and things of that sort."

"I had the pleasure of meeting her, too. Pray is she any relation of the manager of the Fudgeborough theatre?"

"Not in the least; and nothing offends her more than that it should be thought she is. Besides, sir," continued Yawkins, with a solemn nod of the head, "Scrubs has only *one* b in *his* name, whilst Miss Scrubbs spells hers with *two*."

"That's an important and an honourable distinction," said I.

"Sir, sir, sir," suddenly cried Yawkins, "did you ever see Mr. Snoxell off the stage?"

"Never," said I; "which is he?"

"You see those three gentlemen arm in arm, crossing the square," said Yawkins. "The middle one is Mr. Fiat, who writes the 'Dictator;' he on his right arm is Mr. Dowlas, author of the melodrama, the 'Hatchet of Horror,' which is to be acted to-night; the gentleman on his left is Mr. Snoxell."

With becoming admiration I looked at them, till, by turning a corner, they were lost to view.

"But what *is* the 'Dictator?'" I inquired.

"O, very true, sir, I remember," replied Yawkins. "When last you were here we had but one paper—the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer,' edited by Rummins the Younger, the gentleman who just now looked in. We have now another—the 'Little Pedlington Dictator,' written by Mr. Fiat. It is a publication exclusively devoted to politics, literature, the drama, the fine arts, science, political economy, geology, zoology, conchology, pathology, craniology——"

"Stop, stop, for Heaven's sake, Mr. Yawkins," cried I.

"Surely you do not pretend that Mr. Fiat himself writes upon all those subjects?"

"Indeed, but I do, sir," replied he; "and upon all with equal knowledge, taste, and judgment. In his criticisms upon acting, he is, for tragedy, a Snoxellite; for comedy, a Tippletonian. Rummins, on the contrary, is a Waddleite and a Gigsite. What they will say about Miss Julia Wriggles is a mystery; but my own private opinion is, that Rummins, being a friend of the manager's, the 'Observer' will be all on her side; whilst Fiat, who (between ourselves, sir) is said to be over head and ears in love with little Laura Dobs—a pretty little girl who sings in the choruses—will be against her."

"And pray, Mr. Yawkins," inquired I, "which, in your opinion, is the greater actor of the two: Snoxell or Waddle?"

"Why, really, sir," replied he, "that is a question which it is utterly impossible to answer. When I had but one paper to read ('The Observer') I was convinced that Waddle was the better; but since 'The Dictator' has been established, which gives the preference to Snoxell, I am greatly perplexed."

"But have you no opinion of your own?" inquired I, with some degree of astonishment.

With an appearance of equal astonishment Yawkins echoed —"An opinion of my own? Bless me, sir, what an extraordinary question! Where is the use of reading a newspaper if one is to be at the trouble of thinking for oneself after all? No, no, sir; we are not such fools in Little Pedlington as that comes to: and happy are they who are content to read but one paper, for, in that case, they know exactly *what* to think."

"Then," said I, "you Pedlingtonians are very wise people. Far different is it with us in London. *There*, no one is newspaper-led; and such a phrase as 'But my paper says,' is never heard. Well; I wish you good morning, Mr. Yawkins. I shall go to the theatre this evening. To-morrow I will write to my friends what *I* think of the performances; and at the same time send them the criticisms both of the 'Observer' and the 'Dictator.'"

I returned to Scorewell's; took a hasty dinner; and at half-past five—the performances being to commence at six o'clock precisely—proceeded to the THEATRE ROYAL, LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

CHAPTER XIII.*

"And Sessions-papers tragedize my style."

BRAMSTONE'S *Man of Taste.*

THE OPENING NIGHT—Impartial criticism intended: how attainable—Exemplary architect: singular accuracy of a building-estimate—Useful knowledge for the rising generation—On crowds—Unprecedented conduct of a box-opener—Conversation with Hobbleday concerning London theatricals—Destitute condition of the London actors deplored: their emigration defensible—Cliques and coteries—Miss Scrubbs's *last*—The "*Encore*" [query] *nuisance*—Great reception of Miss Julia Wriggles: the Wreath [query] *humbug*—Analysis of the "Hatchet of Horror," with remarks thereon, *passim*—Its morality, and the beneficial effects of this school of Drama on the lower orders insisted upon—Symptoms of party feeling: Speeches of Snoxell and Waddle—The terms "Original" and "Domestic" explained—Discriminating compliment: the Call-for-actors [query] *nuisance*—Summary of the performances.

MONDAY NIGHT—QUARTER PAST ELEVEN.—Just returned from the theatre. Now, whilst the impression of all that I have witnessed is strong upon my mind, I will transfer it to the pages of my journal. I shall claim for my record a reliance on its fidelity and impartiality, for I have not the honour of a personal acquaintance with Snoxell or with Waddle; I dine neither with Tippleton nor with Gigs, nor do I sup with either Mrs. Biggleswade or Miss Julia Wriggles; I never spoke to Mr. Dowlas, the author; I know not Mr. Strut, the manager; have no desire to come out at his theatre, or to go in—without paying for my admission; moreover, never having perpetrated a dramatic work, I have no "acceptation" to hope for, no "rejection" to fear—the contrary of all or any of which circumstances might, possibly, give a slight bias to my statements. Not being a critic by profession, it would, of course, be presumptuous in me to make the smallest claim to infallibility; my opinions, therefore, may be open to objection, honest though they be; but what I state as fact, is fact, and this I will maintain, even though such high

* The five chapters in this volume, upon the Little Pedlington theatricals, were written prior to the month of April, 1837.

authorities as Mr. Fiat, of the "Little Pedlington Dictator," and Mr. Rummins, of the "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer," should combine to gainsay me.

Formerly (according to the Guide Book) the performances took place "in a commodious outhouse belonging to Mr. Sniggerston, the brewer, tastefully fitted up for the occasion;" but since my last visit here, an elegant theatre has been erected. It is the work of Mr. Snargate, the celebrated architect of this place, and does infinite credit to his taste and skill. According to a minute estimate made by that gentleman, it was to cost exactly £671. 15*s.* 7½*d.*; and the estimate having been formed with the accuracy for which Mr. Snargate is upon all occasions distinguished, the edifice, when finished, actually cost no more than £1,343. 11*s.* 3¾*d.*—only one farthing more than double the sum originally required! This money was raised in shares of five pounds each, for which the subscribers were to receive five *per cent.* interest—when they could get it—*and nothing more.* And it is gratifying to be enabled to add, that (such is the prosperous state of theatricals in Little Pedlington!) the *latter* condition is punctually fulfilled.

"Tremendous! Every place taken!" was the reply I received this morning to my question to the box book-keeper, as to whether he expected a full house. This information, in addition to the notification at the foot of the play-bill, that the free-list would be suspended, and that not an order would be admitted, induced me to be at the theatre by half-past five precisely, the hour appointed for the opening of the doors; for, although I had paid for, and secured, a place on the front row of the centre dress-box, I prudently considered that, in case of a rush, my precaution might be of but little avail. I did not repent the resolution I had taken; for, on arriving at the theatre, which was not yet opened, I found crowds assembled at the doors. At the pit-door I counted five persons, at the gallery seven, whilst at the box-entrance was a dense mass, composed of no fewer than eighteen or (I think I may venture to say) twenty.

Poaching, smuggling, highway-robbery, and murder, being the staple of the principal piece to be acted, I need scarcely say that, of the seven persons collected at the gallery-door, six were children, girls and boys, of from ten to twelve years of age, aspirants for the honours of the hulks and the halter.

"Sweet the task
To teach the young idea how to shoot!"

It seems to be the principle of a crowd, whether large or small, whenever or for whatever purpose collected, to make each other as uncomfortable as they can. If fifty people are assembled at the entrance to a place which they know to be capable of accommodating five thousand, they will squeeze, jostle, shove; push forwards, backwards, sideways; they will do anything but stand still, although perfectly convinced they can "take nothing by their *motion*"—save a few needless bruises or a broken rib. I never but once heard a satisfactory reason for this propensity. "Pray, sir," said a person who till that moment had been the backmost of a crowd, to another who had just joined it—"Pray, sir, have the kindness not to press upon me; it is unnecessary, since there is no one behind to press upon you!" "But there may be, presently," said the other; "besides, sir, where's the good of being in a crowd if one mayn't shove?" The good people here seemed to be of the same opinion; for the five who were assembled at the pit-door (which, by the bye, is quite wide enough to allow conveniently of one person entering at a time, if they would but take the matter coolly), were jostling, squeezing, and kicking each other, as vigorously as if their lives depended upon who should be first.

But the great struggle was at the box-entrance, which is between the other two. When the door—for there is but one, though of double the width of the last mentioned—when the door was thrown open, the rush was overwhelming. Little Jack Hobbleday was in the midst of the crowd; and, fairly carried off his legs, squeezed upwards and turned round by the pressure, he was borne along with his head above the others, and back foremost. An idea of the intensity of the pressure will be best conveyed in the words of Hobbleday himself. Gasping for breath, he cried, "This is awful! Tremen*duous!* Shall be squeezed as flat as a pancake; pooh, pooh! know I shall. Never saw such a crowd in Little Pedlington since the day I was born!" I followed the stream and entered. That turning to the left, I did the same. A voice proceeding from a head ensconced in a sort of pigeon-hole in the wall on the opposite (the right-hand) side, cried, "*Orders* this way!" There was a simultaneous rush of the whole party in that direction, and I was left standing alone. "*Money* this way!" exclaimed another voice issuing from a similar hole on the left-hand side. There I presented the ticket which I had purchased in the morning, and was admitted. I thought this arrangement judicious, for there was not a soul at the pay-door to incommode me.

I took my seat. Presently I heard the voice of Hobbleday. He was conversing, in an under tone, with the box-opener.

"Every place taken, I assure you, sir," said the latter.

"Pooh, pooh! my dear Jobs," said Hobbleday, "but you *must* find a seat for *me*. There" (pointing to the bench on which I was sitting), "there, next to that gentleman. Particular friend of mine. Expects me. Something of great importance to talk about."

"Quite impossible, Mr. Hobbleday," said Jobs; "every place in that box is taken and paid for."

"Come now, my dear Jobs," continued the unextinguishable Hobbleday, "see what you can do for me; and when your benefit comes—ahem!—you'll know where little Jack Hobbleday is to be found."

"First company!" cried Jobs, throwing open the box-door: "Mr. Hobbleday's place: front row." And Mr. Hobbleday took his seat beside me.

"Glad to meet *you* of all people," said my old acquaintance. "Well, here we are in whole skins. What a crush! At one time thought I should give up the ghost. Worse inside the house than out. Such a crush at the free door! Lucky for you, you paid—you escaped it. Miss Cripps got one of her sharp elbows stuck so deep in my ribs, I thought I felt it coming through on the other side—did, as I hope to be saved. Never get in the way of a woman with sharp elbows, if you can help it. Too bad of the manager, though! He ought to be ashamed of himself for not making some better arrangement for the accommodation of parties who come with orders. I've a great mind to write a letter to the 'Dictator' about it, and sign myself AN INDEPENDENT PLAY-GOER."

"You will have half the town on your side, sir," said I.

Hobbleday made no reply to this, but looking round the house said, in a tone of triumph, "Well, what think you of our *new* theatre?"

"I cannot judge of it by comparison," replied I, "for I never had the good fortune to see the old one; but it is a pretty little theatre."

"Pretty!—Little!" exclaimed Hobbleday; "you mean splendid, immense! Why, it is more than double the size of Sniggerston's out-house, in which the company used to perform! Little!—It will hold nearly three hundred people. *Little*, indeed! Complaint generally is, that it is too large—that one can neither see nor hear so well as in the old one. But the fact

is, Snargate, the architect, has such magnificent ideas!—does everything on such a grand scale. Right, perhaps, after all; with the eyes of the universe upon him, and the character of such a place as Little Pedlington at stake, quite right."

"For my own part," said I, "I am partial to a small theatre, wherein you may count every line of the burnt cork on the actor's nose—trace every mark of the hare's foot on his cheek; where they can practise none of that roguery dignified by the term *illusion*, but where paint is, palpably, paint, and tinsel, tinsel."

"Exactly my notion, my dear fellow," said Hobbleday: "in these good, sensible, matter-of-fact, march-of-intellect times, rational folks won't allow of any advantage being taken of their imagination, even in a play-house."

"The words "pretty" and "little," which I had unfortunately used, were still operating uncomfortably upon Hobbleday's mind.

"And pray," said he, after a short pause, "since you speak of the Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington, as being *pretty* and *little*, what may be the size of the Theatre Royal, London?"

"Which of them?" inquired I.

"Which!" responded Hobbleday: "why, you talk as if you would have one believe you had half a dozen!"

"More," said I.

"Ahem! I like that," said he, in a tone sufficiently indicative of the value at which he estimated my veracity: "perhaps you have eight?"

"Go on again, Mr. Hobbleday," replied I.

"Twelve?—fourteen?" continued he.

"You are still considerably within the number, sir."

Hobbleday stared at me, drew in his breath, and after emitting it again in a low whistle, said, "Well, I can't go on guessing all night. In a word, how many *have* you got?"

"To confess the truth, sir," replied I, "that is a question difficult to answer, inasmuch as there are several parts of the metropolis which I had not visited for nearly three weeks prior to my leaving it—each of which may (for anything that I can assert to the contrary), be at this moment provided with a theatre of its own. As for instance, on my return to town, at the end of next week, I may find, newly erected, a 'Theatre Royal, Cranbourne Alley;' a 'Theatre Royal, Holywell Street;' a 'Theatre Royal, St. Giles's;' a 'Theatre Royal, Martlett Court;' and so forth,—all of which the play-going world stands greatly in need of."

"But what right have they to them?" inquired Hobbleday.

"Right, sir!" exclaimed I, with astonishment: "right! You, a march-of-intellect man, ask such a question! Why sir, they have the right that everybody now claims to everything, regardless of the rights of everybody else. Besides, sir, by what other means could the interests of the drama be protected, the respectability of the histrionic profession maintained, and the accommodation of the public provided for? I believe, Mr. Hobbleday, that, at present, there are not more than twenty theatres, large and small, open every night, all of which, as it is perfectly notorious, are invariably crammed to suffocation. The unhappy consequences of this paucity of theatres are, that there are hundreds of actors of eminent ability walking about town unable to procure engagements; and thousands of play-mad Londoners who are continually suffering from the want of a play-house wherein they can find sufficient room to put their noses."

"Oh, in that case," said Hobbleday, "all is as it should be. And yet if it be so," continued he, "your theatres must be prodigiously small, eh?"

"They are of various capacities," replied I; "we have one which is capable of holding about three thousand persons; another——"

"Hold, hold, hold," cried Hobbleday, interrupting me; "*that* won't do. Pooh, pooh! can't mean to say you could put all Little Pedlington into one of them! Why, that's more than our whole population, which is two thousand nine hundred and ninety-six—(ninety-*seven*, I should say; for Mrs. Ephraim Snargate was brought to bed this morning of a little girl)—and as to the notion of a theatre that would hold all the people in such a place as *this*——Pooh! that's an idea the mind can't comprehend." These latter words he rather muttered to himself than addressed to me.

"Now, suppose a person were in London, and wished to see your best actors," continued Hobbleday, "to which theatre would you send him?"

"To the theatre New York, Mr. Hobbleday," replied I.

"What!" exclaimed he, with a look of incredulity, "New York, in Africa! If that be true—I say *if*, mind you—then, shame upon London!"

"But what blame is there upon poor London?" inquired I.

"Pooh, pooh!" said he; "can't deceive little Jack Hobbleday. Your actors are not encouraged at home—not *remunerated*—ill-paid—driven to seek a subsistence in a foreign country because

they can't get salt to their porridge in their own. Don't contradict me—know it must be so—can't be otherwise; else, with their *spree de corpse*, would they wander abroad, and leave their profession to go to rack and ruin at home? Ah! poor things! *that* must be the heart-breaking part of the business to them!"

I hardly expected to be met in this knock-down style. But though compelled to acknowledge in my own mind the truth of every word uttered by my interlocutor, I attempted a defence of the spirit of the Londoners, by saying—

"Well, sir; I make no doubt that when the eight or ten new theatres now in progress, or in contemplation, shall be completed, that not only will the wanderers be induced to return, but (which in my opinion is of still greater importance) that the present vast superfluity of histrionic talent in London will find both employment and reward."

I was not sorry when a turn was given to the conversation by Hobbleday's asking me what I thought of the drop-scene? The landscape, as he called it,—that being a view of the Crescent, with its twenty-four houses, with green doors and brass knockers—was the work of the theatrical scene-painter, Mr. Smearwell; the figures—a grenadier standing sentry at each corner—were put in by Mr. Daubson, the celebrated portrait-painter. It appeared to me that Mr. Smearwell was a little out in his perspective; for whilst the centre house was firmly placed on the ground, the others, right and left, appeared to be curling up into the air. However, as it cannot be an easy matter to draw four-and-twenty houses in the exact form of a crescent, I thought that any remark I should offer upon the point might be considered as hypercritical. Upon the whole, therefore, I could not but express my admiration of the painting.

"But how is it, Mr. Hobbleday," said I, "that the soldiers are made to appear taller than the houses? Their caps o'ertop the chimney-pots!"

"In the first place," answered Hobbleday, somewhat tartly, "I suppose our Daubson, who painted the famous grenadier in Yawkins's skittle-ground, knew very well what he was about: he wasn't going to paint hop-o'-my-thumbs that might be mistaken for drummer-boys: they are *grenadiers*, arn't they? In the next place, sir, was a man like Daubson to play second fiddle to Smearwell?—though Smearwell is a great man in his way."

"I don't quite understand the bearing of that question," said I.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Hobbleday, wondering at my

stupidity; "if Daubson had painted his figures smaller, would not Smearwell have had the best of it? As it is, the grenadiers are the first things that catch our attention. It stands to reason, doesn't it?"

To attempt to argue against a reason (and such a reason!) thought I, would be about as wise a proceeding as running my head against a stone wall; so all I said in reply was—"Unquestionably, sir."

I had been so closely engaged in the foregoing conversation with Hobbleday that I paid little or no attention to what was going on around me; but I was suddenly startled by the tuning of the instruments in the orchestra. The band was—as the play-bills expressed it—"numerous and efficient." Indeed it was (as Hobbleday assured me) the very band usually provided for "balls and assemblies," by the celebrated Mr. Wagglebow, the principal (that is to say, the only) music-seller in the place. Mr. Wagglebow himself played the first violin, and led; the *other* violin (the first second as it would technically be called in orchestras still more numerous and efficient than this) was played by Mr. Wagglebow, junior; the harp was by a younger son of Mr. W.'s; and the flageolet by his youngest. There was also a big drum, which was performed upon by an elderly gentleman, an amateur, as Hobbleday informed me. This performer did not servilely follow his leader, as less inspired musicians are wont to do; nor did he play from book. He seemed to trust entirely to his own genius, and the necessity of the case, both for what he should do, and when he should do it; and it was only when he perceived that something was not quite right, or when he fancied there was a deficiency of force in the orchestral effects, that he brought his powerful aid to bear by giving one, two, three, or even half a dozen, heavy thumps on his drum, according to his own notion of what the particular circumstances required.

I counted the orchestra over and over again, but could make out no more than five performers in place of the ten announced. But I would rather distrust the evidence of my own eyes than doubt the word of so honourable a gentleman as Mr. Strut, deliberately pledged in his announcements.

Whilst the band was performing the pleasing ceremony of tuning, I looked around the house. There were about thirty persons in the pit; about fifty (including the crowd of *orderlies*) in the boxes; and (though I could not see the gallery) I should guess from "the dreadful pother o'er our heads," which was

kept by "the great gods," there could not be fewer than twenty in that division of the theatre. The house, taken altogether, might have been about one-third filled; though, when the half-price was in, it was about half full. This was, what Hobbleday called, "a most capital house." It was his opinion, however (he having come in with an order), that the prices must be lowered.—And here I must take occasion to note down that my old acquaintance was invaluable to me, since, but for the information I received from him, I might have remained ignorant upon many important points.

"There!" cried he; "you see Miss Cripps, our Sappho, in that little box? Well; the two gentlemen who have just joined her are, Mr. Dowlas, the author of the 'Hatchet of Horror,' and Mr. Fiat, of the 'Dictator.' Fiat, by the bye, great friend of Snoxell's and Tippleton's. Sweet, they say, upon little Laura Dobs—ahem! And there, in that box opposite, is Miss Jane Scrubbs. She is the celebrated writer of the riddles and conundrums in our 'Observer.' She signs herself Enaj Sbburcs—the name reversed. Very ingenious, eh? Ah! Rummins, the editor, has joined her. *He* is very intimate with Waddle and Gigs, and is a great friend of Mr. Strut's, the manager."

I paid particular attention to this piece of information touching the respective intimacies of the critics. *Why I did so I scarcely know.*

"Clever at guessing riddles, eh?" inquired Hobbleday; who received from me no other answer than a shake of the head, continued:—"Miss Scrubbs's last is wonderful; most wonderful! All Little Pedlington been trying at it for a week; yet nobody has guessed it, although Rummins, in his paper, offers a prize to the successful guesser. Have been trying at it myself night and day, but can do nothing with it. It *is* a puzzler. Only listen.

"Though blest with body, head, and tail,
Yet have I neither leg nor limb;
The waters am I doom'd to swim,
And often I'm exposed for sale.
I'm sometimes boil'd, I'm sometimes fried,
Sometimes I'm stew'd, and sometimes dried.
Of all that lives beneath the sky,
Come, tell me, tell me, what am I?"

"It can't be a *fish*," said Hobbleday, "for any fool could guess *that*. But stop—they are striking up music." And the orchestra performed the march in the Battle of Prague with wonderful

precision and effect, the instruments being scarcely half a note out of tune with each other, and all the performers arriving at the last bar nearly at the same moment with the leader—he, of course, *as leader*, coming in a *leetle* before the others. The overture was loudly applauded, and unanimously encored. The gallery called for it a third time. This call, however, was resisted by the rest of the house. A contest which lasted for some time ensued, and everybody at once crying "Silence!" instead of holding their tongues, a tremendous noise was the consequence. The most uproarious of the gods (a large, fat man) being singled out, several gentlemen in the boxes called, "Turn him out, turn him out!" whilst the pit, as with one voice, in the most disinterested manner, insisted upon it that he should be thrown over, utterly regardless of the fact, that obedience to their command must have been attended with certain uncomfortable consequences to some amongst themselves. The large, fat Little Pedlingtonian (apparently not approving of this mode of visiting the pit at gallery price) became silent, and the rest followed his example.

Miss Julia Wriggles then appeared before the curtain, to speak an address, written for the occasion by the celebrated Miss Cripps. She was received with a loud and general clapping of hands. The address was composed with that elegance for which Miss Cripps is so justly celebrated, and contained many new points, the most remarkable of which were, that it deprecated censure, and solicited praise. It concluded with these lines:—

> "Since British hearts are true to virtue's cause,
> Long live the Queen! and grant us your applause."

Owing either to the smallness of the theatre, or the indistinctness of the fair speaker, I missed many words. The address and Miss Julia Wriggles were, however, vehemently applauded, and the lady made her curtsy and withdrew. The instant she disappeared there was a general call for Miss Julia Wriggles; and after this call had been repeated some dozens of times, she returned. She looked confused, and grateful, and modest, and, in short, she looked everything that it is possible, under such circumstances, to look; and, amidst the waving of handkerchiefs, and cries of "*Brayvo!*" a wreath of flowers was thrown upon the stage. It came from an upper side-box. The lady gracefully and gratefully took it up, pressed it to her heart, and again withdrew.

"Bless my soul! dear me!" said Hobbleday; "I'd almost lay

my life I saw that thrown from the manager's box; but, no; I *must* be mistaken."

Tingle-tingle went the prompter's bell, and the curtain rose.

The piece first performed was—

THE HATCHET OF HORROR;

OR,

THE MASSACRED MILKMAID.

Grumps, a footpad (in love with Martha Squigs)	Mr. SNOXELL.
Growler, his friend	Mr. WADDLE.
Squigs, a smuggler (in love with Lavinia Grumps)	Mr. E. STRUT.
Muzzle, a poacher (also in love with Martha Squigs)	Mr. STRIDE.
Lord Hardheart	Mr. STAGGER.
Mrs. Squigs, mother of Squigs and Martha ..	Mrs. BIGGLESWADE.
Mrs. Grumps, wife of Grumps	Mrs. A. STRUT.
Lavinia Grumps, her daughter, with a song ..	Miss WARBLE.
Ninnypochia, a dumb gypsy-girl, with a *pas seul*	Mlle. SARA DES ENTRECHATS.
Martha Squigs, the Massacred Milkmaid	Miss JULIA WRIGGLES.

In addition to these there are some subordinate characters: poachers, smugglers, housebreakers, highwaymen, incendiaries, &c., all in the most approved taste.

The scene lies at, and in the immediate neighbourhood of, Hardheart Hall, the seat of Lord Hardheart, who, being a nobleman, and a magistrate moreover, is naturally represented as a tyrant and an oppressor. At the Hall is Martha Squigs, engaged in the humble but innocent duties of a milkmaid. She has been there only nineteen days, and it was (as she tells us) to escape from the persecution of Grumps's addresses (Grumps being a married man, and she having given her heart to Muzzle, a gallant young poacher) that she quitted

"The roof maternal, mother's lowly cot."

There is, besides this, another reason for her having left her home. Her mother's circumstances being far from affluent, and her

lover's profession of rather a precarious nature, she prudently resolved (again I quote her own words)—

> "To scrape together something of my own,
> And so provide against a rainy day."

The piece opens with the discovery of Lord Hardheart (Mr. Stagger) seated at a table in his library, and surrounded by his domestics, amongst whom is Martha (Miss Julia Wriggles). These are assembled to hear the examination of a poacher, who is about to be brought before his lordship. He comes on in the custody of two gamekeepers. It is young Muzzle (Stride). Martha Squigs is no common heroine: she neither faints nor screams: she utters the half-stifled exclamation, "Oh, Heavens!" clasps her hands, leans forward upon her right toe, and heaves, not her bosom only, but the whole upper part of her body (head, neck, shoulders, and all), as if at each respiration it would come away from the hips. Muzzle stands undaunted. He makes a sign of silence to Martha. Of course, neither this nor Martha's emotion are observed by any of the other characters. Lord Hardheart begins :—

Lord H.— "So, Mr. Muzzle, here thou art again!
Come, tell us what thou'st got to say to this.
Thou know'st I oft have let thee off before,
But now, Sir Poacher!——
Muzzle—(*with firmness*). I am innocent!
And if I snared those partridges last night,
(*Pointing to four partridges which the first gamekeeper has placed on the table*),
I wish I may not have the luck to take
Another head of game this week to come!
Lord H.— Beware, rash youth! retract that dreadful oath,
Nor steep thy soul in perjury so black.
Muzzle.— What I have sworn, my lord, I've sworn; and if
Those four dead witnesses upon the table
Had tongues within their heads to tell their tales,
They'd cry aloud, 'Jack Muzzle's innocent!'
They're dead!
Lord H.— How died they?
Muzzle.— E'en as I would—game!
1*st Keeper.*— My lord, I'll take my oath he snared them birds:
I caught the fellow in the very act.
Muzzle (*to Keeper*).—Silence, base minion of a tyrant lord!—
(*to Lord H.*)—Proud lord! base tyrant! vile oppressor, hear me!
What right hast thou to have me up before thee?
What right hast thou to punish me for poaching?
What right hast thou to," &c. &c.

In a tirade of some sixty lines, Muzzle makes it perfectly clear that, being fond of partridge, but not liking to pay for it, he,

"A free-born Englishman, no lordling's slave,"

has an unquestionable right to steal it: that no person in the world (himself excepted) has the smallest right to his own property, if any other person in the world should happen to take a fancy to it: that to visit any sort of offence with any sort of punishment is—

"Rank oppression, iron tyranny:"

and that in these times,

"When mind is mind, and thinking men can think,"

it were a downright absurdity to contend for the distinctions of rank, or of any other distinctions whatsoever, and for this obvious reason:—

"Thou art a lord, but let me tell thee this:
Jack Muzzle, though a poacher—IS A MAN!"

Lord Hardheart, like a tyrant as he is, in reply to all this, says—

"Deluded man, I'm not of thy opinion;
This once, however, I will let thee off;
But if thou ever shouldst be caught again
Stealing my birds or anybody's else's,
Thou shalt be prosecuted, take my word for't,
Jack, with the utmost rigour of the law.
Muzzle (*aside*).—Inhuman tyrant! but I'll be revenged:
This night your lordship's haystacks I'll set fire to."

Martha, who, throughout this scene, had been entirely occupied in pumping up emotion, at length, on her lover's liberation, exclaims,—

"I breathe again! my Muzzle is set free!"

Up to this moment the applause had been neither general nor enthusiastic. The gallery, indeed, composed chiefly of the interesting young students already noticed, warmly took up all Stride's speeches, or rather, his sentiments; and other parts of the house

expressed their approbation of his manner of giving "E'en as I would—game!" and "a poacher—is a man!" There was one solitary, but resolute, hiss to this sentiment. It was from Mr. Yawkins, the banker, who (as my companion informed me) has a manor of nearly four acres in extent in the neighbourhood of Snapshank Hill. Nor did Miss Julia Wriggles's "Oh, Heavens!" pass uncomplimented. But, for anything like general and vehement applause, that young lady may be said to have drawn first blood. On giving the words, "My Muzzle is set free!" a pair of hands (which, as Hobbleday informed me, were the property of Mr. Strut, the manager) were thrust forward from a small box over the stage, and led the way to three distinct rounds. Mr. Stride came forward one pace and bowed. One of the pair of hands in question waved to him to retire; and Miss Julia Wriggles, casting at him a look of indignation, and placing herself immediately before him, continued curtsying to the audience till they gave her three rounds more.

Hobbleday, whilst employed in clapping his hands, whispered to me, "Fine sentiments those of Muzzle's; quite of my way of thinking; I'm for liberty and equality, and all that; rights of man, eh? Only, I say, musn't touch the Funds: I've got sixty pound a year in 'em."

The piece proceeded. An exciseman comes on and states that they have taken a smuggler. The prisoner is produced. It is Sam Squiggs (E. Strut), Martha's brother, and suitor for the hand of Lavinia Grumps. This situation, so far as it affected Martha, was a counterpart of the former one; and Miss Julia Wriggles again exclaimed, "Oh, Heavens!" and again went through the pumping process, though with somewhat diminished effect. The depositions against Squigs are taken; and, when he is asked what he has to say in his defence, he follows precisely the line of argument which had been adopted by Muzzle,—merely substituting the word "smuggling" for "poaching." He thus concludes his address:—

"A man's a man; *that* no one can deny:
And if a man mayn't do a bit of smuggling
Whenever he has got a mind to it,
Then make a slave of him at once, say I:
A pretty world to live in were it so!
A free man, I; so what I'd do I'll do;
As for the laws, the laws be d——d, say I."

(*This line was loudly applauded, chiefly by the juvenile students above.*)

The tyrant, Lord Hardheart, proceeds to explain to Mr. Squigs, that his principles, however convenient they may be for his own individual purposes, are by no means calculated to promote the interests of society at large, as society is at present constituted; but offers, on condition of his promising to abandon what he (Lord H.) is bound to consider an unlawful calling, for this once to pardon him. Squigs, choosing rather to argue the point that, as he did not himself frame the laws against smuggling, it is not necessary he should observe them, refuses to comply with the condition. Upon this, Lord H. prepares to sign a warrant for his committal; when, at the very moment, his mother, Mrs. Squigs (Mrs. Biggleswade), rushes on, and a scene of dishevelled hair, tears, and implorations, ensues. The tyrant lord repeats his offer of clemency; but Squigs, remaining heroically obdurate, the officers prepare to remove him. Mrs. Squigs and Martha faint in each other's arms at one corner of the stage: in the centre stands Squigs resisting the officers, who each hold him by an arm; Grumps (SNOXELL!) and Growler (Waddle) rush on at the other corner, and, throwing themselves into attitudes of defiance, the whole of them maintain their positions for just so long as the audience continue to applaud. [This, as Hobbleday informed me, was "what they call a *tablow.*"] Grumps (who during the whole of this pause performs the pumping manœuvre, so successfully executed by Miss Julia Wriggles), now prepares to speak. [Cries of "*Brayvo!*" "Hush!" "Snoxell for ever!" "Silence!" from various parts of the theatre.] At length—his breast heaving, almost bursting with emotion—thus Grumps:—

"My friend!—My Squigs!—In chains!—No, no:—no chains—
The tyrant dared not that—but still—in custody!
Speak!—Tell me!—Wherefore this?—Will no one answer?
Must I in tenfold ignorance abide?
Or, like the seaman on the mountain-top,
Defy the foaming ocean in its wrath,
Till every element of mortal agony
Cries for compassion to the roaring surge?
Or, must I, like—Oh! no, not so!—a flash
Of lightning intercepted in its course,
Affright the trembling clouds and cleave the earth,
Till the scared sea-gull, cowering in its nest,
Awakes pale Echo from her iron slumber
To tell me wherefore—why my Squigs is here?"

This speech was tremendously applauded. And I must take

this opportunity to observe, that whilst the rest of the piece is written in a free, easy, idiomatic (yet not inelegant) style, the whole part of Grumps is in a strain of high—nay, the highest-flown poetry. Amongst those who applauded loudest and longest was Mr. Dowlas himself (the author of the piece), who was in Miss Cripps's box. This I thought rather odd. Hobbleday, however, assured me he was merely applauding the actor, not the speech. This distinction was obvious.

Grumps is informed of the nature of the offence of which Squigs (who is affianced to his daughter), is accused. In a speech, in no way inferior to his last, Grumps defends the practice of smuggling, and denounces Lord Hardheart as

"The tyrant minister of tyrant laws."

Upon this, Growler (Waddle), rushes forward, and, throwing himself into a striking attitude, exclaims in a voice of thunder,

"I'm altogether of my friend's opinion."

This is all Waddle has to say or do in the present act; but this he did in a way to extort applause even from the Snoxellites —and the party was easily distinguishable. The speech was received with three rounds of applause, together with cries of "*Brayvo*, Waddle!" "Go it, Waddle!" "Waddle for ever!" Waddle still remained in attitude, and another three rounds rewarded him. Waddle, apparently liking it, continued immovable as a statue, and the Waddleites endeavoured to get up a third three rounds; but Snoxell rushing forward, and placing himself directly between Waddle and the audience, there was an immediate cry of "Silence," and the performance proceeded.

Grumps, finding his argument of no avail with the obdurate magistrate, gives a loud whistle. At this signal, a party of Grumps's friends—footpads, smugglers, poachers, &c., rush on, and Squigs is carried off in triumph.

The next is a love-scene between Muzzle and Martha Squigs. She expatiates on her own terrors during his late examination, and conjures him by the love he bears her, to abstain from the evil practice of poaching. He feigns compliance, and in the excess of his seeming obedience to her wishes, adds—

"To please thee, I'll not even poach an egg.
Martha.— Nay, thou'rt too kind! Then, soon, my gentle Muzzle,
I'll name the day shall make thy Martha thine.
Muzzle.— Thy Muzzle's happy!—(*Aside.*) Now to fire the stacks."

As Muzzle goes off at one side, Grumps comes on at the other. The latter addresses Martha in a long speech commencing with—

> "My Martha !—Martha Squigs !—Alone !—Untended !
> E'en—as the dove—whose inno—cent—repose,—
> Soft—as the limpid—stream—in summer's prime, &c."

and ending,

> "So,—like the eagle,—soaring—to the skies,—
> Again—I—come—to press—my ardent—suit."

To this the virtuous Martha artlessly replies :—

> "No, Mr. Grumps, 'tis all of no use talking ;
> Though poor, I'm honest ; virtuous, though not rich.
> Virtue is all I have, save nine-pound-ten,
> Which I by honest labour have obtained.
> Nay—press me not—I tell thee, once for all,
> That Martha Squigs is not at all the girl
> To give her hand where she can't give her heart—
> Especially to one already married."

Grumps, in a strain of poetry equal to any of the rest, urges many edifying arguments in the hope of prevailing with her ; but in vain. Then, in a momentary access of morality, he acknowledges, that while such an obstacle to his suit as the one alluded to exists, it would be not altogether proper to persist in it ; and consequently declares (in a side speech) that his wife shall be "disposed of." With this resolution he departs, and Martha withdraws.

This scene was well, but not *finely* acted. Snoxell seemed to be reserving himself for some great effort ; and Miss Julia Wriggles, owing to the culpable inattention of the prompter, who did not give her the word as often as it was his duty to do it, was made to appear as if she was imperfect in her part. With the exception of the first word of her lines, as "No," "Though," "Virtue," "Which," "Nay," &c. (where his voice was audible enough), she had scarcely any assistance from him worth speaking of. Indeed, on one occasion, the young lady was actually compelled to go to what, I believe, they call "first entrance, prompt side," and cry to him, "Why don't you give me the word, you stupid fool ?"

The next scene represents "Lord Hardheart's haystacks, by moonlight." Muzzle enters ; and, at the end of a speech about "Sweet revenge," he places combustibles in the hay. Hearing

footsteps, he retires. Ninnypochia, the dumb gipsy-girl (an almost indispensable character in a melodrame at Little Pedlington), appears. She pokes her forefinger into her mouth to denote that she is dumb. She then signifies that she has observed Muzzle's proceedings, and that she will go instantly and give information at the hall. Thus resolved, she remains to dance a *pas seul*. After that, away she goes. Muzzle reappears and sets fire to the stacks. There is a "terrific conflagration," and all the characters rush on and form a *tableau*. Thus ends the first act.

The next act is opened by a quarrel-scene between Grumps and Growler. They have knocked down and robbed Lord Hardheart; and the dispute arises out of what Growler considers to be an unjust division of the spoil. This scene was very spiritedly acted: it was a trial of skill between the two rival tragedians, and it is difficult to decide to which of them the praise of superiority belongs.

Grumps.— "No more, my Growler! never be it said
That we, like vultures, on the Arabian plains,
Dispute and quarrel for a pound or two.
Growler.— Don't talk to me of vultures—stuff and nonsense:
Your high-flown blarney won't come over me.
You say, you picked Lord Hardheart's pocket—granted:
But who was't knock'd him down first—you or I?
Grumps.— 'Twas thou, my Growler—thou 'twas didst the deed,
And therefore—like the bark that dares the main,
Cleaving her way with top-mast glittering high
Against the sunny pinions of the winds,
To reach the wished-for haven—I consent
To give my Growler half a sovereign more."

Growler declares that he will be satisfied with nothing short of an equal division of the booty. To this Grumps decidedly objects. After a long scene of mutual reproach and recrimination, the friends (now deadly foes) separate: each (in a side speech) announcing his determination "to dispose" of the other.

In this scene every speech was applauded at its conclusion: cries of "*Brayvo*, Snoxell!" or "Waddle for ever!" accompanying the clapping of hands, according as the one or the other was the speaker. Upon the whole, I should say that the "heart-rending Snoxell" was the favourite with the Pedlingtonians.

The interest increases as the piece proceeds; each succeeding incident, indeed, being alone of power sufficient to support a piece. In the next scene, Grumps seeks a pretext to quarrel with his wife (the obstacle to his success with the virtuous

Martha), and "disposes of her" with a hatchet. [Immense applause.] There is yet another "obstacle" — Muzzle, the favoured lover. In the scene following this, Grumps meets him, and "disposes of" *him* also, by means of the same instrument—the hatchet, which gives the piece its first title. But the next and last scene is the crowning glory, as Mr. Fiat would say, of the whole. It is "the fatal cow-house," as the play-bill describes it. Grumps has been offered by a person whom he accidentally meets, and who has the honour of being a perfect stranger to him, eight pounds for a cow. Having none of his own, he resolves (in accordance with the liberal system of justice and morality which it is the tendency of the play to inculcate) to "possess himself of," or (as it would be expressed in unpoetical phrase) to *steal* one of Lord Hardheart's. For this purpose he approaches the cow-house. And here occurs one of the finest, if not *the* finest, speech in the piece, commencing with "Rumble thou hurricanous wind." But scarcely had Snoxell given the first line of it, when he was interrupted by a volley of hisses, and cries of "Off, off!" These evidently proceeded from the Waddleites, and were instantly met by loud cheering and cries of "Shame! shame!" from the Snoxellites. After this uproar had continued some time, Snoxell came forward; and when, at length, he succeeded in obtaining a hearing, he thus addressed the audience:—

"Ladies and gentlemen,—Are you—or are you not—Little Pedlingtonians? If you be, I throw myself—with confidence—on your candour—and liberality. [Great applause.] I know the cause of the disapprobation—no—not disapprobation—opposition which some of you—have manifested. ["Bravo!" from one party; "No, no," from the other.] But I have this favour—to ask—at your hands:—Tell me—am I—Snoxell—or am I—not? [Loud and general cheering.] I am Snoxell, then. Ladies—and Gentlemen,—I have only further—most respectfully—and most humbly to entreat—that I may not again—be—interrupted—in the performance — of — my — pro — fessional — duties." [Thunders of applause; and Snoxell proceeded in his part.]

Grumps, with hatchet in hand, is about to burst open the door of the cow-house. At this moment Growler comes on and watches his proceedings. But here again was an interruption; the Waddleites now crying, "*Brayvo*, Waddle!" and the Snoxellites, "Off! off!" When Waddle, in his turn, obtained leave to speak, he thus delivered himself:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen.—Ahem! I appeal to your generosity as Little Pedlingtonians. [Thunders of applause from all parts of the theatre.] I have been most shamefully—ahem!—it is not for me to—ahem!—but professionally speaking—ahem!—for the many years I have had the honour—ahem!—and as I shall ever consider it my duty to—ahem!—and as I am addressing myself to a Little Pedlington audience [Again, thunders of applause], I trust—ahem!—I hope—ahem!—that I have said enough." The audience testifying by their unqualified applause that they thought so too, the piece again proceeded.*

Grumps breaks open the cow-house door, and leads forth the "favourite cow of the massacred milkmaid" (I quote the playbill); he is taking it away, when he is interrupted in the execution of his "fell design" by the appearance of Martha. She has heard of the two "deeds of horror" he has but so lately perpetrated; refuses to listen to the addresses of

> "A blood-stain'd murderer with gory hand,"

and concludes a powerful speech—the last she is to utter in this world!—in the words following:—

> "Take and let go that cow, thou horrid monster!
> Thou kill'dst thy wife—ay, I know all about it—
> Thou slay'dst my lover, and wouldst steal my cow.
> Away, away! I hate the sight of thee."

Grumps, irritated to fury, drags Martha into the cow-house, and with the "Hatchet of Horror" chops off her head—Growler exclaiming—

> "Ill-fated Martha Squigs, I will avenge thee!"

follows Grumps into the cow-house: there they providentially find two shields and two broadswords. A "terrific combat" ensues. After Growler has been beaten down, and has fought on his knees five times round the stage, and that, in his turn, Grumps has been beaten down, and has fought nine times round on his side, the villain Grumps is slain. A thunderbolt strikes the cow-house, which is shattered to atoms; the ghost of the

* An explanation of the cause of this singular (and, apparently, inexplicable) interruption may, perhaps, be found by referring to a conversation which took place between Mr. Snoxell, first, and afterwards Mr. Waddle, and the manager.

murdered Mrs. Grumps appears—the other characters of the piece come on and form another *tableau*, and in the midst of green fire, blue fire, red fire, and fire of all colours, accompanied with squibs, crackers, and the sound of a gong, the curtain drops. I must add, that there is an underplot, of which the subject is the loves of young Squiggs and Lavinia Grumps; but, in my opinion, it might be dispensed with, as, instead of assisting, it rather encumbers the main action of the piece.

Considered as a whole, I look upon the "Hatchet of Horror" as being, at least, equal to any melodrame which I have had the pleasure of seeing for a long time past; as a piece of writing, it is infinitely superior to the best; but its greatest claim to praise is, that it is both Original and Domestic. By *original* is meant, that it is not [*said to be*] taken from the French, and that its characters, incidents, and situations, although forming the staple of this species of composition time immemorial, are interwoven with a story not *exactly* like that of any of its predecessors. By *domestic*, we are to understand, that its leading characters are not kings, princes, and princesses, nor ladies and gentlemen, nor even what is usually implied by the term "decent people," but gallant, independent, free-thinking spirits, selected from low (or, to use the cant word, *domestic*) life, who are admirably contrived, by their actions and sentiments, at once to illustrate the tyranny of the laws, and teach the oppressed and suffering "lower orders" the pleasure, as well as the propriety, of resisting them. Hobbleday was entirely of this opinion.

"How interesting and edifying!" exclaimed he, as the curtain fell. "Poaching, smuggling, robbery, arson, and murder, all in one piece! And then, what liberal sentiments! This is the sort of thing, my dear fellow, to improve—to enlarge the understanding of the lower classes. Glad they didn't talk about touching the Funds, though—my sixty pounds a year, you know."

On the fall of the curtain, there was a call for Snoxell and Miss Julia Wriggles. After a decent delay they appeared. One bowed and bowed, the other curtsied and curtsied. A wreath—it appeared to me to be the same that had already made its appearance—was thrown from the little box over the stage. It fell immediately between the lady and gentleman. Snoxell, with a bow and smile, was stooping to pick it up, when Miss Julia, putting her foot upon it, and at the same time saying to Snoxell, "Not for you, you stupid fool!" took possession of the trophy. Cheers and waving of handkerchiefs accompanied the retirement

of these favourites. The next favourites who were honoured with a similar *distinction* (the wreath excepted) were Waddle and Mrs. Biggleswade. The next complimented were Stride, Stagger, Mrs. A. Strut, and Mlle. Sara des Entrechats. After these—in short, every one of the performers in the piece was in turn called for, to receive the same compliment—a proceeding which, of course, added greatly to its value. Some one then called for Mr. Siffle, the prompter, who, though not seen, had been distinctly heard; but as that gentleman had not actually appeared upon the stage, the call was overruled. I was somewhat astonished that the good Pedlingtonians did not call for the cow, which *had* appeared. But, upon Hobbleday's informing me that the animal was nothing more than a donkey sewed up in a cow's hide, and also observing how nearly it had spoiled Snoxell's great scene, by braying when the tragedian led him forth—an act which this Life-Governor of the Zoological Garden assured me was not natural to the character he represented—I felt satisfied that the incautious quadruped did not deserve the compliment.

My notices of the rest of the performances must be brief.

Broad-Sword Hornpipe, by Miss Julia Wriggles. Performed three times. Miss J. W. called for, wreath, &c. In apothecary phrase, "Dose as before."

All Round my Hat, "a new and elegant Burletta, without songs or any musical accompaniment whatever." (Hobbleday asked me what *could* be meant by a burletta without songs? Could not explain. Referred him to the Master of the Ceremonies of Little Pedlington, and Licencer also, who ought to be able to give him the information.) Piece eminently successful. Principal characters by Tippleton ("the facetious Tippleton") and Miss Julia Wriggles. Both called for, &c.

Who are You? "a fashionable interlude."—Unequivocally damned, although supported by the whole strength of Tippleton, Gigs, and Miss Julia Wriggles. Nevertheless, they were all called for, and so forth.

She shall be an Actress. As the whole of the characters (eight!) were performed by Miss Julia Wriggles, the piece might have carried a second title—Whether or No. Complete success. Miss J. W. called for, and *the* wreath again.

Of the performers I shall merely say—Snoxell, great; Waddle good, but prone to rant; Tippleton, hard and stiff as an iron

poker; Gigs, rich and racy; Mrs.Biggleswade, first rate; Miss Julia Wriggles, wonderful—for a first appearance—for she played with all the *aplomb* of a practised stager. Her *forte*, tragedy; in comedy, elegant but cold; sings (I must say it) like a raven; but dances—like one of Ducrow's horses. In her eight characters her various dialects were good, but all alike: Irish, French, German, Scotch—all Irish.

Owing to the length of the performances, the theatre not closed till near eleven o'clock! "Late hours for Little Pedlington," said Hobbleday, as he shook hands with me at parting.

To-morrow morning I shall see how far my statement of facts is borne out by the "Dictator," and the "Observer." As for opinions, theirs will be theirs, as mine are mine. And so good night!

CHAPTER XIV.

"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?"—POPE.

CONFICTING CRITICISMS—The "Little Pedlington Dictator"—The "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer"—The impartial and veracious playbill.

TUESDAY MORNING.—Breakfast, the "Little Pedlington Dictator," the "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer," and the play-bill for this evening, are all before me. The play-bill being intended, I presume, as a mere announcement of the performance provided for the entertainment of the public, I cannot expect to be informed by it of any fact beyond that, or to receive from it any opinion at all. As well might I look to the simple advertisements of Mr. Fudgefield (the celebrated auctioneer of this place) to find a hogshead of vinegar, which he may have to sell, converted into a few dozens of choice wine; a broken-down hack, invested with all the attributes of a "Flying Childers;" or a mud-hovel transformed, by the magic power of description, into an Italian villa.

The first paper before me being the "LITTLE PEDLINGTON DICTATOR," with that I begin. Its motto (adopted, no doubt, for its rigid applicability) is,—

"I am Sir Oracle,
And when I ope my lips let no dog bark."

THEATRICAL DICTATOR.

"Last night our Dramatic Temple was opened for the season to the votaries of Thalia and Melpomene. Long before the rising of the curtain the house was filled in every part to a degree of compact and impervious density. Nor is this to be wondered at: a new melodrama, written by that subtle and deep-searching dramatist, Mr. Dowlas, the principal, or, indeed, the chief and main-sustaining character of which was to be represented by that heart-probing and soul-enthralling actor, Mr. Snoxell, was of itself sufficient to account for the circumstance. But, when it is considered that, in addition to this, an Occasional Address from the feminine and graceful pen of Miss Cripps was to be delivered; and, also, that the facetious and mirth-compelling Mr. Tippleton was to appear in two pieces, written expressly for the purpose of displaying his unrivalled and incomparable powers, wonder must altogether subside and cease.

"Having taken our place, our eye rested, with throbbing satisfaction and delight, on the new drop-scene, the joint work of those singularly eminent and gifted artists, Daubson and Smearwell. But we must suggest what would be a grand and obvious improvement, and one that must be made. The neutral tints in the middle distance contrasting abruptly with the bright and sunny radiance of colour in the foreground, whilst a deep and mysterious shadow pervades the back; the consequence is that the *chiaroscuro* of the aerial perspective is diminished, and the general sentiment and feeling of the whole picture weakened and subdued. Were it otherwise, with what captivating and Claude-like effect would the twenty-four green doors, each with its gorgeously-glowing brass-knocker, relieve the solemn and Rembrandt-like tones of the back-ground! whilst the meditative repose and *Titianesque* breadth and stability of the grenadiers at the corner, would present a masterly example of the *Michaelangelesque* sublimity of the pictorial art! This our opi-

nion cannot be disputed—or we have studied our 'Vocabulary of Art' to very little purpose."

"Conclusive criticism, this of Mr. Fiat's!" thought I. "The young gentleman is blest with a *style*, too!" Now, as charity is said to cover a multitude of sins, so may it be said of a style—a style *par excellence*—that it is ample compensation for the absence of sense and meaning. Some there may be who disagree with me to the extent of desiring a modicum of meaning, a small portion of sense: Be it so: I—to use the fashionable phrase—"go the whole hog." Give me but a *fine style*—be it the "graphic," the "picturesque," the "*suggestive*" (which, I believe, is the last-invented nickname), the "spirit-stirring," the "intensely-thrilling," the "widely-grasping," the "deeply-searching," the—the—in short, be it any one of the thousand new-fangled styles, so it be but a *fine* style—and I am satisfied. Any one commonplace person may write what any other commonplace person may understand. But Mr. Fiat writes like a genius, and is rarely intelligible; and such is my admiration of *his* style, even upon this short acquaintance with it, that no power upon earth, short of the power of an Act of Parliament, shall compel me to understand it.—But let me continue the perusal of the "Dictator:—"

"The overture was performed with that chromatic intonation, that wondrous power of harmonic modulation, and that singularly Mozart-like oneness of effect for which Mr. Wagglebow's band is so eminently celebrated. But looking, as is our wont to do, beneath the surface, and penetrating the innermost soul and under-current of things, we must say, that there were passages of that marvellous work (the March in the Battle of Prague) which were not given in accordance with the sublime and astounding intention of the master-spirit which produced it. It is not with a composition of such masterly and wide-sweeping grandeur, such subtlety of depth, and prodigality of refinement as this, as it may be with such works as 'Molly put the Kettle on,' or 'Hey Cockalorum Jig,' which appeal merely to the more obvious sympathies of our nature. This addresses itself as well to the mysterious operations of the finest intellect, as to the more general, but deeply-moving power, of passion and sentiment; and requires, accordingly, a kindred zest, and strong tendency towards the loftiest faculties of appreciation, on the part of the performer. We do not mean to assert that the Wagglebows were totally deficient in these qualities, or that the performer upon the big drum did not occasionally ma-

nifest a fine feeling for the remoter and more subtle beauties of the composer; but if they hope to make a closer and more intense approach towards perfection, they must dive into the profundities of the great *Maestro*, with a patient and learned spirit, as we have done. This they must do. And, indeed, upon all musical matters our opinion and advice must be received with implicit acquiescence—or it is to very little purpose that we have been qualifying ourselves for this branch of our high office, by learning to play upon the fiddle for these six months and upwards."

If this be not "diving into the profundities" of things, the deuce is in it. But, to the "Dictator" again :—

"An Occasional Address, of excelling loveliness, and surpassing purity and grace, was now spoken, or rather, we should say, attempted to be spoken, by Miss Julia Wriggles. Of this fine production, the work of our highly-gifted and singularly-accomplished poetess, Miss Cripps, we shall give two or three specimens; and if these do not bear us out in pronouncing it to be the emanation of a mind of powerful, yet subtle and feminine tenderness, as well as vigorous and searching grasp, we have studied the writings of our illustrious Jubb to very little purpose. How graphic, how full and sweeping, yet how delicately shadowed forth are the opening lines! And then, what a fine perception of the subtle and imperceptible limits which, in a finely-organized and female intellect, divide dogmatic learning from femininely and gracefully timid classicality, is conveyed in the 'I think' in the third line :—

> 'Once more within these glittering walls you're seen,
> Sacred to Thalia and to Melpomene;
> O'er Comedy (I think) fair Thalia sways,
> While Tragedy great Melpomene obeys.'

"Again; how surpassingly forcible and spirit-stirring are the following—

> 'If to hear music here you also come,
> Here you'll hear fiddles and here hear the *drum*.'

"We have printed the word *drum* in italics, because, according to our appreciation, it is introduced with wondrous power and effect, and moves us like as unto the sound of a trumpet. We are almost tempted to give the whole of this soul-enslaving production, but we can afford space for only one extract more. It is an appeal in favour of the new performers engaged at the

theatre, and is touched with a hand of excelling tenderness and delicacy. For exquisitely graceful simplicity, indeed, we pronounce it to be unrivalled :—

> 'To-night, old favourites will be brought to view :
> Be kind to them, but don't forget the new.'

"But why was the delivery of this admirable poem intrusted to Miss Julia Wriggles? Why not to Miss Laura Dobs—a young lady who is made to sing in the choruses, whilst she possesses (as it is rumoured) talent of the most consummately-promising order, which must raise her to the most eminently-elevated rank in her profession. The Address itself, however, was abundantly applauded, and a complimentary wreath was thrown to the fair poetess, who was (as we are informed) discovered in some part of the theatre. Unluckily it fell upon the stage, and was greedily snatched up by Miss Julia Wriggles; who, with surpassing assurance, appropriated the honour to herself."

Now, let me see. "Why not to Miss Laura Dobs?"—"As it is rumoured."—"As we are informed." The wreath "greedily snatched up by Miss Julia Wriggles."—"Surpassing assurance."

I turn to my last night's notes, and find it thus written:—"There!" cried he (Hobbleday); "you see Miss Cripps, our Sappho, in that little box? Well, the two gentlemen who have *just joined her* are Mr. Dowlas, the author of the 'Hatchet of Horror,' and *Mr Fiat of the 'Dictator.'* [*As we are* INFORMED!] "Fiat, by the bye, great friend of Snoxell's and Tippleton's. *Sweet, they say, upon little Laura Dobs*—ahem!" [who possesses (*as it is* RUMOURED) talents, &c.] Again; I find that, after speaking the Address, "the lady (Miss Julia Wriggles) made her curtsy and *withdrew*. The instant she disappeared, there was a general call for Miss Julia Wriggles; and *after this call had been repeated some dozens of times*, she returned * * * * and amidst the waving of handkerchiefs and cries of *brayvo*, a wreath of flowers was thrown upon the stage. * * * * The lady gracefully, and gratefully, took it up, pressed it to her heart, and again withdrew. [*Surpassing assurance!*]

Now, as I am as positive about the *facts* which I have stated as I am careless concerning my opinions, the discrepancies between Mr. Fiat's statement and mine astonish me! By no exquisitely subtle and deep-searching process of intellect, as the "Dictator" would say, can I reconcile them. That Mr. Fiat is sweet upon little Laura Dobs (according to Hobbleday), or that he is in the habit of *tea-ing* with Miss Cripps (according to the

information of Mr. Yawkins, the library-keeper), are circumstances which can have no weight in the estimation of a critic—at least in Little Pedlington. So now to proceed :—

"The theatre was now hushed into a deeply intense and concentrated silence, rendered the more awful and profound by the audible respirations of the spell-bound audience, as the curtain rose for the performance of Mr. Dowlas's glorious melodrame, the 'Hatchet of Horror,' in which it was known that Mr. Snoxell was provided with a part of surpassing power and grandeur.

"The opening scene presents us with a creature called Lord Hardheart, who, in virtue of his hellish office of a magistrate, is waiting the appearance of a fellow-being, whom, doubtless, he has predetermined to consign to the eternal and Erebusean dungeon, or the hungry and life-devouring gibbet. And here, at the very threshold of this noble and deeply-searching drama, Mr. Dowlas evinces the same subtle and philosophic reach of thought which are the rare and mind-embracing characteristics of his other unapproached and truly overwhelming productions,—such as 'Swing; or, the Avenging Rick-burner;'—'Bellingham the Bold; or, a Pattern for Patriots;'—'Turpin the Intrepid; or, the High-minded Highwayman;'—'Laura the Lovely; or, the Accomplished Concubine,' &c. &c. &c. &c.; in all of which he advocates, with transcendent depth and originality, and in language glowing with palpable form and colour, those glorious and soul-stirring attributes of man—*as man*,—at the bare mention of which tyrants shrink into the darkest caverns of mental opacity. The offence—offence, forsooth!—of which the victim upon whom the lordling magistrate is empowered to exercise his vengeance is accused, is, that he has removed some vermin, or (as in the oppressor's tyrannical jargon it is expressed) poached some game. The intended victim is Muzzle. We here take occasion to say that Muzzle was not altogether badly acted by Mr. Stride; but there are passages in his part of a delicacy too fine and subtle, yet of a breadth and boldness of grandeur too terribly impressive, though finely shadowed off into an evening-like softness and beauty, for the limited, though respectable, capabilities of that artist to do justice to. Those passages ought to have been moulded and wrought into the part of Grumps, allotted to Mr. Snoxell. For instance: with what terrible and soul-appalling effect, yet quiet and concentrated grandeur, blended, at the same time, with dove-like grace and purity, would Mr. Snoxell have hurled, as it were, at the head of the titled

oppressor, these lines of wondrous and heart-searching truthfulness :—

> 'Thou art a lord, but let me tell thee this :
> Jack Muzzle, though a poacher—IS A MAN.'

"We can imagine the scorching and withering look with which he would have accompanied the word 'lord,' with an attitude of what surpassing dignity and grace he would have uttered the words 'Jack Muzzle, though a poacher,' and then, after a fine and most artistical pause, with what a tone of excellent thrillingness he would have subsided into the self-supporting and sublime assertion—'is a man.' We can conceive that thus, and by him, delivered, the passage would have caused the very heart of hearts within us to flush and grow pale. Mr. Stride, on the contrary, produced none of these effects. With the exception of a sneer with which he gave the word 'lord,' he slurred over all the rest of this finely and deeply-conceived passage, with stirringless apathy, till he came to the last three words, when, rushing to the foot-lights, he struck his breast with his right hand, elevated the left above his head, distended his legs like a pair of compasses, and roared at the top of his voice, 'IS A MAN;' the consequence of this was, an expression of loud and very general disapprobation. Indeed, we must inform Mr. Stride, that he never can be an actor of subtle and artistical power, unless he will explore the undercurrent of things, and seek the sources of the terrible and sublime throes of passion and sentiment, in the complicated, yet not barren, fields of intellect, and the unerring bosom of nature herself. We assert that this, our opinion, is indisputable, or we have studied the 'Cant* of Criticism' to very little purpose."

Now, I must repeat, that I have nothing to do with the "Dictator's" *opinions*. All this criticism I admit to be fine, and profound, and deep-searching, and wide-grasping, and subtle, and acutely metaphysical, and philosophically analytical — criticism, indeed, of the highest, deepest, wisest, anythingest order; and if there be any who do not clearly understand it, I shall take the liberty to say, on behalf of the "Dictator," that it is no part of his contract with his readers, to provide them with understanding. But again I am at issue with him upon a point of fact. He states, that Mr. Stride's "IS A MAN," excited "loud and very general disapprobation." Now, I assert, that the house expressed its

* Cant of Criticism.—Is this not a misprint for KANT (the German metaphysician) *on* Criticism?"—if such a work there be.

approbation of his manner of giving "E'en as I would—game," and "a poacher—is a man." This I do assert upon the authority of my last night's notes and this I will maintain to be true, or I have used my ears (to adopt a favourite phrase of the "Dictator's") "to very little purrpose." And further on, the "Dictator" says:—

"Indeed, the whole of this scene was played with an unenergetic tameness, which went far to endanger this singularly fine drama; and but for the momentary and intense expectation of the appearance of Mr. Snoxell, which riveted the innermost souls of the audience, the piece would not have been allowed to proceed. No blame for this attaches to the highly-gifted author, for the scene abounds in passages of singular power and beauty: witness the marvellously fine exclamation, 'O Heavens!' which is uttered by Martha Squigs, when, in the person of the accused poacher, she recognizes her lover, Jack Muzzle. This was given by Miss Julia Wriggles in a *suppressed tone!!* Now, Martha Squigs is here represented as in a situation of awfully agonizing, yet self-sustained, terror and suspense; and we have studied to little purpose the subtle and imperceptible (imperceptible to the vulgar apprehension, at least) workings of the under-current of the deep-seated springs of human passion, if this incomparable exclamation ought not to have been fulminated in a singularly wild and soul-piercing scream. We can imagine with what awfully-thrilling power, and volcanic electricity of effect, it would have been given by Mr. Snoxell. Again; what is there in the whole range of dramatic poetry finer than the line spoken by Martha Squigs when her lover is liberated? especially that portion of it which we have printed in italics:—

'*I breathe again!* My Muzzle is set free!'

But it was lost upon the actress, who seemed not to be aware of its excelling truth and power, and was consequently overlooked by the audience. Why was not this, also, intrusted to Mr. Snoxell? who, with that profound and artistical * * * * &c. &c. The fact is, that the part ought to have been allotted to Miss Laura Dobs, who (as we are informed), without much experience of the stage, is possessed (as we are informed) in an eminent degree of a deep and subtle feeling for the truth and beauty of things, and would therefore have exhibited the character in all its surpassing loveliness and excelling grace."

Now, here again the "Dictator" has mis-stated, or (to be

polite) mis-conceived, a fact. My notes say: Nor did Miss Julia Wriggle's 'Oh! Heavens!' pass uncomplimented. But, for anything like general and vehement applause, that young lady may be said to have drawn first blood, on giving the words, 'My Muzzle is set free!'"—and, so on, till they record the fact, that she was honoured with *twice* three rounds of applause! Here, certainly, is a disagreement between us, which, I suppose, can be accounted for only by "piercing into the under-current of the deep and subtle nature of things." I almost wish my friend Hobbleday would drop in to enlighten me.

The "Dictator" proceeds.—But, as this exquisite pudding (not meaning, however, to speak irreverently of such an authority, but being merely led away by an enticing metaphor) is too large to be carried off entire, I shall content myself with picking out a few of its plums.*

"Grumps (Mr. Snoxell) rushes on. We need hardly say that the appearance of this singularly great and surpassingly endowed actor was the signal for the most deafening burst of applause ever, perhaps, heard within the walls of a theatre. When this tribute to his excelling genius and inexhaustible variety of power had subsided into calmness and repose, Mr. Snoxell proceeded.

* *Apropos of plums.* Some years ago, a certain person, A. (if you please), a small hanger-on upon the then government, and who was looking out, as a reward for his services (whatever they may have been), for the first place which should become vacant, met an acquaintance, B.; and between them the following conversation occurred:—

A. So, at length there is a place about to become vacant; and, as Government owes me a good turn, I shall apply for it. Gifford, as I know, is too ill to continue the editorship of the 'Quarterly.'

B. Well; and what then.

A. I shall apply for it. It is in the gift of Government, isn't it?

B. The 'Quarterly' is considered to be one of the organs of Government; but I am not aware that Government has anything to do with the appointment of its editor, or that the editorship is considered in the light of a *place.* Besides, if it were, you can't write.

A. No; but I understand that Gifford scarcely ever writes an article now; so that I am as fit for the place as anybody else.

B. It may be true that he now seldom writes an article, but he puts in a great many plums.

A. Puts in plums! What do you mean by putting in plums?

B. Why he looks over an article, and puts in a good thing—a strong, telling point, here and there; which points, indeed, sometimes give its chief value to a paper. That is what they call putting in plums.

A. Oh!—well!—If that be what you mean by putting in plums, and they should expect *me* to put in plums, I must look out for some *other* place.

Still maintaining his attitude, which was one of *Raphaelesque*, and most imaginative grace and beauty; a masterly emblending of the most appalling dignity with the most intense and highly-finished simplicity and delicacy—we say that, still maintaining this attitude (upon which the delighted eye might for ages have gloated with ineffable admiration, and evermore returned to it with unsated and inappreciable pleasure), he exclaims, on beholding Squigs in custody, 'My friend!' This unrivalled and singularly fine exclamation Mr. Snoxell uttered with a rare combination of intellectual subtlety, of truth and force, of masterly insight into the complicated workings of the soul, of deep and solemn sensibility, of excelling purity and grace; and in a tone of pathos singularly touching, fraught with deeply-felt throes of heart, and carried with infinite and unapproachable skill, through the endless varieties of all the moods and forms of impulse and passion. Nor was he less successful in his delivery of the highly dramatic exclamation which immediately follows—'My Squigs!' And it was in his mode of varying this from the other that the unapproachable genius of this truly great artist manifested itself—at least, to the mind of a critic who pierces with a fine and subtle apprehension into those hidden recesses of thought and feeling which are closed against vulgar intrusion. For, whereas he gave the first, 'My friend!' with an antique severity and grandeur, though exquisitely softened into grace and beauty; he spoke this, 'My Squigs!' with a Doric and home-breathing tenderness and purity, and with ravishing simplicity, familiarity, and nature, though nobly elevated by a mighty and self-sustaining dignity. But if anything could exceed these, it was the manner in which this mighty artist uttered the next exclamation—'In chains!' Here, with excelling and surpassing skill, * * * * and concludes this marvellously fine speech in a wild, volcanic burst, with—

"'Tell me wherefore—why my Squigs is here?'

To attempt any description of the singular power and effect with which he gave the word 'Why,' would be * * * * and, indeed, intelligible only to those kindred spirits of fine and subtle * * * *. Growler (Mr. Waddle) now comes forward and declares—

"'I'm altogether of my friend's opinion.

As this is the only speech Mr. Waddle is charged with in the

first act, we are astonished it was not given to Mr. Snoxell. We can imagine that in the hands of that consummate artist * * * * infinite and unapproachable skill, surpassing excellence, excelling beauty, mastery, and mighty achievement * * * *. As it was, this singularly fine line was entirely overlooked by the audience."

Again must I bring this super-exquisite critic to the *fact*. My notes say of this very line—"This is all Mr. Waddle has to say or do in the present act; but this he did in a way to extort applause even from the Snoxellites——" This, no doubt, is an oversight on the part of Mr. Fiat. I am coming presently to Mr. Rummins's paper, and I trust that there I shall find justice done not only to Mr. Waddle, but to all parties.

"* * * * and the young lovers, Squigs (Mr. E. Strut), and Lavinia Grumps (Miss Warble), meet. We must extract the opening of this exquisite scene, for its rare and surpassing purity and beauty:—

'*Squigs.*— Lavinia, how d'ye do?
Lavinia.— Why, pretty well.
Squigs.— I'm very glad to hear it. How's your aunt?
Lavinia.—She's but so-so; she's got a little cold,
And means to-night to take some water-gruel.'

Now, the Doric and antique simplicity of this may be of a delicacy too fine and subtle for the apprehension of any but a mind deeply imbued with a probing appreciation of the gentlest and truest harmonies of nature. For boldness and breadth of conception, softened and subdued by excelling grace and loveliness of expression, mingled with a feeling of home-delight and innocence, this surely is a passage of surpassing fascination; and we have read 'Enfield's Speaker' with but little advantage to ourselves, if we may not assert that this nobly-simple piece of poetry is unequalled. We know of nothing, even in Jubb, superior to it; nay, we doubt whether Mr. Dowlas himself has ever produced anything of more excelling grace and tenderness."

* * * * * * * *

"This scene (the scene between Grumps and Martha Squigs —I quote my own notes), this scene was well, but not finely acted. Snoxell seemed to be reserving himself for some great effort," &c. The "Dictator," on the contrary, says—

"This scene was acted by Mr. Snoxell with masterly and singular power and effect. The subtle and evanescent beauties

of the poetry which Mr. Dowlas has here put into the mouth of Grumps were shadowed and tinted by the actor with consummate art and skill. His delivery of these exquisite lines,

> " 'So like the eagle soaring to the skies,
> Again I come to press my ardent suit,'

was the most gorgeous example of declamation we ever remember to have witnessed; and the word 'soaring,' in particular, was accompanied with an action of inconceivable sublimity. And, again, in giving the lines,

> " 'Reject me!—I've a wife, thou say'st.—That's true.
> Whilst Mrs. Grumps shall live thou canst not have me;
> What's right is right—(*aside*)—so she shall be disposed of,'

he presented a fearful specimen of the awful and truly tragic struggle of the great moral principle with the native and overbearing impulses of the heart, which formed a picture of terrible grandeur and beauty. Had Miss Laura Dobs been intrusted with the part of Martha, this scene might have been one of perfect and unexampled effect; even as it was, such was the transcendent ability, excelling skill, and surpassing power displayed by Mr. Snoxell, that the audience was moved as by the rushing of a mighty tempest.

" * * * * * which brings us to the last scene of this singularly fine drama—the 'fatal cow-house.' This scene is one of unexampled power and beauty; and Mr. Snoxell's acting in it was a fine illustration of the deep and penetrating spirit, the profound and quiet research, the intellectual grandeur, with which he embodies the subtler and less obvious beauties of his author. There is always, indeed, in this gentleman's acting an undercurrent of purpose almost too fine and evanescent for the understanding of any but a critic of acute and philosophic sensibility. It was for this reason (as we are informed), that that gorgeous burst of poetry commencing, 'Rumble, thou hurricanous wind,' was intrusted to his delivery instead of Mr. Waddle's. Certainly Mr. Waddle could have done nothing with it; and the interruption occasioned by that gentleman's friends, when Mr. Snoxell began to speak it, was resented by the audience in a manner which singularly and abundantly proved that they were satisfied with the change.* * * * Grumps is slain, the cow-house is fired by a thunderbolt, the ghost of the murdered Mrs.

Grumps appears, and the curtain falls upon the solemn and *Michael-angelesque* gloom of this awful and terrible catastrophe. Both author and actor achieved a great and gorgeous triumph, and we are happy to record their surpassing and excelling success. A broad and obvious moral, at which tyrants and oppressors must quail, reigns throughout this singularly fine production, which is destined to maintain a lasting and enduring immortality. At the conclusion of the play, Mr. Snoxell was loudly called for, and on his appearance, a triumphal wreath was thrown to him. Miss Julia Wriggles, however, who had followed him, appropriated it to herself."

Neither does this statement of the affair of the wreath, nor any portion of that which follows, exactly coincide with my notes; but a little inaccuracy concerning facts, may be pardoned for so much fine, profound, and acute criticism. The rest of the performances are shortly noticed by the "Dictator:—"

"Miss Julia Wriggles's broad-sword hornpipe was a miserable affair. Entrusted to Miss Laura Dobs it might have been an exhibition of singular and surpassing excellence. '*All round my Hat*' was dragged through by the inimitable powers of that surpassing comedian, Mr. Tippleton. The infinite humour and excelling richness of that singularly fine and racy actor certainly saved this trashy affair, which is said to be the production of Mr. R—mm—ns, Editor of the 'Little Pedlington W—kly Obs—rv—r.' We do not choose to name the author more particularly. This was followed by an admirable piece, attributed (as we are informed), to Mr. Dowlas, and called '*Who are you?*' The audience expressed some slight disapprobation at the singular inefficiency of Mr. Gigs, and the surpassing unfitness of Miss Julia Wriggles for her part; but the rich and deeply-discriminative acting of Mr. Tippleton, and the infinite wit and fine under-current of humour of the piece itself, prevailed. '*Who are you?*' cannot fail to become an enduring favourite. The piece opens with a chorus, in which the fine and organ-like contralto voice of Miss Laura Dobs, was heard with ravishing effect. Why is not this young lady placed in a situation of more eminent and perceptible prominence? Something or other written expressly for Miss Julia Wriggles, concluded the entertainments; but as we did not think it worth while to stay to see it, we must take it for granted no one else did."

Bravo! Mr. Fiat of the "Dictator!"

Now for the statements and opinions of the "LITTLE PED-

LINGTON OBSERVER." The motto to this paper (from Jubb) is:—

"All parties to please, and all difference to smother,
What in one line we state we retract in another."

THE THEATRE.

"Last night, our theatre was opened for the season. In this, we think, Mr. Strut, the manager, was wrong. In our opinion it would have been more to his advantage had he delayed the opening till to-morrow evening; and yet, as the extent of his season is limited, it would have been injudicious in him to throw away the advantage of two nights' performances; though, were he playing on them to bad houses, as it is possible he might, it would be of no advantage to him, as in that case he would be a loser by so doing. However, upon the whole, perhaps it is better as it is.

"The house was not by any means as full as it might have been expected, considering this was the opening night; though that is not to be wondered at, considering that Signor Rumbello del Squeaki (who is once more in our town) displayed his extraordinary feat of performing on the drum and the Pandean pipes, *both at the same time*, at Yawkins's skittle-ground, in the morning. This was hardly fair towards the manager, as those who attended the morning performance would not be much inclined to go to a second entertainment in the evening; though it would not have been just towards the Signor had he been prevented the employment of his talents when and where he pleased. The interests of the theatre ought, however, to be protected; though there is no reason why any man ought not to be allowed to do the best he can for himself. Yet Strut is an enterprising man, and deserves support; and it is clear that if 13*s.* 3*d.* (the sum stated to have been taken at the door of the skittle-ground) had been paid at the theatre, his loss upon the night's performance would have been by so much less than we fear it is. Upon this ground, therefore, we are right in our opinion. If, notwithstanding, he should wind up this season at a profit, he will have nothing to complain of, though we know he lost ninety pounds upon the last; but if, on the contrary, he should be a loser, by the present, of another ninety, it will bring his loss upon the two seasons up to the enormous sum of one hundred and eighty pounds. In this case, of course, he would relinquish the management. But, if the nightly receipts should

exceed the nightly expenditure by two pounds, this, upon an average of fifty nights, would leave him a considerable gainer, and there would be no necessity for his taking such a step. Indeed, having netted a hundred pounds, he would not be justified in relinquishing the management; though it would hardly be fair to compel him to retain it if he could get any one to take it off his hands.

"The house has not undergone any alteration, nor has it, indeed, even been fresh painted. This we think an injudicious economy. However, as it is only two years since it was built, it did not, perhaps, require it; in which case, the manager would have been highly blamable for laying out any money upon it. We cannot speak in too high terms of the new drop-scene, which represents our Crescent, guarded by two grenadiers. But why did not Smearwell give us a view of our new pump instead? Daubson might still have introduced his grenadiers. However, they are both clever men, and know what they are about; and if, as we have heard, their reason for not doing so was, that the subject of the former drop-scene was the new pump, they have perhaps chosen for the best. They might, however, have given the pump in a different point of view; so that we are right in the main.

"We stated in our last that the march in 'Blue Beard' would be played as the overture. We find, however, that we ought to have said the march in the 'Battle of Prague;' but as they both are marches, we were not altogether wrong. Indeed, we do not know but that the march in 'Blue Beard' would have been better after all, so that we were right upon the whole; not but that the audience seemed very well satisfied with the former, though it is by no means certain they would not have preferred the latter. The orchestra performed the march in a manner that left nothing to be desired; not but that we think it was played at least twice too fast for a slow march; though if, as it is said, this was necessary in consequence of the late hour at which it was expected the performances would terminate, and which rendered it expedient to save as much time as possible, we think Wagglebow did what was proper; though perhaps, upon the whole, he was hardly justified in yielding to such a consideration.

"Miss Julia Wriggles, a young lady who made her first appearance on any stage, now came forward to speak an Occasional Address. Of the Address, which is the avowed production of Miss Cripps, we cannot speak in any terms of praise. Indeed,

but for the excellent manner in which the fair *débutante* delivered it, it would not have been listened to. Why was not Miss Jane Scrubbs applied to to furnish one? Perhaps she was, and declined to enter into the competition. Indeed, considering her great popularity, and the imposing attitude she has assumed in consequence of the sensation produced in Little Pedlington by her ingenious riddle which appeared in our last (the answer to which is, *a fish*), she ought not to have been expected to compete. The task ought at once to have been intrusted to her hands. The audience testified their approbation of the fair speaker by unanimously presenting her with a wreath, whilst their gallantry induced them to forbear hissing the words of the *fair* writer."

This differs widely from the statement of the "Dictator," and, I must acknowledge, from my own notes also. These say, that "the Address and Miss Julia Wriggles were vehemently applauded." Concerning the audience unanimously presenting her with a wreath, the wreath was (according to Hobbleday) apparently thrown to her from the manager's box. But these are trifles. If there were ever to be a perfect agreement, even upon points like these, the world would be too insipid to live in.

"We stated in our last that the theatre would certainly open with Mr. Dowlas's popular melodrame of '*Swing; or, the Avenging Rick-burner*,' and we still have reason to believe that such was originally Mr. Strut's intention. Why did he not abide by it? We do not think the alteration a judicious one; though, from Strut's experience in these matters, we have no doubt he has good reasons for it. Probably, he thought the 'Hatchet of Horror' would be more attractive; if so, he was right to give that the preference, though the attendance last night did not bear him out in that opinion. However, as the theatre did, in fact, open with a piece of Mr. Dowlas's, as we said it would (the only difference being, that instead of 'Swing,' it was the 'Hatchet of Horror'), we were right in the main.

"The play-bills say that the piece is entirely new; but as it has been a stock-piece at the Fudgeborough theatre for the last three years, this assertion is incorrect, and we wonder that a man like Strut should lend himself to such an imposition upon the public. It is very disreputable; not but that Strut himself may have been imposed upon, though we have no reason to suppose that Mr. Dowlas would be a party to such a proceeding. If, however, the words are intended to mean merely that the piece is entirely new to a Little Pedlington audience, our worthy

manager is perfectly justified in using them: not but that they are in some degree calculated to mislead the public, and therefore not to be defended on any grounds. We are sorry that we cannot speak favourably of the piece as a whole, although it contains passages, and even entire scenes of great merit; and, indeed, taken altogether, it is perhaps equal to anything Dowlas has produced. Nevertheless, we think it much inferior to 'Bellingham the Bold,' and not at all to be compared with 'Swing.' It was, however, well received, and is likely to become a favourite. It has, besides, the great merit of inculcating fine principles and excellent morals, in doing which no man is more successful than Dowlas. Still, Dowlas is mainly indebted to the actors for his success in this instance; for, but for the great exertions of Waddle in Growler, and Miss Julia Wriggles in Martha Squigs, we doubt whether the piece would have gone through. Mrs. Biggleswade, too, made the most of a very indifferent part; though, upon the whole, we do not recollect to have seen this lady to less advantage. But why was Grumps given to Snoxell? He is too short and too stout for such a character; whereas, Mr. Waddle (although he also is short and stout) is in every respect fitted for it. In the first act Mr. Waddle has but one line to say:—

"'I'm altogether of my friend's opinion.'

and his manner of saying it (though we are of opinion he will see the propriety of giving it differently in future) produced an electric effect. This, and Miss Julia Wriggles's

"'I breathe again—my Muzzle is set free!'

were, upon the whole, the gems of the evening. Yet, after all, little praise is due to the performers; for these lines are so telling in themselves, that any one of common ability might have spoken them with almost equal effect.

"But the great struggle for superiority between the rival tragedians, Mr. Waddle and Snoxell, was in the quarrel scene, in the second act beginning with

"'No more, my Growler! never be it said,' &c.;

and, in our opinion, Mr. Waddle proved himself altogether the victor; not but that Snoxell played tolerably well. The audience, however, were of our opinion, for at the conclusion of each of his speeches, Mr. Waddle was honoured with deafening applause."

[This account does not quite agree with my veracious and impartial notes, and differs altogether from that of the "Dictator."] "But why was not the scene opened by Mr. Waddle instead of Snoxell? Waddle coming in abruptly with

'Don't talk to me of vultures—stuff and nonsense—'

would have produced greater effect; though, on the other hand, the allusion to vultures might not have been generally understood; and yet, as it would still have been implied, we are perfectly justified in our opinion. We have heard it rumoured, that the speech beginning 'Rumble thou hurricanous wind' was originally in the part of Growler (Mr. Waddle), and that Mr. Snoxell insisted upon having it put into his." ["Heard it rumoured!" Innocent Mr. Rummins. It is not in the least likely that he received the information from Mr. Waddle himself, though I saw those gentlemen come, arm in arm, into Yawkins's library this morning, and heard Mr. R. say that he was engaged to "dine with Waddle!" "Heard it rumoured!"]

"For our own part we do not credit the report, for certainly Waddle is not the man to be treated in such a way; nevertheless, there can be no doubt of the correctness of our information, for the instant Snoxell attempted to speak the speech, he was interrupted by a universal shout of disapprobation; whilst Mr. Waddle, who presently afterwards appeared, was received with deafening applause. Mr. Snoxell stammered a few words in explanation, which we could not distinctly hear; and Mr. Waddle having addressed the audience in a manly and elegant speech (a correct report of which we hope to be enabled to lay before our readers in our next), the performance was allowed to proceed." [Again a slight difference between us.] "We trust, however, that at the next performance the speech will be restored to the part of Growler. Indeed, as an act of justice, it ought to be. And why not, at the same time, give Mr. Waddle the line from the character of Muzzle—

'Jack Muzzle, though a poacher—is a man!'

For although it was not badly delivered by Stride, still it would produce a greater effect in the hands of such a man as Waddle; and although it may be impossible to make the transposition, nevertheless our opinion is correct in the main. * * * * * And thus the piece concludes.

"The chief fault of the 'Hatchet of Horror' is its extreme length. It must be compressed into one act, or at least con-

siderably curtailed, particularly in the part of Grumps (Snoxell); though, upon the whole, we do not see where a line could be advantageously omitted. Why did not Dowlas (and no man understands these things better) introduce a comic character for Gigs? By so doing he might have made three acts instead of two, which is always better when it can be done; though, in the present instance, we think, nevertheless, that two acts are quite sufficient. Dowlas's great merit is, that his pieces are always original. We are uncertain, however, whether or not there be a French piece called, '*La Hache d'Horreur; ou, la Laitière Massacrée.*' If there be, it is not improbable that he has translated a part, if not indeed the whole of it. At the conclusion of the melodrama, Waddle and Miss Julia Wriggles were loudly and deservedly called for. A wreath was thrown to the fair *débutante*, which Snoxell (who, we believe, was also called for) was about to appropriate to himself; but the audience apprising him of his *mistake*, he was obliged to relinquish it to its rightful owner.

"Miss Julia Wriggles's broad-sword hornpipe was succeeded by a new burletta, called '*All Round my Hat!*' Circumstances prevent our saying more of it than that the audience condescended to receive it with unequivocal approbation, though the author, *whoever he may be*, is much indebted for its success to the performers, although Tippleton make but little of his part, which would have produced roars of laughter had it been acted by Gigs. The piece is *not* a translation of the French vaudeville, called '*Tout autour de mon Chapeau,*' as it has been falsely asserted in a certain upstart newspaper.

"We must not omit to mention a song by Miss Warble. She is a charming singer, though her voice is not pleasant, and she has neither taste nor execution. But why does she pronounce *sky* and *fly*, *skoi* and *floi*, when it is the practice of the best singers to pronounce them *skee-i* and *flee-i?*

"A miserable thing called '*Who are You?*' was deservedly sent to the tomb of all the Capulets, though Gigs and Miss Julia Wriggles did all in their power to save it. Tippleton, of course, did *his* best—such as it is—but all to no purpose. We have been doomed to listen to much trash upon various occasions, but * * * * The author is Mr. F—t, Ed-t-r of a thing called the 'D-ct-t-r.' A Miss Laura Dobs was thrust into the affair, who annoyed us with her sharp, shrill, croaking voice. Strut is a sensible man, and is wrong to have permitted this, though he may have his motives for it, in which case we must allow he is in the right. The

evening's performances concluded with '*She* SHALL *be an Actress*,' in which Miss Julia Wriggles performed eight characters! This was a great task for a young lady on the night of her first appearance on any stage; but if, as it is said, she has been playing with Scrubs at Fudgeborough, for the last three years, the effort is not very extraordinary. Notwithstanding this, it is a very extraordinary effort under any circumstances; so that we are right in our opinion after all. Though the performances were not over till nearly eleven o'clock, not a soul quitted the theatre till their termination. The manager ought to drop his curtain at twenty-five minutes past ten, or half-past, at the latest. This he must do, though that would hardly be fair towards those who come in at half-price; and as he could but seldom possibly bring his performances within that time, we think he would not be justified in making the experiment."

A few extracts from another corner of the paper: and then to peep at the play-bill.

THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE.

"We stated, in our last, that Bellowmore had entered into an engagement with Strut for three years, at a weekly salary of two pounds five and sixpence (higher terms than had ever been paid before), with a benefit, upon which he was to be secured ten pounds, and permission to go and play at Fudgeborough the first and third Thursdays in every month. Upon inquiring, however, we find this statement was not exactly correct; indeed, we doubted it at the time. According to Bellowmore's letter to Mr. Strut, which we have just seen, it was for a twelve nights' engagement he applied (not three years), at eight-tenths of the clear receipts nightly (not a weekly salary of 2*l*. 5*s*. 6*d*.), and a free benefit (not a sum of ten pounds secured); and that no stipulation at all was proposed about playing occasionally at Fudgeborough. In fact, he has *not* entered into an engagement, which, we think, is to be regretted; though, with Waddle to lead the tragic business, supported by Snoxell, we are of opinion he would have been useless. Indeed, he did not, strictly speaking, even apply for an engagement. However, as it is certain he wrote to Strut concerning theatrical matters, we were right in the main."

"*To the Editor of the 'Little Pedlington Observer.'*

"SIR,—In your last there appeared the following paragraph:—'We understand that the nightly expenses of the theatre

amount to fifteen pounds, whilst the house will contain no more than nine pounds eighteen, at the utmost. This will leave a nightly loss of five pounds two! But if the house should not be crammed full (and it is not to be expected that it will), and the average receipts should be no more than five pounds, the loss per night will amount to the enormous sum of ten pounds! We suppose, therefore, Strut will close the theatre after a night or two, as he cannot fairly be expected to keep it open with ruin staring him in the face; though in so doing he will not be justified towards the parties concerned with him.'—Now, sir, the direct reverse of your statement is the fact (the nightly *expenses* being nine pounds eighteen, and the possible *receipts* fifteen pounds); and the paragraph being calculated to do the manager considerable injury, I am desired by him to request that you will give it a full and immediate contradiction.

"I am, sir, your obedient servant,

"THOMAR DUMPS, *Treasurer.*

"T. R. L. P.

"*Monday morning.*"

"We willingly give insertion to the above, which the worthy writer is perfectly justified in demanding, although we think his complaint somewhat captious; as, even admitting that we were in error, we have merely put the cart before the horse. *According to his own showing*, we have stated the *sums correctly;* and if, as we said, the receipts should never exceed five pounds (and we do not see how it can be expected that they should), the loss, even then, will be four pounds eighteen nightly; and this, spread over a season of one hundred nights, would amount to nearly five hundred pounds; though, were Strut to curtail his season to fifty nights, the loss would be but half that sum; yet, on the other hand, were he to play the whole year round (which, fortunately for him, he is not allowed to do), the loss would be about treble; and no man could pay his way under such adverse circumstances. As we should be sorry that any statement made by us should go to injure the credit of our worthy manager, we have given this explanation; though, as our calculations cannot be disputed, they prove that we were right in the main."

"SIR,—You say in your last, 'We are sorry to hear that Mrs. Croaks, the once eminent vocalist, has irrecoverably lost

her voice, owing to a slip in stepping out of the Poppleton coach.' It is true, sir, as how I did slip in stepping out of the coach; but as my voice an't by no manner of means injured by it, what you say will ruin me in my profession if you don't contradict it, being in treaty with several managers for an engagement.

"And am, sir, yours truly,

"JULIANA CROAKS."

"We insert the above, though, as the fair writer admits that she did slip in stepping out of the coach, which we take to be the main point, we were not altogether wrong. We should be glad to hear that Strut has engaged her, and, indeed, this he ought to do. She is, or rather was, a woman of extraordinary talent, and ought to be before the public; but, as her voice cannot be as good as it formerly was, she ought to be moderate in her demands. No doubt she will be; though we have reason to believe she requires the same salary she had nine years ago. This, of course, the manager will not accede to; for with Miss Warble in his company, who has youth and beauty in her favour, we do not see that Mrs. Croaks can be of much, if of any, use to him."

These extracts will sufficiently show the tact and propriety with which the editor of this paper has selected his motto. Well informed upon all points which he discusses, learned, profound, argumentative, convincing, with truth may he say—

"What in one line we state we retract in the other."

And, as Mr. Dangle says, in the "Critic," "The interpreter is the hardest to be understood of the two," so may it be said of Mr. Rummins's explanations, and corrections of mistakes and mis-statements, that they invariably make the matter worse than it would have been without them, thus fulfilling, with admirable ingenuity, the intention expressed in the first line of the quotation:—

"All parties to please, and all difference to smother."

I turn to the play-bill, for the mere purpose of learning what are to be the performances this evening. Play-bills being intended

as simple advertisements, it is not to be expected that their inditers should take upon themselves the office of critics or reviewers. If, therefore, at any time, those good-natured and impartial persons should choose to encumber themselves with that additional task, we ought to be the more obliged to them. But, alas! this worldly world is every day becoming more worldly, so it were vain to look to them for any such disinterested sacrifice of time and trouble.

The body of this day's play-bill is precisely the same as that of yesterday. Every piece performed last night is to be repeated this evening—even "*Who are You?*" which, according to the evidence of my ears and eyes, was "unequivocally damned," or (in the more elegant language adopted by Mr. Rummins) "sent to the tomb of all the Capulets." This is *odd*, and only to be accounted for on the supposition that the management intends to request for it another and a more indulgent hearing.

The heading of the bill is different—it is expressed in terms few and simple, yet (as Mr. Fiat might say) of excellent force, and mighty, yet subtle comprehensiveness:—

UNPRECEDENTED COMBINED JUNCTION OF UNITED ATTRACTION!

SEE THE HATCHET OF HORROR!

MISS JULIA WRIGGLES EVERY NIGHT!

GREATEST AND MOST UNHEARD-OF SUCCESS EVER KNOWN!*

But the most important additions are made to what (I believe) is technically called the *underlining*. Besides the information, that "*On this occasion* MR. SNOXELL *will perform;*" "*On this occasion* MISS JULIA WRIGGLES *will perform*," *&c. &c.*, which, as it has been stated in not more than a dozen other parts of the bill, it is indispensably necessary to repeat, we are told:—

*** "THE HATCHET OF HORROR," the finest and most affecting melodrame ever produced, having been received with the

* I was informed, in the course of the morning, that seven lines more, of a similar character, had been sent to the printers; but that, owing to the untoward circumstance of a great quantity of large letters being in use for the advertisements of Gloss's Patent Self-renovating Blacking, and Dr. Drench's Patent Pro-anti-omni-preventi-curative Pills, the Theatre Royal, Little Pedlington, could not be accommodated with them to a further extent. This is, indeed, a pity.

most enthusiastic and tremendous bursts of applause, by the most crowded and suffocating overflow ever collected within the walls of *this* theatre, and unanimously declared, by the most fashionable and judicious audience ever collected within *any* theatre, to be the most heart-rending and splendid spectacle ever produced on the stage of *any theatre whatever*, it will be performed every evening till further notice.

*** Miss Julia Wriggles, having last night, on *the occasion of her first appearance on any stage*, been received with more enthusiastic and tremendous applause than ever before shook the walls of any theatre to their very foundation, and having been acknowledged by the most competent judges to be the most perfect and paramount actress that ever appeared on the British stage, Mr. Strut, regardless of expense, is happy to say, that he has thought it his duty to the inhabitants of Little Pedlington, to prevail upon that versatile and incomparable *artiste* to consent to enter into an engagement with him, at an enormous salary, *for the whole of the present season.*

*** "All Round my Hat" having been received with still more enthusiastic, &c.

*** The fashionable interlude, called "Who are You?" was received throughout with the most tremendous applause, and accompanied all through, from beginning to end, with the most unceasing laughter ever heard within the walls of a theatre, and was given out, at its conclusion, for performance every evening till further notice, with the most enthusiastic cheering, and without one single dissentient voice (!!!).

*** If possible, still more tremendous applause having accompanied the performance of "She *shall* be an Actress," and Miss Julia Wriggles having been received with, if possible, still more, &c. &c.

*** In order to accommodate the hundreds who could not obtain admission last night at the doors, this evening the windows also will be thrown open.

*** To-morrow, being the anniversary of the death of the late eminent antiquary, Simcox Rummins, Esq., F.S.A., this theatre will, by an order received through the parish beadle, be closed; and as, on this solemn occasion, there can be no performance, a variety of most laughable entertainments will be given, as will be expressed in the bills of the day."

Herein do I find much to astonish me; but this concluding paragraph is utterly perplexing! Had there, indeed, been two theatres in the town, separated from each other by only a street's width, I could have understood why, out of respect to this, or any "solemn occasion," the performances should be prohibited at one, yet permitted at the other; because it is manifest that what would be outrageously offensive if done on the north side of a puddle, is, nevertheless, perfectly harmless on the south. But here, where there is only——Would my friend Hobbleday were here to explain it to me! But, for the present at least, I must, as Grumps expresses it, "in tenfold ignorance abide."

CHAPTER XV.

YAWKINS'S SPLENDID ANNUAL.

The annual race — Unfair competition—Advantages of the mock-mystery system—Ladies publicly proclaimed as beauties: Hobbleday's fastidious objection to the custom—Pastry-cook's estimate of the value of Annuals—Their beneficial effects upon literature and art—Opinions of Daubson and Hobbleday favourable to them—Choice specimens of the "Double-distilled Moonbeam."

WENT to Yawkins's, the eminent publisher and circulating-library-keeper, to purchase some pens and paper, tooth-brushes, and shaving-soap. Mr. Yawkins having attended to two customers, who had precedence of me (serving one with a pot of pomatum, and the other with a volume of the latest new fashion, able novel, entitled, "Percy de Fitz-Belcourville; or, Champagne and Pine-apples"), he obligingly supplied my wants.

"Happy to say we shall be out to-morrow, sir," said Yawkins, whilst occupied in making up my purchases into a neat little packet.

"*Out?* Out of what? Paper, or tooth-brushes, or"——

"Beg pardon, sir," said the great bibliopole, interrupting me;

"you misunderstand me; not out *of*, but out *with*. To-morrow we shall be out with our splendid Annual for the next year."

"You are early in the field, then," said I, "considering that we are now only in the middle of July."

"Early, sir!" exclaimed Yawkins. "Lord bless you! the book is intended for a Christmas present, or new-year's gift, for the year to come. Early! no, no, sir: we are not positively *late*, and that is the best we can say of it. Flatter myself, however, I have given those scoundrels the go-by *this* time."

"What scoundrels?" inquired I; "and what is the go-by?"

"Why, sir, the year before last, I announced that my Annual for Christmas would be published in November. What does that villain Snargate do, but publish his in October! In consequence of that, last year I was preparing to publish in September, when that rascal, Sniggerstone, gave *his* trumpery would-be thing to the world in August. The vagabonds! However, I am beforehand with them this time; though" (added he, with a sigh) "it has put me to a world of extra trouble and expense to be so."

"But, if this race is to be continued, Mr. Yawkins, your rivals will, next year, publish their works in June, or May, or April; and *then*, what will you do?"

"*Do*, sir!" exclaimed Yawkins, looking absolutely ferocious, and striking the counter violently with his fist; "I'll out with *my* Annual twelve, nay, fifteen months before Christmas, but I'll distance all my rascally competitors—the villains! Sir, it was I who first published a thing of the kind, a pretty little book, quite good enough for its purpose, with two engravings, price only three shillings. No sooner was it found to succeed, than Snargate, in the most dishonest way, got up one a little bigger, with three plates, price half-a-crown. Of course, I could not allow such a proceeding to pass with impunity; so, next year, I came out bigger still, with four plates, and reduced my price to two shillings. Well, sir; wasn't that a hint—I may say, a very broad hint—which any respectable publisher would have taken?"

"A hint of what, Mr. Yawkins?"

"Why, sir, that I was resolved to crush all competitors, and keep the field entirely to myself. But, no; that scoundrel Sniggerston, in the most dishonourable manner, in a manner the most atrocious and most iniquitous, comes out still bigger than me again, with *six* plates, and has the rascality to charge the public no more for his book than I for mine. Can you conceive any-

thing more infamous towards a brother publisher than this? However, sir, I think I have settled the business this time. My new Annual, sir, will be the largest ever seen, with *twelve* plates, and price only eighteen pence. No, no: I am not the man to be put down. Fair competition I have no objection to; but no one in Little Pedlington has a right to publish an Annual but me; and should those scoundrels persist in so doing, I'll ruin them, or perish in the attempt."

As these last words were uttered in a tone of determination, and accompanied with a shaking of a clenched fist, the sincerity of Mr. Yawkins's intention could not be doubted.

"You will not issue your work to the public till to-morrow," said I; "but"—(this I added with hesitation and considerable diffidence)—"but might I request——"

"I understand," said Yawkins (putting his forefinger to his lips, and slowly bending and again raising his head), "I understand: an early copy. But mum's the word."

Yawkins went to an inner room and instantly returned; triumphantly holding above his head a small volume (a duodecimo, I think it is called) bound in pea-green satin, and bedaubed over, or, as it is usually expressed, *ornamented*, with gold.

"What think you of this, sir?" exclaimed the publisher; at the same time turning the book about in various directions, so as to catch the light on every part of it. "There's a binding! I think I shall astonish Little Pedlington this time. Every person of any pretension to gentility, *must* buy it, for no drawing-room can be complete without it."

"Nor any library, I should hope?" said I inquiringly

What would have been Yawkins's reply I know not; for it was prevented by a lady who came into the shop for a little bottle of lavender-water. Having served his customer, he returned to me, and resumed:—

"The binding alone is worth the money, sir, to say nothing of twelve engravings, after pictures by all the first artists in the place—that is to say, Daubson; and all engraved by Scrape, the only man in the world fit to be named."

"Yet, if I recollect rightly," said I, "you once told me that Mr. Scratch, who engraved for you the portrait of the illustrious Jubb, which embellishes the Guide-book, was your finest engraver."

"Ay—true—yes—when *I* employed him he was; but it is all over with him: he can do nothing now fit to be looked at. He has taken to work for those fellows Sniggerston and Snargate,

nd may do very well for *them;* but rely upon it, sir, my man ;crape is the only one."

"So much for the plates and the binding; but to whom re you indebted for the literary portion of your work, Mr. Yawkins?"

"Sir, I am proud to say that I have enlisted under my banners ll the beauty and fashion of Little Pedlington."

"And *talent* also?"

"Eighteen-pence, if you please, sir," replied Yawkins, not evading, but, as I suppose, misunderstanding my question. "Shall I have the pleasure of sending the book, or will you take it with you, sir?"

Anxious to regale myself with Yawkins's Splendid Annual, I put the book into my pocket, and proceeded to the Vale of Health; where, taking a seat on a bench beneath a spreading elm, I read:—

THE

DOUBLE-DISTILLED MOONBEAM;

OR,

THE BOWER OF BEAUTY;

OR,

PEDLINGTONIA'S PRESENT.

A SPLENDID ANNUAL FOR THE YEAR 183—.

Embellished with twelve highly-finished Engravings, by RAPHAEL MORGHEN SCRAPE, ESQ., after drawings made expressly for the work, by

MICHAEL ANGELO DAUBSON, ESQ.

Edited by the Author of "Snooks; or, The Child of Woe!"

"A captivating title-page," thought I. The next leaf presented me with the—

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS.

THE LADY CAROLINE BRAYMORE; LADY TEAZLE;
LADY RACKET; LADY DUBERLY;
THE HON. MISS LUCRETIA MAC-TAB;
THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF FITZ-BALAAM;
THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF OGLEBY;
SIR PETER TEAZLE, BART.; SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE, BART.;
SIR DAVID DUNDER, BART.; THE HON. TOM
SHUFFLETON, M.P.; MAJOR STURGEON
(Author of "Peeps in the Peninsula");

CORNELIUS COCKLETOP, ESQ., F.S.A.;
The Author of "Leaves of Loveliness;" The Authoress of
"Beams of Beauty;"

A.B.C.; D.E.F.; G.H.I.; P.Q.R.; S.T.V.;

AND

The celebrated X.Y.Z.

In addition to the contributions of the above distinguished writers, will be found those also of the Reverend J. J. (JONATHAN JUBB, Author of "Pedlingtonia"); F. H. (FELIX HOPPY, ESQ., M.C., Author of the "Guide-Book"); 'Salwod,' (DOWLAS, Author of the "Hatchet of Horror"); &c. &c. &c.

Next came the list of embellishments:—

1. THE DELUDED ONE.
2. THE DESERTED ONE.
3. THE DESOLATE ONE.
4. THE DESTITUTE ONE.
5. THE FORLORN ONE.
6. THE REMEMBERED ONE.
7. THE FORGOTTEN ONE.
8. THE LOST ONE.
9. THE FOUND ONE.
10. THE UNSEEN ONE.
11. THE UNKNOWN ONE.
12. THE UNCARED-FOR ONE.

Thus far had I proceeded when I perceived Jack Hobbleday coming towards me. Unwilling to be interrupted, I pretended not to have observed him, and continued to read. In vain! In less that half a minute he was seated at my side. Recollecting Yawkins's "Mum's the word!" touching the early copy, and finding that I must of necessity undergo more or less of Hobbleday, I hastily closed the book and thrust it into my pocket. My friend took off his hat, rubbed his steaming head with a blue cotton handerchief, and thus began:—

"How do, my dear fellow? Here's a day! Broiling! They call these the dog-days, and well they may! Fool I was to go to our U. N. S.—our Universal Knowledge Society—to look at our thermometer: hadn't a notion how hot I was till then. Seventy-five in the shade, as I hope to be saved! Thermometer pretty invention, nevertheless. Don't you think so—eh?"

"Very pretty indeed, sir."

"But I'm afraid I interrupt you. If I do, say so. Sometimes it is a bore to be interrupted when one is reading, and one hates to be bored. Don't you—eh?—I do."

"Inveterately do I hate it, Mr. Hobbleday; but what is a man to do when a dense, unfeeling, and unmerciful bore has resolved to grapple him tooth and nail?" said I; these words being accompanied by an irrepressible groan.

"What, indeed!" replied Hobbleday. "One can't say to him, 'You're a bore!' for that would hardly be civil; and a bore won't take a quiet hint,—so we have nothing for it but to grumble inwardly and wish him we know where, eh! my dear fellow?—Ahem!—You appeared to be reading;—may I ask what?"

"Nothing of any importance," replied I.

"Pooh, pooh! pea-green satin binding—oh, you cunning rogue! I saw—hawks—eagles—lynxes—not a bird amongst them has got such an eye as little Jack Hobbleday, I flatter myself. 'Double-distilled Moonbeam,' eh? Now don't deny it—early copy—I know all about it, but never mind how I came to know it. Early copy—ahem! Jubb had one yesterday; so had Applegarth; so had Shrubsole; so had——. I say: between ourselves, your friend Yawkins is a little bit of a humbug, eh?"

"I know nothing about that, sir; I have always found him civil and attentive in his business, and that is sufficient for me. But, when you call him my friend——"

"Friend! pooh, pooh! when one says 'friend,' why one means nothing more than—yes, to be sure, and you know it, I know you do. But he is an enterprising fellow—splendid book—and all the world ought to buy it, or how is he to be remunerated for his tremendous outlay? He's a liberal fellow, and ought to be encouraged—I tell *you* so—went to Yawkins yesterday, and told *him* so—my candid opinion—ahem!—made me a present of a superb copy—'tis here!" Saying which, my companion drew from his pocket the Splendid Annual.

Finding that I had no longer a secret to preserve, I confessed that I also was the possessor of an early copy: nor, indeed, was I now sorry for this meeting, since it afforded me an opportunity of asking for information upon two or three points concerning which I required enlightenment.

"Who is the editor of this work?" inquired I.

"Who?" exclaimed Hobbleday, with astonishment; "why don't you see? The author of 'Snooks; or, The Child of Woe.'"

"But as I know not who is the author of 'Snooks,' I am no wiser than I was before."

Hobbleday drew my head down till my ear touched his lips and then whispered, "Humphrey Grubs, Esquire."

"Then why not at once say, edited by Humphrey Grubs Esquire?"

Hobbleday made no reply; but putting into my hand the last number of Rummins's "Weekly Observer," he pointed to a paragraph which ran thus:—

"It is reported in the highest and most influential circles that the author, or, more properly speaking, the authoress of 'Snooks' is Lady Caroline Braymore, daughter of Lord Fitz-Balaam, both of whom are now honouring our town with their presence, for the benefit of drinking Drench and Drainum's newly-discovered mineral water. If so, and we have no doubt of the fact, Yawkins may consider himself fortunate in having secured her ladyship as editress of his beautiful 'Double-distilled Moonbeam.' In other circles, however, equally high and influential, it is thought that the writer of 'Snooks' is Lady Teazle, with which opinion we entirely agree, although we do not in the least differ from those who attribute that work to Lady Racket or even the Honourable Miss Lucretia Mac-Tab. It may, indeed, have emanated from the pen of the elegant Lord Ogleby, and there is internal evidence in the book itself that such is the case; nevertheless, it is possible, after all, that it

the production of the Honourable Tom Shuffleton, assisted, probably, by that worthy and talented baronet, Sir Benjamin Backbite; not that Mr. Shuffleton is incapable of writing such a work as 'Snooks' without assistance, and, indeed, we are well assured he would not condescend to accept any. One thing is quite clear, and that is, that it must be the production of some person of high rank and fashion; yet, why may we not be indebted for it to some one of our own celebrated townsmen, or even townswomen—Jubb, or Hoppy, or Miss Cripps, for instance? And this, we think, will most likely turn out to be the fact. At all events, the public may place perfect reliance upon what we have here stated."

"*Now* don't you see?" said Hobbleday.

"The paragraph to which you have directed my attention," replied I, "is as pellucid, and as much to the point, as any I ever read of Mr. Rummins's, but it does not serve to answer my question."

"Pooh, pooh!" said Hobbleday, "I tell you it does, and you know it. Edited by the author of 'Snooks!' Now, if Humphrey Grubs were announced as the editor of the 'Moonbeam,' why all the world would know that the 'Moonbeam' was edited by Humphrey Grubs; but as it is— Come, come, you cunning rogue!" continued he, with a good-humoured chuckle, and favouring me with a poke in the ribs, which for a moment took away my breath, "you understand me well enough, though you won't own it. Mystery—doubts—conjectures:—'tis all right and proper, I tell you, and you know it is."

"Thanks to your explanation, I am perfectly satisfied of it. Now, pray tell me who is A.B.C.; and who the celebrated X.Y.Z.?"

Hobbleday stared at me for some time with a look of wonderment, and then said—

"Come, now, come, you don't ask that question seriously; there is no secret about that. A.B.C. is the famous Miss Scrubbs, *sub roses;* and X.Y.Z. the renowned Miss Cripps, *ditto.* Why, that is as well known all over our town as that Jack Hobbleday is Jack Hobbleday; and even they themselves have made no secret of it for months past."

"Then where is the sense of affecting a mystery, when there is no longer any mystery at all? So long, indeed, as they might have had motives *pour garder l'anonyme,* as the French express it——"

"I understand the expression, my dear fellow," said Hobble-

day; "but I tell you those ladies gave up guarding their anony mouses long ago."

"Then, to persist in their A.B.C.'s and X.Y.Z.'s seems to be —I say it with great submission—a silly affectation, an absurd——"

"Don't, now, my dear fellow, don't say it at all," said Hobbleday, with a shake of the head, and in a tone of mingled kindness and admonition: "consider that you are but a visitor here; and though, no doubt, you manage these matters differently in London, you *shouldn't* speak disparagingly of a practice which is thought to be pretty and interesting in such a place as Little Pedlington."

I felt the justice of the rebuke, and was silent.

"The 'Bower of Beauty;' and they may well call it so!" exclaimed my friend, as he looked at the prints one after another. "The 'Deluded One'—sweet! The 'Desolate One'—charming! The 'Uncared-for One'—divine! I have some respect for the fair sex, and I say, my dear fellow,"—(this was illustrated by a nudge with the elbow)—"some affection, too:—have seen millions of beautiful women in my time; yet must say I never saw a round dozen of such 'ONES' as these."

"The *beau idéal*," said I.

"Pooh, pooh! The *belle idéal* in this case: never saw any *live* women like them. Ah! our Daubson is the man, rely upon it—beats Nature hollow. See! fingers as long as other women's arms; necks as long as other women's bodies; eyes as big as other women's heads, with a double allowance of eyebrows and eyelashes; mouths like holes bored with a gimlet; hair bedevilled—dishevelled I should say;—and as for their waists, tapering down to a pin's point—hang me if they don't look as if the top part of their bodies were made to screw in and out of the bottom part! Pretty!—may venture to say *sweetly* pretty!"

I asked Mr. Hobbleday (really not intending the slightest offence) whether any of the fair occupants of the "Bower of Beauty" were portraits.

"Portraits? *Portraits!*" cried he, in a tone of astonishment and indignation: "do you mean to insult the ladies of our place?" Then, after a pause, he added, in his usual mild and amiable manner. "Come, come, I know you didn't; confess you didn't."

"I may fairly confess that," said I; "for where is the offence in supposing a lady would allow her portrait to be engraved?"

"No harm in *that*," replied Hobbleday; "that's a very dif-

ferent thing; but this book is called the 'Bower of *Beauty*;' all the women in it are set up as regular *beauties*, and——"

"Again let me ask, where is the harm of that?"

"Harm of it? Pooh, pooh! my dear fellow. If you had a handsome wife, or a beautiful sister, or a pretty daughter, how should you like to see her face stuck up in every shop window, to be stared at by every butcher's boy as a declared *beauty?* And I tell you what: I should be astonished if any delicate-minded woman could allow herself to be so paraded."

"Mighty nice in Little Pedlington!" thought I.

"Charming binding, that we *must* say," said Hobbleday, looking with delight at the outside of his volume. "Pea-green satin—gilt edges—uncommon tasty! No wonder Yawkins has got such *names* to write in it."

"We agree as to the binding and the embellishments," said I; and should the literary portion of the work answer to——"

Mrs. Shanks, the pastrycook and confectioner, passing just at this moment, Hobbleday beckoned her towards us.

"Ha! Mrs. Shanks, how do, Mrs. Shanks? See here! Sweet pretty book, eh? Suppose you intend to treat yourself with the new Annual this year, eh?"

"Oh dear, no, sir," replied the lady; "I cannot afford to buy a book for the sake of the pictures; and as for the *littery* part, that doesn't answer my purpose at all."

"*Literary* you mean, my dear Mrs. Shanks," said Hobbleday.

"How contradic*tious* you are, Mr. Hobbleday," said Mrs. S.; "I say *littery* part, and I appeal to that gentleman which of us is right."

Not having yet read a line of the work, it was impossible for me to decide."

"As it is, I have nearly half a hundred-weight of the *littery* part," persisted Mrs. S., "of last year's annual's on hand; but the paper is so smooth, and glossy, and crackly, it's of no use for making up parcels; and as for putting it at the bottom of tarts, the nasty ink on it would *pisen* the people. Wish you very good morning, gentlemen."

"Tarts!" exclaimed Hobbleday, as Mrs. Shanks withdrew; "parcels! pooh, pooh! foolish woman! doesn't know what she talks about. 'Double-distilled Moonbeams,' and such things, very serviceable to the cause of wholesome literature; and as for the fine arts—but here comes Daubson; hear what *he'll* say about that. Ha! Dauby, my boy, glad to see you! Got your 'Beauties,' you see?"

"Well," growled the testy Apelles of Pedlington, "and what do you think of them? And you, mister? Come, give us your candid opinions, but mind you don't say anything impertinent."

Hobbleday was rapturous and unqualified in his praise.

"Right, quite right!" said Daubson; "there is not in all the place a better judge of art than you. But come, if you have any fault to find, state it candidly."

"Fault? pooh, pooh! what fault? None in the world except——"

"Except!" cried the painter; "you are coming with your excepts, are you? Well, what is it?"

"Nothing, my dear fellow," replied Hobbleday; "but," added he, timidly, "this whole-length figure of the 'Deluded One,' seated on a stile—hair dishevelled—milk-pail on one side—skimming-dish on t'other—cow in the distance——"

"Well, mister, and how else was I to make out the subject—the 'Deluded One; or, The Deserted Dairy-maid?' If you have nothing else to object to but that——"

"No, my dear Dauby, 'tisn't that: that is ingenious, fine, tremendously fine; *but*, if she were to stand up, wouldn't she look *ra*ther tall?"

Daubson snatched the book out of Hobbleday's hand, and thrust it into mine, saying, "*Ra*ther tall, indeed! D—d fool! What say *you* to it, mister? I'll answer for it, you know more about these matters than he does."

Hobbleday was so far right in his criticism that, had the lady got upon her legs, she would have appeared to be, in proportion to the objects around her, about nine feet in height. I merely observed, however, that in making his dairy-maid somewhat taller than the common run of women, Mr. Daubson had only availed himself of what is understood by the term "painter's license."

"You are right, mister; my object was to draw a fine woman, a magnificent creature. D—d fool, that Hobbleday! Who would buy my 'Beauties,' I should like to know, if I were to cramp my genius by creeping and sneaking at the heels of Natur', and paint such women as one may see on any day of the week? Where would be the genius of *that*, eh, mister? D—d fool!"

"In your opinion, Mr. Daubson," inquired I, "is the cause of high art likely to be promoted by publications of this kind?"

"High art be d—d!" cried Daubson; "what is high art to me? My Grenadier in Yawkins's skittle-ground is high art but

the world will get no more grenadiers from me, d—n 'em. That took me two months to paint, and scarcely paid me for canvas and colours; whilst I can knock off a dozen 'Beauties' in a week, and get five shillings apiece for 'em. I have always said I should like to see your d—d high art knocked o' the head; and I'm delighted to say, our 'Double-distilled Moonbeams' are doing it as fast as they can."

"Do you hold it to be the same thing with respect to the art of engraving, sir?" inquired I.

"Why, to be sure, mister. There's Scrape, d—n him! he won't undertake any great work so long as he can get these little things to niggle at, d—n him! But that's too bad, and he ought to be compelled to do it, before he touches anything else. How dare he neglect my great pictur'? a work truly national, mister: our new 'Churchwardens and Overseers, presiding at a Select Vestry'—eleven portraits in it, all black profiles. But there it is, and I can't get him to take it up, d—n him!"

"But, my dear Dauby," said Hobbleday, "why blame Scrape, who is but following your example?"

"Hold your tongue, you d—d fool!" cried Daubson, "that's a different thing altogether. My great pictur' ought to be dissem*ni*ated to the world before all things. Then the public, d—n 'em! they lay out all their print-money for these trumpery trifles, and neglect such important works as my 'Select Vestry.' Instead of subscribing three shillings at once for a thing like that, which, it would be creditable to possess, they dribble it away, a penny at a time, for these paltry affairs. I shouldn't care about it, if my pictur' were engraved. 'Live and let live,' say I; but as long as this rage for the cheap and pretty lasts, you'll not see my great national work in the shop-windows. Nobody 'll engrave it, nobody 'll publish it, nobody 'll buy it, nobody 'll——D—n high art! d—n engravers! d—n publishers! d—n the public! d—n——and so, good morning to you!" And away strutted the illustrious Daubson.

"I am glad," said I, "to have received the opinion of so eminent an artist as Mr. Daubson upon a point which I consider to be of some importance. With respect to what we were about to say concerning the effect of these publications upon literature——"

"*Must* be beneficial," said Hobbleday. "Pretty books, pretty pictures, pretty outsides—all must be of a piece—what's the consequence? Contributors, pretty women, pretty men—contributions, pretty verse, pretty prose—all *must be* pretty, and all

will be pretty; it stands to reason; and remember, it is little Jack Hobbleday that tells you so. Pooh, pooh! rely upon it."

Hobbleday read aloud a portion of the table of contents:—

"SELIM, a Tale of Turkey, by LADY TEAZLE.
MELISSA, a Tale of Greece, by LORD OGLEBY.
EPANTHE, a Tale of Greece, by LADY DUBERLY.
OSMYN, a tale of Turkey, by THE HON. MISS MAC-TAB.
THE BANDIT OF GREECE, by SIR DAVID DUNDER.
THE BRIGAND OF TURKEY, by LADY CAROLINE BRAYMORE.
THE CAPTIVE OF TURKEY, by LORD FITZ-BALAAM.
THE PRISONER OF GREECE, by THE MOST NOBLE THE MAR——"

"Why, Mr. Hobbleday," cried I, interrupting him, "this is a strange bill of fare! It is all Turkey and Greece!"

"Why, my dear fellow," replied he, "that's all the go in Little Pedlington just now. Pooh, pooh! I tell you it is. Could no more do without Turkey and Greece in a Christmas Annual, than without turkey and sausages at a Christmas dinner. It is all right: Greece and Turkey two interesting countries—one likes to get a good notion of their people, their characters, habits, manners, customs, and all that, don't you know?—Can't go oneself—obliged to any one who will give us correct information about them. Then the style—sweet! pretty! poetical?—Have a bit of Lord Ogleby's tale as a specimen?"

"If you will read a portion of it, I shall be thankful to you," replied I.

Hobbleday cleared his voice and began:—

"'It was one of those soft and balmy evenings at the end of June, so peculiar to the East, whose zephyrs brought upon their wings the commingled odours of the rose and jessamine, fanning the bosom with a refreshing coolness after the intense heat of the mid-day sun, so characteristic of that climate, rendered the more exquisite by the accompanying warblings of the songstress of night, whose notes are nowhere so melodious as in that country. Melissa sat at the window of her seraglio, silently gazing at the uprising queen of night, whose brightness in those regions is unparalleled; her large blue eyes fixed upon the shining orb; her arched eyebrows, and long silken lashes, together with her flowing hair, which fell in profuse ringlets adown her swan-like neck, and half concealed her shoulders of more than alabaster whiteness, rivalling the glossy jet plumage of the raven. Her sylph-like form was slightly bent forward;

her waist, taper as the gazelle's, encircled with an ataghan of costly price; whilst in her long and slender fingers she held the chibouque, whose notes no longer resounded to her gentle touch.' "—

"Ha!" said Hobbleday, "there's a picture of her exactly as she is described. Charming! See! 'Melissa, or the Forgotten One?' "—He continued—

"'Her whole attitude was immersed in attention, which a sculptor might have studied, whilst the beating of her heart was audible in the stillness of the night, which in those territories is of peculiar silence. Presently the clock of the neighbouring muezzin struck ten.

"'Yet he comes not!' exclaimed Melissa, starting from the silken kiosk on which she was seated, and ringing the bulbul for her faithful female capote.

"'In a moment the slave was in her presence.

"'Tambourgi,' said she, 'fly to the jerreed where HE dwells, and tell him this.'

"'Here she whispered something to the capote, who replied, 'Lady of the Seraglio of Loneliness! it shall be done. But, oh! lady, some signal to soothe his lacerated heart.'

"'For a moment Melissa hesitated. A tear bedimmed the sapphire blueness of her eye, and fondly nestled in the silken lash'——

"'Nestled in the silken lash!' Charming!—sweet!—pretty style, eh, my dear fellow?" said the enraptured Hobbleday. He proceeded—

"'—silken lash. She gathered some flowers from the pots, which at once enlivened and adorned her minaret; and giving them to the capote, said in those tones of silvery sweetness so characteristic of the daughters of the East, 'HE will understand this token. Away!'

"'It was midnight—yet Missolonghi came not. One—two! yet was no footstep heard to send its wished-for echoes along the vaulted roof of the maiden's seraglio. Wearied with watching, she seized a lamp, with a heartrending sigh, which was lighted with a perfumed oil, whose odoriferous essence imparted a pleasing fragrance to the chamber, retired to her harem, and throwing herself upon a downy tophaike, dismissed her attendant houris for the night, whose assistance she declined, but not to sleep.' "

"If the other chapters are equal to this first one," said Hobbleday, "'Melissa' will be the sweetest thing *I* ever read.

But come, we'll have a specimen of the poetry; and then I must leave you, for I dine at two." He turned over a few pages, and read—

STANZAS ADDRESSED TO THE DESOLATE ONE.

BY THE HON. TOM SHUFFLETON, M.P.

Most desolate, I love thee !
By thy eye of melting blue ;
In life and death I'll prove me
Faithful, kind, and true !

Most desolate, I love thee !
By the heart that now I give ;
Oh ! let my fond prayers move thee,
To bid me hope and live !

"What say you to that?" cried Hobbleday. "Hang me if that poetry isn't almost equal to our Jubb's!"

"I think," said I, "I have met with verses very like those in some one of our London Annuals."

"Pooh! pooh! don't tell me: you'll meet with no such poetry out of Little Pedlington. Editor man of exquisite taste—profound judgment! *Now* what say you to the effect of these things upon wholesome literature—high art? I tell you what, my dear fellow: if the 'Double-distilled Moonbeam' should contain many more 'gems' like those I have read to you (and I'll answer for it it does), it will be the *very best* ANNUAL that ever was published."

"Upon that point, sir," said I, "I am entirely of your opinion." And hereupon we shook hands and parted.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Busy Week—Dinner-hunting: a delicate attention—Private views—Cockney propensity to *touch*, vindicated: its gratifying results—Threatened dispersion of the Rumminsian Museum—Choice cellar of wine, *à la* Fudgefield—Conduct of the rulers of Little Pedlington censured—Extraordinary "salutations in the Market-place"—"A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind"—Difficulties of admission into learned societies—Great copyright-meeting.

The first person I meet on quitting my hotel is, as usual, my unavoidable friend, Hobbleday. Jack seems to possess the power of ubiquity; for in all places, upon all occasions, there is little Jack Hobbleday.

"Here still, eh?" cried Jack; "glad of it, knew you would. Once in a place like Little Pedlington, no easy matter to get away from it, eh?" Dreadful excitement, though; always something going on."

"What is going on now, Mr. Hobbleday?" inquired I.

"What! oceans of things; no end to them. Such a season as the present I have not known for years—ages—centuries! Three tea-parties last week!—at them all—never once in bed much before eleven—wasn't, as I hope to be saved. Two more this week, besides a rubber at threepenny *longs* to-night at Snargate, the builder's."

"And my landlord, Scorewell," said I, "tells me there is to be a grand dinner-party at Mr. Yawkins, the banker's, on Saturday."

"No!" exclaimed Hobbleday, with a look of astonishment. "How very odd! As Scorewell told you so, no doubt it is true; but it is strange, *very* strange, that *I* should have heard nothing of it. He seldom forgets me. I have not called at his house for this week past, to be sure; but, notwithstanding——You know a little of Yawkins—wish you knew more—you ought—an excellent man—most hospitable creature—not a more hospitable creature in all Little Pedlington—now, *that* I tell you—and a very old and dear friend of mine. *Grand* dinner-party! By the by, I just now met Miss Tidmarsh, who told me that yesterday

Yawkins had Popsy, his favourite French poodle, clipped. Not prudent—coldish, rawish day, and the dog is a delicate little dog—now, I tell you I know it is. I'll just call and ask Yawkins how the poor little thing bears it? He likes such little attentions—he appreciates them—now I know he does. Walk towards Market Square—I'll be with you again in five minutes."

Away skipped Hobbleday; and in little more than the time specified, he, with a face radiant with joy, returned to me.

"You'll be delighted to know that poor Popsy is quite well—hasn't suffered in the least. I gave it a few sugar-plums which I happened to have in my pocket, and the poor thing seemed quite to enjoy them—quite. Kind-hearted creature is Yawkins! Felt my attention—really felt it. By the by, we have a grand dinner-party at his house on Saturday." (A pause.)—"Ahem!—I don't know how many we shall be—sure to be pleasant, though—Yawkins's the best dinner-parties in all the place."

Mem. For the future to carry about with me a supply of sugar-plums, and look out for sick poodles.

"Dreadful excitement!" resumed Hobbleday. "Had no notion of what a place ours is, eh?—know you hadn't. Glad to get quietly settled down in London again?—know you will! But, I say, my dear fellow, how is it *you* were not at the private view yesterday?"

"Private view! Of what?"

"Kangaroo—I had a ticket. To-morrow, private view of Daubson's great picture of Snoxell and Waddle, as Grumps and Growler, in the 'Hatchet of Horror'—I have a ticket. Next day, private view of the Rumminsian Museum, at Fudgefield's Auction-Rooms—I have a ticket. Day after that, Friday, grand sight!—total eclipse of the sun:—always something going on in Little Pedlington."

"You, of course, Mr. Hobbleday, have a ticket for the private view of that too, on the day before?"

"No, you rogue; but if anybody had, I flatter myself it would be little Jack Hobbleday. But, I say, are you likely to have an eclipse soon in *your* place?"

"How! Why—on Friday, to be sure," replied I, with a laugh.

"Friday! Pooh! pooh! Eclipse in two places on the same day! nonsense, I tell you."

"But what about the kangaroo?" said I.

"Is it possible you did not hear of it? The town talk! Chickney, the poulterer, who has naturally been appointed keeper

of our Zoological Gardens, and honorary secretary, has presented us with a stuffed kangaroo. Yesterday there was a private view of it. Interesting sight! Subdued, *quiet* interest, though—— not of an *exciting* interest like the monkeys on the ladies' days, Sundays, you know. Interesting creature, though. Paper pasted on it—'*Visitors are reqested not to touch.*' Very foolish—gave great offence. How can one tell what kangaroos are made of if one isn't allowed to touch? Besides, I'm a friend of the people—public property—people have a *right* to touch; and the moment Chickney's back was turned people *did* touch. And what harm did they do? Nothing but a little bit of its tail, one fore-paw, and two claws of the other, broken off. Chickney angry—very foolish to be angry—told him so. Easy to glue the pieces on again—if ever he should get them back. If not, what then? What is that in comparison with the rights of the people? I don't know how the case may be with you Londoners, but this I can tell you, my dear fellow, no free-born Pedlingtonian will relinquish his right at an exhibition of touching whatever he can lay his hands upon."

As I thought the tone in which Mr. Hobbleday uttered this last remark was intended to convey an offensive doubt of the patriotism of my dear fellow-Londoners, I replied to him somewhat sharply:—

"Mr. Hobbleday, allow me to tell you, sir, that the London public are as well acquainted with their rights, and as jealous of them as the Little Pedlingtonians, sir, of theirs. And, sir,"—(I was vexed, and could not help *Sir*-ing him a little,)—"and, sir, if in a picture-gallery one entertains a doubt as to whether the varnish on a picture be dry, he will satisfy his very laudable curiosity by rubbing his hand over it; if as to what it may be painted on, he will poke at it with his finger; and to point out its beauties, he, like a free-born Londoner, will use the end of his stick or his umbrella. In a museum, sir, doubting as to whether a statue be of marble, or stone, or plaster, he will exercise his right of twitching it by a finger, or any part most easily fractured, in order to inform himself; and in all places, sir, he will scribble or chip his name (and for the information of posterity, the date of his visit too) upon the most prominent object within his reach, no matter how much it may be disfigured by his handiwork; always taking care, sir, to assert these his unquestionable rights when the persons who might perhaps oppose them—those instruments of tyranny and oppression, the keepers or guardians—are absent. And, sir,——"

"My dear fellow," said Hobbleday, who no doubt perceived that I was warming into anger; "my dear fellow, if I have said anything to offend you, I beg your pardon—thousands—millions, I tell you. I meant no offence: on the contrary, I am satisfied that your worthy Cockneys deserve every tittle of the praise you have bestowed upon them."

And (conscientiously thinking), with some slight allowances, so they do. But as Rome, we are told, was not built in a day, so ought it not be made a subject of complaint against the "worthy Cockneys" that everything that is destructible, and within their reach, in the public places to which they are admitted, is not yet destroyed. In Westminster Abbey, for instance, much still remains to be done; though, considering that that edifice has never yet been thrown open *gratis*, at all hours of the day, to all sorts of people, it is astonishing, as well as satisfactory, to reflect on the prodigious quantity of noses, toes, fingers, and other equally vulnerable parts, which have been knocked off from the numerous monuments, even under the present restricted system of admission. Some portions of the work, however, are complete, or nearly so. Of the delicate inlaid brass-work, which formerly so profusely ornamented many of the tombs (that of Edward the Confessor, for example), some, though not much, still remains to be scooped out; but once let the Abbey be thrown open *gratis*, and, with common industry, the whole of the work in that department might be finished in a month. The antique coronation chairs, however, are actually completed; and so entirely are they carved over with names, dates, and initial letters—ornaments at once interesting and appropriate—that there hardly is room on any part of them to cut a dot to an *i*. Some persons have suggested, that in the event of free and unlimited admission to this and to edifices of a like kind, being granted, an additional number of keepers or guardians should be employed. To this there could be no objectien; for the number of visitors of all ages, and classes, and descriptions, would be immense; and as it would be impossible for the functionaries to be present in all parts of a vast building at the same time, they would but little, if at all, impede the progress of the works to be carried on by the "worthy Cockneys."

But, to return to our conversation.

"Mr. Hobbleday," said I, "I hope I am not to understand, from what you said touching the Rumminsian Museum, that that interesting collection of antiquities and other curiosities is coming to the hammer?"

Hobbleday mournfully shook his head, and, with a long-drawn sigh, replied, "Disgrace to our town—goes to my very heart to say it—but so it is. Took the immortal antiquary a whole life to collect, and on Friday next it is to be sold by Mr. Fudgefield—dispersed all over England—Europe—the world—and the disgrace of Little Pedlington sealed to all eternity at twelve for one precisely."

"But whose is the fault?" inquired I.

"The authorities—the men, my dear fellow, who have got the management of our town-business into their hands. Might have purchased the whole collection, from the handle of the old pump, down to the stuffed parrot, for thirty pounds. Worth double the money; treble; to Little Pedlington invaluable. But economy is the order of the day.—Ahem!—Shrubsole, the coal-merchant, a creature of their own—vote him thirty pounds to go and dig for coals in the chalky part of the Vale of Health, where they might have known there was no chance of finding them. Digs a large hole—no coals—hole a nuisance—vote thirty pounds more to Applegarth (another creature of their own) to go and fill it up again—yet can't spend thirty pounds for an object truly Pedlingtonian."

"How different was it in London," said I; "when the Lawrence-Collection of drawings was——"

Hobbleday interrupted me:—

"Economy—ahem!—Ousted the former men for jobbing, as they called it—that is to say, for allowing the town-crier a plain cocked-hat once in three years, and turned off the town-crier for wearing it—called it waste of public money. On the motion of Feltby, the hatter (one of themselves), vote the present town-crier (because he, too, is a creature of their own) a new three-cornered hat, bound with gold lace too, once a twelvemonth—say the government of Little Pedlington can't be carried on without it. Wouldn't care if they were consistent, but they arn't I tell you. Old apple-women—no principle—blow hot and cold. Parish beadle a case in point.* Old beadle dies—elect a new one. On such occasions, custom in Little Pedlington, time immemorial, to new-lacquer the nob of his staff. Economy again—won't have it done—call it antiquated prejudice—see no reason even for the beadle having a nob to his staff at all—tell us beadle may be quite as good a beadle without it. Now all

* By an odd coincidence, this conversation occurred about the time (June, 1838), when a certain august ceremony was in preparation in London also.

this may be true—or it mayn't—but that isn't the question. Dignity of the parish beadle of such a place as Little Pedlington must be maintained for the sake of the dignity of the place itself. But shall little Jack Hobbleday let you into the secret in two words?"—[Here he drew me down till my ear nearly touched his lips, and in a mysterious whisper, he added]—"One thing leads to another, my dear fellow—pooh, pooh! I tell you it does. They begin by saying there is no need for new-lacquering the nob of the staff—next, they say there is no reason why there should be any nob to the staff at all. Now, if our new parish beadle doesn't look sharp after his own rights and dignity, these men will soon get the staff out of his hands altogether, and then persuade us *we have no need for a parish beadle at all.*"

As I take but little interest in parish matters, I interrupted Mr. Hobbleday by saying—

"But concerning the Museum, where is your public spirit, sir? Why not call a meeting of the inhabitants, for the purpose of securing to your town a collection which is, as you say, so truly Pedlingtonian?"

"Meeting! My dear fellow, three weeks ago—largest meeting within the memory of man—Yawkins's skittle-ground—my friend Yawkins, the banker (with whom I dine next Saturday), in the chair. Some of the finest speeches ever made—proposed that a subscription should be opened for the purpose of securing to our town the Rumminsian Museum—motion carried *crim. con.*—and Yawkins, with his usual liberality, volunteered to receive subscriptions. You don't think we are asleep, my dear fellow—I know you don't—can't!"

"And what was the result?"

"As I tell you—everybody voted in favour of the subscription—unanimous—enthusiastic,—but—ahem!—nobody subscribed."

After a moment's pause, Hobbleday resumed:—

"Ever see a sale by auction? Pretty sight. Must stay and see the Museum sold—must, I tell you—ought—memorable day for Little Pedlington. Fudgefield sells—elegant creature—full of humour—on such an occasion you'll see him in all his glory. Choice cellar of wines, too!"

"Whose is it?" inquired I.

"Whose? Read!" replied Hobbleday, directing my attention to a posting-bill, which, after announcing the sale of the Museum, proceeded to state that—

"Also will be sold, without reserve,

HIS SMALL BUT VERY SELECT CELLAR OF

SUPERIOR CURIOUS CHOICE OLD WINES OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY;

Including PORT *ninety years in bottle,* SHERRY, FINE EAST INDIA MADEIRA, MOSELLE, CLARET, BURGUNDY, HERMITAGE, CHAMPAGNE, HOCK IMPORTED DIRECT FROM THE CELLARS OF

PRINCE METTERNICH;

And A FEW BOTTLES ONLY OF VERY CURIOUS CHATEAU-MARGAUX, PRESENTED TO THE LATE LEARNED ANTIQUARY, AS A TESTIMONY OF RESPECT, BY

MONSIEUR CHATEAU-MARGAUX HIMSELF!!!

"I was not aware that the 'late learned antiquary' possessed so fine a cellar of wines," said I.

"Not a drop, my dear fellow," said Hobbleday. "Rummins's favourite wine—ahem!—especially when he had company to dine with him—was Cape sherry; and that he used to send for by a bottle or two at a time, as he might happen to want it, to Scorewell's. But what has *that* to do with *this?*"

"What!" exclaimed I, with natural astonishment. "Here is a collection of wines broadly stated to have been the property of the late illustrious Simcox Rummins, F.S.A.—imported from the cellars of Prince Metternich—presented by Monsieur Chateau-Margaux himself—(I wonder we have not the Marquis of Moselle and the Bishop of Burgundy into the bargain)—yet you, who happen to know, tell me that not one drop of it——"

"And I say again," said Hobbleday, "that not one drop of that wine was ever in Rummins's cellar. Pooh, pooh! my dear fellow; there isn't even a cellar to the house—never was. Kept his coals in a shed in the back-yard, and I happen to know. But what of that? as I said before; isn't it the custom in London?"

"Really, Mr. Hobbleday, I don't know what opinion you may entertain of us Londoners—at least, of some of our auctioneers, —but this I will venture to assert——"

"Now don't be angry," said Hobbleday, soothingly; "foolish to be angry. It is the custom here, at any rate—Fudgefield's at least; and if he were to put up for sale an old woman's cast-off wardrobe, her select cellar of choice old wines would be sure to follow.—Ahem!—And it is natural it should be so—quite natural, and you know it is."

Perceiving that I was unwilling, or unable to confess to any knowledge on the subject, he continued:—

"I tell you, you *do* know. Why now, you rogue," (and these words were accompanied with a knowing wink and a good-humoured chuckle), "you know it *is* natural; for Dregs, the wine-merchant, married Fudgefield's sister.—I say—look!—why, now, I declare there goes Dregs's wine-caravan, full of hampers, down to Fudgefield's auction-room! What *can* it be going there for?"

This conversation having occupied a good quarter of an hour, it is not to be wondered at that, walking all the while, we had twice made the tour of the town. We now found ourselves again in Market Square, on the identical spot where we had first met. Hobbleday made a dead stop.

"I say, my dear fellow," cried he; "see—here comes Snargate (one of our library-keepers) from North Street; and here comes Sniggerston (another of our library-keepers) from South Street. They are deadly enemies—*foes* I might also say—each would cut the other's throat if he dared—hate one another like two tragedians—haven't spoken to each other for months—never can again, after the atrocious things they have said of one another—rogue! scoundrel! villain!—have heard 'em say so hundreds of times—thousands—must *remain enemies* to all eternity—*longer*, I tell you. Now, observe!—mark the scowl with which they'll pass each other."

They met, and——!

"My dearest friend," said Snargate to Sniggerston, "I was on my way to call upon you."

"My worthy friend," said Sniggerston to Snargate, "I was on my way to save you that trouble."

They shook hands with cordiality amounting almost to affection; and, withdrawing to a short distance from us, fell instantly into earnest and, apparently, friendly conversation. Hobbleday looked first at me, then at them, then again at me, and so on alternately twenty times. At length, having recovered the command of his tongue,—

"Odd!" exclaimed he; "strange!—singular!—extraordinary!

—*most* extraordinary! I'm struck all of a heap! What *can* it mean?—Why, it was but yesterday I heard Snargate say of Sniggerston, that of all the scoundrels——but here comes Yawkins—hates them both, more bitterly, if possible, than they hate each other. *He'll* be thunder-struck at seeing this. *Must* know what it is about. I'll ask Yawkins—dare say he knows."

He approached Yawkins, who, just nodding to him, passed on and joined the other two! Great was the shaking of hands and the familiar slapping of backs. Hobbleday's astonishment now amounted almost to consternation. He stood for two or three minutes silently watching the group, during which brief period a good-humoured altercation seemed to be going on amongst them. At length it was apparent that Yawkins (who is unquestionably the leading man in his way in Little Pedlington) had prevailed; and we heard him say—

"Now, my dear fellows, you must not talk to me of going to Scorewell's: I won't listen to such a thing. I shall have a piece of beef ready at half-past two—'tis nearly that now—so I insist upon your taking a friendly bit of dinner and a cosey glass of grog at my house. Come along, my darling boys: *we can talk over the matter more conveniently there;* and my little woman will be quite delighted to see you. Come, Sniggy, my dear fellow; come Snargy."

Arm in arm away they went, and the next minute we saw them enter Yawkins's shop.

"I'm all amazement—*all* amazement, I tell you," said Hobbleday. "Talk over the matter more conveniently there! It must be something of *tantamount* importance—*tantamount*, rely upon it.—That Yawkins is a good creature—excellent creature; and Snargate is an excellent creature; ay, and Sniggerston is an excellent creature too—in his way. You don't know *Mrs.* Yawkins? Charming woman. Has never been quite the thing since her last confinement. I'll call and just say 'how d'ye do?'—Well, good-bye! Shall see you in the Crescent this evening, of course—promenade, you know—man with the drum and the pandean pipes plays from seven till eight—all the world will naturally be there. *Au reservoir.*"

Set off for a walk to the Vale of Health; took a turn or two. Oppressively warm. Returned "to town," as the Pedlingtonians properly express it, the distance being nearly the third of a quarter of a mile. Paid a visit to Mrs. Shanks, the confectioner. "Thy face is valanced since I saw thee last," thought I. Growing older, she "naturally" dresses younger. White muslin

frock *à la demoiselle;* more red-paper roses in her flaxen wig than formerly; and, having abandoned the use of nasty red and white paint—face nicely enamelled. Professes to have taken "a serious turn"—an excuse for never venturing a hearty laugh. Tuesday not being the day for ices, I asked for a glass of lemonade. Predestination *versus* Free Will. Tried with all my might not to make wry faces: predestined that I should—at least I could not help it. Fear this was not unobserved by Mrs. Shanks.

"I hope you admire my lemonade, sir," said she, smiling as much as she dared with due regard to the safety of her complexion.

"Beyond expression, madam," replied I, as soon as I could unscrew my mouth for the purpose.

"There *is* a confectioner in our town," continued she, "who makes his of tartaric acid—rank poison! but I am proud to say, sir, that I make *my* lemonade entirely of cream of tartar, and the very best that can be bought for money."

March of intellect! Mrs. Shanks's confectioner's shop was formerly called—and stupidly enough—a confectioner's shop. It is now converted into the "Temple of Isis," and her window is appropriately decorated with a view of the ruins of the Coliseum. Need it be added, that for the suggestion of the latter she stands indebted to the late illustrious Rummins, F.S.A. The idea of the temple *may* be originally Pedlingtonian; but I recollect it being remarked, as a happy coincidence, that, so near to the Egyptian Hall (in Piccadilly) should stand Mrs. Grange's Temple of *Ices*.

I had the pleasure of again seeing my friend Hobbleday much sooner than he had led me to expect. Met him as I quitted the "Temple."

"Been looking for you all over town," cried he: "murder's out."

"I thought you would have taken dinner with your friend Yawkins," said I.

"Pressing invitation—would hardly let me off—knew they had private matters to talk about—naturally declined. Excellent creature, as I said just now—very best creature in all the world, —but—not half so good a creature as his cousin the banker. Banker worth twenty of him—fifty, I tell you—banker a hospitable creature. But the murder's out. Was sure there was something in the wind when I saw those three publishers so lovingly united. But that is natural you know—now I tell you,

you know it is, for the matter in question is something that promises to be for the benefit of authors."

"And in what manner is that object to be effected?" inquired I.

"Can't exactly say—shall know all about it by and by. Great meeting on the subject this evening. Was to have been held in the room of our Universal Knowledge Society, up one pair of stairs, No. 18, South Street. Not large enough—could squeeze five-and-twenty into it though, that I can tell you. However, it will take place in the Grand Assembly Room at the Green Dragon. That will accommodate sixty with ease—you may stare—but it will, as I hope to be saved. But here—here is a paper about it, which I got from our Hoppy.

Saying this, Hobbleday put into my hand a paper, from which the following is an extract:—

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GRAND ASSEMBLY-ROOM, GREEN DRAGON,
LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

This evening a meeting will be held in the room above to take into consideration, at six o'clock precisely, whether *when an author has wrote a book* IT SHALL BE HIS OWN PROPERTY OR ANYBODY'S ELSE'S; *and, also, how this most desirable object is to be carried into effect.*

"There!" cried Hobbleday, interrupting me—"there! that is drawn up by our Hoppy himself—will swear to it—know his style—infernal evidence as it is called. I tell you what, my dear fellow; people may say what they will to *deprecate* his abilities, but there is but one Hoppy in the world after all."

I proceeded—

The following distinguished personages have signified their kind and obliging intention to honour the meeting with their presence, viz.:—

EDWARD YAWKINS, Esq., Banker, P.U.K.S.; P.Z.; and A.L.S.F.O., who will condescendingly take the chair.

The REV. JONATHAN JUBB, M.U.K.S.; and Z.

FELIX HOPPY, Esq., M.C.; M.U.K.S.; and Z.

MICHAEL ANGELO DAUBSON, Esq., Portrait Painter and Profilist, M.U.K.S.; and Z.

RAPHAEL MORGHEN SCRAPE, Esq., Engraver, M.U.K.S.; and Z.

EPHRAIM SNARGATE, Esq., Architect, M.U.K.S. ; and Z.
LUKE SNARGATE, Esq., Builder, M.U.K.S. ; and Z.
THOMAS CHICKNEY, Esq., Poulterer, M.U.K.S. ; and Keeper and Hon. Sec. Z.
SADGRAVE DIGGES, Esq., Upholsterer and Undertaker, M.U.K.S. ; and Z.
JOHN HOBBLEDAY, Esq., M.U.K.S. ; and Z.

"That's your humble," said Hobbleday, arranging his cravat, and drawing himself up to his full height.

"But, Mr. Hobbleday," said I; "here follow many more names, and every one of them, without an exception, has the addition of M.U.K.S. ; and Z. Pray oblige me by explaining this circumstance."

"Explain! Plain as a pike-staff: M.U.K.S. stands for Member of the Universal Knowledge Society, and Z. for Zoo—Member of the Zoo, also."

"But Mr. Yawkins, the banker," continued I, inquiringly: "he writes P. and A.L.S.F.O. in addition?"

"O," said Hobbleday, "great man! He is P—President of both societies, and Agent to the London Salamander Fire Office into the bargain."

"President of both societies! Why, then, Mr. Hobbleday, I take it for granted he is a man of profound learning, of vast scientific knowledge."

"Learning! knowledge! not a bit, my dear fellow. Besides, what has that to do with it? Kind soul—hospitable creature—gives capital dinners; but, between ourselves, dull dog—stupid *homo*—ignorant as a horse."

"You amaze me!" exclaimed I. "Then what are his pretensions to——"

"Pretensions? Banker, to be sure—head of the firm of Yawkins, Snargate, and Co.—great capitalists:—Wouldn't say anything offensive—don't know what the case may be in London—but in Little Pedlington the monied interest takes the lead in everything, that I can tell you."

Recurring to the long list of names which I held in my hand, I observed to Mr. Hobbleday that, judging from the number, it seemed to me that half the men in the place must enjoy the distinction of writing themselves M.U.K.S., and Z.

"Flatter ourselves we do," said he, evidently gratified by the observation. "No notion of finding so many distinguished men amongst us, eh?—Begin to sing small, eh? Ours is the place to

come to if you want the shine taken out of you, eh, my dear fellow? Now I don't wish to say a severe thing—but, in *your* place, now, I apprehend you can't boast of as great a proportion of F.R.S.'s and F.S.A.'s amongst you?"

"Not quite, I must, in candour, confess," replied I; "but we count a tolerable number, notwithstanding. And then, sir, it must be considered, that the qualifications for admission into those learned societies imply talents of no common order—to say nothing of entrance-fees and subscriptions——"

"Same thing with us—exactly the same thing with us—five shillings entrance—half-a-crown a quarter. Zoo, by the bye, three and sixpence—for the live things require feeding."

"Allow me to proceed, sir. A candidate for admission into either of those societies is subjected to a very rigid examination. For the Antiquaries:—in Numismatics, for instance, he must be able to declare the age of a coin or a medal upon merely looking at the date it bears; in History, he must be prepared to state whether it was Wat Tyler or Walter Tyrrel who slew King William Rufus in Smithfield; and in Chronology, he must answer correctly to the question, 'In what year occurred the great fire of 1666, commonly called the Fire of London?' The Royal Society, being chiefly scientific, requires of a candidate that he should answer, categorically, whether or not he believes the moon to be made of green cheese,—whether, on a red-hot poker being presented to him, he would take hold of it by the hot end or the cold, and why,—whether——"

"Stop, stop, stop, stop," cried Hobbleday; "begging your pardon, I can't quite believe that: we undergo no such examinations for our U.K.S., nor, in fact, any at all, which—ahem!—is much the safer plan for many of us. But, come, tell me, now, in confidence, don't you think that now and then the case occurs of a man's being admitted into those learned societies who could *not* answer any of those questions?"

"Why, then, in confidence, Mr. Hobbleday," replied I, "I do most potently believe, that *now and then such a case does occur;* but, pray, pray, don't go all about Little Pedlington saying so."

Took one turn more round Market Square, shook hands with my friend, and parted, first promising that I would be at the grand assembly-room at six precisely. Hasty dinner.

Hurried off to the Copy-right meeting. Entered as Mr. Yawkins took the chair. Perceived by Hoppy, who beckoned me to a seat which he had kindly kept for me at the upper end of the room, next to himself. This was the more considerate on his

part, as I found the great room crowded almost to suffocation—at a moderate computation, not fewer than fifty people there. The chairman was supported on his right by Hoppy, on his left by Jubb; near him were Daubson, Scrape, Dowlas, Rummins, Fiat, Strut, Snoxell and Waddle, the tragedians (at opposite sides of the room), Yawkins, Snargate, and Sniggerston, the publishers (lovingly seated together), Mr. Crib, the proprietor and compiler of the "Little Pedlington Penny Pilferer," Doctor Drench, and others of lesser note.

"The deep interest we Little Pedlingtonians feel in literary matters," said Hobbleday, "is the cause of this tremendous assemblage; but, had the *Drama* been in question, the whole *house* wouldn't have been big enough to hold us—it wouldn't I tell you."

"Precisely the same case with us in London," replied I.

Cries of "Silence! chair! chair! silence!" and the banker-chairman thus addressed the meeting:—

"Gentlemen, I——"

Having with remarkable confidence and fluency proceeded thus far in his oration, he hesitated and stammered,—an accident which, I believe, has happened to many orators. He made a fresh start.

"Gentlemen, as I said before, I—a—in stating to you the business—a—the business, gentlemen, which brings—a—brings us, gentlemen, together, I—I—a—gentlemen—I shall not call upon you to pay in—to—a—that is, for a large instalment of your time. Ahem! But, gentlemen, I cannot refrain by—refrain for—a—I—refrain from—from, gentlemen, expressing my gratification to—gratification for seeing before me—before me, so large and respectable—numerous—so large a per-centage of the numerous—the large—a—population—I—respectable—of our town. And, gentlemen, this naturally brings me to—ahem!—I shall, therefore, at once—a—I—and, in consequence, lay before you the account which I hold in my—that is, gentlemen, make the statement of—statement for what we are assem—met—'sembled—in the words of the—a—requisition—drawn up, I believe—I—a—by my talented—my friend—on my right, with his—with my—that is—gentlemen—usual clearness and pre—de—precision."

Here Hoppy bowed and blushed; and Yawkins read from a paper:—

"'To take into consideration whether, when an author has wrote a book, it shall be his own property or anybody's else's:

and, also, how this most desirable object is to be carried into effect.'

"And now, gentlemen, I—we—I shall leave you to cast up the—gentlemen, the arguments on both sides, and then—you—I—we—ahem!—and then, gentlemen—a—strike a balance."

The chairman sat down amidst deafening applause. Hobbleday said to me in a whisper—

"All out of his own head—not made for him—clever fellow after all, eh?"

Mr. Hoppy then rose, and addressing himself to the chairman—(occasionally looking into his hat—no doubt a habit of his when speaking)—thus, Hoppy:—

"Sir; I am told that, as master of the ceremonies, it is proper I should lead off the business upon which we are met. But in rising on the light fantastic toe to address this splendid assembly, I feel unnerved, like an unstrung kit, by finding amongst my auditors such men as the illustrious author of 'Pedlingtonia;' the Vandykean painter of the 'Grenadier;' the luminous and consistent editor of our 'Weekly Observer;' the deep-searching, mind-probing, under-current-seeking critic, and editor of our 'Dictator;' the Shakspeare of Little Pedlington—need I name the author of the 'Hatchet of Horror;' the heart-rending embodier of Grumps; the vigorous representative of Growler; the enterprising and liberal manager of our theatre; and many others whom to name would be to eulogize: not forgetting those absent ornaments of our *female* literature, the talented Miss Cripps, and the ingenious Miss Scrubbs. Under these trying circumstances, I hope I shall be pardoned if I fail in that *à-plomb* with which I might be expected to approach my task."

Mr. Hoppy then proceeded at great length, and with considerable ingenuity, to show that copyright was copyright, which, according to his interpretation of the term, meant—in short, copyright. Next, after declaring that he was actuated by no motives of personal intesest in this matter, but solely by a desire to benefit his illustrious co-labourers in the fields of literature, he moved (partly founding his motion on the words of the requisition) that "when an author has wrote a book it shall be his own property and nobody's else's, during his lifetime, and the property of his legal representatives for ever afterwards; and that this is the best mode of carrying that most desirable object into effect."

Here Mr. Jubb whispered something to him, and, after a few minutes, Hoppy said,—

"I have to thank my illustrious and reverend friend for a suggestion which does equal honour to his heart and his head; and as it is charitably and feelingly intended to conciliate any parties who might be otherwise inclined to oppose the motion, I shall adopt it. Instead, therefore, of the words, 'the property of his legal representatives *for ever afterwards*,' I shall substitute, 'for only so long as they may choose to keep it.'"

Mr. Hoppy sat down, and the cheering was so loud as to wake the chairman, who had been fast asleep for upwards of half an hour.

The motion was ably seconded by Jubb, in a speech full of pathos and poetry. He commenced by declaring himself abashed at having to address such men as the illustrious author of the "Little Pedlington Guide;" the Vandykean painter of the "Grenadier;" the luminous and consistent editor, &c., &c., precisely as Hoppy had done before him. Neither was *he* actuated by motives of personal interest, but solely, &c. &c. *ditto*-ing Hoppy. He contended that as authors wrote for no other object than to oblige posterity, posterity ought to be compelled to repay the obligation. "Else," said he, "else who, like the eagle soaring to the skies, would undertake a work in advance of the age he lived in? I, like the lone Arab in the desert, have composed a work which none but I can read, which none but posterity, like morning peeping through the gloom, will understand. I offered it for sale, like Joseph when sold by his brethren, to my liberal friend and publisher Yawkins; but like that same Joseph when tempted by the wife of Potiphar, he declined it. So, like the twins of the zodiac, so Sniggerston, so Snargate! I had flown, as they said, like some wandering bird, in advance of my contemporaries, and must look to posterity for my reward.—Permit me."

Here he drew a large manuscript from his pocket, and continued:—

"I, like the soft ripple of the stream, will read to you the first stanza I happen to fall upon, and you, like the Muses on Olympus, shall be my judges.

"'From META-PHYSIC-IANA, *a Philosophical Poem in twenty books, of three hundred stanzas each*:—

"'Within the cold recesses of the mind,
Mazing the labyrinths of thought sublime,
How beautiful the costly gems to find
Scattered o'er temples of the olden time,
Free from the stain of cruelty and crime;
No sigh sophisticate, no word unkind,
But power, and beauty, and excelling grace,
And intellectual truth, infinity of space!'"

"Is this intelligible? Like the imploring dove, I ask you is this intelligible?" (Cries of "No, no," from all present excepting Mr. Fiat, who exclaimed, "But wondrously suggestive!") "Then to posterity I turn; and, like the pelican feeding its young, this as a patrimony will I bequeath to my children's children, when the hand that wrote it shall be sleeping in the grave. With all my heart, like the resistless rush of the cataract, do I second the motion."

This speech was rapturously applauded. Fiat, almost in hysterics with delight, cried to the reverend bard—

"Poetry, immortal and immutable! Beyond the understanding of the present age. But I and posterity—we'll stick to you."

Mr. Dowlas spoke on the same side. He said that—"After the brilliant, the unparalleled speech which had just been delivered by the illustrious poet—a speech sparkling with poetic gems—a speech which, he trusted, would, ere many hours had elapsed, be disseminated far, far indeed beyond the boundaries of Little Pedlington: after listening to that unrivalled speech, and standing as he did in the presence of such men as the author of the immortal 'Guide;' the inimitable creator of the 'Grenadier;' the heart-rending Snoxell, to whose never-to-be-forgotten display of histrionic power he entirely owed the great success of his 'Hatchet of Horror;'"—["D—n Snoxell," muttered Waddle]—"that man of unapproachable talent (need he name Waddle?) to whose ever-to-be-remembered display of histrionic force he also entirely owed the great success of his 'Hatchet of Horror,'"—["D—n Waddle," mumbled Snoxell]—"the luminous and consistent editor," &c. &c. [mixture as before] "he felt himself utterly incompetent," &c.

"Nothing like this in your place, eh, my dear fellow?" whispered Hobbleday. "Disinterested praise!—generous creatures! Do justice to each other's merits—no envy—no gall—all honey and treacle—and liberally served out, eh?"

"Not with niggard hand, certainly," replied I; "one can't complain of their feeding each other with tea-spoons."

"Tea-spoons, my dear fellow!" said Hobbleday; "pooh! pooh! tea-spoons would never answer:—table-spoons, ladles, I tell you; and when they *do* set about buttering one another, as we call it here, nothing less will satisfy them."

Mr. Dowlas, after disclaiming (as the other speakers had done) all personal interest in the question, but being solely actuated—and so forth—concluded by saying—

"I am altogether in favour of this noble measure. I have experienced the benefits of the Dramatic Copyright Act. By that Act I have been enabled, sir, to compel our liberal and enterprizing manager to pay me ninepence for each night's performance of my 'Hatchet of Horror;' whereas, but for such power, our spirited and liberal manager would never have paid me one farthing."

Mr. Strut spoke against the contemplated measure, and denounced the Dramatic Copyright Act as one dangerous to the British Constitution, and moreover, injurious to the interests of liberal and spirited managers, who were now obliged to pay for that which, he had no hesitation in saying, it would be more to their profit and advantage to get for nothing.

Mr. Fiat was ineffably and surpassingly in favour of the measure. He delivered a speech of great length, teeming with arguments subtle and profound, deeply-probing, mill-stone piercing! He concluded by declaring it to be his opinion, that his illustrious friend Jubb having sold the copyright of his poem of "Pedlingtonia" to Mr. Yawkins—a poem which, upon his honour as a gentleman and a critic, he assured his hearers would be read by the latest posterity,—it would be greatly to the advantage of literature that an act should be passed to compel Mr. Yawkins to give the copyright back to him.

Yawkins, Snargate, and Sniggerston, all rose at the same moment, each saying, "Sir, I have no personal interest in this question, but for the good of the public, I shall oppose——"

The chairman interfered, and requested that Mr. Yawkins might be allowed to take precedence.

Mr. Yawkins spoke temperately, and, as I thought, sensibly. He had no objection to an extension of the term of copyright *in all works hereafter to be published:* the longer the right in the property, the better for its possessor, whether author or publisher, his representative or his assignee. But copyrights already sold and purchased ("out and out" as he expressed it) were clearly the property of the purchaser according to the conditions of purchase and sale; and that now to alter the conditions upon which those bargains had been made would be a manifest injustice to the purchaser. "I purchased," continued he, "at the enormous price of fifteen pounds, the copyright of the 'Antiquities of Little Pedlington,' by the late immortal Rummins. I published it in duodecimo for eighteenpence. Since the death of that great man, I have contemplated the publication of a National Edition of that, his greatest work, in post octavo, price

four shillings, with numerous illustrations. The sale of a book at *such* a price must necessarily be slow; and should this motion be carried, I must abandon all idea of the undertaking. Yes, really now, I must, I assure you."

Mr. Crib, proprietor of the "Little Pedlington Penny Pilferer" (to supply which, he steals the best parts from the best publications), then rose, and delivered a furious tirade against copyright and all other rights whatsoever.

"I rise," said he, "in defence of my property. I am opposed to any extension of copyright. I am opposed to copyright altogether. I am opposed to the payment of authors. I am opposed to payment for anything—except the payment of one penny for my 'Pilferer.' Authors are sufficiently paid by being allowed the luxury of composition: they are overpaid by the chance they have of delighting posterity with their writings. I speak *warmly*, for the *flame* that inspires me is patriotism. I *burn* for the good of the public; and I say, that by enforcing the law of copyright, my 'Pilferer' would be injured, and my means of livelihood would be——"

Here were loud cries of "Question, Question;" but Crib kept gabbling on in spite of the noise.

"I say," said Hobbleday, "he's blazing away like a house on fire, and does not seem very anxious that the engines should put it out."

These words he uttered in a tone intended to be particularly significant, though wherefore I know not.

The inhuman noise again awoke the chairman, who, with the exception of a minute now and then, had been asleep throughout the proceedings.

Mr. Simcox Rummins, the younger, as soon as he could obtain a hearing, made a long and luminous speech, the conclusion of which may serve as a specimen of the whole:—

"To conclude, sir, this measure is one which cannot but be of the greatest benefit to authors, although I do not see in what way it can be of the slightest advantage to them. On the other hand, it cannot fail to be very prejudicial to publishers; yet, though, notwithstanding, nevertheless, I am not aware how it can possibly do them the slightest injury. This being my most *un*decided opinion, I shall vote accordingly."

Mr. Hoppy briefly replied. The chairman then having put the question so luminously framed by Hoppy, said—

"All you who are of this opinion will please to hold up your hands."

Every one held up his hand.

"Carried unanimously," said the chairman. "Now, every one who is of a contrary opinion, will please to hold up his."

Again all hands were held up.

"Carried unanimously also," said the chairman. "Most gratifying! The most agreeable meeting I ever had the honour of presiding over."

Thanks were then voted to Mr. Yawkins for his able conduct in the chair, and the meeting broke up.

CHAPTER XVII.

"There's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year."—SHAKSPEARE.

Death of Captain Pomponius Nix, L.P.L.V.—Every one of vast importance to himself, or his wife, his daughter, or his grandmother—The art and mystery of Life-and-Times-making.

SCARCELY had Little Pedlington recovered from the shock inflicted upon it by the death of its illustrious antiquary, Simcox Rummins, F.S.A., when it was doomed to receive another heavy blow by the loss of the renowned Pomponious Nix, formerly a Captain in the Little Pedlington Loyal Volunteers. Though late in the evening when the melancholy event occurred, the intelligence flew like wild-fire: in less than three minutes it was known from one end of Little Pedlington to the other; and (fortunate coincidence! the town clock just then striking eight, the usual hour for closing the shops), the inhabitants, as if impelled by one feeling of respect and affection for the departed, instantly put up their shutters. For the next four-and-twenty hours—from North Street to South Street, from the Market Place to the Crescent, from High Street to the Vale of Health—nothing was heard but "Nix is dead!" "Nix is no more!" "Nix is gone!" "Nix now is nothing!"

The extinction of such a being as Nix was not to be recorded in that obscure corner of a newspaper usually appropriated to births, marriages, and deaths, and disposed of in the summary style of, "Yesterday, at his house, in such a street, died Mr. So-and-so, in the such a year of his age:" consequently, in the next number of Mr. Fiat's "Dictator," a PARAGRAPH was devoted to the occasion.

"It is our distressing duty to announce the death of Captain Nix, which occurred at his house in the Crescent, on Wednesday last, at eight P.M. The event, for which no proximate cause can be assigned, may be said to have been both sudden and unexpected; for, although in his sixty-sixth year, he was in such excellent health, that, on the very night previous to his decease, he ate a hearty supper of pickled salmon, calf's-liver, broiled mushrooms, lobster salad, and toasted cheese, and drank freely of strong ale and rum-punch. The next morning he arose at his usual hour, complaining merely of having passed a somewhat restless night, and of feeling a sensation of tightness across the chest. Within a few hours afterwards he was a corpse. Such is the uncertainty of life! It would be offensive to the memory of a man so universally known as the gallant Nix, were we, in this place, to presume to enter into any details of his life. Those are the property of his country and of Little Pedlington, and must be treated of with care and deliberation. The life of Nix must be written in a soul-dissecting spirit, and with a piercing insight into the under-current of the more purely metaphysical workings of the subtle springs of intense passion, as distinguished, in a highly-philosophical sense, from the complicated frame and bearings of action. A work written in such a spirit we pronounce would be the most delightful book in the language. He to whom the task must be confided is (next to ourselves) Humphrey Grubs, a master-spirit, whom we have taken under our especial patronage,* and who, we pronounce, is destined to work a revolution, and commence not only a new, but a splendid and gorgeous era in the paramountly fascinating art of Life-and-times-erism."

In the "Observer" appeared the following:—

"In another part of our paper of this day we have recorded the death of our eminent and gallant townsman, Captain Pomponius Nix, L.P.L.V. Of course, a copious biography of him

* In cases like the present, would not *pet*ronage, or *puff*ronage, be a more appropriate word?

will be published, as, indeed, there ought to be; though, considering how long it is since he was engaged in the active duties of his profession, we apprehend that very little interest would attach to it. Nevertheless, if his afflicted and only daughter, Miss Lucretia Virginia Nix (now, alas! at the age of only forty-five, left an unprotected orphan), should be in possession of a vast mass of exceedingly interesting documents concerning her late distinguished parent, as no doubt she is, we see no reason why a very readable, and, indeed, exciting book might not be made out of them, though it is far from probable that many, if, indeed, any such, have been preserved; in which case it would, as we have said, be impossible to produce an interesting book, unless, indeed, in the absence of such materials, the young lady's memory should supply her with facts of a nature to take a strong hold of a reader's attention. Besides, from the captain's long and intimate acquaintance with the *élite* of Little Peddlington—the Jubbs, the Rumminses, the Daubsons, and the Hoppys, and such highly-gifted women as the Crippses and the Scrubbses—much concerning him, both in the way of correspondence and anecdote, might be gleaned; though we think it very unlikely that any thing of that kind should have been preserved. Indeed, we have good reason for stating that such is the fact; yet, notwithstanding, it is possible we may have been misinformed; and though, upon the whole, we think it far from likely that we can be in error, nevertheless, upon a point so doubtful, and in this early stage of the business, it is more than probable we may be wrong.

"Of course, the work will not exceed one octavo volume; indeed, it ought not; unless, indeed, materials should accumulate beyond the compiler's expectations, in which case there is no reason why the work should not be extended to three, or even four volumes. Upon the whole, however, we think that two handsome volumes in quarto would be best, though, perhaps, in that form the book might not be so saleable. At all events, should there be a considerable deficiency in the materials, as it is probable there may be, Yawkins would do well to confine the publication to a thin duodecimo, as, indeed, there is every reason for believing he will, for no man understands his business better than that liberal and enterprising publisher, nor is any man more deserving of support. But why does he not allow Snargate, or even Sniggerston, an occasional chance? There is room enough for all in a place like Little Pedlington. Though supposing the 'Life of Nix' was offered to our friend Snargate

for a certain sum, which he declined to pay for it, and double that sum was given by Yawkins, we think the compiler was perfectly justified in closing with Yawkins; and although we do not know that any such arrangement has been made, yet, if so, we are justified in this our opinion. At any rate, Yawkins, no doubt, is prepared to pay a good round sum for the copyright, say twenty, or even twenty-five pounds, and, indeed, he ought; but if, on the other hand, the work should not be worth so large a sum, Miss Nix ought not to demand more than fifteen, or even ten pounds, nor will she.

"Of course, Miss Nix herself will prepare the work for the press, though we think it had better be entrusted to Jubb; notwithstanding, we are, upon the whole, of opinion that Hoppy, who has immortalized himself by his 'Guide,' is the fittest person for the task. Yet, considering that Hoppy has never yet appeared in the field as a professed biographer, it might be imprudent to trust a work of such importance to his care, not but that he would do it sufficiently well. Upon the whole, however, we think Jubb ought to be selected, though we see no reason why all three should not put their shoulders to the wheel.

"Of course, the work will appear in a month or six weeks at the latest, before the public curiosity concerning the illustrious and immortal deceased shall have entirely subsided. It ought not, however, to be got up in a hasty or slovenly manner; and should it swell to any considerable size, a year, or even two years, ought to be devoted to its preparation. Indeed we do not see how, in any case, it can be done in a shorter time; but as, in these matters, it is necessary to strike whilst the iron is hot, two months is the latest period within which the work ought to appear, whether as regards the profit of the publisher, or the fame of the immortal Nix.

"We have every reason to believe that the price of the book will not, under any circumstances, exceed ten shillings, nor, indeed, ought it. Yet, on the other hand, Yawkins would be perfectly justified in charging fifteen shillings, or even a pound for it, should his outlay on the speculation warrant him in so doing. Of course, it cannot be to his advantage to lose by the publication, nor, indeed, ought he; so that if, upon calculation, he should find that seven-and-sixpence, or even five shillings, would induce a larger scale, whilst it left him a considerable profit, he would be right to sell the book for the smaller sum, as he would clearly be a gainer by such an arrangement. For, be it remembered, that, in these times, no man would pay a pound,

or even half that sum, for a book if he could get it for less, nor indeed, ought he. At all events, we are right in the main."

No sooner had the spirited and enterprising Yawkins read this paragraph than he despatched to Miss Nix the following note:—

"Market Square Library,
Saturday morning, 5 min. past 9.

"My dear Madam,—Allow me to offer you my sincere condolence upon the calamity which has lately befallen you, in common with all Little Pedlington, in the death of your eminent and highly-esteemed father, and to assure you that I shall be happy to treat with you, upon the most liberal terms, for the publication of his memoirs. For worlds I would not, at the present moment, intrude upon a privacy which is rendered sacred by grief; but if you could favour me with an interview, if possible without an instant's delay, you would greatly oblige,

"My dear Madam,

"With the profoundest sorrow, and impatiently waiting your reply,

"Your very obedient Servant,

"Thomas Yawkins."

"P.S.—Doubtless, your mind is too much distracted for thought; yet it might be as well if you would just consider whether 'Life, Times, and Correspondence,' would not be preferable to mere 'Memoirs.'"

To this note Miss Nix sent a verbal answer by her maid. Miss Nix's nerves were so shattered by the blow which she had lately received, that she found it utterly impossible to hold a pen, she therefore trusted Mr. Yawkins would excuse a verbal message. As yet, Miss Nix had seen none but a most intimate friend or two; nevertheless, as Mr. Yawkins had always been highly esteemed by her dear, departed father, she would willingly receive *him*, if he could make it convenient to call in the course of an hour.

Proud of this flattering preference, Yawkins, precisely at the expiration of one hour, proceeded to the residence of the afflicted lady. As he turned the corner, he saw Sniggerston issue from the house. He affected not to have noticed the circumstance, and went on, thinking it, however, the oddest thing in the world.

But, oh! were it not for the odd things which do pass in the world, the world would be by no means so amusing a world as it is.

It seems that, in the interval between the receipt of Yawkins's note and his visit, Miss Nix had requested and obtained interviews with both Sniggerston and Snargate, concerning the publication of the book. The enterprising Snargate, who was the first received, liberally offered to publish the work in any way the lady might choose, and upon these terms:—That Mr. Snargate would make all the requisite disbursements for paper, printing, advertising, &c., Miss Nix merely giving ample and satisfactory security for the repayment of the same, whenever he might demand it: that Mr. S. should be protected against any loss whatsoever that might be occasioned by the enterprise: that Miss N. should have no claim whatever for any profits arising out of the sale of the first nine-tenths of the first edition of the work; *but*, that upon the sale of the remaining tenth, Miss N. should be entitled to one clear half of the profits arising out of the same, Mr. S. first deducting twenty-five per cent. for his commission. And this is what the liberal and enterprising Snargate called the share-and-share-alike scheme.

The lady, not feeling violently tempted to close with this offer, wished Mr. Snargate a good morning, and promised to "let him know."

Next came the enterprising and liberal Mr. Sniggerston.

Mr. Sniggerston commenced by stating that he had rather not have anything to do with the work, upon any consideration whatever: that "Lives and Times," and "Memoirs," and "Autobiographies," were a drug in the market: that so many obscure people, who were of immense importance to nobody but themselves, had published their "Life and Times," that he doubted whether even the "Life and Times" of a Nix would "do." However (he continued) he would, to oblige Miss Nix, publish the work upon her own account, she paying all the expenses as they might from time to time arise; and that, out of the respect in which he held her late father, he should desire no other remuneration for the trouble of publishing the book, than the clear profit of the first edition; after *that*, Miss Nix should have the option of entering into a new arrangement. And he concluded, by expressing his conviction, that no man in Little Pedlington could, with anything like justice to himself, make her a better offer.

Miss Nix, being, if possible, less charmed with these proposals

than the others, dismissed Mr. Sniggerston also with the promise to "let him know."

Mr. Yawkins, still thinking the circumstance he had just witnessed remarkably odd, gave a gentle rap at the door of Miss Nix. He was admitted, and presently ushered into a little back parlour, which was partially darkened. The moment he appeared, the fair mourner, tall, scraggy, and forty-five, burst into a violent fit of tears, in consequence of which, Mr. Yawkins thought it but decent and proper to make sundry wry faces, twist his mouth into all imaginable shapes, put his handkerchief to his eyes, and emit a small gurgling noise from his throat. These the customary preliminaries performed, Miss N. made a motion to her visitor to take a seat.

"You expressed a wish to see me, sir," said the young lady, after a brief silence. "The exception I have made in your favour by receiving you at such a time, sir, is a proof of the singular confidence I place in you."

"Yes, mem; flattered—honoured—but——" "confound your impudence," he would have added, as the thought crossed his mind that the knocker appended to her door had scarcely yet ceased to vibrate from the touch of Sniggerston—as a *fine* writer would express it. However, this being a business-visit, the business feeling prevailed, and he continued:—"The fact is, mem, that seeing by our 'Weekly Observer' of this morning, that something or other may, or may not, be got up concerning your late distinguished father, which is, or is not, to be prepared for the press by they cannot say whom, and published, or not, by either one house or the other, but *which* they cannot possibly determine; I have acted upon that information, mem, and now wait upon you, as the fountain-head, for confirmation of it. Now, mem, if you are in possession of any documents relating to your late eminent parent, such as Journals, Letters, Literary Remains, Notes of his Table-Talk——"

"An immense mass, sir, and of the most interesting kind," replied the lady, interrupting him. "There are his journals," (pointing to a score of small red-leather memorandum-books which lay on the table); "there are his journals, in his own handwriting, for the first fifty years of his life; and there," (pointing to a trunk which stood in a corner of the room), "there is a trunk, full, sir, of documents of all kinds: for, throughout his life, my revered father fortunately preserved all papers, even to a coffee-house bill for his dinner."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Yawkins, rubbing his hands; "there we

have 'Autobiography,' and plenty of materials for 'Appendices.' And 'Letters,' mem?" said he, inquiringly.

"Amongst those papers, sir, are, I believe, all the letters he ever received, together with copies of most of those he wrote."

"Bravo! again; there's our 'Correspondence.' For the rest, we must write to every one in Little Pedlington whom he might ever have known, spoken to, or even looked at, for contributions of anything they can give us, or tell us, concerning him."

"And then, sir," interposed Miss Nix, "we must not forget to apply to the members of the club held at the 'Cock and Bottle,' at which he was a constant attendant."

"Well reminded, mem; excellent! That will furnish us with our 'Table-talk,' 'Bon-mots,' 'Opinions,'—in short, mem, our 'Nixiana.' And now, mem, to a very important point: that portion of your late gallant father's life which may more strictly be termed public—his military career: that portion of it, indeed, when he served in the Little Pedlington Loyal Volunteers; and which, as it ought to be the most stirring period of it (as we say), so will the public look with the most intense expectations to that."

"These journals and papers, sir," replied the lady, "contain all that can be required concerning it."

"With respect to his private life, his domestic habits, mem, you, of course, can tell much of a very interesting nature," said Yawkins.

"Oh, yes, sir," replied the afflicted orphan, bursting into tears, "much, much. For instance, sir: he was the best of fathers."

"Ay, no doubt, mem," said Yawkins, looking into the fire with an air of disappointment. "But, begging your pardon, mem, if that is all of the kind you have to tell, I really don't think the public will be *very* much interested about it."

"All, sir!" exclaimed the lady; "oh, no; for I have often heard my poor, dear, departed mother say, he was the tenderest of husbands."

"Again, mem, with submission, I really do not think that even *that* would be very likely to——"

"And our Betty, sir, who has lived with us for years, will tell you that he was the kindest of masters."

"Charming, charming, indeed, mem! and will tell amazingly well on a tombstone," said Yawkins; "but I doubt whether that will be sufficient for a book. The truth is, the Pedlingtonians have been used to such high-seasoned narratives, that I fear

they would not relish those little details, beautiful as they are. However, mem, we will reserve that portion of the work for your consideration when your mind shall be more at ease. And now, mem, if you please, we will see whether we can agree as to terms, for it will be of the greatest importance to get the book out instantly."

"Instantly, sir!" exclaimed Miss Nix, with a look of extreme astonishment; "instantly! Why, sir, the book cannot possibly be brought out, in such a manner as a life of my father *ought* to be, in less than two years. And, indeed, sir, that is the opinion of the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer.'"

"Two years, mem!" exclaimed Yawkins, in return. "Two years! I beg pardon, a thousand pardons: it is true the 'Weekly Observer' does somewhere say two years; but if you had taken the trouble to finish the sentence, mem, you would have found that that intelligent writer changes his opinion, and says six weeks, or two months, at the longest. Two years! Why, mem, not to speak disparagingly of your illustrious father, I assure you that the great Rummins himself, our immortal antiquary, was scarcely thought of six months after his death; so that when, at length, nine months after that ever-to-be-lamented event, Jubb came forward with his 'Life and Times'—with which, by the bye, he ought to have been ready within three months of it—the work fell dead flat: never did, and never will, mem, pay paper and print."

"But how, sir," inquired Miss Nix, with amazement, "how is a work in two volumes quarto to be got out in six weeks?"

"Two volumes quarto, mem!" exclaimed Yawkins: "Monstrous! preposterous! Such a thing was never conceived."

"Begging your pardon, sir," replied Miss Nix; "but the 'Weekly Observer' is decidedly of opinion that there must be two quarto volumes."

"Again, my dear mem, if you had but taken the trouble to read to the end of the sentence, you would have perceived that that infallible instructor is again altogether of a different opinion with himself, and recommends a small duodecimo."

"Then, no doubt, he is right," said Miss Nix; "but on which side I cannot, and never could, for the life of me, tell. However, sir, I leave those points to your better judgment. But this one point is clear: the work must be edited by Jubb, for the 'Observer' says——"

"I know very well what he *says*, mem," replied Yawkins; "but the dev—I beg pardon, but I must speak out—the devil

of it is to make out what he *means*. No, no, mem; Hoppy, who wrote our Guide-book, the most profitable book I ever published—the celebrated Hoppy is the man for the purpose."

"But there is Mr. Humphrey Grubs," said Miss Nix, "who is so strongly recommended for the task by Mr. Fiat of the 'Dictator.' Why not confide it to him?"

"Oh, no, mem," replied Yawkins, "that would never do. Mr. Humphrey Grubs is one of Mr. Fiat's pet master-spirits (as he calls them), of whom nobody else in the world ever heard, except for his giving good dinners; for as to his being the author of 'Snooks; or, the Child of Woe'—ridiculous, I assure you. Mr. Fiat, who, as you know, mem, is a patron in his small way, and a maker of reputations on the shortest notice, is evidently working upon one for Mr. Humphrey Grubs. But it won't do, mem: to use a favourite phrase of your poor departed father's, he is 'coming it too strong:' he makes so many, and turns them out of hand so fast, that they scarcely ever wear through a season. Besides, mem, they are such preposterous mis-fits! His giants' garments hang so loosely about the shoulders of his pigmies, that after strutting about in them for a month or two, they themselves are ashamed to be seen in them. Oh, no, mem; Mr. Hoppy before the world. And now, if you please, mem, to the essential—the terms."

"Why, sir," with some hesitation, said the lady, "the 'Weekly Observer' says—though I own I read only the *commencement* of *that* sentence—the 'Weekly Observer' says something about five-and-twenty pounds."

"And I, mem," replied Yawkins, "read only the conclusion, which says something about ten pounds."

"Oh, dear me, that is *quite* out of the question," said Miss Nix; and bursting into tears, she continued: "The affliction that has befallen me has so completely unnerved me—my heart—my mind—my spirits—that I am incapable of entering into a question concerning such a thing as money; but, really, I cannot think of taking so little as ten pounds. Besides, to be candid with you, sir, this very morning Mr. Sniggerston *sent* me a very advantageous offer."

Mr. Yawkins's only reply to this was a short cough.

"And again, to be candid with you, sir, I have received from Mr. Snargate, one, much more so. But, still, to be candid with you, I would rather the book should be ushered into the world by the publisher of such works as Jubb's 'Pedlingtonia,' Rum-

mins's 'Antiquities of Little Pedlington,' and 'Hoppy's Guide,' even though it cost me some pecuniary sacrifice."

"Thank you, mem, for the *preference*," said Yawkins, with a bow—no matter for what he thought. "And now," continued he, "I know nothing about the persons you have named, or their offers; but this I *do* know—they are neither of them moneyed men." (And here, with an air of importance, he drew a cheque-book from his pocket.) "Now, in one word: I will give you five pounds—for the ten pounds talked about by that *dem'd* busy 'Weekly Observer' (pardon my swearing), is madness, mem, madness—I will give you five pounds for those materials, and take upon myself all the trouble, risk, and expense of publishing—editing and all, mem."

Now, though Yawkins knew nothing about the offers made by Sniggerston and Snargate, the lady did; so that the sight of the cheque-book had the effect of striking her into an almost immediate compliance with Yawkins's. She hesitated, however, for about seven seconds; and again bursting into tears, and lamenting her incapacity (occasioned by the state of her mind, nerves, and so forth) to higgle and haggle, as she expressed it, she said that, in one word, Mr. Yawkins should have the materials, provided he would make the pounds guineas. After the discussion, throughout which the afflicted mourner resolutely maintained her point, guineas were agreed to; and the lady's eyes sparkled through her tears with joy, as Yawkins handed her a cheque upon the Little Pedlington bank for the amount. Miss Nix rang for Betty; the journals and papers were thrown into a washing-basket; and Betty was instantly despatched with them to Mr. Yawkins's house.

"And now, mem," said Yawkins, as he rose to depart, "I trust that in a short time we shall get out a nice little book."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Miss Nix, with astonishment; "out of that prodigious mass of papers you talk of making a *little* book!"

"Oh, mem," replied Yawkins, "manuscript, mem, is very deceptive: it prints down amazingly, mem: it is like spinach, mem, a very large basketful of which will furnish but a very small dish for the table."

"Now, Mr. Yawkins," said Miss Nix, "I have two or three stipulations to make. That portrait of my gallant father"—(here she pointed to a drawing which hung over the mantelpiece)—"in the act of firing off a cannon, and enveloped in

smoke, was taken when he served in the volunteers: it must be engraved as a frontispiece to the book."

"It shall be so, mem," said Yawkins.

"And also his profile, in black, by Daubson. And then, sir, you will find amongst the papers my father's Personal Narrative of his walking, for a wager, all the way from this place to Poppleton End: there must be a map of his route."

"That," said Yawkins, "is indispensable."

"And a fac-simile of one of his letters," continued Miss Nix.

"The book could not appear without it," said Yawkins.

"And you must impress upon Mr. Hoppy the necessity of descanting largely upon my excellent father's virtues, and of avoiding, by all means in the world, the slightest allusion, in any way whatever, to a single one of his faults, failings, or foibles."

"Oh, mem," replied Yawkins, "Mr. Hoppy will understand all that, as matter of course."

"And, pray, sir, conjure him, whilst writing the life of my illustrious father, constantly to bear in mind what is due to Little Pedlington, and to the memory of such a man as the late Captain Pomponius Nix, L.P.L.V."

These stipulations having been all complied with, and Miss Nix promising to apprize him of any others which might hereafter occur to her, Mr. Yawkins took his leave.

No sooner had Yawkins reached home than he despatched a messenger to Mr. Hoppy to request his immediate attendance at the Market-Square Library. Mr. Hoppy's lodgings being only at the other end of the town, in about five minutes he made his appearance. Fortunately, this not being what he called one of his "dancing-days"—that is to say, one of those days on which he was wont to instruct the young ladies and gentlemen of Little Pedlington in the poetry of motion—he was enabled, conjointly with Mr. Yawkins, to devote the remainder of it to the inspection of the Nix Papers. The result of their labours was satisfactory in the highest degree. It was found that out of those papers, together with such letters of the captain's, and such information concerning him, and anecdotes of him, as might be obtained from his numerous friends and associates, a book might be produced which should form an invaluable addition to the biographical literature of the country. And, in consideration of the sum of seven-pounds-ten, this book, Felix Hoppy, Esq., Master of the Ceremonies, undertook to supply.

The following advertisement was immediately issued:—

IMPORTANT NEW WORK.

In the Press, and speedily will be published,

In One Volume duodecimo, price eighteenpence, embellished with a capital whole-length Portrait, after a Drawing by DABWASH, and an elegant Profile in black, after DAUBSON, both engraved by SCRAPE, ornamented with a fac-simile letter, and illustrated by an accurate Map,

THE

LIFE, TIMES, AND CORRESPONDENCE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, PERSONAL NARRATIVE, JOURNALS, AND LITERARY REMAINS;

OPINIONS, TABLE-TALK, AND REMINISCENCES

OF THE LATE

CAPTAIN POMPONIUS NIX, L.P.L.V.,

TOGETHER WITH

Copious Appendices, and Notices of the eminent Men with whom he flourished.

EDITED BY FELIX HOPPY, ESQ., M.C.

AND AUTHOR OF THE "LITTLE PEDLINGTON GUIDE."

N.B.—A limited number of copies on large paper will be struck off, with proof impressions of the plates, price Two Shillings. For these an early application is requested.

YAWKINS: LITTLE PEDLINGTON.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Publication of the Life and Times of Captain Pomponius Nix, L.P.L.V. —Hoppy's profound reflections on the true principles and objects of biographical writing—Literary highwaymen—Specimens of the "Life and Times:" Nix's education and early life; his domestic habits; his table-talk; indiscreet disclosure; his military career, his prowess, and the true cause of his well-merited promotion; examples of his wit, wisdom, and wonderful memory—Melancholy anticipation.

AT length THE BOOK IS OUT.

My friend, little Jack Hobbleday, tells me, in a confidential whisper, that Mr. Fiat intends to "cut it up" in the next number of the "Dictator," for the reason that Mr. Humphrey Grubs, Mr. Fiat's Little Unknown, his last-manufactured eighth wonder of the world, was not employed to produce it, agreeably to the desire of the Aristarchus of Little Pedlington. But, had Humphrey Grubs been intrusted with it!—then, O ye gods! you should have seen what you should have seen! On the other hand, it is to be vehemently praised in every alternate sentence of an article which is to appear in the "Weekly Observer"—the intervening sentences being charged with the counteracting duties of the "Buts," the "Yets," the "Thoughs," the "Nevertheless," and the "Notwithstandings," according to the practice invariably variable, and consistently inconsistent, of the unerring critic of *that* journal. In the mean time, my large paper copy of the work, beautifully hot-pressed, price two shillings, lying before me, I will notice two or three of its most important or most interesting passages.

Mr. Hoppy opens a remarkably well-written preface with the following sensible observations:—

"If, from the days of Adam to the present hour, the biography of every person who was of vast importance in the estimation of himself, his grandmother, or his great-aunt, or of his own little clique, or his own little club, had been given to the world, I pronounce it to be my settled belief, that the biography of every person who had lived and died within that period would

have been written, and, consequently, that the world would have been full of nothing in the world but books of biography. This being admitted, I have little hesitation in saying that amongst that prodigious number there might have been, here and there, one not altogether calculated to interest the general reader. The selection of subjects became, therefore, in some degree necessary.

"But, although the most rigid caution has been exercised in this respect, it has, nevertheless, happened once in half a century, or so, that the 'Memoirs,' or the 'Life and Times,' of some eminent and distinguished personage, whom few people knew, and fewer cared about, have made their appearance in the world, and which, by the way, the world has very 'willingly let die.' Upon two grounds, however, occasional infractions of the rule may be excused; the first, *i.e.*, the biographer being bound by the will of an individual deceased either to write his 'Life,' or relinquish a good legacy; the second, *viz.*, the biographer owing the deceased a grudge—this manner of revenge being the most exquisite that the ingenious malignity of man has ever yet contrived. But far different is the case when the voice of PEDLINGTONIA calls upon the biographer to write a record of a Rummins, or narrate the *Notabilia* of a NIX! And this reflection naturally forces the compiler of the present work to tremble at the bare idea of the responsibility he has undertaken: to shrink into himself when he measures his own limited powers with the gigantic dimensions of the subject he has been called upon to employ them upon; and—with the latest posterity in his mind's eye awaiting the descent of the hero of his pages—to recoil upon himself with awe at the thought of his humble pen being unable adequately to come up to the task of carrying him down. And, yet, on the other hand, when he reflects upon the indulgence, nay, he is proud to say, approbation, with which his 'Guide-book' was received, he is emboldened to hope that * * * * *"

In short, Mr. Hoppy goes on, as is usual on similar occasions for apology, till he feels himself emboldened to hope that his "Life and Times of Nix" will be "read with pleasure by his contemporaries, nor altogether neglected when Hoppy shall be but a name!"—(pp. i.—v.)

The preface continues:—

"The great difficulty of the compiler has been in selecting from the vast mass of materials furnished to him by the amiable and afflicted daughter of the captain. For, in addition to his invaluable journal, *in his own handwriting*, his most interesting Per-

sonal Narrative of his walk for a wager to Poppleton End, and the highly-exciting Correspondence in which he became engaged in consequence of the prominent and unflinching part which he took in the ever-memorable case of the abduction of the ladle from the new pump, when the question arose, whether or not a new ladle should be supplied, and the town was divided into *Pro*-ladletonians and *Anti*-ladletonians—a division which, for a time, shook Little Pedlington to its centre:—in addition to these were a collection of the captain's washerwomen's weekly bills, from the 13th February, 1805, to the 27th August 1836: his tavern and coffee-house bills from 1794 to 1835; and every note or card of invitation he had ever received in the course of his long and valuable life, with copies of his answers thereto!

"It was the wish of Miss Nix—a wish prompted, doubtless, by filial affection, and the notion she entertained that every, the minutest record relating to her eminent father would be interesting to Little Pedlington—it was her wish that the whole of those valuable documents should be published. This, however, (though greatly to the dissatisfaction and, it is feared, also the displeasure of Miss N.), was found to be impracticable; and selections, according to the best of the compiler's judgment, have been made. As, for instance, it cannot but be interesting to the reader to know that, by bill, 20th June, 1807, it appears that the captain had, about that time, discontinued the use of ruffles; by another, of the 4th May, 1828, that he left off wearing frilled shirts; and that *the first mention of his using false collars* occurs in a bill dated the 7th October, 1832.*

"To the following ladies and gentlemen the compiler returns his best thanks for the assistance, in the way either of anecdotes or correspondence, which they have afforded him:—To Miss Cripps, so justly termed the Sappho of Little Pedlington; to Miss Jane Scrubbs (better known as Enaj Sbburcs), the highly-gifted *charadiste;* to JUBB, whom to name is sufficient; to Daubson, our Sir Joshua; to Captain Sniggerston, for his Secret History of Captain Nix's sudden and unexpected promotion from the ranks to a Captaincy in the L. P. L. V.; to Mr. Scrawley (secretary to the Cock-and-Bottle Club, of which for many years the captain had been president), for his invaluable communications, which have furnished the larger portion of the

* "See Appendix S., No. 14. It is much to be regretted that the bills for the months of May and June, 1821, are missing; it is feared, indeed, irrecoverably lost: thus rendering this otherwise *unique* collection incomplete!—F. H."

Nixiana, Table-talk, and Opinions; to," &c. &c.—[Here follow the Hobbledays, the Snargates, the Stintums and the less eminent of the Little Pedlingtonians]—"and (though last, not least) to Mr. RUMMINS, the intelligent, erudite, and all-accomplished editor of that most ably-conducted journal, the 'Little Pedlington Weekly Observer,' for numberless most useful and valuable suggestions during the progress of this arduous work"—(pp. vi.—viii.)

O, Mr. Hoppy! what do you mean by this compliment to a critic?

As a *specimen* of the Preface, I have selected the *whole of it:* the omission of some half-dozen unimportant lines scarcely forming an exception. In this I do but act upon a system which, I understand, is prevalent in Little Pedlington, and found to be of great advantage to the reading public. This, however, would be a consideration of but little value, were not the system of some advantage also to the liberal extractors to whom we are indebted for the invention of it. And surely, it will be said, the labourer is worthy of his hire: so let us see how the case really stands.

Here is Mr. Yawkins, a self-styled liberal publisher, who has the effrontery to charge eighteenpence for "Hoppy's Life and Times of Nix," and for no other reason, forsooth, than that having, for the encouragement of literature, risked large sums in the *making* of the book, he finds that a smaller charge could not remunerate him; whilst the truly liberal caterers for the edification of the public, the proprietors of the "Little Pedlington Penny Pilferer," will, in their next number, give you the work, *all but* entire, at the small charge of one penny!—and simply for the reason that they stole—(this is an ugly word, gentlemen, but none more appropriate immediately occurs to me)—*stole* the work *ready-made.* Mr. Yawkins is quite at liberty to complain of the invasion of his property, and refuse, therefore, to risk his money upon the next work which may be offered to him; but it is perfectly childish in him to go about wondering why his shop is deserted, whilst the doors of the "Penny Pilferer" office are besieged.

With respect to the invention of the system, it occurs to me, upon reflection, that it is not strictly with the "Penny Pilferer" gentry of Little Pedlington. I think it may be traced further back. Years ago there was a class of "extractors" and "selectors" who made *their* elegant extracts on the highways. They would request leave to inspect a traveller's purse; and

having "extracted" or "selected" from it the twenty golden guineas, they would leave him the odd half-crown to pay turnpikes. But even though this should be disputed as the precedent, the principle in both cases, is the same.

To return to the work; the first chapter of which is entirely devoted to the pedigree of the Captain, and the no less important point of the various ways—Nichts, Knycks, Knyks, Knyx, or Nyx—in which his name could have been, might have been, ought to have been, or had been, spelt, till it settled down into its present shape. With respect to the Captain's pedigree, Mr. Hoppy has, with indefatigable industry, traced it as far back as——But let me quote his own words, which detract nothing from the dignity essentially belonging to the subject:—

"Toiling with unwearied step through the mouldering archives of Little Pedlington"—[*Qy.* the Parish-Register?]—"I find mention of the name of Nix (sometimes written Nyx, sometimes Nicks) as far back as the early part of the reign of our third George, or in other words, about thirty years prior to the close of the eighteenth century; that is to say, that in the year 1770, there came to settle in Little Pedlington—a town unconscious then of the proud position it was destined in after-times to assume—one Hugo Nix, a general merchant, warehouseman, haberdasher, or (as in the barbarous jargon of that age he was called) pedlar. There is every reason to believe that from this Hugo descended our hero: for on the 1st July of that year (1770), we find him married to Lucretia Shanks (a name still celebrated in this town), only daughter of Ephraim and Virginia Shanks. But here the labours of the genealogist must cease: beyond this period all traces of the Nixes are lost. It is pleasing, however, to reflect, that the accuracy of my researches (so far as circumstances would allow me to extend them) is established by the fact that, on the 1st April, 1771, Lucretia, the wife of Hugo Nix, was safely delivered of a son. THIS WAS OUR HERO!"

And here Mr. Hoppy is justified in halting to take breath for a fresh and vigorous start in a new chapter.

Into this one chapter (the second) has Mr. Hoppy, with unusual skill, compressed the first three years of the life of the little Nix: a period which, abounding as it does in chicken-cough and whooping-cough, and the "thousand natural shocks" that such young "flesh is heir to," might easily have betrayed him into more copious detail. Even the particulars concerning the cutting of his teeth occupy no more than three pages, al-

though that portion of the chapter commences with—"It cannot but be interesting to know,"—a phrase which the biographer very properly uses whenever he has anything to narrate of more than usual importance. Thus, in the next chapter:—

"It cannot but be interesting to know that, at this time, the little Nix being then in his ninth year, the time had arrived when his parents considered it high time that some time should be devoted to his education; and, at that time, Mr. Whipsley's seminary for young gentlemen being the most celebrated, if not indeed the only one in the place, thither, without loss of time, was young Pomponius daily sent."

And, again, in chapter the fourth:—

"It cannot but be interesting to know that, at this time, Pomponius, or, as, throughout life, he was familiarly called, Pompo, having now attained his fourteenth year, and finished his education in reading, writing, and arithmetic with brilliant success; Pompo, we say, was removed from that seat of learning, and taken by his father (now an eminent dispenser of many of the smaller articles of commerce, and a vestryman of considerable oratorical distinction), to act as his deputy in the emporium, and assist him in supplying the wants of his numerous clients."

How may not the meanest subject be elevated by fine writing! Mr. Hoppy, in this place, judiciously uses the language prevalent in the Waterloo Houses and Trafalgar Emporiums of Little Pedlington. To have said that young Nix was taken from school to assist his father in serving the customers in his haberdasher's shop, would have been so undignified as to be quite intelligible. But, thanks to the march-of-intellect refinements of the new vocabulary, a tradesman's customers are now his "clients;" a linendraper's shopman is an "assistant;" a tailor's apprentice, a "student;" a shoemaker's clerk, the "young gentleman at the desk;" and—and the consequence is, that the police-magistrates are smothered with cases of "irregularly transferring" from the warehouse, and "unauthorizedly abstracting" from the till.

As the work advances we find the use of the phrase, "It cannot but be interesting to know," becoming more and more frequent. This is to be accounted for by the ever-increasing importance of the incidents in the life of such a man as Nix. Thus, in the year 1801, Nix, not having yet attained his thirty-first year, has the misfortune to be left an unprotected orphan—both his parents dying within the same week:—

"And, now," says the M.C., "and now, to quote Milton, the talented author of Paradise Lost—

'The world was all before him where to choose;'

so, inheriting his father's property, and succeeding to his business, he wisely preferred staying where he was,—viz., in Little Pedlington. In the June or (as Mr. Jubb is inclined to believe) the July of this year, also, commenced his acquaintance with the illustrious Rummins; nor can it be uninteresting to know that that acquaintance soon ripened into the closest and most familiar friendship, as will appear by the tone of the letters, Nos. 98, 99, 100."—(*Vide* CORRESPONDENCE.)

Turning to the CORRESPONDENCE, I find, amongst numerous other letters, all of nearly equal interest with them, the following:—

LETTER 98.—*Rummins* to *Nix*.

Dear Pompo, L.P. Sept. 28th, 1801.

To-morrow being Michaelmas, or, as it is sometimes called, St. Michael's day, have got a goose for dinner, at three o'clock. Will you come and eat a bit?

Your sincere friend,

SIMCOX RUMMINS, F.S.A.

LETTER 99.—*Nix* to *Rummins*.

Dear Rummy, L.P. 2 a clock.

Don't care if I do.

Your sincere friend,

POMPS. NIX.

LETTER 100.—*The same* to *the same*.

Dear Rummy, L.P. half-past 2.

Write again to say mind and have plenty apple sarse and tators biled in their jackets, as I call it—wouldn't give a d— for um else, as I say.

Yours,

POMPO.

JOURNALS are, in most cases, records of dull trivialities, and, to all persons except their makers, monotonous and tiresome, "stale, flat, and unprofitable." For this, however, no blame

ought to attach to the journalizer: the fault lies in that foolish practice, in which the world has so long, and so obstinately persisted, of having the year to consist of so many as three hundred and sixty-five days. Now, of that unconscionable number, to most of those worthy persons who daily note down what they call the events of their lives, at least three hundred and sixty are as like to each other as peas; whilst of the remaining five, it is well if one may be illustrated by the death of a cat, and the second by the birth of a kitten. Even the journals of Nix are occasionally liable to this objection. Take for example the following—"taken at random," as is usual with reviewers, *not* carefully selected for the purpose:—

"Sept. 26.—Rose at 8—shaved—9, brekd." [For breakfasted.] "3, Biled beaf for dinr. and carots hot." [It adds considerably to the interest of the work that, in all cases where Nix's MSS. are consulted, his own system of orthography is adhered to. The same may be said of his peculiar mode of pronunciation whenever he is made to appear as the narrator or interlocutor. Of these the dramatic effect is thereby considerably heightened.] "6, Walkd. to Vale of Health—10, Supper. Welsh rabbet, gin and water—11, bed."

"Sept. 27.—Rose 8—shaved—9, brekd.—3, biled beaf for dinr., cold—6, walkd. to V. of H.—10, supp., Welsh r., gin and water—11, bed."

"Sept. 28.—Rose 8—shavd.—9, brekd.—3, dinr. rost leg muton and tators.—Note from Rummy to dine to-morrow; answered, Go.—wrote agin about apple sarse.—6, walk to Vale of H.—10, super, *briled red herrin, no* cheese, gin and w. 2 glass. —11, bed."

The following day is one of those few the events of which are worthy to be recorded. But a journal—anybody's journal—made up entirely of such "riveting circumstances" is no more to be expected than a pudding all of plums.

"Sept. 29.—At 8 rose—shave—9, brekd.—2, to put on best blue coat to go to Rummy's—could not find key of draws for near an hour—found it at last in desk in shop—wondered how it got there—coudnt tell—at almost 3 got to Rummy's—had to go all the way back home for pocket hanf.—got to R.'s rather latish—rather disturbed my *enaquimity*, as I call it—soon recovered and sed the best thing I ever sed in all my life—Rummy, says I, I'm so peckish I shall eat all the goose and leave you the *rest* on it—Rummy laughd amazing—so did Jubb, who was there—so did I.—Dinner came in, rost goose, apple

sarse, and tators. Upon the whole, never was such a capital day in all the world.—All of us tip-top sperits—feast of reason and so forth—Says Rummy, says he, a goose is a foolish bird—So says I, that's what Jack Spiggins used to say—a goose is a foolish bird, says Jack. But says I to Jack, that's 'cause it is too much for one and aint enough for two. And a remarkable coincidence it is; that's just eight—no, nine—yes, it *is* eight year ago this very day, says I, that I said so to Jack. As to *your* goose here, says I—Rummy, says I, foolish as it is, us three will make it look a d—n sight foolisher afore we're done with it. So Jubb laughed, and so did Rummy, and so did I. And that's keeping up the ball, as I call it.—Sed another capital thing, better than t'others. It warn't long afore Rummins says to me, Pompo, says he, d—mme, says he, isn't the coat you've got on rather *too short*, says he. So says I to Rummy, d—mme, says I, it will be long enough afore I get another. So we *all* laughed."

Now all this is very well: it affords an admirable specimen of Nix's table-talk: but what shall we say of the following?

"Goose tolerable good, but not so good as goose eat with Jack Spiggins eight year ago. Stuffing decided bad; and as for apple-sarse, *not enough to go twice round!*"

Now, whatever may be thought of the taste and feeling which could dictate the record of a fact so unfavourable to the learned antiquary's character for hospitality, surely there can be no doubt of Mr. Hoppy's *indiscretion*—to apply the mildest term to the proceeding—in publishing it to all the world, and handing it down to the latest posterity. It may be pleasing to the gossips of Little Pedlington to learn, for the first time, that Mr. Rummins invited his friends to partake of a goose with him, yet meanly economized in the essential accompaniment of apple-sauce; but how are the feelings of the surviving relatives of the eminent antiquary likely to be affected by such a slander of him? And not a single extenuating circumstance suggested! Mr. Hoppy does not even hint that apples, at the time, might have been scarce; or that the cook, or (the common offender in such cases) the cat, might have eaten half the quantity which had been provided for the purpose. But Jubb, who was present on the occasion, still lives; and doubtless he will instantly step forward to vindicate the character of his great contemporary in a letter to the editor from "Fair Play," or "Hear both Sides," or, haply, from "One of the Goose-party."

"An important event," says Hoppy, "was now hovering on

the wings of Destiny. Towards the close of this year (1801), Pomponius Nix was drawn to serve in the militia. From this moment may be dated the commencement of his military career; for regardless of expense, and with a promptitude most honourable to his patriotism, he instantly provided a substitute, whom he sent to defend his king and country, even at the hazard of his life."

This substitute, as it afterwards appears, was drafted into the line. And gallantly did he represent his principal: for his regiment being ordered upon foreign service, he became engaged in many of the battles in the Peninsula; till, on the memorable field of Waterloo, he fell, covered with wounds and glory—"An event," adds the biographer, "of which the gallant Nix might justly be proud, though his pride (whenever he was called upon to allude to the subject) was tempered by that modesty which is ever the concomitant of true valour."

But I am anticipating.

"In the year 1804, the bloodthirsty tyrant, the ferocious monster, the insatiable murderer, the pest and scourge of society, the *un*justifiable homicidal Corsican,* threatened this mighty Empire with invasion, and all Little Pedlington, like one man, flew to arms. Of Pedlingtonia less could not be expected, nor less did she do. The corps of Little Pedlington Loyal Volunteers was formed; and Nix, ever foremost to serve his country, took part in it as a simple private. But merit like his could not long remain unnoticed or unrewarded; and after a few months, behold him elevated up into the exalted rank of Captain!† No sooner was he entrusted with command, than a fierceness more than mortal seemed to take possession of his very soul. The duties of his emporium became to him a matter of secondary consideration. He appeared to grow out of himself, as it were. The conscious pavement resounded to his martial tread. In short, (to use a phrase at once expressive and picturesque), Little Pedlington seemed hardly big enough to hold him. Rapidly spread the intelligence that our hero was now a leader of our band of patriots; that the sword of vengeance was flaming in the grasp of the now sash-bound Nix; consequently, not many days elapsed ere news arrived that the bloodthirsty tyrant, the ferocious" * * * [as before] "had abandoned his execrable

* "To prevent any misunderstanding, it may be proper to inform the reader that *Boneypart* is here meant.—F.H."

† "See Captain Sniggerston's 'Secret History.' *Appendix* K.—F. H."

project of invasion, and retired, abashed and disconcerted, into the savage wilds of Gallia."

I turn to Appendix K, by which it appears that the real cause of Nix's promotion was this :—

After allowing full credit to Nix for the precision and dexterity with which he went through the manual exercise, Captain Sniggerston, in a style of narrative easy and unaffected, proceeds :—

"This was all very well so long as we fired with bone flints to the locks and without any sort of powder in the barrels; but when it came to firing with real flints, and with gunpowder too, it was a very different sort of thing. Now Nix was nervous, never having fired off a gun with powder in it in his life. So, when the word was given to 'prime and load,' my lamented friend and brother soldier loaded, but, for fear of accident, did not prime; and when the word was given to 'Fire' only made believe to pull his trigger; and this he did eight times one after another. Now, when all was over (as this was the first time of our having cartridges served out to us), Sergeant Rattan, who had been sent down to drill us, and who was a *real* soldier (not a volunteer), and very strict,—Sergeant Rattan, I say, went along the line and examined every man's touch-hole, and made him sound his barrel. He also examined our pouches. This was to see that we had all fired off eight rounds apiece. Finding we had done so, he could not but own we had done our duty like men. Now, when he came to examine Nix, *his* touch-hole was quite bright, and did not smell of gunpowder in the least. So he looked at his pouch, which was empty. Then he found that Nix had rammed down eight rounds of cartridge into his barrel, to say nothing of the ramrod, which he had left sticking in it also. So he complained to Colonel Snargate (the small-beer brewer), who commanded the corps at that time, and told him, that if Nix's gun had gone off it must have burst, and blown the whole corps to—a very considerable distance. Now, the Colonel being convinced how dangerous it was to trust Nix with a musket, yet not liking that the country should lose his services altogether, instantly made a Captain of him: for, said the Colonel, 'he will then only carry a sword, and he is not likely ever to do anybody the smallest harm with that.' Whereupon, Nix was promoted to a captaincy. And this is the true history of the affair, for which I can vouch, being, at that time, a simple private in the corps. And, now, lest it should be imagined that he was envied his promotion, I must say that such

was not the case: we were a band of brothers; and certain it is no man rejoiced at it more than I did. I had the honour to be my gallant friend's right-hand file."

Had you? Disinterested Sniggerston! Had the "gun gone off!" says the sergeant.

To multiply extracts would be unfair towards the enterprising publisher of the work; I shall, therefore, content myself with only two or three more.

In the Nix journals, under the date of 31st December, 1814, we find the following mem.—a mem. of the deepest interest, recording, as it does, the termination of the captain's military career. After the inevitable "8, rose; shaved—9, brekfd," it proceeds—

"Boney squizzled, as I call it—put *haw de combaw*, as I say—L.P.L.V., in consequence, this day disbandled—I retire from milintary life, and like St. Cinnatus, convert my sword into a plough-tail."

And here the history of the public life of Nix might have been concluded, but for the determined part which he took in the famous "Pump-ladle controversy," in 1829. This Mr. Hoppy has detailed at great length, and with a minuteness befitting its importance. Nor is he less communicative upon the subject of his hero's election, in 1830, to the *perpetual* presidency of the "Cock-and-Bottle Club," of which, for many years, he had been president by *annual* election. But for the particulars of those, as of many other equally important matters, I must refer to the work itself.

A specimen of his table-talk, as recorded by himself, I have already given; this renders any extracts from the "invaluable communications" from Mr. Scrawly, the secretary to the club, unnecessary. I find, however, his exquisite and original pleasantry upon the coat being too short, repeated on three-and-twenty different occasions. These repetitions clearly prove its excellence.

Nor was his wisdom inferior to his wit. Upon the arrival of a person, or the occurrence of an event, much after the time expected, he was wont to say, "Better late than never;" and once, upon so apparently trivial an occasion as giving his glove to his daughter to be mended, he emphatically observed, "A stitch in *time* saves *nine*"—an axiom, which, as Hoppy truly remarks, "is almost as valuable for its rhyme as for its reason."

His memory was truly wonderful. When he was "i' the vein," he would, for hours together, amuse and delight his hearers with an accurate account of where he had dined, what he had eaten

for his dinner, and how each meal had "agreed with him," on every day of any entire month "forty year ago." "But this," says Hoppy, "he could only be prevailed upon to do when surrounded by a social circle of intimate friends, whom he knew to be capable of appreciating and enjoying such a display of his uncommon powers."

In the lives of all extraordinary men, remarkable coincidences must be found (or made). Nix was not without his. Perhaps, not the least striking is this: that on the very day when Louis XVI. lost his head, in Paris, Nix lost his hat in Little Pedlington; and, says Hoppy, "though last, not least, as it was on a Wednesday he died, so it was on a Wednesday he was buried."

Here I shall conclude. "Hoppy's Life and Times of Nix" will soon be in the hands of every reader of taste. Excepting the insertion of some dozens of letters, which rather degrade than elevate the character of his hero, and of some scores of others, to and from persons still living, and of which the publication must inevitably set all Little Pedlington by the ears: these slight exceptions allowed, Hoppy has performed his task with a discretion, a tact, and a skill, which at once establish him as a biographer of the highest order.

CHAPTER XIX.

LITTLE PEDLINGTON IN A PUCKER: THE NIX COMMOTION.

Distressing consequences of the publication of Nix's private journal—Business for the gentlemen of the long robe—Display of legal lore, and advantages of a man being his own lawyer—Two characters: Mr. Papman, the *Attorney;* Judas Hitchem, Esquire, the *Solicitor*—Little Jack Hobbleday in his element—Every one can feel for himself—Affair of honour—Ladle and spoons: provocation and remorseless retaliation—Suspiciously sensitive—The apple-sauce calumny triumphantly refuted by Jubb—Conclusion: solemn warning to journalizers.

I TOLD you so. Praising Mr. Felix Hoppy for the extraordinary discretion, tact, and skill which, as a biographer, he had displayed in his "Life and Times of Pomponius Nix," I excepted from this general commendation merely "the insertion of some dozens of letters which rather degrade than elevate the character of his hero, and of some scores of others, to and from persons still living, *the publication of which must inevitably set all Little Pedlington by the ears.*" These were my words; and the prediction has been verified with awful celerity. Scarcely four-and-twenty hours old is the book, and already has it caused—— But, to convey anything like a notion of what it has caused, I must repeat the words of my worthy host, Scorewell.

Unconscious of the storm that was raging without, I was quietly taking my breakfast, when Scorewell rushed into my room, and, with consternation depicted on his countenance, exclaimed, "Sir, sir, the world is coming to an end!"

Now, as I perfectly well knew that that event was (in sporting language) "not to come off" till the seventeenth of February, 1844, at twenty-two minutes, fourteen seconds, and fifty-four sixtieths of a second past three, A.M., I was less alarmed than I might otherwise have been by the announcement. This unquestionable fact, that we have a good four or five years before us

for winding up our accounts, I communicated to Scorewell; and, bidding him take a seat and compose himself, I continued:—

"Scorewell," said I, "it is now just fifteen years since a report was current in Paris, and by many believed, that in the course of that year the world was to be destroyed by fire: 'Then must each look to his own safety,' said a certain French gentleman; *I* shall convert all my property into money, and go to America.' This was a wise resolution, Scorewell, and I recommend you to adopt it on the present occasion."

But, heedless of what I said, Scorewell again exclaimed, "Sir, the world is coming to an end, I tell you, for Little Pedlington is no longer a fit place for quiet people to live in. Except in the year of the pump-ladle, never, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, was the place in such a ferment! And all owing to that plaguy book, sir! Mr. Snargate threatens to call out Captain Sniggerston; Captain Sniggerston threatens to kick Mr. Scrawly; Mr. Scrawly threatens to pull Mr. Daubson's nose; Mr. Daubson threatens to duck Mr. Scratch in a horse-pond; Mr. Fiat is to show Mr. Rummins up, and Mr. Rummins is to write Mr. Fiat down; whilst even the Reverend Jonathan Jubb almost swears that he has almost a good mind to take steps in spite of the colour of his cloth. And then the ladies! Miss Cripps calls Miss Scrubbs by a bad name; Miss Scrubbs calls Miss Nix by a worse; and Miss Nix is to do something or other quite terrible to everybody, without an exception. As to Mr. Hoppy, and his publisher, Mr. Yawkins, they are to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, without benefit of clergy, and the book is to be burnt in Market Square, by the town-crier, with every mark of *ignonnimy*."

"I was apprehensive that the book would make an unpleasant stir in the town," said I; "yet I did not anticipate such horrible consequences as those."

"And all through Mr. Hoppy!" said Scorewell. "Such an elegant creature, too, as (you know, sir) the Master of the Ceremonies, at a place like this, is bound to be! The *bo ordeal* of politeness, as Miss Cripps used to call him! What she will call him now it is shocking to think of; for I am told, sir, that your ladies who write very tender poetry are sometimes given to talk very strong prose. However, sir, I can't but say he deserves the worst, the villain!"

"Villain is a severe term, Scorewell," said I; "and how the gentle Hoppy should have deserved it from you, who were formerly one of his greatest admirers, I cannot conceive."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Scorewell, "what! have you not read what he has published about *me?* Why, sir, that is the rascally part of the book. If he had but let me alone there would have been no call for all this turmoil; for, after all, what is said about other people I look upon as capital fun, and, in my opinion, they are fools to notice it. But, to say a word against my negus, which *is me—!* I'll spend the last farthing I have but I'll be revenged for it. Here, sir, here it is." And saying this, he drew from his pocket a copy of the "Life and Times," with a slip of paper stuck in the part of the volume where the offensive passage occurred. The passage was an extract from Nix's journal, and ran thus:—

"24 Nov., ½-past 8, evening—Wanted to see Lunnun paper, so went to Scorewell's. Called for glass neagus for good of the house, as I call it. D—n strong of the water, as I say. So says to Scorewell, d—m me, Scorey, as I call him, says I, this neagus, says I, aint fit to give to a dog, as I say;—d—m me, it's what I call water bewitched, says I. Not such neagus as I get at the 'Cock and Bottle,' says I. So says Scorey, says he, next time, says he, I'll make it stronger, says he. Why, d—m me, says I, what am I the better now for what you'll do next time, says I—that's d—m nonsense, as I call it, says I.—So wont take no more neagus at Master Scorey's no more."

"Now, sir," cried Scorewell, "if that is not libel, sedition, and malice prepensed, I don't know what is. I have not been studying 'Every Man his own Lawyer' for nothing. It is actionable; and if I don't get damages, there's no law in the land. Why, sir, there's three counts in the indictment! First of all, he calls my negus water bewitched, which I deny; next, he says my negus isn't fit to give to a dog, which I'll take my oath it is; and last, he says my negus isn't such as you get at the 'Cock and Bottle,' which is criminal information, and shows a *malus anonymous*. But *I'll* Cock-and-Bottle 'em; I'll teach 'em that my character is not to be retaliated upon in this injudicial manner. I'll show 'em that I know something of law; and as they are wrong upon all three points, I'll have them served with a writ of error upon every one of them. Not such negus as you get at the 'Cock and Bottle,' indeed! But I'll find a way to make 'em keep their *scan. mag.* within proper bounds, or I know nothing of what the Statue of Limitations is meant for."

"Be calm, Scorewell," said I: "abstain from any proceedings at law, which (to say nothing of other inconveniences they might

occasion) will give ten-hundred-fold publicity to the matter. Unless you yourself make a bustle in the affair, it will soon blow over and be forgotten."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Scorewell (with that look of mingled astonishment, anger, and indignation with which a man invariably receives the advice of a temperate counsellor, when he has predetermined to act like a fool, after his own wise fashion), "what, sir! blow over! Never, while one brick of Little Pedlington stands upon another. Even Mrs. Shanks, the confectioner, is setting the whole town in an uproar only because, in another part of the journal, Captain Nix says she sometimes puts treacle into her raspberry tarts. That may blow over, and she is a fool to notice it. But if any fiend in human form is allowed to come, like a midnight assassin, and *insiduously* say, in the open face of day, that at the 'Cock and Bottle' they make better negus than mine, and to escape without receiving the severest impunity which the crime deserves; why, then, I have only to say, that the liberty of the subject is at an end, the constitution is in danger, and Magna Charta, the glorious Bill of Pains and Penalties, and the Law of Nations are only so much waste paper. No, no;"—(here, for a moment, he firmly compressed his lips; and, then, with a shake of the head, a smile of self-satisfaction, and a sharp rubbing of his hands, he added)—"*I'll* negus 'em, *I'll* Cock-and-Bottle 'em, *I'll* trounce 'em, *I'll* not let 'em off with *common* damages—it is a case for *nominal* damages, and that I'll go for, or I have read 'Every Man his own Lawyer' to very little purpose."

Viewing the entire circle of human knowledge, the three objects of study which may be most profitably undertaken by the professional or amateur student are, probably, Law, Physic, and Divinity. I am aware that against one point of this opinion may be quoted the common saying, that, "A man that is his own lawyer has a fool for his client;" and I must in candour admit, that I never yet knew a dabbler in Physic who did not persuade himself into the enjoyment of as many aches, pains, disorders, and diseases, as would supply a whole hospital with patients; or a dabbler in Divinity who had any more religion than an English horse or a French philosopher. All this, however, proves nothing against the justness of my notion "in the main," as the "Little Pedlington Observer" would say—at least, I do not think it does. I throw it out for what it may be worth, and so let it pass.

Mr. Scorewell, although he had "Every Man his own Lawyer"

at his finger-ends, was too cautious a person to act entirely upon his own responsibility in a matter of so great importance as that which now occupied his mind; so forthwith he proceeded to the house of Mr. Papman, his attorney, for advice. So far as it concerned the mere law of the business, this step was needless; for Scorewell knew (as he has shown) that he was as well acquainted with the law as any Mr. Papman alive. But the mode of vengeance which he contemplated required that certain forms should be observed, and certain things done, none of which could he do for himself: and, in fact, this consideration alone it was that reconciled him to so humiliating a task as that of consulting anybody at all.

Mr. Papman being, at the moment of Scorewell's call, engaged with a client, Scorewell was detained for a short time in the outer office.

"All very busy here to-day, no doubt," said Scorewell. This was addressed to Mr. Papman's only son (his only clerk also), a lad of fourteen, who was seated on a high stool, at a desk enclosed within a slight wooden railing.

"Very busy indeed, sir," replied the boy, without taking his eyes from the work upon which he was earnestly employed. He had before him a large sheet of copying-paper, on which he was sketching horses' heads. "My father has had a great many calls this morning," continued he: "Miss Cripps is with him now, but she'll be going presently, and then—Oh, there she goes. You can walk into father's private office now, sir, if you please."

Mr. Papman is a tall, thin man, of gentleman-like appearance, with an intelligent countenance and a bald head. His constant dress, from head to foot, is black, with black silk stockings, and buckles in his shoes. There are three attorneys in Little Pedlington, and he enjoys the reputation of being the honest one. I know not what proportion this allowance of honesty in that profession may bear with the statistical returns upon the same point in London, but, certainly, the Pedlingtonians are very proud of it.

Scorewell, with the "Life and Times" in his hand, rushed into Mr. Papman's office, and scarcely allowing himself time for the common salutation of a "good morning," he threw himself into a chair, and thus addressed his legal adviser:—

"Now, Mr. Papman, since by this time all Little Pedlington must be ringing with this rascally attack upon me, I need not tell you that my present business with you is to consult you and

take your advice upon it. In the first place, then, you will use your utmost power of attorney, and proceed against them immediately with all the rigour of the law."

"Upon my word, Mr. Scorewell," said Papman, "I have not the remotest idea of what it is you allude to; so, first of all, pray enlighten me concerning the facts of your case, and then, with respect to the law, I shall perhaps be able to——"

"Ay, ay, sir," said Scorewell, "there can be no difficulty about the *law*, for it is as clear a case of criminal information against my character as any to be found in the Statue at Large, *that* I can tell you. It is the mode of proceeding, the mode, sir, I want your advice upon; you will therefore do everything you can to put them to the greatest expense, and to inflict the most summary chastisement upon them. I need not tell you that we can proceed against all the parties concerned, author, publisher, and printer; and, in my opinion, we can trounce the paper-maker too. But of this I am certain, that as the libel is originally in the handwriting of the deceased testator, we can punish his legal representatives, provided he has left a will, and that his executors have administered for the benefit of his next of kin, which is his daughter, who has profited by this rascally publication:—but, of course, in that case, as the matter will then come within the jurisprudence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, we must seek our remedy in the *Court of Arches*, and file a probate, or something of that sort, against the parties."

At the termination of this display of legal lore, Scorewell looked astonishingly big, and paused just long enough to allow Mr. Papman to say, "Be cool, my good man, be cool; calmly state to me the facts, and afterwards——"

But again he was interrupted by Scorewell, who thus proceeded:—

"*Facts!* but I tell you, sir, there is not a single fact in the case. Water bewitched, not fit to give to a dog and better at the 'Cock and Bottle!' I'll take my oath they are not facts, but false; and, therefore, I will appeal to a jury of my countrymen to find a Bill of Error upon every one of them."

"What—are—you—talking about?" inquired Papman, with extreme deliberation. "I have listened to you for half an hour, yet am I as ignorant of what you mean as the man in the moon. In a word, what is your grievance?"

"What!" exclaimed Scorewell, with amazement. "Why, haven't you heard? — haven't you seen? — haven't you read?"

"No, no, no," reiterated Papman—"so explain to me at once."

"Wonderful!" cried Scorewell. "Here is my character held up to the execration of all mankind, for making negus not fit to give to a dog, yet my own legal adviser knows nothing about it! Now, then," continued he, as he placed the book before Papman, and (with a sapient shake of the head) pointed to the offensive passage, "now, read that, and *then* tell me what you think."

Papman slowly wiped and put on his spectacles, and having with great attention twice read the passage, he quietly returned the book to Scorewell, and coldly said, "Well, and what of that?"

"What of that!" exclaimed Scorewell; "why, that is it—it is a malignant, blasphemous, and sacrilegious libel, calculated to mislead to a breach of the peace, and impugn the liberty of the subject, as lawfully made and provided for by the Act of *Habeas Corpus*. It is a libel, and I will bring actions against all the parties concerned in it, jointly, ay, and *severely* too."

"That is no libel, Scorewell, so put the book into your pocket, and go home," said Papman.

"No libel! Come, come, that's a good one! It says of me what I don't like, yet you would have me believe it is no libel! I come to you for advice how to act; but I know, sir, what is libel."

"Indeed!" said Papman, with a smile; "then, upon my word, my good friend, you are all to nothing the most knowing man in Little Pedlington, lawyer or other. There is not in the whole of that passage the slightest ground for action. Bring an action upon *that!* I should be a rogue were I to encourage you in taking such a step: we should be laughed out of any court in England."

"Then, with all respect for your opinion, sir," said Scorewell, drily, "I don't agree with you. I haven't been *sleeping* over 'Every Man his own Lawyer,' and I can tell you we shall be certain of a verdict, let the case come on before the judges either *in banco* or at *Nova Scotia*."

"*Nisi Prius*, I suppose you mean," said Papman. "But no matter for that; the passage is a foolish passage, as might be expected from its writer; but you have not the slightest ground for action. Nothing that poor Pompo (as the captain delighted to be called) ever wrote or said could do any living creature the slightest harm. He was a foolish old man, tiresome, stupid, and vulgar, and so habitually a grumbler, that he would growl at a turkey for no other reason than that it was not a duck—nay, he

would grumble because pains had been taken so to please him, that nothing was left for him to grumble at. I speak thus freely and truly of my poor dead-and-gone friend, in the hope, that by so doing, I may succeed in allaying the irritation under which you are labouring. Go home—think no more of this affair; attend to your business, and keep your money in your pocket, for the law can do nothing for you."

"There you and I don't agree, sir," said Scorewell, somewhat angrily. "I'm resolved to spend my last farthing but I'll be revenged on the whole kit of them. If I don't mind the expense, why need you? Besides, I'm a free-born Englishman; and if I can afford to pay for legal advice, I have a right to go to law when I choose."

"I don't dispute your right, my good man; but in the present case, it would be dishonest on my part to abet you in so hopeless, so foolish, a proceeding. So here let our conference end."

"Honesty! Nonsense! I know the law, and what has honesty to do with that?" Then suddenly rising and clapping his hat firmly down upon his head, he added: "Now, I tell you what, Mr. Papman—if you won't *per*secute the parties for me, I dare say I can find an attorney in Little Pedlington who will; so there's the long and the short of it."

To this Mr. Papman calmly replied—

"In my profession, as in most others, Scorewell, there are scamps and rogues, who, for their pitiful hire, will undertake any work, however dirty, degrading, or dishonest it may be; but rely upon it, they are as much the scorn of the honourable profession which they disgrace, as they are the despised of society in general. Come, come, don't look angry, Scorewell; I am not rich enough to afford the loss of even so small a client as you are; so when you have any respectable business to be done, let me have the benefit of it."

"No, sir," replied Scorewell; "I don't see the use of consulting a legal adviser who, upon points of law, differs with me, *tetotum cœlo*, as the lawyers say. You may do very well for *mild* practice," (he sneeringly added,) "but not where one is determined to proceed *a fortiori*. So good morning—Mr.—— Papman."

Leaving Mr. Papman, Attorney, Scorewell forthwith proceeded to the house of Judas Hitchem, Esquire, *Solicitor*. Hitchem is, in all respects, the reverse of Mr. Papman—character not excepted. He is a stout, plump fellow, with a bull-head; a face red and bloated from over-feeding; small, sickly, pale eyes;

and a quantity of hair resembling flax, carefully curled. He wears three under-waistcoats, all of them of flaring colours; a crimson velvet stock, fastened with a large mock-diamond brooch; on his fingers a quantity of gilt-copper rings; about his neck three massive chains, all of the same precious metal. In short, he is the *beau ideal* of a vulgar would-seem-somebody. His chief practice in his profession is that of a *bill-snatcher*.

By this title (which seems to have been suggested by that of an equally respectable calling, the body-snatcher) is meant, one of those petty attorneys—(pettifogging, I believe, is an actionable word, so I abstain from using it)—who buy up small acceptances in the hope that when due they will not instantly be paid. In that case, they, without the loss of a moment, commence proceedings against drawer, acceptor, indorser, and every one into whose sides they can contrive to stick their fangs. Just to save appearances, there is usually one or two others concerned besides the operator, and great is the profit thereof! In justice to Judas Hitchem, *Esquire*, it must be said, that he has sometimes expressed a wish to be employed upon business a degree or two more respectable; but unfortunately for his virtuous aspirations, he has never yet found any person in all Little Pedlington fool enough to trust him with it.

To this worthy the irate innkeeper proceeded. The *solicitor*, (for so he always styled himself,) who had read nothing, knew, notwithstanding, almost as much of law as the innkeeper who *had* read "Every Man his own Lawyer." Having listened attentively to his new client, who stated *his* view of the law of the case in nearly the same words which he had used to Papman, he said, in a yaw-yaw way—

"I am quite of your opinion, Mr. Scorewell, quite; you are perfectly right; slander, defamation, libel; atrocious case; we'll trounce every one of them. I'll serve them all with notices of action this very evening."

"I knew I was right," cried Scorewell, chuckling, and rubbing his hands.

The rogue—(rogue, I believe, is *not* actionable, but I *will* use that word at a venture)—the rogue opened his black book, and, following Scorewell's dictation, inscribed therein the names of Yawkins, Hoppy, and half a dozen others who were either positively, or probably, concerned in the publication.

"One thing more," said Hitchem. "If you happen to hold, or can procure, acceptances of any of the parties, we may have

an opportunity of working them upon those also. There is no harm in having two strings to one's bow, Mr. Scorewell."

This is the lawyer for my money, thought Scorewell.

"*And* one thing more, Mr. Scorewell. As the outlay in this business will be considerable, I shall require twenty pounds of you, in advance."

Scorewell, considering this to be a reasonable demand, besides that it would secure to him the services of this able adviser, immediately paid him the amount required; and, thought he, as he counted out the notes, I haven't read "Every Man his own Lawyer" for nothing. Solicitor and client shook hands; and, said the former, as Scorewell was quitting the house:—

"We'll show them what it is to get into the clutches of little Judas Hitchem."

The result of this proceeding of my wise host, is, of course, for the present, in the bosom of Time; but any one is at liberty to make his own guess at it, according to his own judgment and foresight.

By persons who not only were witnesses to, but prominent actors in, the well-known pump-ladle troubles, I am assured, that the excitement then prevailing scarcely exceeded that of the present moment. When Miss Cripps's lost reticule was cried in the Market Square I was a spectator of the scene. *That* was interesting and exciting to an almost painful degree, for men's minds were distracted by hopes, and doubts, and fears—so nicely balanced were the chances for and against the recovery of the lost object; but that event will bear no comparison with what the Little Pedlingtonians have already distinguished as the NIX COMMOTION!

The whole town being in a state of utter confusion, and events of the deepest interest occurring simultaneously in different parts of it, I shall do no more than make a few notes of what is going on: a narrative pretending to order and regularity is, under the circumstances, out of the question.

I go into Market Square, and instead of walking peaceably along, as of yore, am thrust to the right, jostled to the left, shoved forwards, pushed backwards! The dignified bearing and the cold look have taken the place of familiar nods and smiles; instead of the friendly "How do?"—"How are you?"—"Pleasant weather!"—"Fine morning!"—nothing is heard but —"Sir, I don't know you."—"I desire, sir, you will never speak to me again."—"I wonder at your assurance, miss, in looking me in the face."—"Sir, what Mr. Hoppy says in his book, that Captain

Nix said that Mr. Shrubsole told him that he had heard from Mr. Snargate what you said of me in strict confidence *to him* as long as twenty-two years ago, and which I never knew till now, is unbecoming a gentleman, and you may expect to hear from me."

In the very thick of all this is little Jack Hobbleday! He catches one by the button and listens to him; he takes another by the collar and whispers in his ear; a third he drags into a corner and looks double-distilled mysteries at him; he knocks at a door, and presently is in earnest conversation with the foot-boy; a housemaid is industriously engaged in pumping water from the new pump, and, presto! little Jack Hobbleday is at her side, industriously engaged in pumping her. This is a fine time for Jack: he is in his element! He is now coming to me.

"How do, my dear fellow? Lived here all my life, but never saw anything like this. Where it will end nobody can tell. I say—come into a corner. What I have to tell you must be in confidence. This publication will be the ruin of poor Hoppy. Already the consequences of it are awful, quite awful! His annual benefit-ball, which is fixed for Wednesday week—well—what do you think? Out of nineteen three-and-sixpenny tickets, which he had already issued, seventeen have been returned! Poor fellow—sorry for him! Loses three pupils, too—two of them Mrs. Shrubsole's daughters. Foolish of Mrs. Shrubsole to notice it; for, after all, what is it? Twenty years ago, when she was Miss Shrapnell, Pompo saw her dancing—goes home, claps down in his journal that Polly Shrapnell has got bandy legs. Poor Pompo never dreams of his journal being published—he dies—out it comes. But this is one of the many things Hoppy ought to have suppressed—*for*—the truth is, she *has* got bandy legs, and I happen to know it. I say—between ourselves, she would not have cared about it if her legs had been straight. Now, rely upon what I have told you about Hoppy—I have it from the highest authority—don't ask who—mustn't tell—but this I *may* say—that was his little maid you saw me talking to at the pump." This last fact he communicated to me in a significant whisper.

Hobbleday continued: "Then—Chickney, the poulterer, is angry because his name *is* mentioned in the book—dragged before the public. Digges, the undertaker, because his is *not*—too insignificant, he supposes, for notice. Digges won't take any more dancing-lessons at Hoppy's academy for grown gentle-

men. Chickney makes his wife withdraw her subscription from Yawkins's library. Miss Tidmarsh's *sorees*, the pleasantest things in Little Pedlington, are put off, because it comes out that, seven years ago, Miss Cripps, Mrs. Sniggerston, my aunt Hobbleday, Daubson, Jubb, Yawkins the banker, and eight or ten others of our 'top-sawyers,' as the saying is, all agreed, at a rout at Pompo's, that Miss Tidmarsh could not be less than forty-eight. Forty-eight and seven, eh? I say nothing. Ahem! that's her age, though; and I happen to know it. But it is very foolish of people to be angry about such things. Then, there's poor Miss Nix herself—she's half out of her mind about the book! She has quarrelled with Hoppy because he has published no more than about three dozen of her eminent father's washerwoman's and tavern-bills, and (in the 'Correspondence') only a score or so of letters of invitation received and answered, when, as she says, she had supplied him with hundreds of them. Says he has left out all that was worth telling of the great Nix, told nothing but what was not, and told that badly. Says that if the illustrious Rummins had been alive, *he* ought to have been employed to immortalize her immortal father. Poor Yawkins, too! She has quarrelled with him, because he would not give her two hundred copies of the work to present to her friends. As Yawkins says, in that case there would have been nobody left in all the world to buy it; so he sent her a dozen. Then, as the book is making such a stir, she complains that he did not pay her enough for it; but, as Yawkins says, he paid five guineas for it, and it was all a speculation. However, he has sent her an additional sovereign, and put her down for a year's subscription to his library, *gratis*. This I have, in confidence, from the best authority—mustn't tell who—but this I may tell you—have just left the house of the most liberal and enterprising publisher in all Little Pedlington."

"I fear, Mr. Hobbleday," said I, "this publication will furnish much employment for the gentlemen of the long robe."

"I fear so too, my dear fellow," replied Hobbleday; "but people are very foolish to notice such things—very, I tell you. There's Hitchem, the eminent solicitor, but the greatest scoun——ahem!—sharp fellow, though—know him well—dine with him sometimes—well, he has got his hands full already. Amongst other things of the sort, he is bringing an action for damages, Cripps *v.* Scrubbs, for Miss Scrubbs telling Pompo that Miss Cripps wore a false front to her hair, There it was, my dear fellow, snugly bottled up in the book for fifteen years—nobody

the wiser for it—at last, out it comes. Papman, the great lawyer, would not have anything to do with the matter—said it was foolish, and *in for a dig*. People *are* fools to notice such things. I have shown the book to, at least, twenty of my most intimate friends—pointed out to them the most disagreeable things said about themselves. But I'm for peace and quiet—recommended them to take no notice of it—never to think of going to law about it. But there they are, all of them, going at it, ding-dong. Fools for their pains—such things are not worth notice—pooh, pooh! they are *not*, I tell you. Well—I must be off—going to consult Papman, my solicitor; for, what is said about *me* in the book is *too* bad. I'll leave you to judge. See here."

Hobbleday put into my hands the "Life and Times," a leaf of which was doubled down at the corner. The passage that displeased him was in that fatal "Journal;" and thus it ran:—

"Jack Hobbleday just been here—Paul Potter, as I call him. Looked down my airy, and saw a air hanging up in kitchen windy. Wanted to no when it was to be drest—woudn't tell—d—m me, what bisness of his'n? as I say. As he went out, ask'd Patty cook—didn't no. Went all over L. P. telling people as how he was certain it was old and tuff—shot all to pieces as if it had been kild with a canon bawl, and sure it coudn't be worth heatin. Jack, the best naturd little fellar in L. P., but somehow sets more peeple by the years than all the ill-naturd fellers put together. Would set the greatest friends mentioned in all ainshant histry a-quarling—Damon and Pick-axe, Restus and Pillydus, Silly and Carybdus, or any on um."

"There," said Hobbleday, as I returned the book; "that *is* something to complain of. What the old blockhead has written about others is only fit to laugh at—not worth notice—fun, capital fun—but to say anything about *me*——But I must be off, or I shall be too late to find my solicitor at home. Good bye, my dear fellow, good bye. Look out for Hobbleday *versus* Hoppy, and you'll see something, I promise you."

Scarcely had Hobbleday left me when my attention was attracted by the sound of a horn, and the cry of "Little Pedlington Weekly Observer, *Scun-dition!*" It was indeed a second edition of that interesting paper, so I purchased it. And fully was the republication warranted by the importance of the event which it announced! The paragraph was printed in much larger type than that used in any other part of the paper; and being unostentatiously intelligible, and unaffectedly consistent with itself, I presume it could not have proceeded from the erudite

pen of my favourite writer, Mr. Rummins, junior. It occupied the place usually allotted to the leading article.

"*SECOND EDITION.*

"LITTLE PEDLINGTON, *Two o'Clock* P.M.

"An affair of honour has just occurred between Captain Snargate and Captain Sniggerston, both formerly of the L. P. Loyal Volunteers. The meeting took place in Yawkins's skittle-ground; and that spot was selected because, this being the day on which twopence is demanded for admission, (the ground on all other days of the week being opened *gratis*), the parties would be in no danger of interruption. They were accompanied to the field by their respective seconds, Mr. Puddifoot Puddifoot and Mr. Perks Perks; and, apology being out of the question, they took their ground at a distance of twelve paces. Loaded pistols were then placed in the hands of the combatants; when, the seconds thinking enough had been done, the parties expressed themselves satisfied, shook hands, and withdrew in perfect good humour. Both gentlemen, we are assured, conducted themselves with the greatest gallantry; but we trust it will not often be our painful duty to have to record the occurrence of such murderous scenes in a place like Little Pedlington. The cause of the meeting will be explained by the correspondence subjoined:—"

No. 1.

"L. P., Tuesday morning,
"27 min. past 9.

"Capt. Snargate presents his compliments to Capt. Sniggerston. In Capt. S.'s 'Secret History,' appended to Mr. Hoppy's 'Life and Times of Capt. Pomponius Nix,' appears the following passage:—'So he complained to Colonel Snargate (the small-beer brewer) who commanded the corps at the time.'

"As Colonel S. was well-known to be a brewer of TABLE ALE, and *not* of *small beer*, Capt. S. considers the use of the words SMALL-BEER BREWER to be offensive to the memory and character of his late respected father; and that by placing them in a parenthesis (which renders them more remarkable), it is adding insult to injury—the more so as Capt. S. himself still carries on the brewery for TABLE ALE *only*. Capt. S. therefore requests

that Capt. S. will, with as little delay as possible, cause the words *small-beer*, which are offensive to Capt. S.'s feelings as a gentleman, to be exchanged for TABLE ALE, *and the parenthesis removed.*

"Capt. S. has to add, that as he cannot, consistently with his dignity as an officer and a gentleman, apply for redress to the publisher; and as Capt. S. is informed by Mr. Hoppy that it would be against all the rules of etiquette for *him*, as master of the ceremonies, to be called upon in any way whatever, it is to Capt. S. alone that Capt. S. can address himself. Capt. S. waits the honour of Capt. S.'s earliest attention to this."

No. 2.

"L. P., Tuesday morning,
"3½ min. past 10.

"Captain Sniggerston has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Captain Snargate's note, dated L. P., Tuesday morning, 27 minutes past 9. Considering the delicate nature of the subject of Capt. S.'s note, Capt. S. begs to decline sending Capt. S. a reply till Capt. S. has had an opportunity of *consulting a friend*, which Capt. S. will do without delay."

No. 3.

"L. P., Tuesday morning,
"1 min past 11.

"Capt. Sniggerston has the honour to inform Capt. Snargate that he cannot have the slightest objection to substitute, at the earliest opportunity, the words *table-ale* for *small-beer*, as requested in Capt. S.'s communication, No. 1; and, at the same time, to express his regret that the inadvertent use of the words *small-beer* should have caused any pain to Capt. S.'s feelings as a gentleman. But Capt. S., considering that Capt. S. *has no right to interfere with the parenthesis*, Capt. S. feels himself under the necessity of declining to remove it."

No. 4.

"L.P., Tuesday morning,
"59 min. past 11.

"Capt. Snargate has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Capt. Sniggerston's communication, dated L. P., Tuesday morn-

ing, 1 minute past 11. Capt. S. is happy that Capt. S. has consented to retract the offensive term 'small-beer brewer;' but Capt. S. cannot, as a man of honour, dispense with the removal of THE PARENTHESIS. As Capt. S. considers that, from this point of the affair, it would be inexpedient that any further communications should be made directly between Capt. S. and Capt. S.,—Capt. S. has the honour to inform Capt. S. that this note will be delivered to Capt. S. by Capt. S.'s friend, Mr. Puddifoot Puddifoot."

And hereupon occurred the hostile meeting.

One side of this paper is nearly filled with letters from persons who consider themselves either insulted or injured by passages in Nix's Journal, or by the publication of letters addressed to him under the seal of privacy. I select a few of the most interesting. They are all addressed—

"*To the Editor of the Little Pedlington Weekly Observer.*

"SIR,—Miss Nix has allowed Mr. Yawkins to allow Mr. Hoppy to publish a letter of mine, wrote *private* and *confidential* to her late father, and only intended for the *bosom* of *friendship*, and is as follows:—

'PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

'DEAR POMPO,—I want to borrow your punch-ladle, as I ant got one, so put it in your pocket when you come to-night, and give it me *sly*.

'Yours, truly,

'JOHN JULIUS SPIGGINS.'

"Now, sir, I don't think my character *a bit worse* for not having got a punch-ladle AT THAT TIME, but no man likes to have it made the *town talk;* and Miss Nix *knows well enough*, if I can *borrow*, I can LEND, as the following will *show*, though it might not *suit her* to *publish that*, but it shall now appear *in the face of all the world*, which I would not *otherwise* have done.

'DEAR SPIGGY,—Am short of tea-spoons, as I say, for our route to-nite, so bring ½ a duzn with you. 1 good turn desarvs a nuther, as I say.

'Yours, truly,

'POMPS. NIX.'

"Now, sir, as Miss Nix has *brought this upon herself*, by publishing *what was not a delicate act to do*, in the *first* instance, she may THANK HERSELF for the *consequences*.

"Your obedient servant,

"J. J. S."

"SIR,—In Capt. Nix's Journal, it is said—'June 20, 1834, walked to Vale of Health, met * * * * with ——'s pooty wife —pooty doings for Little Pedlington!'

"Now, sir, if this is meant to allude to me and Mrs. Strut (the wife of our worthy manager), I say it is a gross falsehood, without the shadow of a foundation.

"Your obedient servant,

"EDWARD YAWKINS, JUN."

"(Of the firm of Yawkins, Snargate, and Co., Bankers)."

"SIR,—In Captain Nix's infamous Journal, he has the unmanliness to say—'June 20, 1834. Walked to Vale of Health; met * * * * with ——'s pooty wife—pooty doings for Little Pedlington!'

"Now, sir, as it is impossible to tell how far people may carry their wicked insinuations to, I call upon you to protect a helpless woman whose reputation is at stake, as I solemnly declare it was only *by the merest accident* I was overtaken by Captain Sniggerston as I was going to see my innocent baby which was out at nurse, and this I am sure the captain, as a man and a gentleman, will bear me out in.

"Your humble and unjustly-slandered servant,

"PORTIA LUCRETIA SHRAPNELL.

"P.S.—I cannot help saying that *a certain lady* had better *look at home* before she allows such cruel insinuations to be published."

Following these, are fourteen letters from other ladies and gentlemen, all of them vigorously repelling the charge, if intended to apply to them. The next is curious:—

"Sir,—Allow me, through the medium of your valuable columns, to call the attention of all Little Pedlington to a fact of which they might otherwise have remained ignorant, or which, at least, could only have been known to that small and select circle of friends who are the most intimately acquainted with me. I, therefore, earnestly request that everybody would turn to Nix's Journal, in which, at page 53, seven lines from the top, they will find the following entry:—'Just saw * * * * pass the door—he is the gratist blocked in the town, as I call it.' There cannot be the slightest doubt that by the greatest block-head in the town is meant *me* (for I have a distinct recollection of having frequently passed Nix's door), and, indeed, many friends, on whose judgment I have the firmest reliance, assure me that they consider me perfectly justified in thinking so. The publication of this letter will prepare Little Pedlington for any steps I may think it proper to adopt under the circumstances.

"I am, sir, your very obedient servant,

"Thomas Noddy."

"P.S.—Should any impertinent doubts be expressed of the truth of what I have asserted, I shall certainly consider myself under the necessity of making my statement, *upon oath*, in the presence of a magistrate."

The following possesses a peculiar charm, as coming from the Reverend Jonathan Jubb, the Bard of Pedlingtonia. As being the most interesting, so shall it be the last:—

"Sir,—As a lover of truth, a Minister of Peace, and the Literary Executor of the late Simcox Rummins, F.S.A., I feel myself loudly called upon, by the still small voice of justice, to dissipate with a breath the flickering cloud of calumny which, like the dove, is made to hover over the well-known character for hospitality of that illustrious man, now sleeping *unconscious* and *defenceless* in that grave over which the elegant tomb-stone now just finished will, I am happy to say, be placed in the course of this week.

"In the Journal of Pomponius Nix, now just published, that great and good man records with unerring precision, like the bow of Apollo, that on the 29th September, 1801, he dined with

the great Antiquary. It is as true as the needle to the pole that he did so, for in my own journal, which may one day, like manna from Heaven, be given to the world, I find the fact corroborated. But, like the pelican, ungratefully turning on the breast that fed it, he adds,—'Goose tolerable good, but not so good as goose eat with Jack Spriggins eight year ago. Stuffing decided bad; and as for apple-sarse, *not enough to go twice round!*' With regard to the goose and the stuffing, I say nothing: that is matter of opinion, of which it can only be said, ''twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands.' But, sir, when, like the voracious cormorant, he complains that there was not enough apple-sauce, truth and justice both bid me raise my voice, like thunder roaring in the desert, and dispel the calumny, as the avalanche sweeps away the flimsy cobweb. Sufficient was there, then, to have gone twice, nay, thrice round, like a planet in its orb, but that at *the first round* the gallant Captain, 'as was his custom always in the afternoon,' like the sea yawning for its prey, *took nearly the entire of it to his own share*. Let me, then, like the ring-dove pleading for its young, inquire of every candid mind 'the cause, the cause my soul,' WHY *went it not twice round?* Spirit of Rummins! (of whose 'Life and Times,' by me, a few copies, price half a crown, may still be had at my publishers), art thou, say, appeased?

"And I remain, Sir, yours,

"JONATHAN JUBB, Curate, L.P."

And now, O you who nightly record the sayings and events of the by-gone day, bethink you of the legacy of mischief and disorder which haply you are preparing for posterity; suspend awhile your desperate pens in air; bestow a thought on Little Pedlington; and, ere you write—REFLECT.

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